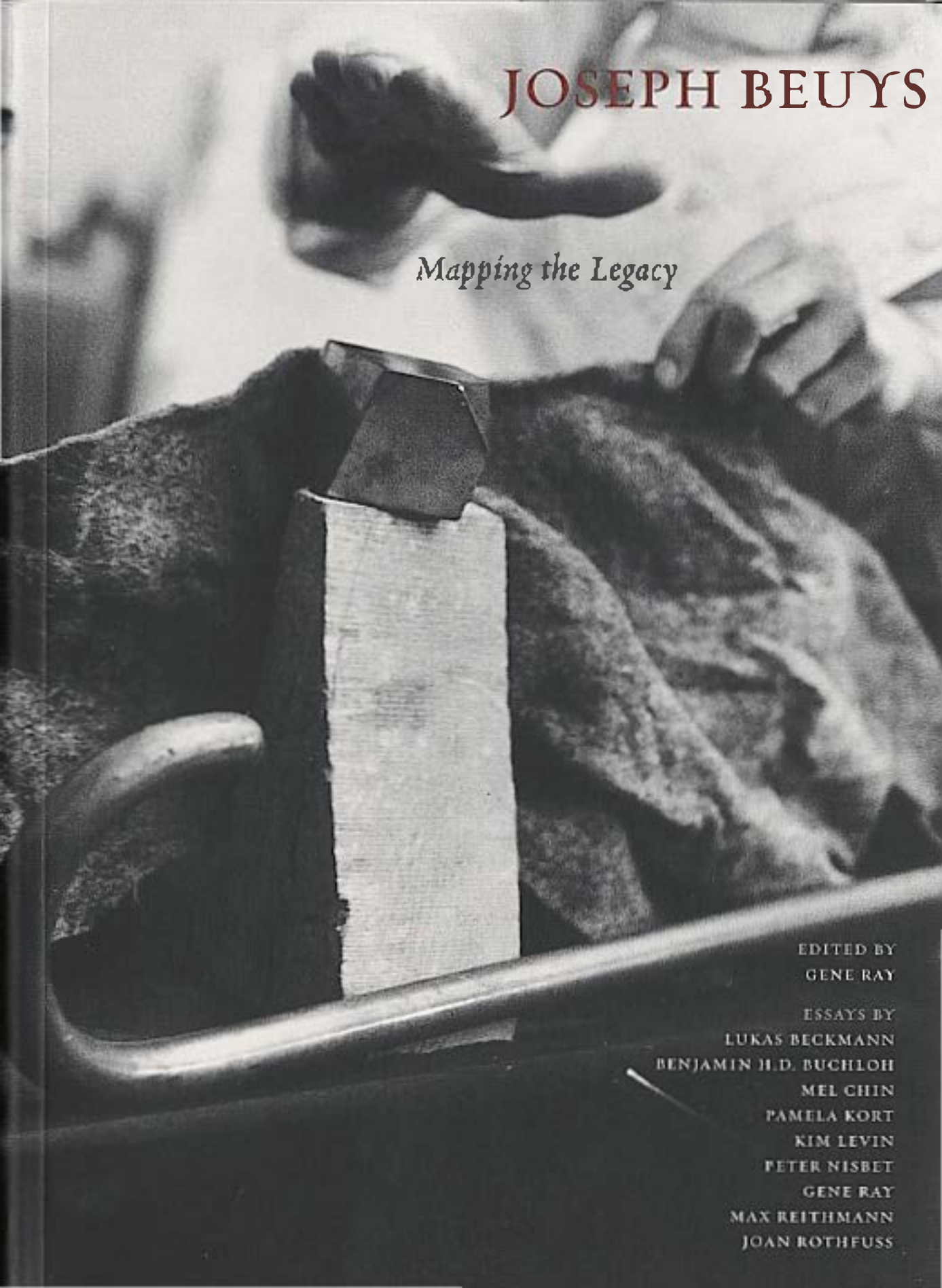

JOSEPH BEUYS

Mapping the Legacy

EDITED BY
GENE RAY

ESSAYS BY
LUKAS BECKMANN
BENJAMIN H.D. BUCHLOH
MEL CHIN
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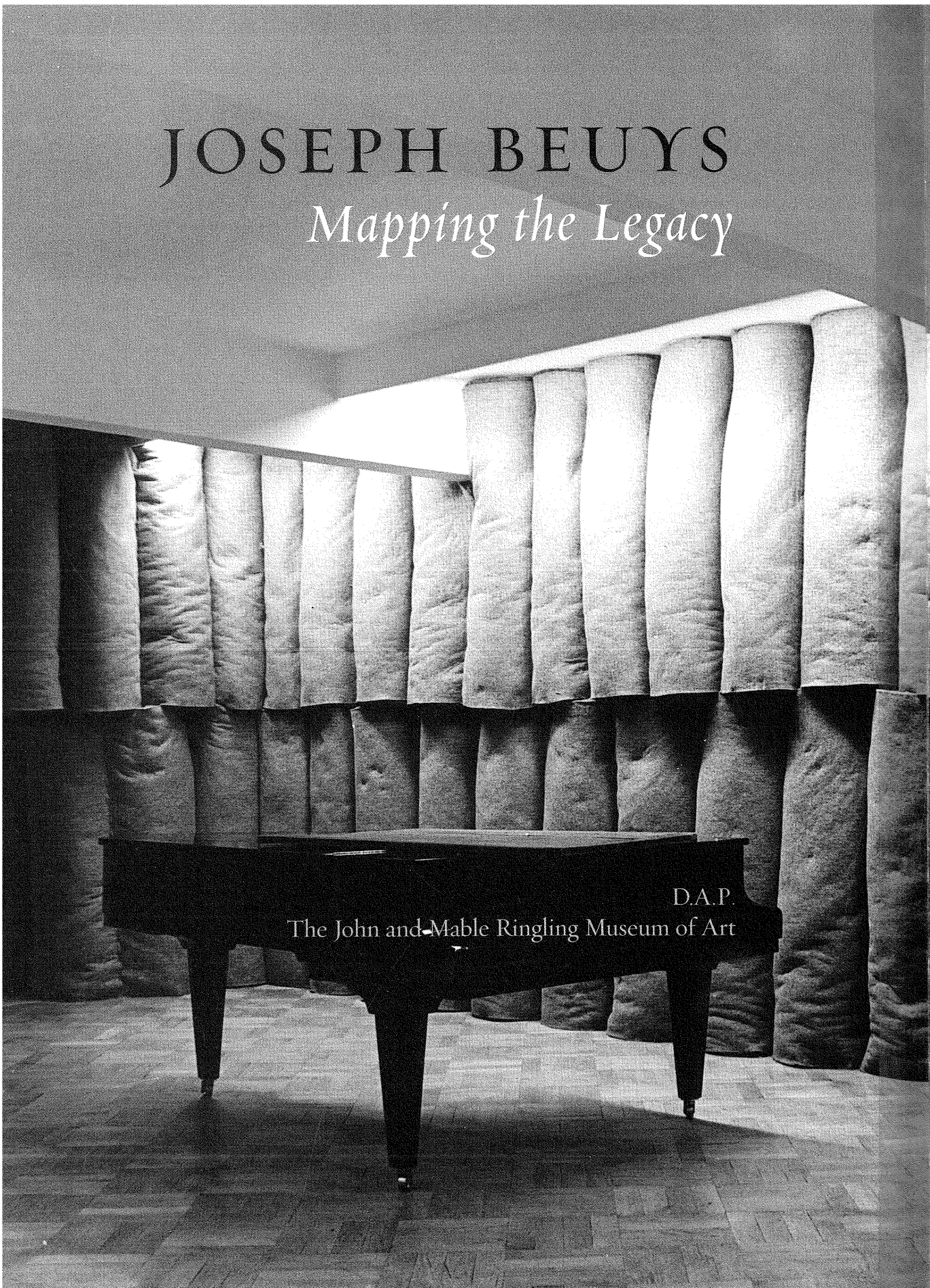

D.A.P.
The John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art

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JOSEPH BEUYS
Mapping the Legacy
 Cover: Joseph Beuys during the action Honigpumpe (*Honey pump*), November 2, 1984. Photograph: Jochen Hiltmann November 2, 1984 in the Dusseldorf studio of Joseph Beuys. Back cover: Joseph Beuys, *Mein und meiner Lieben verlassener Schlaf* (*My and My Loved Ones' Abandanded Sleep*), 1965 (installation view) Wooden rack and felt sheets, 150 x 152 x 62 cm Beuys Block, Room 2, Hessisches Landesmuseum, Darmstadt Title page: Joseph Beuys, *Plight*, 1958-85. environmental sculpture with felt, blackboard, piano and thermometer. Photograph courtesy of Anthony d'Offay, London.

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Contents

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THE SYMPOSIUM *JOSEPH BEUYS: Mapping the Legacy* took place at the John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art in Sarasota, Florida, December 4–6, 1998. The culmination of several years of planning and a major commitment from the Ringling, the symposium coincided with the exhibition of *Joseph Beuys Multiples*, a major traveling exhibition organized by the Walker Art Center, as well as extensive programs developed and implemented by the curatorial and educational teams at the museum. It would be no exaggeration to say that the effects of the intense encounter with the work and spirit of Joseph Beuys continue to be felt on many levels by the Sarasota community.

The symposium and exhibition would not have been possible without the support and involvement of many individuals and sponsors. Special thanks go to Sascha Müller-Kraenner and the Heinrich Böll Foundation, Gisela Kadar and the Goethe-Institut in Atlanta, the Joseph Beuys Foundation in Basel, Woman's Exchange, and Melitta USA for their support of the symposium and this publication. The exhibition and related programs were made possible through the support of Don and Heather Chapell; Courtyard by Mariott;

Margot and Warren Coville; Mr. and Mrs. Edward Keating; NationsBank; Residence Inn by Mariott; Eugene and Ina Schnell; Time Warner Communications; the Sarasota County Tourist Development Council; the Sarasota County Arts Council; the State of Florida Department of State, Division of Cultural Affairs, and the Florida Arts Council also generously supported the program.

The dedication and commitment of many members of the Ringling Museum staff helped make this project a reality. Mark Ormond, then Deputy Director for Collections and Programs and Senior Curator, was instrumental at every level. Director David Ebitz endorsed the project from the start. Deputy Director for Development Susan Brainerd, Assistant Director for Finance and Administration Walter Eisele, Paula Parrish, and Director of Communications Barbara Linick all made crucial contributions. Special thanks to Joseph Arnegger, David Puriek, Christian Sampson, Glen Gentele, and Ron McCarty from Collections Management for completing a complex installation; and to Françoise Hack, Rebecca Engelhardt, librarian Linda McKee, and Les Druckenmiller for their support and assistance on many levels. Finally, a heartfelt thanks to Cara Chiarello, Fayanne Hayes, Susannah Michalson, and Virginia Shearer for the wonderful education in the value of collaboration.

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Gene Ray

PREFACE

Inheritance is never a *given*, it is always a task.
—Jacques Derrida

PLACING JOSEPH BEUYS AND TRACING his impact: these have been and continue to be surprisingly difficult and divisive tasks. Beuys' reception while he was alive was notoriously polarized. That situation is improving, in that critical responses more nuanced than all-or-nothing denigration or idolatry have now established themselves in the literature. However, Beuys (1921–1986) still seems to provoke extraordinarily strong reactions. Troubled by his private history, his public persona, or his politics, some observers of postwar and contemporary culture remain reluctant to admit the impact of his work, and alternately many others are still unable or unwilling to be at all critical about the object of their adoration. For others of us, it seems undeniable that Beuys was all too human. But it seems equally undeniable that his activities have inspired, enabled, or enriched important directions of contemporary art production, from what can broadly be called "history art" to installation, performance, and environmental art, and, in general, artists have been much more willing than critics to acknowledge as much. Whether or not one is prepared to label it "influence," the

responses to Beuys by artists belong, along with his work and the history of its critical reception, to a legacy. That still-contested legacy—in all its complexity and not excluding its tensions, contradictions, and discomforts—is the basis for a place in the history of twentieth-century art and culture.

In his 1993 reflection on the legacy of Karl Marx in the context of a triumphalist, globalized neoliberalism, Jacques Derrida emphasizes that every legacy is always plural, always involves mourning, and always places heirs under a forward-looking responsibility. "An inheritance is never gathered together," he writes, "it is never at one with itself."[1] These are fitting observations with which to approach the question of Joseph Beuys. For there is not one Beuys, but many. The lack of consensus surrounding the task of mapping and formulating his plural legacy at least confirms the irreducible plurality of that proper name. We can at least affirm that for now and for the future, Beuys remains unavoidable.

The essays that follow were presented at a symposium held December 4–6, 1998, at the John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art. The essays combine new research and reflection filtered through a range of approaches and positions. Considered as a whole, they indicate fairly well the present state of Beuys' reception. With three major international symposia having already been published since Beuys' death in 1986, and with new monographs, studies, and exhibition catalogs on Beuys appearing at an alarming clip, one may wonder if there is really anything left to say on the subject. But as these essays make clear, certain themes and topics are still very much alive and open. Beuys' actions during the Nazi period and the war years and the relation between that time and his postwar activities are still the source of considerable critical discomfort and exchange. The particular "Germanness," as opposed to the universality, of Beuys work, and the question of interpretive methodology were other recurring topics of discussion at the Sarasota symposium.

In his contribution, Peter Nisbet returns to perhaps the most controversial episode of Beuys' biography—the plane crash in the Crimea during the war. Nisbet reviews the various retellings of the event, its transformation into what he calls "the Story," and the history of its subsequent reception, in order to clarify the changing role of autobiography within the emergence and evolution of Beuys' persona. Nisbet argues that an important shift in the way Beuys made use of autobiography took place around 1970, and that attention to such shifts illuminates the "historical, diachronic" character of the artist's evolving oeuvre.

Pamela Kort focuses on Beuys' studies and early career through a survey of constitutive moments in the writing, from a distinctly German perspective, of nineteenth- and twentieth-century art history. She makes a compelling case

1 Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning, and the New International*, tr. Peggy Kamuf (New York and London: Routledge, 1994), p. 16.

that Beuys' identity and formative decisions as an artist were shaped by the perceived need for a new successor to a standing lineage of artistic masters perceived to be or claimed as Germans. Wilhelm Lehmbruck, a pre-Nazi figure whose political resonance met the requirements of the German postwar cultural climate, was the last to convincingly fill this role. But with his appointment to professorship at the Düsseldorf Kunstakademie, argues Kort, Joseph Beuys emerged as "the long augured successor who could revive culture in Germany and lead a younger generation of artists to distinction."

Joan Rothfuss examines Beuys' early reception in America in order to explore a question suggested by Kort's essay: is Beuys' work universal or somehow "inherently German"? Rothfuss argues that Beuys' perceived Germanness—a perception based largely on misunderstanding and interpretive misfires—in fact became a sticking point with American audiences. Many of the terms and categories from positions staked out in reviews from the early 1970s were recycled and rehearsed in the reception to the artist's 1979/80 retrospective at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, in effect ensuring that his American reception would at that point remain inconclusive.

In my essay, I argue that a consistent pattern of direct and indirect allusions to the Holocaust can be found across the whole of Beuys' mature oeuvre. This pattern should be read as a second project, a project of mourning in parallel to the declared project of social sculpture, or the "expanded concept of art." This second project produced some powerful late installations capable of functioning as openings for mourning or working-through. The indirect or "negative" strategies by which these works produce their effects can be linked to the rewriting, in the context of after-Auschwitz thought and theory, of the traditional aesthetic category of the sublime.

Benjamin Buchloh responds to my argument and reflects on recent Beuys scholarship in order to revisit the concerns of his well-known 1980 *Artforum* essay. That essay, harshly critical if not dismissive of Beuys, has attained a kind of exemplary status, as the most concise and forceful challenge to the artistic role Beuys represented. In acknowledgment of its importance for everyone seriously concerned with this artist, it is reprinted in this volume. Buchloh's reconsideration of Beuys in the context of this symposium, nearly twenty years later, contains some subtle adjustments, perhaps some qualified concessions, and some thoughtful methodological warnings.

Lukas Beckmann shares his personal experience of the genesis of the German Green Party to discuss, for the first time in English, Beuys' role in that movement and political party. Beckmann also explores in depth some points of

convergence between the political and economic ideas of Beuys' "expanded concept of art" and the eventual platform of the German Greens, in order to argue that those dimensions remained central to Beuys' art-making practice.

Artist Mel Chin, responding indirectly to Beckmann's talk at the symposium, presented an extraordinary performative pastiche combining a playful appropriation of the Beuysian chalk-talk format, a recitation of a poetic homage, and a wide-ranging artist's slide talk. As a kind of intervention into the symposium, with its academic conventions and mood, Chin's deployment of these familiar but incongruous discursive forms and modes enlivened and refreshed the proceedings. Along the way, issues about persona, self-presentation and the political role of the artist, about trauma, memory, and rememoration, and about the deceptions and self-deceptions of interpretation were in effect countersigned and sent back for further reflection and discussion.

Max Reithmann's contribution brings a philosophically sophisticated continental approach to bear on questions of history, memory, and repression in Beuys' works and language. Reithmann's previous studies of Beuys have combined close readings of some of Beuys' major installation works with analyses of the philosophical sources of Beuys' "expanded concept of art." Here Reithmann confronts for the first time, and not without evidence of struggle, Beuys' relation to the Nazi period. He analyzes moments of evasiveness in Beuys' words and works and advances Albrecht Dürer, Paul Celan, and Anselm Kiefer as exemplars of alternative artistic postures with respect to history and trauma.

Kim Levin, drawing on her past research and experiences with Beuys, offers some new observations and suggestions regarding the artist's intellectual roots in the Nazi period and comments on recent trends in Beuys exhibitions and scholarship.

Finally, readers will find the important "Key Experiences" interview conducted with Beuys by Georg Jappe in 1976. This text, in which Beuys discusses the crucial episodes of his biography, is offered here for the first time in English, in an annotated translation by Peter Nisbet. The opportunity to include Beuys' own voice in this volume emerged when it became apparent that Stuart Morgan would not, for reasons of health, be able to participate in the symposium or contribute to this volume. We regret the absence of his views here and wish him well.

To these authors, again my thanks. Their careful research, thoughtful presentations, and pointed discussion made the Ringling symposium a stimulating and valuable event. The resulting essays will, I am certain, advance our understanding of a difficult and challenging artist.

Peter Nisbet

1½ CRASH COURSE
Remarks on a Beuys Story

FOR FEW ARTISTS HAVE PERSONA AND presence played such an important role as for Joseph Beuys. Throughout his varied career as a draftsman, sculptor, performer, lecturer, installation artist, political activist, and ecological campaigner, Beuys' self and image came to underpin the authority of his work in ways both persuasive and problematic. In the years since his death, those concerned with "mapping the legacy" have had to confront the implications of Beuys' absence, and the effect of that absence on the work he left behind.

Moreover, the removal of the charismatic personality allows the biographical narrative that buttressed the impact of the artist's actuality, to emerge as an object of study in its own right. In particular, the changing role of autobiography in the artist's evolving oeuvre can be illuminated as a historical, diachronic phenomenon. This essay does not focus on trying to assess the extent to which Beuys' art may have invoked his life-story to varying degrees at different moments (or on taking a position on whether that art is best interpreted within the framework of the artist's individual biography). Rather, it focuses on the fact that Beuys could and did deploy different kinds of autobiography at different times in his career. Specifically, it seeks to support the argument that a sig-

nificant shift in Beuys' mode of deploying autobiography—and, by implication, narrative in general—occurred around 1970. I take as a test case the famous story of Beuys' wartime crash and trace the tale back to the historical juncture at which it begins to be told. The contrast in content and style between this autobiographical fragment and Beuys' earlier approach to fashioning a chronicle of his experiences (notably in the *Life Course/Work Course* of 1964–70) is crucial.[1]

ANYONE WHO has ever attempted to present the work of Joseph Beuys to an American audience will attest that the one piece of common knowledge, the one constant reference, is the story of the artist's World War II crash and his miraculous survival in the hands of tribesmen who wrapped him in fat and felt. Such details as Beuys' service in dive-bomber squadrons or the identity of his rescuers as Tartars may or may not factor into the awareness of the audience, but the key anecdotal elements (crash, injury, fat, felt, recovery) are all but universally known among viewers and critics in this country. The *locus classicus* for this so-called legend is the extended account presented by Caroline Tisdall in the catalogue of the 1979 Guggenheim retrospective, as if quoted from the artist himself. Tisdall recounts:

> One event was absolutely determining. In 1943 the Ju-87 [i.e., the dive bomber] that Beuys was flying was hit by Russian flak and crashed in a snowstorm in the Crimea. He was found unconscious among the wreckage by Tartars.

The passage then continues with Beuys' words:

> Had it not been for the Tartars I would not be alive today. They were the nomads of the Crimea, in what was then no man's land between the Russian and German fronts, and favoured neither side. I had already struck up a good relationship with them, and often wandered off to sit with them. "Du nix njemcky" they would say, "du Tatar," and try to persuade me to join their clan. Their nomadic ways attracted me of course, although by that time their movements had been restricted. Yet it was they who discovered me in the snow after the crash, when the German search parties had given up. I was still unconscious then and only came round completely after twelve days or so, and by then I was back in a German field hospital. So the memories I have of that time are images that penetrated my consciousness. The last thing I remember was that it was too late to jump, too late for the parachutes to open. That must have been a couple of seconds before hitting the ground. Luckily I was not strapped in—I always preferred free movement to safety belts. I had been disciplined for that, just as I had been for not carrying a map of Russia— somehow I felt that I knew the area better than any

1 This essay derives from research done for a larger study of Beuys (and German art) around 1970 and presents primarily documentary evidence. It is a revised version of the talk offered at the John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art in December 1998.

> map. My friend was strapped in and he was atomized by the impact—there was almost nothing to be found of him afterwards. But I must have shot through the windscreen as it flew back at the same speed as the plane hit the ground and that saved me, though I had bad skull and jaw injuries. Then the tail flipped over and I was completely buried in the snow. That's how the Tartars found me days later. I remember voices saying "Voda" ("Water"), then the felt of their tents, and the dense pungent smell of cheese, fat and milk. They covered my body in fat to help it regenerate warmth, and wrapped it in felt as an insulator to keep the warmth in.[2]

It is this event I would like, for the purposes of this essay, to call simply "the Story." The speed and authority with which the Story established its currency and centrality can be concisely illustrated by two references, both reviews of the 1979 Guggenheim exhibition. Robert Hughes commented in *Time* that Beuys' "wartime experiences have for his followers almost joined Van Gogh's ear in the hagiography of modern art,"[3] while Donald Kuspit remarked laconically in the opening paragraphs of his article in *Art in America* that, "In general, his fat and felt works have an autobiographical dimension. Beuys, a pilot in World War II, was shot down . . ."[4]

Indeed, the Story became central not only to the appreciation of Beuys, but also to countervailing critiques. It has arguably been because of its more or less scornful attention to Beuys' account that Benjamin Buchloh's polemically dissenting article about Beuys (published in the journal *Artforum* in 1980) has itself achieved quasi-mythical status as the definitive explanatory deflation of Beuys' status.[5] Although carrying the disarmingly modest subtitle "Preliminary Notes for a Critique," Buchloh's essay has, in fact, not required any follow-up to its "preliminary" investigations. The essay's apparently decisive debunking of the crash myth has in subsequent decades been taken as sufficiently damning to stand for the discrediting of the artist as a whole.[6]

In short, the originary account of fat and felt has served both as the exegetical key to understanding Beuys' signature use of these materials—a use that is taken to exemplify and summarize his entire career, as well as the centerpiece of the prosecution's case against the artist. That case has come to be made up both of a dismissive boredom (with the sense that there cannot be much that is interesting about the artist if one Story, in and of itself, can provide a totalizing explanatory matrix for the work) and of a critical resistance (based on the notion that the Story is evidence of the artist falsifying history).[7]

Beuys himself moved rapidly to downplay the importance of the Story almost as soon as he could see the emblematic significance that it was quickly acquiring. Already in early 1980, for example, he stressed to Kate Horsfield that

2 Caroline Tisdall, *Joseph Beuys*, Exh. cat. (New York, 1979), pp. 16–17. In her author's note, Tisdall writes that "unattributed quotations are from my interviews with Joseph Beuys, September–October 1978" (p. 7).

3 Robert Hughes, "The Noise of Beuys: At New York's Guggenheim, the Guru of Düsseldorf" *Time* (November 12, 1979), p. 89.

4 Donald Kuspit, "Beuys: Fat, Felt and Alchemy" *Art in America*, vol. 68 no. 5 (May 1980), p. 79.

5 Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, "Beuys: The Twilight of the Idol. Preliminary Notes for a Critique" *Artforum*, vol. 18 no. 5 (January 1980), pp. 35–43. The Story is described as a "fable convenue" that "seems as contrived as it is dramatic" (p. 38). While Buchloh does argue that the factual accuracy or otherwise of the Story is not important, he positions it very close to outright fantasy or lie.

6 To take a random example—Thomas Crow refers to Buchloh's essay and its "trenchant dismantling of the Beuys mythology" in his *Modern Art in the Common Culture* (New Haven, 1996), p. 93.

7 I owe this point about the nature of the opposition to Beuys to Keith Krysinski, a participant in my seminar on Beuys at Harvard in spring 1997.

"these physical experiences during the war—accidents, damages on my body, wounds and such things—are overrated in regard to my earlier work."[8] However, such disavowals were in vain; the Story stuck and, for better or for worse, has become the touchstone for debates and exegesis.

Of course, this is not the only such tale Beuys told. The narrative pattern of describing a rebirth after a near-death experience is deployed by Beuys on at least two other occasions. One is the relatively well-known account of his nervous breakdown in the mid-1950s and subsequent period of recovery, including time spent working on the farm of his friends, the Van der Grintens. In two little-known but particularly vivid retellings of this progress from collapse to regeneration, Beuys emphasized how close he had come to dying at the outset of this experience. He spoke of how his friends looked for him for months and then broke down the door of the place where he had been hiding and starving himself, seemingly to death. "I believe that those who found me observed that they could literally have pulled the flesh from my bones. That was how far gone from life I was."[9]

A second example of this near-death motif concerns a startling childhood memory, often repeated by Beuys in interviews and conversations. He claims to have felt, as a five-year-old child, that he had lived long enough and that it was time to end his interminable life.[10] While it is not clear just what it was that rescued the five year old from the temptation of suicide, there was a powerful realization, as the artist put it in one interview, that "everything had to change if life was to continue."[11]

Nevertheless, the crash story is unique among such autobiographical fragments for its persistence, resonance, and influence. This has surely been because it alone has offered itself as an interpretive tool, assigning meaning—whether existential or anecdotal—to prominent and significant aspects of the artist's oeuvre, fat and felt. The detail about the curative uses of these subsequently sculptural materials and the specificity of the act of wrapping the body in them, have provided a welcome anchor for otherwise confounded audiences. The explanatory power of the Story has rested not only in the authority of the autobiographical, but also in its provision of an iconographic key.

The overwhelming presence and import of the Story in the reception and interpretation of Beuys since about 1980 inevitably provoke more or less challenging and subversive questions. My purpose in returning once again to the Story and its centrality, however, is not to address the obvious question about its accuracy, nor indeed to assess the validity of any critique.[12] Instead, this investigation has been prompted by puzzlement about the Story's prehistory.

8 Kate Horsfield, "On Art and Artists: Joseph Beuys," *Profile*, vol. 1 no. 1 (January 1981), p. 10 (transcription of an interview of January 1980). Beuys goes on specifically to reject a causal relationship between these war experiences and his use of materials, arguing that he found his way back to these materials only after having developed a theory of sculpture for which they seemed appropriate.

9 André Müller, "Joseph Beuys," *Interviews* (Hamburg, 1982), p. 58 (interview conducted on 8 February 1980 and originally published in the German edition of *Penthouse*, no. 106, 1980), and Hermann Schreiber, "Joseph Beuys," *Lebensläufe* (Frankfurt am Main, 1982), p. 126 (interview conducted on 27 January 1980).

10 Stella Baum, "Ein Gespräch mit Joseph Beuys" *Plötzlich und Unerwartet. Todesanzeigen* (Düsseldorf, 1980), p. 172; Schreiber "Joseph Beuys" (note 9), p. 119.

11 Schreiber, "Joseph Beuys" (note 9), p. 126. Interestingly, Beuys also claimed that he first became aware of his artistic talents at age five (Birgit Lahann, "Joseph Beuys: 'Ich bin ein ganz scharfer Hase,'" *Hausbesuche. Zu Gast bei Künstlern, Stars und Liebenden* [Stuttgart, 1985], p. 258 [interview conducted on 22 August 1980 and first published in *Stern*, 30 April 1981]).

When and under what circumstances did the Story first emerge? This historical, perhaps even pedantic, question grew out of the simple realization that there must have been a longer or shorter period when the Story did not and could not structure an audience's responses to Beuys' work, because it was not yet known.

Curiosity about the results of tracking the Story to its beginnings was reinforced by realizing that, shortly before Caroline Tisdall published her version of the Story, the art critic Georg Jappe had conducted an extensive interview with Beuys about "key experiences," in which Beuys offers a version of the Story that is remarkably close to the account presented in the Guggenheim catalogue—in fact, so close that the former may in some way have been incorporated into the latter. But, there remain some key differences. An archaeology of the Story can begin with an extensive quotation from Jappe's interview, conducted in September 1976. Jappe prompts Beuys, "... it is often said that flying vest, fat, felt, were all inspired by this crash and the Tartars' tent where you were cared for ... wasn't that also a key experience?" To which Beuys replies:

> Yes, of course! That lies on the intermediate border between these two types of key experiences. [Beuys is referring here to the clear distinction he has made between real and imagined experiences.] It was also a real event. Without the Tartars, I would today not be alive. These Crimean Tartars were behind the front. Already beforehand I had a good relationship to the Tartars. I often went to them, and sat in their houses. They were against the Russians, but certainly not for the Germans. They would have liked to take me away, tried to persuade me to secretly settle down with some clan or other. You not German, they would always say, you Tartar. Implicitly, of course, I had an affinity to such a culture, which was originally nomadic, though by then partially settled in the area.
>
> When I then had this crash, and they hadn't found me because of the deep snow, if they hadn't accidentally discovered me in the steppe while herding sheep or driving their horses ... They then took me into the hut. And all the images I had then, I didn't have them fully conscious. I didn't really recover consciousness until twelve days later, by which time I was already in a German field hospital. But all these images fully ... entered me then, in a translated form, so to speak. The tents, the felt tents they had, the general behavior of the people, the issue of fat, which anyway is ... a general aroma in their houses.... also their handling of cheese and fat and milk and yogurt—how they handle it, that all practically entered into me: I really experienced it. You could say, a key experience to which one could forge a link. But it's a bit more complicated. Because I didn't make these felt pieces to represent something of the Tartars, or, as others say, to represent something that looks like a concentration camp mood, gray blankets ... that plays a part of course, that is what the material itself brings with it. Especially when it is gray. But those are all admixtures. Later I took felt and tried

12 For what it is worth, I believe that the current state of the evidence provides an adequate defense against criticism of Beuys' account as falsification and fantasy. It is now documented that Beuys did crash in the Crimea on 16 March 1944 and was delivered the next day to a German field hospital, where he stayed until 7 April (See Franz-Joachim Verspohl's biographical entry on Beuys in Günter Meissner, ed., *Saur Allgemeines Künstlerlexikon*, vol. 10 [Munich, etc., 1995], p. 295). This would have left at least one day for the Tartars' ministrations to the wounded and almost immediately unconscious Beuys. At most, Beuys can be accused of not carefully and consistently correcting interviewers and commentators about the year of the incident (often given as 1943), about its actual duration (on those few occasions when his extended period of unconsciousness between was confused with the length of his stay with the Tartars), and about what certain documentary photographs actually show (where writers have too quickly assumed that they were intended to show this very incident or its immediate aftermath). The plausible charge that Beuys did not so much lie about his experiences under the Nazis before and during the war, as inadequately address the full truth about them, forms one core assumption of a recent book, Frank Gieseke and Albert Markert, *Flieger, Filz, und Vaterland. Eine erweiterte Beuys-Biografie* (Berlin, 1996), which gathers an enormous amount of documentary material about the social, institutional, and military environment in which Beuys moved between 1933–45 and beyond. The authors focus their relentless and largely circumstantial case on the National Socialist dimension of what Beuys may or may not have experienced (and what he may have absorbed in the way of Nazi attitudes and thinking). Their findings must be used with great care.

to literally insert it into theory. As an insulating element. That adds a theoretical element. But I probably would never have come back to felt, without this key experience. I mean to this material, fat and felt. Just as I would also, without my inner conditioning, never have come to these people and to such a sphere of life. So one can trace it all further and further back, but the real experience with the crash, that was definitely very important for me.[13]

There are two things of major importance to say about this version of the Story. First, Beuys is clearly at pains to establish that his account is not necessarily factually true, that key experiences can be composed in part of imagined, intuited, subconscious elements—in this case, his experiences of images while unconscious. (It is this clearly articulated position, incidentally, which renders moot most attempts to discredit Beuys by positivist critiques of discrepancies, breaks in logic, and other inadequacies in the Story.) The second, quite remarkable aspect of this account is that nowhere does Beuys claim to have been wrapped in fat and felt. These materials are mentioned as part of the environment in which Beuys is saved, but the link to Beuys' oeuvre, while indicated, is by no means as anecdotal or literal as it was shortly to become. In fact, Tisdall's subsequent account is, to all intents and purposes, the first clear mention of the therapeutic uses of fat and felt.

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FURTHER EXCAVATION of the Story's history leads back to a relatively circumscribed historical period, beginning in late 1968 and extending for two or three years. The moment around 1970, it seems, saw the public introduction of the Tartar episode, if only vaguely and, crucially, without the iconographic reference to fat and felt. Documenting the incremental steps by which the Story became known, requires drawing on quite varied evidence. Sometimes, this involves quoting from the published texts of interviews with the artist, at other times, it involves calling on descriptive passages by writers commenting on Beuys and his work. The following concatenation of quotations and citations is not intended to be an exhaustive reconstruction of the precise sequence of the Story's evolution (in its various manifestations); rather, it attempts to give a plausible and responsible evocation of the process by which the Story entered the realm of public discourse.[14]

It is important to note here the reluctance and hesitation with which Beuys approached the telling of the Story. In late 1968, Beuys tells an interviewer that it was his war experience that detoured him from his path toward

13 Georg Jappe, "Interview mit Beuys über Schlüsselerlebnisse, 27.9.76" in his *Beuys Packen. Dokumente 1968–1996* (Regensburg, 1996), pp. 206–20, here pp. 208–9 (first published in abbreviated form in *Kunst Nachrichten*, vol. 13 no. 1 [March 1977], pp. 72–81). Beuys goes on to describe the circumstances of the crash, impact, the arrival of the Tartars, and his request for water before blacking out—all in vivid terms close to the version given by Tisdall, summarizing: "Well, all that just to introduce the sequence of events, why I survived what normally no human survives" (p. 210). See my annotated translation of this interview in this volume.

14 I have not been able to consult all the relevant sources, especially the full spectrum of newspaper commentary as it developed after the mid-1960s. For an extensive bibliography of such materials, see Ingrid Burgbacher-Krupka, *Prophete rechts, Prophete links: Joseph Beuys* (Nuremberg, 1977), pp. 109–39. It may be that the Story was published in a form and at a date seriously at variance with the outline I sketch here. If so, I would argue that the information published in such an article did not find its way into the more prominent and extensive discussions of the artist to which I have had access. I am reasonably confident that my survey offers a probable account of the evolving status of informed art-world opinion. For a very useful survey of interviews with Beuys, see Monika Angerbauer-Rau, *Beuys Kompass: Ein Lexikon zu den Gesprächen von Joseph Beuys* (Cologne, 1998).

15 Ernst Günter Engelhard, "Joseph Beuys: Ein grausames Wintermärchen" *Christ und Welt*, vol. 21 no. 3 (3 January 1969), p. 12. Engelhard goes on to report an interesting exchange about Beuys' attitude to his fellow soldiers and wartime service. "There was no doubt [for Beuys] about serving at the front. The others were there! The young man from Cleves felt himself part of the collective. But there was one difference. In his opinion, the best men died. They were too unprepared, too pious, too pure. They didn't want to survive at all costs—like the refined,

a career as a scientist, and speaks of being found by Tartars several days after crashing his Stuka dive-bomber in the Crimea. However, Beuys indicates that he would say more about this "only unwillingly."[15] Indeed for most of 1969, this forms the maximum extent of Beuys' comments. In an August 1969 interview with Willoughby Sharp, Beuys volunteers even less information. In answer to a question about his wartime experience, the artist affirms, "Yes, I took part in the whole war, from 1941 until 1946. I was in Russia," and specifies that he was not in Stalingrad but "more to the South, in Ukraine, the Caucasus, Black Sea." Asked what he saw in the war, he replies laconically and evasively, "Certainly not art! What can I say? I was a fighter pilot [*sic*]. I cannot talk about the war. There were dead people lying around everywhere."[16] In the introduction to an interview also conducted in August 1969, Ursula Meyer reports, "During World War II, while serving as a Stuka pilot on the Eastern Front, he was shot down and badly wounded,"[17] presenting equally little new information.

Another interview that year identifies the effects of the war in broad terms as a basic experience perhaps reflected in his work, or in general statements about people met and landscapes seen.[18] In this same account, the Tartars appear not as the later Story's rescuers, but simply as representatives of the "Asiatic," which elicited a great fascination.[19] It is significant that felt as a material is, in this and other statements of the time, not linked to the Tartar experience whatsoever (and indeed not to any concrete experience at all), but instead to the artist's search for a material to parallel his epistemology and theory.[20]

Beuys' reluctance to speak directly about his war experiences continues into 1970. In a major interview of spring 1970, Helmut Rywelski poses the question, "Hardly any other artist's past has accumulated so many legends as that of Joseph Beuys. The roots of your art have been suspected in your experiences in and after the war. If that's so, which experiences were they?" Beuys replies:

> I'm actually not that interested in addressing right now individual things from amongst what has been suggested and what may indeed be correct. It wasn't as if one individual catastrophic event was the trigger alone, but rather the sum of catastrophes, which I lived through. And I lived through a large number of catastrophes. Actually, I can say that this sum of catastrophes is not concluded, I experience these catastrophes daily.[21]

Despite Beuys' caution, the outlines of the Story are in place by 1971. For example, by November 1971, the critic John Anthony Thwaites writes:

> The Beuys legend starts with the war. He was a pilot and served on the Russian Front. The story, which he is fond of telling [*sic*], is that his Stuka was shot down and that he

alert, egoistical Beuys." This is not the occasion to pursue the fascinating implication that Beuys may have felt some form of survivor's guilt and self-criticism for his will to live, and that this may have affected his later career.

16 Willoughby Sharp, "An Interview with Joseph Beuys," *Artforum*, vol. 8 no. 4 (December 1969), p. 42 (the transcript of an interview conducted on 28 August 1969).

17 Ursula Meyer, "How to Explain Pictures to a Dead Hare," *Art News*, vol. 68 no. 9 (January 1970), p. 54 (quoting from an interview of August 1969).

18 Rolf Gunter Dienst, "Joseph Beuys: Interview," in *Noch Kunst. Neuestes aus deutschen Ateliers* (Düsseldorf, 1970), p. 31 (transcript of an interview of December 1969).

19 It should be noted that Beuys' affinity to the Tartars had already been verbally expressed in a biographical sketch he prepared in 1961, for publication in his first catalogue: "Tartars wanted to take me into their families" (Eva, Wenzel, and Jessyka Beuys, *Joseph Beuys. Block Beuys* [Munich, 1990], p. 19). It is details such as this that render even more implausible the already far-fetched suggestion that Beuys introduced his Tartar story in the early 1970s to catch the mood of increasing right-wing sympathy for the national minorities in the USSR (Gieseke and Markert, *Flieger, Filz und Vaterland* [note 12], pp. 182–83).

20 Tolappe, Beuys asserted in early 1969 that his interest in felt had often been misinterpreted as an interest in its haptic instead of its insulating and isolating qualities (*Beuys Packen* [note 13], p. 68, originally published in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 11 February 1969). Similarly, he spoke to Hanno Reuther on 3 June 1969 of felt being interesting not necessarily for its aged, dusty qualities, but as a material parallel to theory ("Werkstattgespräch," broadcast on WDR on 1 July 1969, and published in Kunstmuseum Basel, *Joseph Beuys. Werke aus der Sammlung Karl Ströher* [Basel, 1969], p. 38).

21 Helmut Rywelski, "Heute ist jeder Mensch Sonnenkönig," *Joseph Beuys. Eurasienstab*. Art Intermedia Book 3. (Cologne, 1970), n.p. (transcript of an interview of 18 May 1970).

> lay for 'some days' unconscious in the wreckage before being rescued by a unit of Crimean Tartars. How much of this is true, nobody knows . . .[22]

Moreover, the story is beginning to carry symbolic and interpretive weight by this point, as in this influential formulation by the critic Georg Jappe—influential because it was published in 1971 in the widely distributed, English-language journal of the avant-garde, *Studio International*, under the authoritative title "A Joseph Beuys Primer":

> As a wartime pilot, he crashed in a snowstorm in the Crimea, and survived in defiance of all the laws of probability when the cockpit of his aircraft buried itself in the ground. He was nursed back to health by Tartars in a hide tent. There is no doubt that this was a key experience. . . . Beuys became aware that the experience of death, and hence the central issues of existence, could not be comprehended scientifically.[23]

Indeed, Jappe adds a crucial detail. By specifying the Tartars' hide tent, this text brings us a step closer to the role played by materials in the rescuing of Beuys.[24] Only when fat and felt are specified, can the Story go on to acquire evocative power as an interpretive tool, linking the narrative to Beuys' actual use of materials in his art. However, the salient last element in the Story, precisely this association of specific materials with the account of regeneration, does not seem to have been added to the Story until about five years later (in Jappe's interview with the artist concerning "key experiences", as quoted above). This helps to account for the perhaps surprising fact that commentary on Beuys in the United States in the mid-1970s makes little or no use of the Story. Accounts of Beuys' lecture visit in early 1974, and reviews of his action *I Like America and America Likes Me* later that same year are remarkably free of reference to it.[25]

❁

WHY, THEN, should the Story have begun to emerge around 1970? A circumstantial reason can surely be found in the simple fact that, with the artist's growing public stature, he was subjected to more interviews and therefore to a greater demand for biographical information. However, given that Beuys had himself largely engineered his new-found fame and that he was nothing if not expert in the careful managing of his public persona, this does not offer a satisfying account.[26]

Instead, Beuys was surely rethinking his approach to autobiography during these years, both in terms specific to his war experience and, more generally, to

22 John Anthony Thwaites, "The Ambiguity of Josef [*sic*] Beuys," *Art and Artists*, vol. 6 no. 8 (November 1971), p. 22.

23 Georg Jappe, "A Joseph Beuys Primer" *Studio International*, vol. 182 (September 1971), p. 65. Another, rather different, example of how one detail of the Story could assume interpretive weight is given by Alastair Mackintosh's report on Beuys' visit to Edinburgh in 1970, which contains no mention of the crash or the Tartars, but says of the artist's performance: "Some saw it as an act of penance (Beuys was a Stuka pilot), others as a highly Germanic and Romantic piece of total theatre" (Alastair Mackintosh, "Beuys in Edinburgh," *Art and Artists*, vol. 5 no. 8 [November 1970], p. 10).

24 The word "hide" here seems to be a mistranslation for "felt." Jappe's German text was originally a radio talk, broadcast by Deutschlandfunk on 23 May 1971. The recently published version indicates that Jappe did speak of "Filz" (*Beuys Packen* [note 13], p. 121). One wonders if the reception of Beuys would have been noticeably different in the 1970s, if the word "felt" had appeared here and interpreters had been allowed to make the connection.

25 This applies also to articles reviewing the exhibitions of Beuys' work that now began to be mounted by art dealers. See, for example, Peter Frank, "Joseph Beuys: 'the most fascinating of enigmas'" *Art News*, vol. 72 no. 4 (April 1973), p. 51.

26 It was in 1968 that Beuys began to achieve substantial renown, not only as a result of two major exhibitions (in Mönchengladbach in 1967 and at Documenta IV in 1968), but also because his conflict with his colleagues at the Düsseldorf Academy was rapidly intensifying.

27 For a full discussion of this vitrine, see Mario Kramer, "Joseph Beuys: Auschwitz Demonstration, 1956–1964," in Eckhart Gillen, ed., *Deutschlandbilder: Kunst aus einem geteilten Land* (Cologne, 1997), pp. 261–72. It was also in this key period around 1970 that Beuys first began to formulate the idea that later became the explicit and oft-repeated notion that the essential

how he could incorporate his life-story in his work. Two instances can illustrate this point: first, Beuys' increasingly explicit attention in these years to the fact of the Holocaust (not a central aspect of his own biography, as he had no immediate experience of the genocide), and second, the adjustment in the status of the *Life Course/Work Course*, the text that he had been using since 1964 as his biographical statement.

One of Beuys' most famous ensembles is the work that has come to be known as the "Auschwitz Vitrine," now a part of the Beuys Block at the Hessisches Landesmuseum in Darmstadt. Officially entitled "Auschwitz Demonstration" and made up of fourteen objects dating from 1956 to 1964, this work has been the subject of much recent critical attention. There is no need to recapitulate the interpretations of the work's individual parts and their relation to the overarching topic of the Holocaust and Beuys' reaction to it. Important here is the fact that this rare instance of a Beuys piece making direct reference to events of World War II was assembled in its final form precisely in 1968; that is to say, parallel to Beuys' tentative public engagement with his own wartime experiences.[27] Beuys underscores the unique importance of this thematically specific vitrine in an interview, also in 1968, in which he addresses the heterogeneous, apparently random nature of the works included in the exhibition then on view in Munich:

> —It's just an exhibition of many objects which I have made. It's not important that they're lying on tables, and it's also not important that they're in vitrines.
>
> —And what of how they're lying, how they're arranged?
>
> —How they are lying is almost not important as well. With the exception of one vitrine, which [entitled 'Auschwitz-Demonstration', and the one about the concentration camps—those [objects] have a certain relationship.
>
> —And it's a matter of indifference whether one combines or halves the contents?
>
> —The things can be combined, halved, or interchanged. Of course there are always interesting connections which emerge when one arranges them first this way, then that.[28]

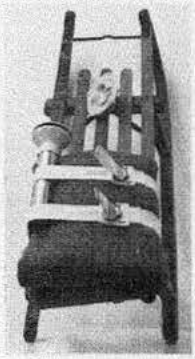
The "Auschwitz-Demonstration" piece is the only one iconographically fixed with a title, and is here emphatically distinguished from the other works. It is exempted from Beuys' refreshingly insouciant attitude towards the evocative possibilities of random rearrangements of his objects.[29]

The circumstances of the Auschwitz vitrine are doubly revealing. Not only do they point to the artist's engagement with his war experiences, but they also point to a moment of fixing, a finalization. This vitrine formed a key part of the large collection of Beuys' work that now forms the famous Beuys Block in

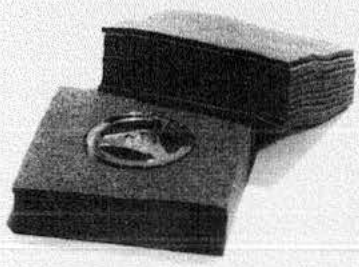
conditions of Auschwitz somehow persisted into the present day. To Helmut Rywelski in 1970, for example, he speaks of his work deriving from not just one catastrophe, but from all the catastrophes he has experienced, stressing then that "this total number of catastrophes is not complete, I experience these catastrophes daily (Rywelski, "Heute ist jeder Mensch Sonnenkönig" [note 21], n.p., a passage immediately followed by comments identifying the concentration camps with such a catastrophe). In late 1978, Beuys is more specific: "I find for instance that we are now experiencing Auschwitz in its contemporary character" (Tisdall, *Joseph Beuys* [note 2], p. 23). Although Beuys has been criticized for the glibness of this point of view, it is worth stressing that it was by no means an unusual position at the time. Compare, for instance, Eugène Ionesco's equivalent formulation, published in 1956 and quoted approvingly by Herbert Marcuse in a highly influential treatise of the mid-1960s: "The world of the concentration camps ... was not an exceptionally monstrous society. What we saw there was the image, and in a sense the quintessence, of the infernal society into which we are plunged every day" (Herbert Marcuse, *One Dimensional Man. Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society* [Boston, 1964], p. 80).

28 Interview with Dr. Müller, first published in *Galerie-Spiegel Monatszeitschrift der Münchner Galerien*, no. 1 (July-August 1968), and reproduced in part in Kunstmuseum Basel, *Joseph Beuys* (note 20), p. 35.

29 I have argued elsewhere that the viewer's imaginative and intuitive activity in establishing connections between two or more disparate Beuys "objects" (be they drawings, actions, sculptures, texts, etc.) is central to the art's intentions, effects, and achievements. See Peter Nisbet, "In/Tuition: A University Museum Collects Joseph Beuys," in Jörg Schellmann, ed., *Joseph Beuys. The Multiples*, eighth, English edition (Cambridge, Mass., Minneapolis, Minn., and Munich, 1997), pp. 520–21. Beuys' later authority, and indeed his undoubted genius for compelling installations of his own works, have



47
Sled 1969
Wood, metal, felt and fat
90×35×35 cm/35×14×14 in
Edition of 50
Sold out
Edition René Block, Berlin



48
Ja ja ja nee nee nee 1969
22 feltsheets and 32' magnetic tape
15×25×25 cm/6×10×10 in
Edition of 100, signed and numbered
Price Lit. 200,000 (£135*)
Colophon Arte Moltiplicata, Milan

Available also as an LP record in an edition of 500 (Lit. 20,000 (£13·50*))

49
Felt suit 1970
Felt
170×100 cm/67×39 in
Edition of 100
Price D M 1,200 (£170*)
Edition René Block, Berlin

1921 Exhibition of a wound patched with tape, Kleve. 1922 Exhibition of dairy cows near Kleve. 1923 Exhibition of a moustache cup (contents: coffee with egg). 1924 Exhibition of heathen children, Kleve. 1925 Documentation: 'Beuys as Exhibitor', Kleve. 1926 Exhibition of a stag guide, Kleve. 1927 Exhibition of radiation, Kleve. 1928 Exhibition of a trench, Kleve. Exhibition to elucidate the difference between loamy sand and sandy loam, Kleve. 1929 Exhibition at the grave of Genghis Khan. 1930 Exhibition of heather and herbs, Donsbrüggen. 1931 Retrospective exhibition, Kleve. 1933 Underground exhibition (digging parallel to the ground), Kleve. 1940 Exhibition of an arsenal (together with Heinz Sielmann, Hermann Ulrich Asemissen and Eduard Spanger), Posen. Exhibition of an airport, Erfurt North. Exhibition of an airport, Erfurt-Bindersleben. 1942 Exhibition of my friends, Sebastopol. Exhibition while a JU 87 is intercepted, Sebastopol. 1943 Interimexhibition (with Fritz Rolf Rothenburg and Heinz Sielmann), Oranienburg. 1945 Exhibition of cold, Kleve. 1946 Warm exhibition, Kleve. 'Profile of the Successor', Union of Artists, Kleve. Happening, Central Station, Heilbronn. 1947 'Profile of the Successor', Union of Artists, Kleve. Exhibition for people hard of hearing, Kleve. 1948 'Profile of the Successor', Union of Artists, Kleve. Exhibition in the Pillen house of beds; Exhibition 'Kullhaus', Krefeld (with A. R. Lynen). 1949 Exhibition three times in a row, Heerdt: 'Profile of the Successor', Union of Artists, Kleve. 1950 Reading of Finnegan's Wake, House Wylermeer, Kranenburg; 'Giocondologie', House van der Grinten, Kranenburg: Profile of the Successor', Union of Artists, Kleve. 1951 'Collection van der Grinten', Kranenburg. Beuys: Sculpture and drawing. 1952 Exhibition 'Steel and Pig's Foot' (19th prize), (additionally, a light ballet by Piene), Düsseldorf; 'Crucifixes', Wuppertal Museum of Art, Wuppertal; Exhibition in honour of the Amsterdam-Rhein Canal, Amsterdam; 'Beuys' Sculpture', Nijmegen Museum of Art. 1953 'Collection van der Grinten', Kranenburg. Beuys: painting. 1955 'Profile of the Successor', Union of Artists, Kleve. 1956–57 Beuys works in the fields. 1957–60 Beuys recovers from working in the fields. 1961 Beuys receives a call to become Professor of Sculpture at the Düsseldorf Art Academy; Beuys adds two more chapters to Ulysses at James Joyce's request. 1962 Beuys: The Earth Piano. 1963 Fluxus, Art Academy, Düsseldorf: Beuys exhibits Warm Fat during a warm July evening while Allan Kaprow lectures, Zwirner Gallery, Cologne: Fluxus exhibition, House van der Grinten, Kranenburg; 1964 'Documenta III', Kassel. 1964 Beuys recommends that the Berlin Wall be heightened by 5 cm. (better proportions!); Beuys 'Vehicle Art'; Beuys 'The Art Pill', Aachen; WHY? Felt works and Fat Corners, Copenhagen; Friendship with Bob Morris and Yvonne Rainer; Mousetooth happening. Düsseldorf-New York; 'The Chief', Berlin; Beuys – 'The silence of Marcel Duchamp is overvalued'. 'Brown Rooms'; 'Deer Hunt' (in the back room). 1965 'and in us . . . below us . . . underneath us', Parnass Gallery, Wuppertal; 'Western Man Project', Gallery Schmela, Düsseldorf; '. . . any old rope . . .'; 'How Pictures Are Explained to a Dead Hare', Gallery Schmela, Düsseldorf. 1966 'and here is already the end of Beuys: Per Kirkeby "2.15"'; 'Eurasia 32nd Set. 1963, Gallery René Block, Berlin'; '. . . with brown cross', Traekvogen, Eurasia, Copenhagen; 'Festival exhibition: The greatest contemporary composer is the thalidomide child'; 'Division of the Cross; adapted for felt piano and felt cello'; 'Manresa with Bjorn Norgard', Gallery Schmela, Düsseldorf; 'Beuys the moved insulator'; 'The difference between static and moving heads', Gallery St Stephan, Vienna. 1967 'Mainstream' (with Henning Christiansen), Darmstadt; 'Darmstadt Fat Room', Gallery Franz Dahlem, Darmstadt; 'Eurasia Staff-82 minute fluxorum oragnum', Vienna; Beuys founds the DSP (German Student Party), June 21, Düsseldorf; 'Parallel Process I' (with Johannes Cladders), Monchengladbach; 'Karl Ströher'; 'The Earth Telephone'; 'Static Head-Moving Head (Eurasia Staff)', Wide White Space Gallery, Antwerp; 'Parallel Process II' 1968 'The Great Generator', Stedelijk van Abbe Museum, Eindhoven; 'Parallel Process III'; 'Documenta IV', Kassel; 'Parallel Process IV'; 'Almende (Art Union)', Art Museum, Hamburg; 'Beuys Exhibition', Neue Pinakothek, Munich; 'Fat Room 563 x 491 x 563)', Nurnberg; 'Hot-Cold (Parallel Process V)', Stuttgart, Karlsruhe, and Branschweig; 'Felt TVII; The Leg of Rochus Kowallek not put in fat (JOM) I' Frankfurt; 'Felt TVIII: Parallel Process', Düsseldorf; 'Vacuum Mass (Fat): Parallel Process – . . . Gulo borealis . . . for Bazon Brock', Intermedia Gallery, Cologne; 'Johannes Stuttgen Fluxus Zone West, Parallel Process', Art Academy, Düsseldorf, 'No Liver Allowed', Intermedia Gallery, Cologne. 1969 'Set III', Gallery Schmela, Düsseldorf. 'Beuys pleads guilty in the case of the snowfall from February 15th to 20th', Berlin – Galerie René Block; Joseph Beuys and Henning Christiansen concert 'I attempt to make you free'. Berlin: National Gallery; Berlin; Akademie der Kunste: 'Sauerkraut Score-Pertitur Essen I'; Monchengladbach: 'Change Concert' with Henning Christiansen; Düsseldorf Exhibition Kunsthalle (Karl Ströher); Luceme; 'Fart Room' (Uhr); Basel Kunstmuseum Drawings; Düsseldorf 'Prospekt'; Elastic Foot Plastic Foot.

50
Curriculum vitae and list of works
1964/70
Letterpress
46×5 cm/18×2 in
Edition of 4,000
Free with this catalogue
Arts Council of Great Britain, London

The artist has authorized publication here of this 'official' biography[1] as an original printed multiple art work.

[1]English version from '*Strategy: Get Arts*', Edinburgh, 1970 (catalogue).

Darmstadt, which was to be acquired by the industrialist Karl Ströher around this time. A contract drafted between Beuys and Ströher late in 1967 gives a very clear indication that the artist was conscious of a sense of closing one chapter in his creative life and embarking upon another. The artist, the draft version states, "is experiencing a caesura in his creativity, a call to fulfill a political plan, the feeling of a pause of perhaps several years, (whether caused or not by this political plan) before a *new creative path.*"[30] Although this remarkably intimate wording is not found in the final 1969 version, the phrasing unmistakably speaks to an artistic shift of some kind, with politics as a new goal.[31]

This reorientation of effort at the end of the 1960s also involved a wider rethinking of the artist's approach to autobiography. This can be demonstrated most effectively with the example of a little known work from 1970 involving the *Life Course/Work Course*, that, in the second half of the 1960s, served as the artist's (partly ironic) official biography for exhibition catalogues.[32] In 1970, Beuys contributed a number of multiples to an exhibition organized by the Arts Council of Great Britain, entitled 3 → ∞: *New Multiple Art*. Along with a conventional contribution of actual objects to the exhibition (including such now-famous pieces as the *Sled* and the *Felt Suit*), Beuys engaged in some stimulating conceptual trickery by designating three parts of the printed exhibition catalogue as actual multiples. These three pieces included two printed photographic illustrations of his actions and, significant to this argument, a block of text. This was the English translation of Beuys' poetic *Life Course/Work Course*, which he first published in 1964 and expanded in subsequent reprintings, which allowed him to periodically add data until it reached its final form in 1970. The *Life Course/Work Course* is a playful and personal sequence of events transformed mostly into "exhibitions" as a parody of the traditional artist's biography. For instance, alongside 1921, the year of his birth, Beuys lists "Exhibition of a wound drawn together with plaster," for 1926 "Exhibition of a stagleader," and so on, through the war years and up to

FIGURE 1.1 (OPPOSITE)
Joseph Beuys (1921–1986)
Curriculum Vitae and List of Works, 1964–70
letterpress
46 x 4 cm
Edition of 4,000, published by Arts Council of Great Britain
Schellmann 17
Busch-Reisinger Museums, Harvard University Art Museums
The Willy and Charlotte Reber Collection, Gift of Charlotte Reber
1998.155

resulted in deep respect for the artist's own decisions about arrangements and layout. Especially after his death, the authenticity of arrangement has become a decisive criterion. These circumstances have combined to submerge the artist's earlier belief in the aesthetic and interpretive value of multiple configurations of heterogeneous objects. This problem is key to the project of "mapping the legacy."

30 The draft is transcribed in Joseph Beuys, *Block Beuys* (note 19), p. 399, followed by the text of the eventual agreement.

31 The turn to politics in Beuys' trajectory is clear and well-known, beginning with the founding of the German Student Party in 1967 in response to the setting up of the Marxist SDS and the student upheavals following the killing of Benno Ohnesorg by the police in Berlin during a demonstration against the Shah of Iran earlier in the year. This was then followed by the Organization for Non-Voters-Direct Democracy and other political initiatives into the 1970s.

32 The *Life Course/Work Course* ("Lebenslauf/Werklauf") first appeared in the brochure for the Fluxus event in Aachen in 1964, and in its final authorized version in Kunstmuseum Basel, *Joseph Beuys* (note 20), pp. 4–7. Additions (of a markedly more prosaic kind) for the years 1970–1983/1984 were made by Beuys' assistant and friend, Heiner Bastian, apparently with the artist's approval. See Karin Thomas, "Lebenslauf/Werklauf," in *Beuys vor Beuys* (Cologne, 1987), p. 222. One curious anomaly is worth mentioning in this context, as it deals directly with the continuing theme of regeneration and rebirth that underlies the story. The English version of the *Life Course/Work Course* published by Caroline Tisdall in the catalogue for the Guggenheim Museum exhibition does not end with 1970, but adds: "1973 Joseph Beuys born in Brixton" (*Joseph Beuys* [note 2], p. 9), an entry that was seemingly never repeated. Whatever other personal significance it may have had, it does perhaps reflect the reorientation and renewal around 1970 that is the theme of this essay. See also *Bits and Pieces. A Collection*

his current activities. This document is a "point by point demonstration of his aesthetisation of the self, accomplished by turning his life into an allegory for his production of art."[33]

The unique and crucial aspect of the document's appearance in 3 → ••: *New Multiple Art* (fig. 1.1, which also shows adjacent catalogue entries), however, is that Beuys explicitly designates this printed version as a work of art, a designation not bestowed upon any other versions published before or afterward. The catalogue entry following the text could not be clearer, in that it adopts the strict conventions of catalogue data for exhibited works and applies them to the columns of letterpress:

50
Curriculum vitae and list of works
1964/70
Letterpress
46 x 5 cm / 18 x 2 in
Edition of 4,000
Free with this catalogue
Arts Council of Great Britain, London

The artist has authorized publication here of this "official" biography as an original printed multiple.[34] It is the elevation of this poetic autobiography to the status of artwork that marks its closure, the exhaustion of its utility as an expanding version of the artist's life-narrative.

The shift in Beuys' autobiographical strategy, away from aesthetisation toward the anecdotal was not merely one of style, but involved content, too. The *Life Course/Work Course* actually contains no mention whatsoever of the Story.[35] This is in striking contrast to the increasingly important place it occupied in Beuys' conception of himself after 1970. Remarkably, the same is true of another key crisis in Beuys' life, the nervous breakdown he reportedly suffered in the mid-1950s. In the *Life Course/Work Course*, Beuys mentions only "Beuys works in the fields," for the 1956–57 period and "Recovery from working in the fields," for 1957–60. This is both evasive and misleading. The two entries give no hint of a reason for Beuys' action, and at the same time displace cause and effect. Surely, the work in the fields was part of the recovery process for the artist and not the event from which recovery was needed. Beuys first acknowledged this nervous crisis (if that is indeed what it was) only in 1973, three years after *Life Course/Work Course* was retired.[36]

Around 1970, Beuys was consciously moving towards a version of his life-story that would be more firmly grounded in recognizably historical fact. He was leaving behind the imagistic, almost incantatory poetry and hermetic humor of

of Work by Joseph Beuys from 1957–1985 Assembled by Him for Caroline Tisdall (Edinburgh, 1987), p. 36, no. 131 (a 1969 drawings checklist with the inscription in red ink: "Joseph Beuys wurde 1973 in Brixton geboren").

33 I borrow this apt description from Pamela Kort, who writes of the *Life Course/Work Course* that "[It] is actually a quasi-fictional narrative that blurs the borders between reality and its abstraction. The *Lebenslauf* is Beuys' manifesto of style. It is a point by point demonstration of his aesthetisation of the self, accomplished by turning his life into an allegory for his production of art. . . . At stake was the ordering of Beuys' life and the fixing of his self. This is the hidden agenda of Beuys' *Lebenslauf*, implicit in its construction and suggested by his continual adjustments to it between 1964 and 1970" (Pamela Kort, "Joseph Beuys' Aesthetic 1958–1972" in David Thistlewood, ed., *Joseph Beuys: Diverging Critiques*. Tate Gallery Liverpool Critical Forum Series, vol. 2 [Liverpool, 1995], p. 65). I am suggesting that this fixing of the self was superseded after 1970 by another approach (perhaps only possible once the earlier fixing had taken place), an approach that did not involve aesthetisation and allegory in the same manner. In general, Kort's important account of the role of the "retrospective" installation *Arena* (first presented in 1970 and then, in its final form, in 1972) neatly dovetails with my exposition, which can be seen as entirely complementary to her estimate of the importance of autobiography in these years.

34 This subtle and important work has been overlooked in part because it has never been satisfactorily described in the several editions of the catalogue raisonné of the artist's multiples. The relevant entry only listed and illustrated the two photographic multiples in 3 → ••: *New Multiple Art* (apparently on the basis of a manuscript notation by the artist that catalogued only "I: The Chief" and "II: How to Explain Paintings to a Dead Hare"). However, this is clearly an oversight, as the *Life Course/Work Course* is presented in the 1970 publication in precisely the same manner as the two

the *Life Course/Work Course*. Parallel to his move into the public realm of politics, his own story becomes, on the one hand, more accessible, and, on the other, more individual, more rooted in his own subjectivity. The relationship between his self and his audience (not to mention his art) was renegotiated at this moment (at a time when, in the wake of the student rebellions of the late 1960s and their apparent failures, many were reassessing the role of the personal in public life). This did not involve a radical caesura, but rather a shifting of strategy and emphasis. In this, the gradual disclosure of the Story played an important part. That the Story as it developed around 1970, together with the decisive interpretive accretions of 1976–78, has loomed so large in the reception of the artist has been unfortunate. I have attempted to diminish the significance of the Story, paradoxically by focusing attention on it, and have hoped to illuminate the transformations Beuys underwent around 1970 as a way of clearing the ground for a more accurate view of his changing project. Both scholarly analysis and aesthetic appreciation of Beuys' achievement should not be content with a synchronic synthesis fusing the artist's entire career into a coherent whole, but should instead insist on historical specificity and variety. That is only one of the Story's lessons.

photographs and deserves equal status. The Joseph Beuys Estate has now agreed to a mention of this third multiple in the notes of the most recent edition of the catalogue raisonné. See *Joseph Beuys. The Multiples* (note 29), no. 17 and p. 432. I believe that, strictly speaking, all three are, in fact, separate multiples.

35 This point has been badly obscured by serious mistranslations in the English versions of the *Life Course/Work Course*, including the one in fig. 1.1. For 1942, Beuys listed, using the concept of "exhibition" that runs through document, "Sewastopol Ausstellung während des Abfangens einer Ju-87." The word "Abfangen," which refers specifically to the moment of pulling out of the bomber's steep dive, has been mistranslated as "interception" (by Caroline Tisdall, *Joseph Beuys* [note 2], p. 8: "Sebastopol Exhibition during the interception of a Ju-87") and as "capture" (by Patricia Lech in Götz Adriani et al., *Joseph Beuys. Life and Works* [New York, 1979], p. 15), thereby encouraging the association with Beuys' crash caused by Russian anti-aircraft fire. The correct meaning of "Abfangen" in this context is actually explicated in the German edition of the latter book, both in the original 1973 edition (p. 14) and in the revised and expanded edition of 1994 (p. 16).

36 That the crisis was first mentioned in the original edition (1973) of Götz Adriani, et al., *Joseph Beuys* (note 35) was pointed out by Rhea Thönges-Strigaris, "'Denke an die Konstruktion eines Spezialgehirns' Zu einem Dokument der Krise" in Ingo Lorenz, ed., *Joseph Beuys Symposium, Kranenburg 1995* (Basel, 1996), pp. 59–66. An equivalent point can be made about Beuys' childhood experiences, notably the report of feeling profoundly tired of life at age five. This seems to have been first alluded to (if rather obscurely) in an interview of 1 March 1973. See Axel Hinrich Murken, *Joseph Beuys und die Medizin* (Münster, 1979), pp. 43 and 148.

Pamela Kort

2} BEUYS
The Profile of a Successor

THE CULTURAL LEGACY OF JOSEPH Beuys (1921–86) is a crucially defining element in contemporary art and criticism. However, no serious mapping of this legacy can take place without a considered look at the tangled bequest that Beuys himself inherited as a young artist. Rather than ignoring fraught issues beleaguering the establishment of modern art in Germany around 1890 and its abrogation during the 1930s, Beuys reached back to this problematic heritage and made its unfulfilled promises the spearhead of his aesthetic mission. The task he took up was Herculean: despite a widespread feeling of national humiliation in post–World War II Germany, Beuys formulated an aesthetic embedded in the rich cultural and intellectual heritage of his country. He adopted this strategy at a moment in history when it was almost unthinkable to excavate inherently Germanic traditions, when artists and critics preferred to focus upon the less burdened aesthetic arenas of France and America. Beuys grasped that Germany needed—more than ever after 1945—what it had lacked practically since the death of Albrecht Dürer: an artist-theoretician able to make work that was both indigenously German and internationally significant. Only such an aesthetic leader could reestablish the nation as a place of cultural preeminence.

The attempt in Germany to discover such an individual dates back to the last decade of the nineteenth century, more than thirty years before Beuys' birth. By 1946, when Beuys entered the Düsseldorf Kunstakademie, the need for an instructor who could bring about an enduring modernist aesthetic was even more urgent. Three factors converged: the censorship of modern art under the National Socialists, the encumbered legacy of Expressionism, and a series of aesthetic disputes around the construction of an appropriate image of man. Beuys deftly navigated these turbulent waters by subtly aligning himself with certain "untainted" fathers of modern German art. Chief among them was the sculptor Wilhelm Lehmbruck (1881–1919). Beuys' interest in Lehmbruck first surfaced in a résumé that accompanied the portfolio of photographs of his work, with which he successfully applied to become Professor of Monumental Sculpture at the Düsseldorf Kunstakademie in 1961. It was from this platform that he began to establish himself as Germany's long-sought artistic helmsman.

Prototypical Nordic Educators: Rembrandt and van Gogh

IN THE LATE nineteenth century, a book was published that discussed the importance of identifying artist-educators who could reinvigorate the flagging spirits of a fledgling German nation. This inexpensive and widely read publication (twenty-nine printings of the book in a single year were necessary to meet demand) appeared in 1890 under the title *Rembrandt als Erzieher* (Rembrandt as educator). From 1900 to 1920, the number of reprints steadily increased, necessitating the production of an illustrated popular edition and a revision in 1922. It was not until 1944 that the book went out of print.[1]

This eccentric and deeply pessimistic book, written anonymously "by a German," appealed particularly to painters and sculptors on two grounds: its upholding of individualism and its insistence that only artists could lead the nation to a brighter future. The book's author, Julius Langbehn, singled out Rembrandt (1606–69) as both the greatest individualist and the most universal of all German artists.[2] Never mind that Rembrandt was Dutch; Langbehn turned him into a German, arguing that he embodied the spirit of *Niederdeutschland* (Lower Germany)—incidentally, the region with which Beuys identified throughout his life.[3]

Given Rembrandt's widespread popularity in late-nineteenth century Germany, there was nothing novel in Langbehn's touting his name. Furthermore, his designation of Rembrandt's successor, the Swiss-born artist Arnold Böcklin (1827–1901), was also unsurprising: in 1890 Böcklin was at the

1 See Johannes Stückelberger, *Rembrandt und die Moderne: Der Dialog mit Rembrandt in der deutschen Kunst um 1900* (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 1996), 47–49.

2 See [Julius Langbehn] Von einem Deutschen, *Rembrandt als Erzieher*, 50th ed. With a foreword by Bendedikt Momme Nissen (Weimar: Duncker, 1922) 4, 56, 352.

3 For Beuys' identification with the Niederrheinland, see Franz Joseph van der Grinten, "Joseph Beuys, der Niederrhein und Fritz Getlinger," in *Getlinger Photographiert Beuys 1950–1963*, exh. cat. (Kalkar: Städtisches Museum, 14 October–11 November 1990), 17.

height of his acclaim in Germany. However, just four years after his death, Böcklin began to fall from favor, largely because of Julius Meier-Graefe's *Der Fall Böcklin* (The case of Böcklin). This 1905 book was eagerly devoured by the art world at large, generating widespread controversies around Böcklin's effect on the birth of modern German art. For Meier-Graefe, the case of Böcklin was that of Germany; his work could not be discussed as modern, because for the past century Germany had lacked an up-to-date art tradition. It was not long before this viewpoint prevailed, effectively dethroning Böcklin as Rembrandt's heir apparent and making room for another successor. Meier-Graefe had no doubts about who this might be: the German painter Hans von Marées (1837–87). A few years later, in 1909 (as Langbehn's book went into its forty-ninth printing), the first part of a three-volume monograph on Marées by Meier-Graefe went to press. In it he argued that Marées had not only assimilated Rembrandt's achievement, but had taken it to a new level, thereby unquestionably making himself the earlier artist's successor. When the book appeared, Marées had been dead for more than twenty years.

In 1911, controversies around modern art in Germany took an odd turn. That year the Bremen Kunsthalle acquired Vincent van Gogh's painting *Mohnfeld* (*Poppy field*, 1889/90), a purchase that caused a group of conservative artists to publish *Ein Protest deutscher Künstler* (A protest of German artists). This antimodernist nationalistic tract was answered by the pamphlet *Im Kampf um die Kunst* (The struggle for art), rapidly compiled by Wassily Kandinsky (1853–90) and Franz Marc (1880–1916). As it turned out, *Ein Protest deutscher Künstler* backfired on its initiators, for it inadvertently directed attention to van Gogh's importance to young German artists such as Marc.[4] A decade later, in 1921 (the year of Beuys' birth), Meier-Graefe published a two-volume book on van Gogh that began with this statement: "This is the modern Germanic contribution to the development of European painting, the only indispensable contribution of the nineteenth century, and perhaps even since Rembrandt."[5] Of course, van Gogh was no more German than Rembrandt.

Lehmbruck's Rightful Successor

FOLLOWING THE CLOSE of World War II, in a climate of confusion and shame, Germany was in greater need of an artistic educator than ever before. Indeed the urgency of keeping alive the thought that an "empty throne awaits the perfect man" was the theme of another enormously successful if extremely cynical book, published in 1948, Hans Sedlmayr's *Verlust der Mitte* (The crisis of art).[6]

4 See Ron Manheim, "The 'Germanic' van Gogh: A Case Study in Cultural Annexation," in *Simiolus* 19 (1989), 283.

5 Julius Meier-Graefe, *Vincent* (Munich: R. Piper & Co, 1921), vol. 2, 9, cited in Wulf Herzogenrath, "Ein Schaukelpferd von einem Berserker geritten' Gustav Pauli, Carl Vinnen und der 'Protest deutscher Künstler,'" in *Manet bis van Gogh*, exh. cat. (Berlin: Nationalgalerie, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, 20 September 1996–6 January 1997), 270.

6 Hans Sedlmayr, *Verlust der Mitte* (Frankfurt am Main: Ullstein, 1985), 248.

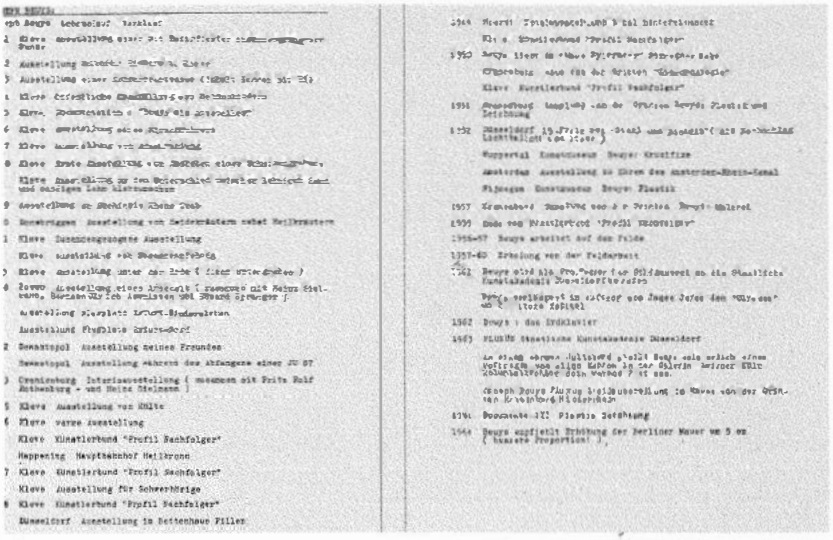


FIGURE 2.1

Joseph Beuys
Lebenslauf Werklauf (Lifecourse Workcourse), 1964. Archive Edition Hundertmark, Cologne.

Even if Beuys did not read the book, he was certainly familiar with it, for it soon went into numerous editions and by 1955 had been issued as a paperback.[7]

Make of it what you will, but in 1946, the year Beuys entered the Düsseldorf Kunstakademie, he situated a phrase that appears more often than any other in the *Lebenslauf Werklauf* (Lifecourse workcourse) that he drafted in 1964.[8] It reads "Kleve Künstlerbund 'Profil Nachfolger'" (Kleve Artists Association "Profile Successor"). There was indeed an artist's society with which Beuys began to affiliate himself in 1946, but it did not incorporate the word *Nachfolger* (successor) in its name. The organization he joined was reactivated in 1947 under the name Niederrheinischer Künstlerbund Kleve after a group founded in 1936, the Künstlergilde Profil.[9]

Beuys, who throughout his artistic career had a sharp ear for the sound and meanings of words, may have intended the designation *Profil Nachfolger*—accentuated by his placing it within quotation marks—as an evocation of himself as a potential heir. In 1951, at the conclusion of his training as a master student of Ewald Mataré (1887–1965) at the Kunstakademie, the designation *Profil Nachfolger* vanished from his *Lebenslauf Werklauf*. It reappeared only one more time, in 1955, as "*Ende von Künstlerbund 'Profil Nachfolger'*"(End of the artist's association "profile successor"). Beuys could not have meant the dissolution of the Niederrheinischer Künstlerbund Kleve, because that remained in existence until 1987.[10] Instead the entry seems to relate to the temporary loss of belief in

7 Norbert Schneider, "Hans Sedlmayr: (1896–1984)," in *Altmeister Moderner Kunstgeschichte*, edited by Heinrich Dilly, ed. (Berlin: Dietrich Reimer, 1990), 274.

8 For the significance of Beuys' *Lebenslauf Werklauf*, see Pamela Kort, "Joseph Beuys' Arena: The Way In," in *Joseph Beuys 'Arena'—Where Would I Have Got If I Had Been Intelligent*, Lynne Cooke and Karen Kelly, eds. (New York: Dia Center for the Arts, 1994), 18–33. The original copy of "Joseph Beuys *Lebenslauf Werklauf*" is in the possession of Armin Hundertmark in Cologne.

9 See Gerhard Kaldewei, "'Unsere Arbeit war nicht umsonst': Beuys, Kleve, Getlinger 1950–1986/Lokale Chronologie eines spannungsvollen Beziehungsgeflechts," in *Getlinger Photographiert Beuys*, 9.

10 Dr. Guido de Verd, Director of the Museum Kurhaus Kleve, conversation with the author, January 1997.

his calling during a year when Beuys was experiencing what he later described as an "upheaval in his artistic development."[11]

Here, then, *Profil* would mean an abbreviated portrait of Beuys, the candidate student. In his first euphoric student year, and over the next four years during which this term reappeared in his *Lebenslauf Werklauf*, Beuys seems to have envisioned himself as the augured successor, who had long been sought but was not yet found in twentieth-century Germany. It was the promise of this legacy that Beuys kept in mind as he embarked upon his artistic career.[12]

Beuys' aesthetic is embedded in the ideas of alignment, perpetuation, and addition. Rather than advocating invention, he believed it was the artist's task to discover connections and expand upon them. Not surprisingly, one of Beuys' heroes was van Gogh.[13] Beuys' admiration of the Dutch artist was certainly bound up with the central role van Gogh played in facilitating the birth of modern art in Germany.[14] Furthermore, the reception of the very artist whom Beuys credited as having inspired him to become a sculptor, Lehmbruck, was also deeply linked to the idea of a legacy, but in this case one not yet mined. Already in 1919, the year of Lehmbruck's death, Paul Westheim brought out a monograph about his work that began with this line: "Lehmbruck's work has remained a torso."[15] What Westheim meant was that the rich promise of Lehmbruck's work, cut short by his decision to take his life before the age of forty, awaited fulfillment. One of the first German artists to attain international status, Lehmbruck had been the only German sculptor invited to exhibit in the 1913 Armory show in New York City. By 1939, his work had come to be seen in America as standing for the free art of Europe. That year the exhibition "Art in Our Time," mounted at New York's Museum of Modern Art included several Lehmbrucks. Among them was the *Kniende* (Kneeling woman), described in the exhibition catalog as one of the "masterpieces of modern sculpture."[16]

Though Beuys referred several times to the importance of his initial encounters with Lehmbruck's work between 1933 and 1941, it was not until 12 January 1986, a few days before his death, that he publicly discussed Lehmbruck's significance to him in depth. On that occasion, in connection with his acceptance of the Wilhelm Lehmbruck Prize in Duisburg, Beuys delivered a speech that began: "I would like to thank my teacher Wilhelm Lehmbruck." Beuys had been a master student of Mataré at the Düsseldorf Kunstakademie between 1947 and 1952, where Lehmbruck had studied forty-six years earlier. His decision to open his talk by thanking this fictional teacher was not merely a polite gesture. It also reveals Beuys' concern with aligning himself with the legacy of Lehmbruck as a

11 See Beuys' statement: "Around 1955 upheaval in artistic development." cited in his *Lebenslauf*, 7 March 1961, in *Transit: Joseph Beuys Plastische Arbeiten 1947–1985*, exh. cat. (Krefeld: Kaiser Wilhelm Museum, 17 November 1991–16 February 1992), 38.

12 See Beuys' statement: "My whole life was campaigning, but one should for once be interested in *for what* I had applied." In Götz Adriani, Winfried Konnertz, and Karin Thomas, *Joseph Beuys* (Cologne: DuMont, 1994), 6.

13 See the slip of paper pinned to the wall of the room in which Beuys and Henning Christiansen performed "Celtic" in 1970 at the Edinburgh College of Art: "Where are the souls of Van Gogh, Duchamp, Piero della Francesca, William Nicholson, Fra Angelico, . . . and Leonardo da Vinci?" Discussed in Richard Demarco, "Notes to Beuys," in *Similia Similibus: Joseph Beuys zum 60. Geburtstag*, Johannes Stüttgen, ed. (Cologne: DuMont, 1981), 119. See also Beuys' statement: "Art was always something for me that was based on the achievements of many . . . There was absolutely Van Gogh, there was Lehmbruck, there was Gothic art, Egyptian art, Greek art." In Beuys, "Heute ist jeder Mensch Sonnenkönig" (18 May 1970). An interview with Helmut Rywelsky in "Einzelheiten—Joseph Beuys," *Art Intermedia*, 3, Cologne, 1970.

14 See Emil Waldmann, *Die Kunst des Realismus und des Impressionismus im 19. Jahrhundert* (Berlin: Propyläen

Kunstgeschichte, 1927), 126: "The innovations which most inspired twentieth century art did not emanate from Paris. Leadership had quietly passed to Germanic artistic forces. The Dutchman van Gogh . . . stand[s] at the portals of the twentieth century." Cited in Mannheim, 282.

15 Paul Westheim, *Wilhelm Lehmbruck* (Potsdam: Gustav Kiepenheuer, 1919; 2nd ed., 1922), 9.

16 *The Bulletin of the Museum of Modern Art*, New York (October/November 1942); cited in Laszlo Glozer, "Der Fall Lehmbruck," in *Westkunst: Zeitgenössische Kunst seit 1939*, Cologne: DuMont, 1981), 49–51. See also Walter Grasskamp, *Die unbewältigte Moderne: Kunst und Öffentlichkeit* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 1989), 99–100.

17 I appreciate Peter Nisbet's drawing my attention to the exact date given in Frank Gieselle and Albert Markert, *Flieger, Filz und Vaterland: eine erweiterte Beuys Biografie* (Berlin: Elefanten Press, 1996), 22.

18 There were only four publications about Lehmbruck between 1919 and 1939: Paul Westheim, *Wilhelm Lehmbruck* (Potsdam: Gustav Kiepenheuer, 1919; 2nd ed., 1922); Hans Bethge, *Wilhelm Lehmbruck zum Gedächtnis* (Berlin: A. R. Meyer, 1920); August Hoff, *Wilhelm Lehmbruck*, Junge Kunst 62/63 (Berlin: Klinckhardt & Biermann, 1933); and August Hoff, *Wilhelm Lehmbruck, seine Sendung und sein Werk* (Berlin: Rembrandt-Verlag, 1936). While Bethge's pamphlet was a mere

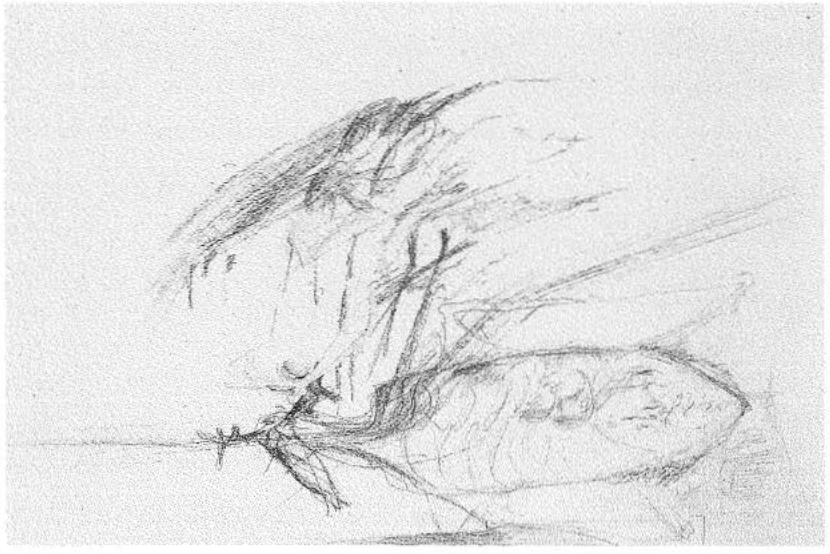


FIGURE 2.2
Joseph Beuys, *Toter Hirsch (Dead Stag)*, 1952, pencil, 38.1 x 49.8 cm. Hamburger Bahnhof, Berlin.

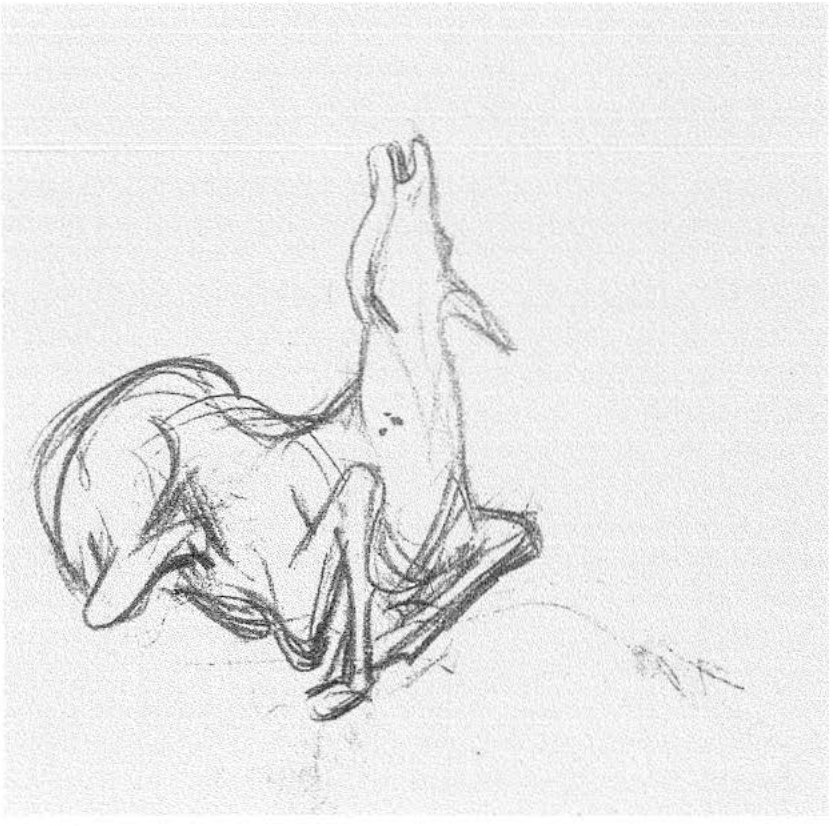


FIGURE 2.3
Franz Marc, *Sterbendes Reh (Dying Doer)*, 1908, pencil, 12.1 x 12.5 cm. ©2002 Artists Rights Society (ARS), NY / VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn.

puissant educator. Beuys continued his award talk with a description of his initial encounters with Lehmbruck's work; his rescue, most likely on 19 May 1933, of a "photograph" from a National Socialist book burning at his school; and his discovery of what he cryptically referred to in 1986 as a "little book" that he came across while at the Reichsuniversität in Posen (during a break from military training during World War II) in the years 1940–41.[17]

It is likely that the little book was August Hoff's *Wilhelm Lehmbruck*, published in 1933 as part of the popular Junge Kunst series.[18] The first sentence of Hoff's text is worthy of note: "As the German-Rembrandt wrote his strange book, in which he expected the artist to lead humanity back to 'unity and freedom, to soulfulness and introspection,' the glowing flame of a lonely van Gogh was extinguished."[19] The "German-Rembrandt" (*Rembrandtdeutsche*) is an epithet for Langbehn, whose text appeared in 1890, the year of van Gogh's death. In pointing out this coincidence, Hoff sought to underscore the struggle to identify an enduring figure who could motivate a younger generation of German artists toward a goal not yet achieved, a mission that Lehmbruck did not live long enough to fulfill, but whose work pointed the way.

The Troubled Heritage of Expressionism

BEUYS' ART HAS LITTLE in common visually with Lehmbruck's. Instead, the enigmatic images of a primeval world that Beuys brought to paper during his student years are reminiscent of Franz Marc's. On the most obvious level Marc's and Beuys' art may be connected by their deep sympathy with the uncorrupted world of animals increasingly imperiled by modern man. As Marc put it: "Quite early in life, I began to feel that man was ugly; an animal seemed to me to be more beautiful, more pure."[20] For Marc, animals belonged to a holier, more primordial world than humans. Some fifty years later, Beuys discussed the motif of the dead stag in certain of his drawings as being the "outcome of disgrace and disregard."[21] His equation of a dead stag with an image of Christ also suggests that, like Marc, he venerated dying animals as something sanctified and spiritual.[22] Finally, the fugitive animals frequently encountered in Beuys' early work underscore another conviction he shared with Marc: that theirs is a short-lived, expiring world. Only after the end of human history in its present form could a new history of man be attained.[23]

Despite these parallels, Beuys seldomly mentioned Marc. To understand why, one need only look at what was written about Marc after the war. Adversaries of modern art, such as Hans Sedlmayr, criticized Marc's work as

twelve pages in length and contained no images of Lehmbruck's works, Westheim's 1919 publication and Hoff's text of 1936 are of standard book length, thereby ruling out all three of these as the "*Büchlein*" (small book) to which Beuys referred. Moreover, later in his talk Beuys mentions the publication as a "*kleines Heftchen*" (small booklet), stating he noted "at the span of Lehmbruck's life. The 1933 Hoff pamphlet concludes with a brief description of Lehmbruck's life under the heading "*Lebensdaten*" (life chronology).

19 Hoff, 1933, 1. The term "German-Rembandt" may reference Benedikt MommeNissen's 1926 book *Der Rembrandtdeutsche, Julius Langbehn.*

20 Franz Marc, cited in Lothar Romain, "Franz Marc und Joseph Beuys: Zur Wiederkehr des Romantischen in der deutschen Moderne," in *Romantik und Gegenwart: Festschrift für Jens Christian Jensen zum 60. Geburtstag*, Ulrich Bischoff, ed. (Cologne: DuMont, 1988), 205.

21 Beuys, "Gespräch zwischen Joseph Beuys und Hagen Lieberknecht," in *Joseph Beuys: Zeichnungen 1947–59* (Cologne: Schirmer, 1972), 17.

22 See Lothar Romain and Rolf Wedewer, *Über Beuys* (Düsseldorf: Droste, 1972), 34. See also Peter-Klaus Schuster, "Von Tier zum Tod: Zur Ideologie des Geistigen bei Franz Marc," in *Franz Marc: Kräfte der Natur: Werke 1912–1915*, Erich Franz, ed. (Ostfildern: Hatje, 1993), 169.

23 See Marc's statement: "With death begins that

dangerously nihilistic.[24] Unfortunately, Sedlmayr was half right; Marc's art had subtly suggested an irrational willingness to die. On the other hand, those proponents of modern art who championed Marc did so primarily in nationalistic terms.[25] There were also those who, while appreciative of his work, viewed it as "problematic" for opening "domains that since have become the battleground . . . of particularly modern art in Germany."[26] To cap things off, Marc's early death in 1916 left his work tangled in the snarled debates around Expressionism, from which it never had the chance to escape.

Immediately following the war, a number of exhibitions were mounted that attempted to rehabilitate Expressionism. Nevertheless, many artists, Beuys among them, were reluctant to overtly affiliate themselves with the style, because of the stigma attached to it. As is well known, Expressionism began to run aground in 1919, when infighting over its aims caused many artists to renounce their commitment to the genre. Even more consequential for the reception of the style in Germany was Georg Lukács' 1934 essay, "'Grösse und Verfall' des Expressionismus" (Expressionism: Its significance and decline). Lukács criticized primarily Expressionist writers for abstracting reality. To him their decision to weed out "its inessential elements," corresponded to Fascist methods, an accusation that remained particularly virulent in postwar democratic Germany.[27] In any event, the National Socialists' brief flirtation with the style (despite their ultimate denouncement of it) certainly did not add to its allure. In the end, however, as Lukács noted, the central problem with Expressionism was not its formal qualities, but the plurality of styles subsumed under the rubric, Expressionism, which left it open to attack.

The desire of many postwar artists to steer clear of any affiliation with Expressionism also had geopolitical dimensions. As early as 1946, Leopold Zahn—the editor of *Das Kunstwerk* (one of the most powerful postwar magazines in Germany)—was quite unequivocal: "While the formal equivalents of surface and line [qualities considered typical of Expressionist art] are the constitutive characteristics of Eastern art, the plastic and spatial values count as essential to occidental art." Zahn's placement of this comment at the beginning of an article defending "painterly painting" as the essential impulse of Western art, implied that the potential for the rebirth of such painting could have nothing to do with Expressionism, let alone with Soviet art.[28] Moreover, by turning away from Expressionism, many artists also indicated their allegiance to the prevailing line of thought that it was their task as "free" artists to find forms that would lead to a less anxiety-ridden future.[29] In brief, Expressionism was not only too political, but also too German at a time when

very existence which we living restlessly marvel about just as the light around which we the living flutter restlessly as a moth flits around light." Compare with this statement of Beuys': "Yes we live in a death zone and it is really only in this death zone that one becomes aware of how life actually appears." Both statements cited in Romain, 202, 198.

24 See Sedlmayr, 155–157.

25 See Werner Haftmann, *Skizzenbuch zur Kultur der Gegenwart. Reden und Aufsätze* (Munich: Prestel, 1960), 166. "No work of a German painter of our century could become so much the spiritual domain of the nation as the large animal paintings of Franz Marc." See also Klaus Lankheit, "Marc will always be regarded in an extraordinary measure as German," 167, ibid. See also Schuster, 169, ibid.

26 Hans Eckstein, "Wiederbegegnung mit Franz Marc bei Günther Franke, München," in *Das Kunstwerk* 7 (1946/7), 42.

27 Georg Lukács, "'Grösse und Verfall' des Expressionismus," in *Internationale Literatur* I (Moscow, 1934) 153–73. Cited in Rose-Carol Washton Long, ed., *German Expressionism: Documents from the End of the Wilhelmine Empire to the Rise of National Socialism* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1993), 314–17.

28 Leopold Zahn, "Apologie der malerischen Malerei," in *Das Kunstwerk*, 7 (1946/47), 3.

29 See Yule F. Heibel, *Reconstructing the Subject: Modernist Painting in Western*

Germany was trying to pry itself loose from its own cloudy heritage.

It was this climate of unease that helped fuel interest in Sedlmayr's bleak *Verlust der Mitte*. A rabid enemy of modern art, Sedlmayr conceded that at least contemporary sculptors were somewhat more serious in attempting to make images that might preserve the "dignity of the human race."[30] The debate around what constituted an "appropriate" image of man culminated in an exhibition *Das Menschenbild in unserer Zeit* (The image of man in our time) and a three-day conference "Darmstädter Gesprächs" (Darmstadt discussions). The conference, to which Sedlmayr was invited, was packed with people who had come to watch a "public debate . . . hardly imaginable in any other epoch" about the "situation of art in our time."[31]

Throughout the 1950s, German painters continued to have trouble coming up with an artistic image of man, not least because of controversies surrounding abstract and figurative art. Predictably, the fate of those who chose to work in a figurative style was similar to that of the few artists who chose to align themselves with Expressionism. Neither group was particularly successful on the open market, partly because of the general perception that figurative art was in league with conservative political ideologies. An abstract (i.e., democratic) style of painting came to the fore during the 1950s and continued to dominate throughout the 1960s. Of course, in this genre the image of man was not of particular importance. The responsibility of constructing an unblemished image of man was left to the more traditional medium of sculpture.[32]

Plastik: A Greek and German Legacy

THOUGH BEUYS HAD ALREADY opted to concentrate his energies on sculpture two years before Sedlmayr's book appeared, his growing desire to be perceived as a sculptor must be considered within all these contexts. Nevertheless, as late as 1964, Beuys' reputation was still based upon his draftsmanship. In that year he was invited for the first time to participate in Documenta 3. Although initially he was requested to submit only three drawings, Beuys lobbied until he was granted permission to also show several of his sculptures.[33]

Beuys seldom referred to his three-dimensional work as sculpture, preferring instead the term *Plastik* (plastic). Given the fact that he claimed to have arrived at art through language, his decision to designate his work as *Plastik* is significant.[34] Whereas *Plastik* derives from Greek *plastikos*, and describes the activity of modeling, *Skulptur* (sculpture) derives from a Latin word (*sculpere*) that indicates the process of reductive carving.[35] Beuys' awareness of this dis-

Germany, 1945–1950 (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1995), 96.

30 Sedlmayr, 137.

31 Kurt Leonhard, "Kunstgespräche," in *Das Kunstwerk* 8/9 (1950), 103.

32 See Martin Damus, *Kunst in der BRD: 1945–1990* (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1995), 71.

33 See Veit Loers, "Die plastischen Arbeiten der Documenta 3," in *Joseph Beuys: Documenta Arbeit*, exh. cat. (Kassel: Museum Fridericianum, 5 September–14 November 1993), 49.

34 See Joseph Beuys, "Reden über das eigene Land," in *Sprechen über Deutschland* (Wangen: Flü, 1995), 10.

35 See Werner Hoffman, *Die Plastik des 20. Jahrhunderts* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1958), 18.

tinction is suggested by these comments made during a 1964 discussion about his work at Documenta:

> In my opinion, *Plastik* is a concept which has not been sufficiently grasped. . . . That was not the case in earlier epochs, for example during the Greek period, when the entire human being was an expression of *Plastik* itself . . . when *Plastik* stemmed not merely from the need for decoration and adornment, but was an example, a model, a guiding light for what the Greeks understood to be the human form and creation of man as he might be.[36]

Such an assertion not only informs Beuys' "expanded concept of art," but also subtly alludes to the ideas of the German philosopher Johann Gottfried Herder, who contended that the beginnings of language, partly preserved by Greek myths, are the actual source of the plastic ideal. Immediately after his 1986 Lehmbruck Award speech, Beuys told a journalist that Herder's conception of the "human being as a sculpted column" lay behind the theory of *Plastik* articulated in his talk.[37]

Beuys' understanding of *Plastik* as language, as something one *hears* before it is seen seems indebted to Herder's 1778 essay entitled "Plastik: Einige Wahrnehmungen über Form und Gestalt aus Pygmlions bildendem Traume" ("Plastic: A few perceptions about form and image from Pygmalion's pictorial dream".) There one reads: "We approach a sculpted column as if it were in a sacred darkness. . . . The more naturally we approach the work . . . the more the silent image will speak to us."[38]

Herder regarded mythology as the figurative language of a poetic soul, capable of generating a rich trove of images, which, like ancient Greek sculpture, embodied fundamental human energy. To his mind, sculpture is both a mouthpiece and a declaration in and of itself.[39] These ideas, as well as the title of Herder's essay, could not have escaped Beuys, and its point would have been obvious to him: the text was a brilliant argument for the supremacy of sculpture over painting. For Herder, sculpture was truth, whereas painting was merely a dream.

Leopold Zahn recapitulated this maxim in an essay entitled "Zum Thema 'Plastik'" (On the theme of plastic) that appeared in the first issue of *Das Kunstwerk* in 1946: "Painting is essentially illusion; *Plastik* is concrete being. Painting is illusory space; *Plastik* creates space."[40] Twelve years later, in 1958—the year Beuys first applied for the professorship at the Düsseldorf Kunstakademie—Werner Hofmann published *Die Plastik des 20 Jahrhunderts* (Twentieth century sculpture), which the eager candidate hardly could have overlooked. Hofmann began his book by distinguishing between the arts of

36 Beuys "Plastik und Zeichnung," in *Kunst* 5/6 (June/July) 1964,129. When questioned about the relationship of the sculpture and paintings exhibited at Documenta, all of which were from the late 1950s, Beuys commented, "In those days I was able to express the mythical in the drawings, with the *Plastik* I was after something with an archetypal quality)" (ibid., 128).

37 Beuys and Erhard Kluge, "Ich will gestalten, also verändern," in *Vorwärts* 5 (1 February 1986), 19.

38 Johann Gottfried Herder, "Plastik: Einige Wahrnehmungen über Form und Gestalt aus Pygamlions Bildendem Traume," in *Werke in Zwei Bände* (1770; reprint, 2 vols., Munich: Carl Hanser, 1953), 1: 681.

39 See Bernhard Rupprecht, "Plastisches Ideal, Symbol und der Bilderstreit Goethezeit," in *Kunstgeschichte und Kunsttheorie im 19. Jahrhundert* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1963), 210–11.

40 Leopold Zahn, "Zum Thema 'Plastik,'" in *Das Kunstwerk* 1 (1946/47), 27.

41 Wilhelm Lehmbruck, cited in Werner Hofmann, *Die Plastik des 20 Jahrhunderts* (1958), 27.

42 Hoff, 1935, notes 10, 19: Moreover, if Beuys read the 1932 text by Julius Meier-Graefe about Lehmbruck, which was

sculpture and painting, citing Herder's arguments. He then traced the linguistic difference between sculpture and plastic. The introduction closed with the remark that the hour for sculpture was once again dawning, a moment that had been predicted by Lehmbruck, with whose hopeful statement Hoffman concluded the book's introduction: "I believe that we are once again approaching a period of truly great art, and that we shall soon find the expression of our era in a monumental style appropriate to our time."[41]

Curiously enough, though originally Lehmbruck had been just as deeply identified with Expressionism as Marc, the reception of their work eventually took completely different paths. Following Lehmbruck's death in 1919 (three years after Marc's) his chroniclers chose to concentrate upon the meaning of his work for the future of modern art in Germany, rather than its Expressionist qualities, as they had in Marc's case. Further, Lehmbruck's legacy was perceived as largely untapped, a state of affairs lamented by Hoff in his 1933 booklet: "Lehmbruck has remained without an immediate successor. . . . Perhaps he will only find the proper succession in a coming generation."[42] Moreover, while Marc's achievement was ambivalently received, Lehmbruck was unequivocally appreciated as one of the "great European sculptors of the twentieth century" whose work fulfilled the promise of the most Germanic of styles: the "secret Gothic." These assertions, made in 1913, headed an essay on Lehmbruck written for the catalogue that accompanied the 1985 exhibition *German Art in the Twentieth Century* at the Royal Academy of Arts in London (October–December 1985).[43] The significance of the show for an international appreciation of German art did not escape Beuys, who singled out for praise three artists included in it during his November 1985 lecture "Reden über das eigene Land: Deutschland" (Talking about one's own country: Germany). Beuys' decision to omit Marc's name and mention instead Lehmbruck, the Swiss-born Paul Klee, and the Russian Wassily Kandinsky in this prestigious lecture about "one's own country" must be considered with this history in mind.[44]

Within this context, Beuys' ambivalence concerning his teacher Mataré also begins to make sense. Beuys' deep admiration of Mataré—one of the most successful artists in Germany during the 1940s and 1950s—is attested to by the number of works he made during those very years that strongly resemble his instructor's art. Moreover, the critical reception of Mataré's work in the early postwar years may have suggested to Beuys a means of sidestepping disputes around figurative and abstract art. In 1948, the same year that Sedlmayr's book was published, a short article appeared in *Das Kunstwerk*

reprinted in the 1949 Düsseldorf exhibition catalogue of Lehmbruck's work, he may have taken note of this comment: "I saw in Lehmbruck a successor and erred. Marées settled down in Hesperien. Lehmbruck remained a guest." See Meier-Graefe in *Wilhelm Lehmbruck*, exh. cat. (Düsseldorf: Kunstsammlungen der Stadt Düsseldorf, summer 1949), not paginated.

43 Werner Haftmann cited in Reinhold Hohl, "Wilhelm Lehmbruck: A German Preserve," in *German Art in the 20th Century*, exh. cat. (London: Royal Academy of Arts, 11 October–22 December 1985), 438.

44 See Beuys, "Reden über das eigene Land: Deutschland," 12.

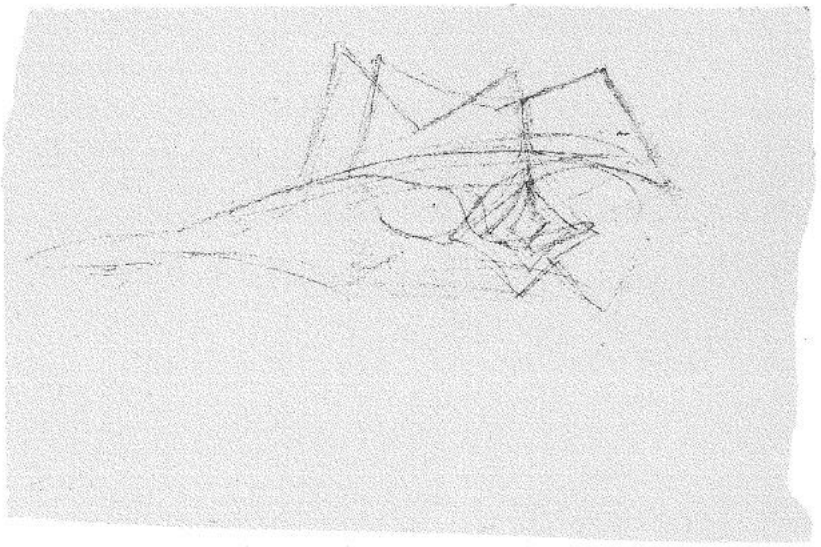


FIGURE 2.4
Joseph Beuys, *Gläsernes Hornvieh (Glass-like Horned Beast)*, 1950, pencil, 11.3 x 17 cm. ©2002 Artists Rights Society (ARS), NY / VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn.

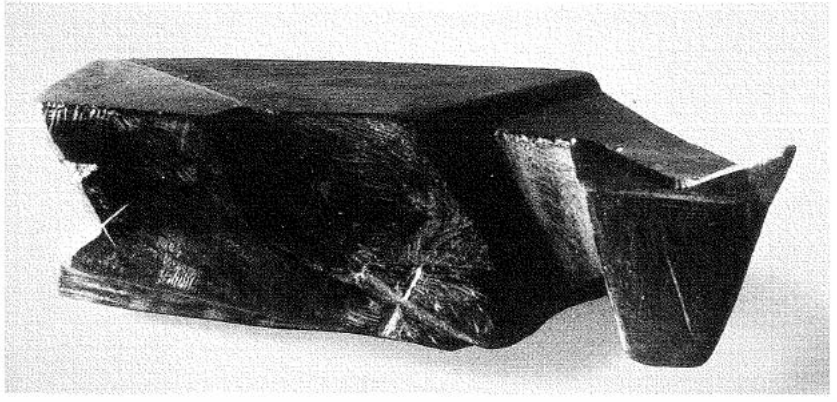


FIGURE 2.5
Ewald Mataré, *Liegende Kuh (Lying Cow)*, 1946, wood, 4.5 x 12 x 7 cm

about Mataré's sculpture, "Die Kuh des Mataré" (Mataré's cow). Its author evaluated Mataré's accomplishment in these terms: "Art is not nature; it is its essence. . . . To recognize the sculpture of Mataré . . . one needs a clear-sighted internal perceptual facility."[45] For the reviewer, Mataré's talent lay in his ability to depict the "essence" of the cow, rather than the animal itself. Never mind that this had been Marc's achievement too; in the 1940s Mataré's reputation was not burdened with the ideological baggage that had by then become part and parcel of Marc's reception.

45 Gerhard Schön, "Die Kuh des Mataré," in *Das Kunstwerk* 2 (1948), 34.

46 See Beuys, "Interview with Kate Horsefield" (1980), in *Energy Plan for the Western Man: Joseph Beuys in America* (New York: Four Walls Eight Windows, 1990), 67.

47 See Hofmann, 64

48 See Heiner Stachelhaus, *Joseph Beuys*, David Britt, trans. (New York: Abbeville Press, 1987), 33.

49 Beuys, "Lebenslauf" (7 March 1961) in *Transit: Joseph Beuys Plastische Arbeiten 1947–1985*, 38.

50 Beuys mentions Lehmbruck's influence upon his decision to become a sculptor only one more time in writing: his so-called 1961 "Notizzettel Josef Beuys" (Notes), drafted in response to an article that appeared in the *Rheinische Post* on 12 September 1961, shortly after he assumed his teaching position. Its appearance marks the beginning of Beuys' active intervention in his own critical reception. It was immediately put to use again less than a month later, when it was printed in the front of the small catalogue of Beuys'

After his appointment to the Düsseldorf Kunstakademie in 1961, Beuys seldom mentioned Mataré. In later years, Beuys praised Mataré for his clearly defined theoretical approach to art, but not for his actual work.[46] Such a stance suggests that Beuys wanted to eliminate the possibility that he might be considered Mataré's successor. Already in 1958 Hofmann had criticized the impulse of Mataré's work as becoming increasingly ornamental.[47] A little more than a decade later he had come to be perceived as a minor, if quintessential, Rhineland artist.

Beuys' Application Portfolio of 1961

BEUYS' INITIAL FAILURE to secure the professorship at Düsseldorf in 1958 was for the most part due to Mataré's effective blocking of his appointment.[48] Undoubtedly, this provoked Beuys' decision to present his work this time in the form of photographs. He also included in this brief résumé of his life upon his second bid for the professorship in 1961. This résumé is the first instance in which Beuys mentions the debt his work owed to Lehmbruck's. Apart from Mataré and Joseph Enseling (with whom Beuys had briefly studied), he referred to no other artists in this short written statement.[49] The mention of Lehmbruck's name within the context of his application for a professorship at an art academy that had generated an artist of Lehmbruck's stature was certainly not incidental.[50]

Beuys carefully considered which of his works to include in this photographic portfolio. By then he had acquired a thorough knowledge and appreciation of photography.[51] Indeed, as he made clear in the accompanying résumé, it had been his encounter with "reproductions" (elsewhere termed "photographs") of Lehmbruck's work that had been of decisive importance to his becoming a sculptor.[52] Nevertheless, Beuys seldom took photographs. For this reason he asked his friend Fritz Getlinger to make them for him. Getlinger, who did press work for the *Rheinische Post* and *Neue Rhein/Ruhr Zeitung*, had published several photographs of Beuys and his work during the 1950s. Undoubtedly Getlinger (and Beuys as well) was aware of Constantin Brancusi's (1876–1957) conviction that the medium of photography offered the most truthful commentary about a work of art, emancipating it from the vagaries of verbal or textual interpretations.

Coincidentally or not, in 1958, the year that Beuys initially applied for the professorship, Carola Giedion-Welcker published the first important German monograph on Brancusi, with sixty-five photographs the sculptor had taken of his work and given to the author shortly before his death. In the foreword to that monograph Giedion-Welcker describes these photos as "first-rate artworks. . . .

7 October 1961 exhibition at the Haus Koekkoek in Kleve. There it served as Beuys' own introduction to his life and work in the same year that he first became a teacher. See Joseph Beuys, "Notizzettel Josef Beuys," in *Josef Beuys, Zeichnungen, Aquarelle, Ölbilder, Plastische Bilder aus der Sammlung van der Grinten* (exh. cat. (Kleve: Städtisches Museum Haus Koekkoek, 8 October–5 November 1961), not paginated. Three years later, with his professorial appointment firmly in grip, Beuys seems to have no longer needed Lehmbruck as a credential. There is no allusion to him in his well-known 1964 *Lebenslauf/Werklauf*. In that document he named two artists and a writer: Leonardo da Vinci, Marcel Duchamp, and James Joyce.

51 See Christopher Phillips, "Arena: The Chaos of the Unnamed," in *Joseph Beuys Arena!*, 54. See also Franz Joseph van der Grinten, "Joseph Beuys, der Niederrhein und Fritz Getlinger," 19.

52 See Beuys' statement: "1938 first encounter with photos of Lehmbruck's sculptures, event!" in "Biographische Notizen von Joseph Beuys für Franz Joseph und Hans van der Grinten, ca. September 1961" in *Transit: Joseph Beuys Plastische Arbeiten 1947–1985*, exh. cat. Krefeld: Kaiser Wilhelm Museum, 17 November 1991–16 February 1992), 39. See also Beuys' comment: "The only hope I had was when I saw one day a photograph of sculpture which was put away during Hitler's time. It was a sculpture by Wilhelm Lehmbruck. . . ." In Beuys, "Interview with Kate Horsefield," 65.

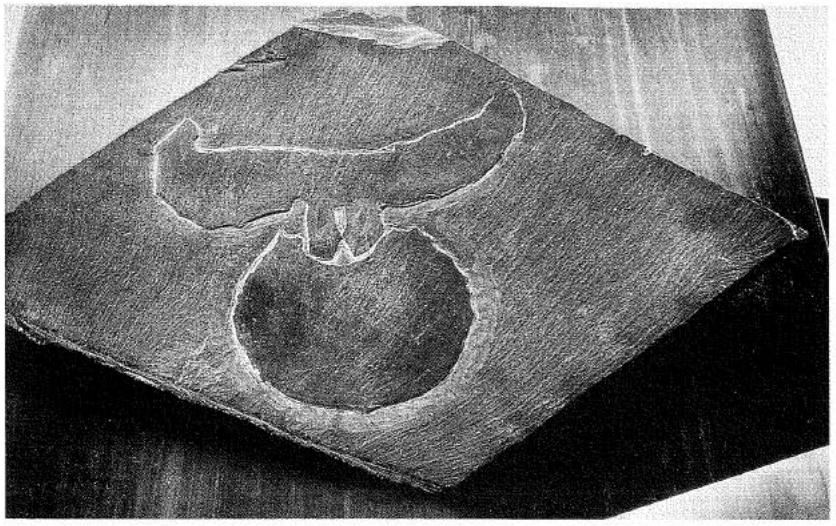


FIGURE 2.6
Joseph Beuys, *Großer Generator (Large Generator) (Himmel und Erde)*, 1951, slate, 60 cm. Here on *Tisch (Table)*, 1953. ©2002 Artists Rights Society (ARS), NY / VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn.

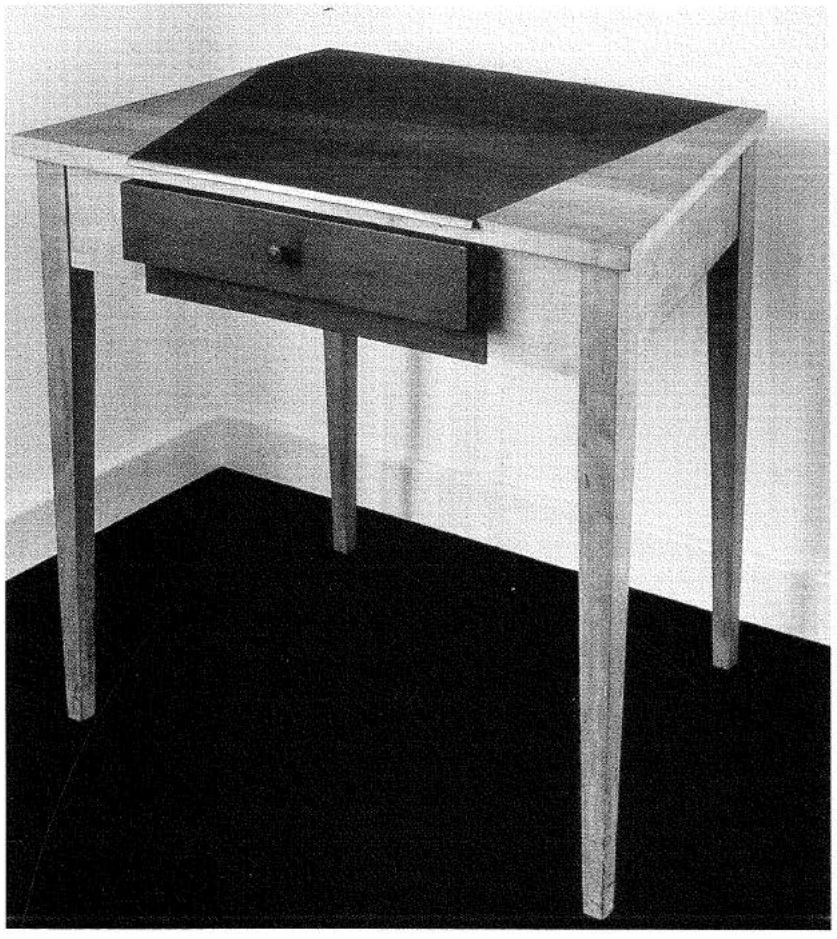


FIGURE 2.7
Joseph Beuys, *Tisch (Table)*, 1953, wood. ©2002 Artists Rights Society, NY / VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn.

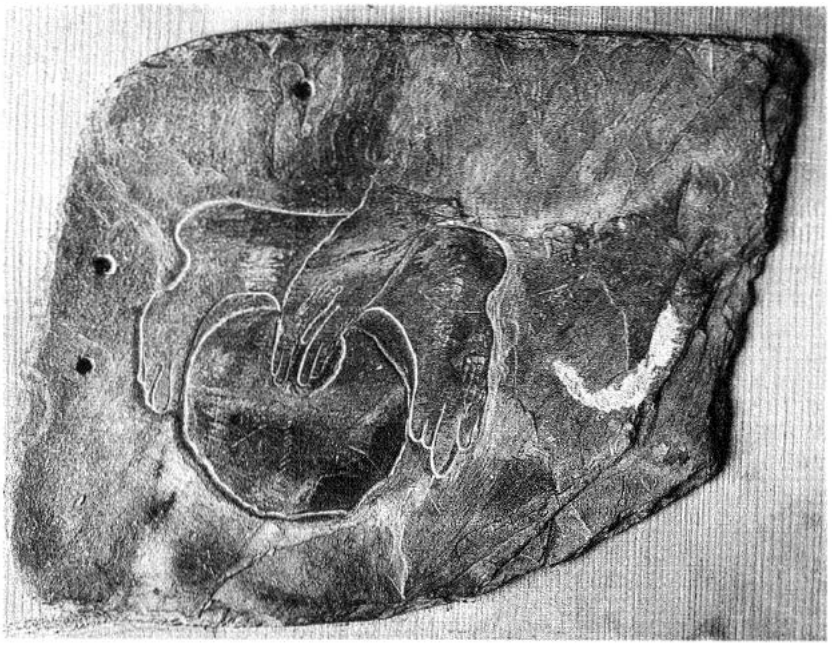


FIGURE 2.8
Joseph Beuys, *Himmel und Erde (Heaven and Earth)*, 1949, slate, 22.3 x 27 cm. ©2002 Artists Rights Society (ARS), NY / VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn.

They lead us directly to Brancusi's interpretation . . . we immediately perceive the work as Brancusi felt it and also as he wanted it communicated—from the genuine perspective and interpretation of their creator."[53] This was exactly what Beuys desired to achieve with the more than forty photographs of his art that he ultimately presented to the application committee: he wanted to allow his work to speak for itself.

While Beuys determined which works to include in his application portfolio, it was Getlinger who decided how to photograph them. His documentation of Beuys' sculptures in their momentary studio settings, often positioned upon ready-at-hand objects, resembles Brancusi's photographs of his own work. Getlinger's photograph of the second version of a 1949 sculpture, *Himmel und Erde* (Heaven and Earth) titled *grosse (Himmel und Erde)* (generator, Heaven and Earth, 1952) is a good example. By placing the piece of etched slate upon Beuys' 1953 *Tisch* (Table) it was displayed to its greatest advantage. Indeed, the asymmetrical positioning of the slate plate against the irregularly shaped, incised black surface of Beuys' *Tisch* makes it seem as if the incised image itself is flying away. Getlinger's truncation of the lower end of the table also yields the impression that the entire slab is about to slide into the realm of the viewer. Such juxtapositions produce momentary connections that turn out to have an

53 Carola Giedion-Welcker, *Constantin Brancusi* (Basel: B. Schwabe, 1958), 7.

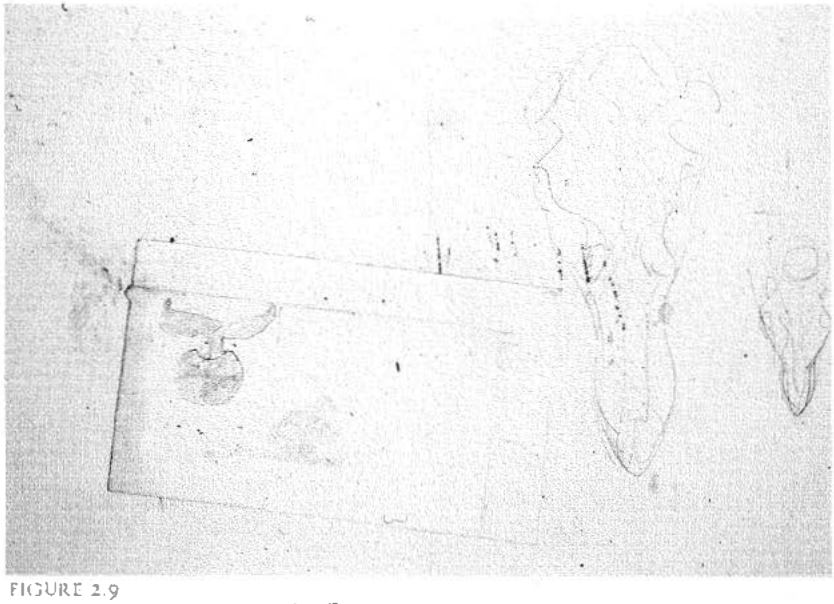


FIGURE 2.9
Joseph Beuys, *Ohne Titel (Untitled)*, 1951, pencil, 20.8 x 29.7 cm. ©2002 Artists Rights Society (ARS), NY / VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn.

FIGURE 2.10
Joseph Beuys, *Ohne Titel (Plakatentwurf) (Untitled (Poster Design))*, 1955, watercolor (hare blood) over pencil, 10.9 x 14.9 cm. Collection van der Grinten, Kranenburg. Joseph Beuys Archiv Schloß Moyland des Landes Nordhein-Westfalen.

unexpected, almost classic, durability. Ultimately, the photograph presents the etched piece of stone as inseparable from its studio environment, suggesting that like Brancusi's work, it is a kind of total work of art.[54]

The final portfolio included shots of Beuys' sculpture as well as of his prints and drawings. There were few recent works: the majority dated back to the late 1940s and 1950s. Almost without exception their motifs, media, and style were traditional. A number of them resembled Mataré's work. Beuys' decision to include several pieces that evoked a primordial mythic world, such as the first version of *Himmel und Erde* made in 1949, also suggests his interest in positioning his work within one of the most heroic themes taken up by post–World War II artists: that of making visible the eternal powers of nature and myth through the medium of art.

The date of the first version of *Himmel und Erde*, 1949, was also the year a book appeared that is today in the Beuys archive: Jean Gebser's *Ursprung und Gegenwart* (The ever-present origin). It may have been there that Beuys first came across the idea that it is the artist's task to make manifest the "diaphanous" structures that lie behind things and thoughts. Gebser argued that the monster of cultural pessimism spawned by Oswald Spengler in *Der Untergang des Abendlandes* (The decline of the west; 1923), and nourished by Sedlmayr's 1948 book, could only be vanquished by wielding the scythe of "aperspectival" vision. To see "aperspectively" meant to operate in an in-between realm: to make visible the veiled as a sign of the "contemporaneity of the future." This thinking transmuted Sedlmayr's cynical conception of the "loss of middle" into the gain of an entirety that takes place at a between point.[55] It is this in-between site—in which something otherwise unfigurable takes on form—that is most explicitly referenced by the image and title of both versions of *Himmel und Erde*.

Beuys' inclusion of a photograph of each of these etched pieces of slate in his application portfolio suggests the importance of these works to his aesthetic. His preoccupation with its theme is also attested to by an untitled 1951 drawing. It is highly probable that by then he had at least thumbed through the 1950 catalogue *Das Menschenbild unserer Zeit*, (The image of man in our time.) in which one of the authors argued for the importance of Gebser's ideas to contemporary sculptors.[56] In 1955 Beuys made another drawing connected to the theme of these three works. The deep significance of the motif to his theory of plastic is further attested by Beuys' use of it some thirty years later in connection with his most ambitious sculptural project, 7000 *Eichen* (7000 oaks).

The symbolism of both the drawn and etched works is deeply intertwined with the concept of "above and below." While the higher realm of the gods con-

54 See Thilo Koenig, "Fritz Getlinger photographiert Joseph Beuys: Künstler und Kunstwerke vor der Kamera," in *Getlinger Photographiert*, 29.

55 See Jean Gebser, *Ursprung und Gegenwart*, 2 vols. (1949; reprint, Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1973), vol. 1, 32; vol. 2, 635–37.

56 Adolf Schmoll von Eisenwerth, "Zum Thema der Ausstellung," in Hans Gerhard Evers, ed., *Das Menschenbild in unserer Zeit* (Darmstadt: Neue Darmstädter Verlagsanstalt, 1950), 14. This excerpt from Eisenwerth's catalogue essay appeared only five pages before several reproductions of artworks deemed essential to the exhibition, the first of which was Mataré's *Kopf* (Head), 19.

FIGURE 2.11
Joseph Beuys Roundtable discussion at the Kunstakademie Düsseldorf, circa 1967

notes a masculine engendering principle, often symbolized by a bird (winged creatures appear in both versions of *Himmel und Erde*), the lower realm is that of the feminine earth, suggested by the incised globular forms. In the 1955 drawing a female form stands within the globe of the earth, while a set of wings hovers nearby. Exactly at her midpoint Beuys inscribed his own name. In so doing he set forth the idea that for him the production of artwork was a kind of airborne engendering. The etched slate plates contain at least three more levels of meaning. To begin with, they evoke the condition of flying, the very state in which Beuys claimed to have decided to become an artist. That same year, 1949—the year the first version of *Himmel und Erde* appeared—is when the split between East and West Germany became decisive. Finally, both titles refer to the attempt during the late 1940s to anchor art in the "godly, in the middle, as part of the demand that it embody positive values."[57]

Seven months passed after Beuys submitted his portfolio in 1961, were to pass before he could jubilantly write to Getlinger that their work "was not in vain."[58] This time Beuys' candidacy for the professorship had been a success. The way was now open for him to become the long awaited successor who could revive culture in Germany and lead a younger generation of artists to distinction. Today this is indeed Beuys' legacy. It is one of the ironies of history that Mataré obstructed Beuys' appointment in 1958 with the argument that Beuys would certainly fail as a teacher. For it was from the platform of his professorship that Beuys bequeathed to posterity what he considered his greatest work of art—his teaching.

57 Damus, 111.

58 See the letter from Beuys to Getlinger dated 10.9.61 reproduced in Kaldewei, 11.

Joan Rothfuss

3½ JOSEPH BEUYS
Echoes in America

ON THE FLOOR OF THE BASEMENT room Joseph Beuys lay rolled up inside a swathe of rough felt. Near his head was a copper rod, also wrapped in felt; a second rod was propped against a wall. Two dead hares—one at his head, one at his feet—were stretched out on the floor, extending the line of his body. Several small fat sculptures had been placed around the room, and a lock of hair and two fingernail clippings were affixed to a wall. An electric cord snaked across the floor, connecting Beuys inside his felt roll to an amplifier that leaned against the wall. The room's only doorway was blocked by boards nailed across its opening.

This was the setting for Beuys' action *DER CHEF/THE CHIEF, Fluxus Song*, performed December 1, 1964, at René Block's Berlin gallery. Beuys lay motionless from 4 P.M. until midnight, signaling his presence only through amplified sounds made with the aid of a microphone hidden inside the felt roll. One viewer described them as "very amorphous and strange, there was very little human about them."[1] Audience members watched through the barricaded doorway.

According to the poster, Beuys' performance was to be synchronized "to

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1 Hans van der Grinten, quoted by Uwe M. Schneede in "Beuys & Block," in *Mit dem Kopf durch die Wand/Head through the Wall* (Copenhagen: Statens Museum for Kunst, 1992), p. 109.

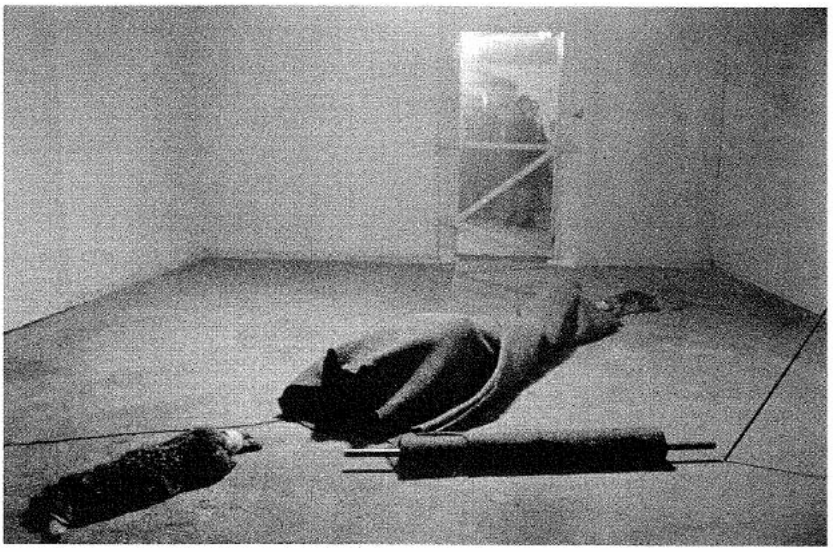

FIGURE 3.1
Joseph Beuys, *DER CHEF/THE CHIEF (Fluxus Song)*, gallery view, 1964
Photograph: Jürgen Müller-Schneck

FIGURE 3.2
Invitation to Joseph Beuys' 1964 action *DER CHEF/THE CHIEF (Fluxus Song)*
Photograph courtesy of Dr. Uwe M. Schneede

the second" with a performance of the same work in New York by Robert Morris. Beuys recalled later, "I wrote everything down for him. I drew him a sketch with the dimensions, gave him all the instructions with regard to space and all the elements involved."[2] Wolf Vostell, who wrote about the action for a Berlin daily newspaper, imagined Morris' performance as "an echo" and mused, as Beuys ended his action in Berlin, "I wonder whether Bob Morris was just crawling out of his roll. . . . What was he thinking in New York, and what was his audience there thinking?"[3]

WHAT WAS HIS AUDIENCE THINKING? The question is one that American critics may have asked themselves when considering Beuys' great renown in Europe, for America has not embraced Beuys wholeheartedly. Our public discourse on his achievements has been defined by extremes: apologists who interpret and spread the ideas, and censors who denounce the man and the work; a great deal of puzzlement lies in the middle. Many recent commentators have noted that a balanced critical reading of Beuys' work is still in the early stages of development. As his death recedes further into the past and the power of his presence fades, this reading will necessarily be based on the objects he made and documentation of his performances and other activities, rather than on testimonials from eyewitnesses.

It is those eyewitness accounts with which this essay will concern itself in an attempt to examine the notion that Beuys' oeuvre is both "universal" (a claim made by Beuys himself) and "inherently German" (a phrase used by some early critics). If Beuys' aims were universal—concerned with the human condition outside a specific historical moment—then what might it mean for those aims to be "inherently German" at the same time? Could the two characteristics coexist in one body of work? Perhaps; but if the "inherently German" is contained within the "universal," why haven't Americans given Beuys a warm reception?

Such questions suggest that national identities can be described for politically defined entities such as Germany or the United States, and that they can be extended to all spheres of activity including artistic practice and critical reception. To construct a face-off between the two countries over the work of Beuys is not my goal and doesn't seem especially useful. What's interesting is not that a rift has occurred between an artist from one country and an audience in another, or that it occurred between these two particular countries,

2 Quoted by Willoughby Sharp in "An Interview with Joseph Beuys," *Artforum* 8, no. 4 (December 1969), p. 43. The drawing is still in the collection of Robert Morris (correspondence with the author, September 6, 1998).

3 Wolf Vostell, "Ich bin ein Sender, ich strahle aus! Fluxus-Demonstration der Galerie Block," *Der Tagesspiegel* (Berlin, December 3, 1964). Portions quoted in this essay are taken from a partial reprint in René Block's essay "Fluxus and Fluxism in Berlin 1964–1976," in Kynaston McShine, ed., *Berlinart 1961–1987* (New York: Museum of Modern Art and Munich: Prestel, 1987). See also Uwe M. Schneede, *Joseph Beuys: Die Aktionen* (Ostfildern-Ruit bei Stuttgart: Verlag Gerd Hatje, 1994), pp. 68–79.

but that the reception of Beuys' work has been so polarized, and that the terms of the debate have remained weirdly unchanged over the past thirty-five years. Even if this is only because Beuys' ideas were unusually consistent (an assertion that also could be debated), it still seems significant that some of the same objections to his work were raised in 1998 as in 1963.

How much of Beuys did Americans have access to in the early years of his career, and what was their reaction? Which of his ideas seem to have been understood, and which elided, in discussions of his work? Was early reception in the United States irreparably warped by Beuys' decision to present himself and his ideas but to withhold his objects until 1974? A first step toward answering some of these questions might be a close examination of Beuys' early presence in America—exhibitions, performances, collaborations with American artists, and press coverage. I will focus on the years 1963 through 1974, a period bracketed by his introduction to the Fluxus group and his first trips to the United States. It was an especially fertile and active period for him: during this time he fleshed out his "social sculpture" and "expanded concept of art" theories; was fired from his teaching position amid a national controversy; performed most of his important actions; produced hundreds of powerful sculptures, drawings, and multiples; and exhibited widely in northern Europe.

Despite the volume, variety, and notoriety of his activity, until 1974 he was known in the United States only through sporadic coverage in the art press, personal contact with American artists who traveled to Germany, and—beginning in 1970—minimal presence in a few, scattered exhibitions. And although they were based on a trickle of information, often secondhand, many early assessments concluded that his work was either "universal" or "inherently German."

❁

SOMETIME IN THE EARLY 1960S Beuys wrote to the Wuppertal dealer Rolf Jährling explaining why he could not accept Jährling's invitation to exhibit in his gallery. Among the reasons he gave: "For two years I have been working on forms that produce no images and no sculpture—FLUXUS."[4]

Beuys had been introduced to Fluxus in 1961 through the Korean artist Nam June Paik, who in turn introduced him to George Maciunas, a Lithuanian immigrant to the United States who was temporarily living in Wiesbaden and was the self-styled leader and curator of Fluxus activities.[5] Beuys was immediately attracted to Fluxus, a loosely knit, multidisciplinary

4 From an undated letter in the Rolf Jährling Collection, Weidingen. A photocopy of the letter is in the Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection, Detroit. The original German reads, "Seit 2 Jahren arbeite ich an Gestalten die kein Bild und keine Plastik ergeben—FLUXUS." Trans. by Regina Brenner.

5 Paik, who became a regular participant in Fluxus concerts during the 1960s, has written that Beuys approached him in 1961 with compliments on his 1959 concert at Galerie 22 in Düsseldorf. See Paik's book *Beuys Vox 1961–86* (Seoul: Won Gallery/Hyundai Gallery, 1990), p. 11.

group of artists experimenting in film, performance, poetry, music, and the visual arts. He found in Fluxus a peer group that, as he later recalled, showed him that "anything could be art."[6]

Certainly Fluxus artists embraced all manner of activity as art, but they were especially interested in stimulating people to examine the unremarkable and quotidian more closely. "Concerts serve only as educational means to convert audiences to such non-art experiences in their daily lives," wrote Maciunas.[7] Once one had seen a performer make music by slowly, deliberately crumpling a paper bag into a live microphone, the hope was that one would thereafter crumple one's own paper bags with a new consciousness of the value and interest of the sound and, thus, of one's own life in all its minutiae. A key aspect of this idea was that Fluxus compositions could be performed by anyone, at any time, thereby divorcing the ego of the artist from his or her creation. Maciunas was a passionate advocate of artists in all disciplines who were experimenting in this vein—including composer LaMonte Young, performer and filmmaker Yoko Ono, poet Emmett Williams, and visual artists Robert Filliou and George Brecht. By 1962 Maciunas had decided to promote their work by producing a publication, to be financed by revenues from a series of concerts, the first of which would take place in Europe.[8]

When he met Paik, Beuys had not yet begun performing, and it can be argued that it was this early contact with the Fluxus group that stimulated the development of his actions. His first two actions, *Siberian Symphony, Section 1* and *Composition for Two Musicians*, were performed at the Festum Fluxorum, a two-day concert held at the Düsseldorf Kunstakademie in February 1963.[9] {See Plate 3.2} The two pieces were vastly different. *Siberian Symphony* was a composition for piano with a provocative conclusion in which Beuys removed the heart of a dead hare; he later said that the aim of this piece was to find a contextual, or symbolic, way to allude to primary experiences such as birth and death.[10] In contrast, *Composition for Two Musicians*, performed as a kind of entr'acte between two other pieces, was direct and playful in the classic Fluxus style: Beuys simply wound up a tin toy of a drummer and cymbalist, and let it play until it wound down. It was over in twenty seconds. Beuys later said, "The Fluxus people felt that [*Composition for Two Musicians*] was my breakthrough, while the event of the second evening was perhaps too heavy, complicated, and anthropological for them. Yet the *Siberian Symphony, Section 1* contained the essence of all my future activities and was, I felt, a wider experience of what Fluxus could be."[11]

Despite his immediate understanding of the fundamental differences

6 Quoted by Caroline Tisdall in *Joseph Beuys* (New York: Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, 1979), p. 84.

7 Quoted by Emmett Williams in "St. George and the Fluxus Dragons," in *Aufbrüche: Manifeste, Manifestationen/Upheavals: Manifestos, Manifestations* (Cologne: DuMont Buchverlag, 1984), p. 37, n. 9.

8 According to Dick Higgins, Maciunas had fled the U.S. to Germany around this time in order to escape his creditors. See *Jefferson's Birthday/Postface* (New York: Something Else Press, 1964), p. 66.

9 Beuys later said that he had intended to take part in the Fluxus Festspiele Neuester Musik, held in Wiesbaden in late 1962, but "for some reason" wasn't able to attend. Had he participated, *Earth Piano*, which he had prepared for the concert, would have been his first action. See Götz Adriani, Winfried Konnertz, and Karin Thomas, *Joseph Beuys, Life and Works*, trans. Patricia Lech (Woodbury, New York: Barron's, 1979), pp. 77–78.

10 Adriani, Konnertz, Thomas, *Life and Works*, p. 92.

11 Quoted by Tisdall in *Joseph Beuys*, p. 78.

between their approaches, Beuys performed his next two actions—*Piano Action* (March, 1963) and *Kukei, akopee-Nein! Brown Cross, Fat Corners, Model Fat Corners* (July, 1964)—in the context of Fluxus events.[12] The Danish artist Eric Andersen said that he and the other Fluxus artists considered Beuys' work at this time to be "very symbolic, expressionistic, and traditional. It was very much concerned with the concept of *Selbstdarstellung* (self-representation) as a personal interpretation of the world. It was absolutely not an anonymous work. It was a personal work socially oriented in a specific sense. . . . In 1964 he was very marginal in Fluxus and very few of us had anything to do with him." Andersen goes on to describe what seems to have been Beuys' final break with the group, at a Fluxus concert in Copenhagen in September 1964. "The people taking part were Emmett Williams, Arthur Køpcke, Wolf Vostell, Tomas Schmit, Beuys, and myself among others. We started fighting about aesthetic and philosophical questions. Beuys and Vostell were kicked out of the festival because we totally disagreed with their position. My friends and I were so angry that we just told them to get out of the country."[13]

SOON AFTER HIS BRIEF ENCOUNTER with Beuys in Düsseldorf, Maciunas relocated himself and "Fluxus headquarters" to New York, running the Fluxus mail-order business from his loft in lower Manhattan and staging Fluxus performances at various venues around the city. After the move he did not invite Beuys to participate in Fluxus concerts that he organized, nor was Beuys included on the extensive mailing lists Maciunas prepared to distribute his "Flux Newsletters." Maciunas' definition of Fluxus (and the roster of artists he deemed acceptable as collaborators and participants) was a work in progress, but in this statement of 1964 he enumerated some of the characteristics of Fluxus as he understood it: "Fluxus is against art as medium or vehicle promoting artist's ego, since applied art should express the objective problem to be solved not artist's personality or his ego. Fluxus therefore tends toward collective spirit, anonymity and anti-individualism—also anti-Europeanism (Europe being the place supporting most strongly and even originating the idea of—professional artist, art-for-art ideology, expression of artist's ego through art, etc.)."[14]

Obviously, Maciunas' use of the word "Europeanism" as a negative cannot be read as a rejection of European artists—Maciunas himself was Lithuanian, there were many Europeans involved in the group (including the Swiss-born

12 *Piano Action* took place during the opening of Nam June Paik's "Exposition of Music/Electronic Television" and *Kukei, akopee-Nein!* was part of the Aachen Fluxus concert *ACTIONS/AGIT POP/DE-COLLAGE/ HAPPENING/EVENTS/ANTIART/L'AUTRISME/ART TOTAL/REFLUXUS—Festival der neuen Kunst*. See Schneede, *Die Aktionen*, for more details.

13 Quoted in Jean Sellem, "About Fluxus, Intermedia, and So . . . An Interview with Eric Andersen," *Lund Art Press* 2, no. 2 (1991), pp. 56–57. The Copenhagen festival he refers to was *Maj-udstillingen (7 koncerter—nye koncertf oenomener. happenings, action music)*, August 29–September 11, 1964. At the concert Beuys was a participant in Vostell's *Bus Stop* and premiered his own *THE CHIEF*.

14 Reprinted in Jon Hendricks, ed. *Fluxus etc./Addenda II: The Gilbert and Lila Silverman Collection* (Pasadena, CA: Baxter Art Gallery, California Institute of Technology, 1983), p. 166.

Ben Vautier, to whom Maciunas referred as "100% Fluxman"), and Marcel Duchamp was counted by most Fluxus artists as one of their most important predecessors. Instead Maciunas let the term "Europeanism" stand for a set of values about art that Fluxus artists rejected: the counterimage, so to speak, of Fluxus. Perhaps he was thinking of Beuys when he wrote the phrase "art as medium or vehicle promoting artist's ego." If so, it was a misinterpretation of Beuys' work, but one which, as Eric Andersen's comments reveal, was not uncommon in Fluxus circles. In any case, it is important to note that Fluxus rejected Beuys as a Fluxus artist, not as an artist per se, and because they were a self-consciously international association, they do not represent a distinctly American point of view. Nevertheless, their objections to Beuys' practice became the paradigm for the reception of his work in America years later.

For his part, Beuys continued to use the term Fluxus to describe his activities, pinning it to actions, exhibitions, and even, in 1968, renaming his German Student Party "Fluxus Zone West." In a letter to Maciunas dated October 8, he wrote, "In Germany, and as far as I have heard and seen, I seem to be the only one who has spoken for Fluxus after your departure from Europe." He went on, "I don't understand how differences of opinion, which by definition are present always and everywhere (see human nature)—Maciunas-[Jackson] Mac Low, Maciunas-[Dick] Higgins, Maciunas-Tomas [Schmit], etc.—have led to this separation. Certainly differences of opinion exist between you and me as well. Vostell even says, 'Maciunas rails against you.' Which doesn't stop me from having to further develop my own view of things. Which doesn't stop me from loving Maciunas."[15]

In suggesting that he and Fluxus might yet find common ground for working together, Beuys may have been alluding to the utopian vision that he shared with Maciunas, their belief that art could be used to help solve real social and cultural problems, and ultimately to transform society. (Maciunas often sought to spur the mostly apolitical Fluxans into activism and had once written to Emmett Williams, "Our activities lose all significance if divorced from socio-political struggle going on now.")[16] But Maciunas was apparently not interested and, despite the overtones in Beuys' letter of both meekness and missionary zeal (love thine enemies, spread the news), he remained unswayed.

In 1970 Beuys responded to Fluxus' charge that his work reeked of "Europeanism." He issued a three-part multiple that could be read as an indirect criticism of the social disengagement of Fluxus (which recalls his famous criticism, in 1964, of Marcel Duchamp's silence). One element was a text, stamped "Hauptstrom," "Fluxus Zone West," and "Deutsche Studentenpartei," proclaim-

15 From an unpublished letter in the Getty Research Institute, Research Library, 890164. Trans. by Regina Brenner.

16 From a letter to Emmett Williams, written in spring 1963 and reprinted in Williams' book *My Life in Flux—and Vice Versa* (Stuttgart: Edition Hansjörg Mayer, 1991), p. 168.

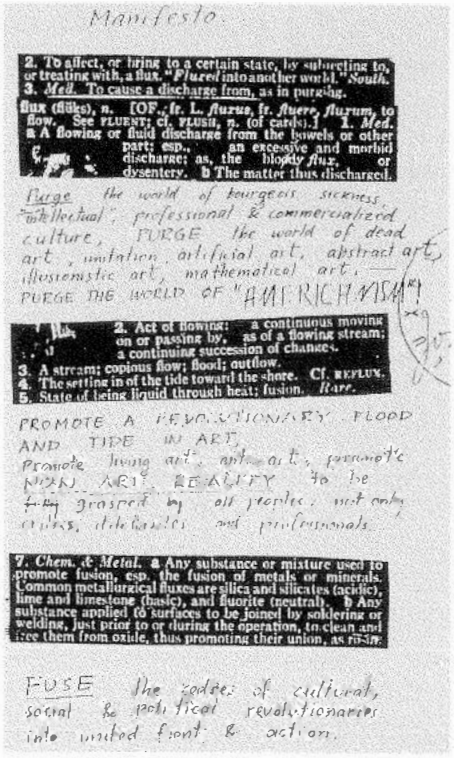

FIGURE 3.3
George Maciunas, *Manifesto*, 1963. Offset on paper, 8.25 x 5.875 in.
The Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection

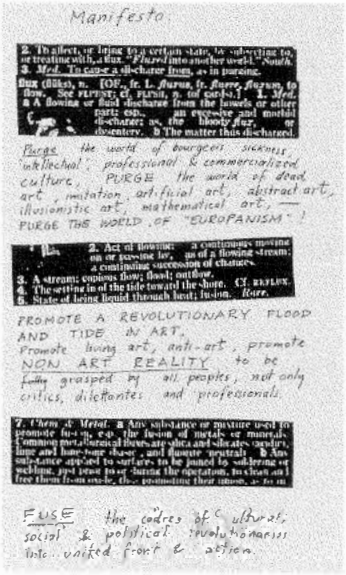

FIGURE 3.4
Joseph Beuys, *Manifesto*, 1970. Photocopy, ink stamp, 11.6875 x 8.25 in. Edition of 25.
Alfred and Marie Greisinger Collection, Walker Art Center, T.B. Walker Acquisition Fund, 1992.
Collection of Walker Art Center, Minneapolis. ©1999 Artists Rights Society (ARS), NY/VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn

ing that art with political aspirations must be aimed at the concrete rather than the theoretical. Another was a broadside, signed by Beuys and his students Jonas Hafner and Johannes Stüttgen, urging people to exercise their free will against "sham democracy" and refuse to vote for established political parties.

The third element was based on a Fluxus "manifesto" Maciunas had prepared for the 1963 concert in Düsseldorf at which Beuys first performed. Maciunas cut up a dictionary definition of the Latin word "flux" and added his own text, which read, in part, "Purge the world of bourgeois sickness, 'intellectual,' professional and commercialized culture, purge the world of dead art, imitation, artificial art, abstract art, illusionistic art,—purge the world of 'Europeanism.'" These manifestos had been duplicated and tossed into the Düsseldorf audience as part of the performance of Benjamin Patterson's *Paper Piece.* Beuys altered Maciunas' manifesto by changing it to read, "Purge the world of Americanism."

Thus rectified, it became the third element in the multiple, which was issued in an edition of twenty-five and tossed back, so to speak, at Maciunas and Fluxus and, by implication, the rest of America.[17]

The history of Fluxus was writ by Maciunas in 1973 in his *Diagram of Historical Development of Fluxus and Other 4 Dimentional, Aural, Optic, Olfactory, Epithelial, and Tactile Art Forms* [*sic*]. The chart lists Beuys, along with Vostell, Paik, Charlotte Moorman, Vienna Aktionism, Gutai, and Happenings, as a direct descendant of "church procession, medieval fairs, Roman circus, Versailles Super Multi Media Spectacles, Wagnerism, Expressionism." On the other side of the page (literally) was Fluxus, whose forebears—and those of Yoko Ono, John Cage, Piero Manzoni, Robert Morris, Anna Halprin, and Conceptual Art—included Bauhaus, Duchamp, Dada, Futurism, Constructivism, and vaudeville.[18] This somewhat Cartesian bifurcation suggests Beuys' work could be aligned with the mystical, the sensual, the ritualistic, and—if one goes from Wagner to Hitler—perhaps even the sinister; "true" Fluxus, on the other hand, was intellectual, rational, socially engaged, and playful. Mind vs. body, Apollo vs. Dionysus, Fluxus vs. Beuys. Was Maciunas also implying America vs. Europe?

A DECADE EARLIER in Berlin, Wolf Vostell wondered what Robert Morris was thinking when he crawled out of his felt roll in New York, but, in fact, there was no American version of Beuys' actions. Some time during the month after

17 The multiple is titled *Manifesto, Text and Poster.* See no. 16 in Jörg Schellmann, ed., *Joseph Beuys, The Multiples* (Cambridge, Mass: Busch-Reisinger Museum; Munich: Edition Schellmann; and Minneapolis: Walker Art Center), 1997.

18 The chart is reproduced in Jon Hendricks, ed., *Fluxus Codex* (Detroit and New York: The Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection, in association with Harry N. Abrams, 1988), pp. 329–32.

his return from Düsseldorf, Morris had decided against going through with the collaboration and he apparently did nothing related to *DER CHEF/THE CHIEF Fluxus Song* that evening.[19] When Beuys asked him about it later, Morris answered that he hadn't believed that Beuys could actually pull off a performance of that length, and didn't want to try himself.[20]

While Beuys made an attempt in *DER CHEF/THE CHIEF, Fluxus Song*, to collaborate with Morris, and signaled that intent with a bilingual title, the action actually marks a major shift in Beuys' performance practice (Beuys scholar Uwe Schneede has even designated this action as the inception: "It all started with *THE CHIEF*.")[21] Among other things, it marked a significant move away from the collaborative; it was the first action that he performed alone, outside the context of a larger Fluxus concert (though he used Fluxus in his title), and the first time he rigorously controlled the performance space, adding sculptures and other objects to the room and boarding the entrance to keep spectators in a prescribed relationship to him. The length of the performance gave it the aspect of a physical challenge, which in turn introduced the shamanistic, *Übermensch* overtones that so many Americans have found distasteful in his work. Beuys' desire for total control—extending even to what Morris would do in New York ("I wrote everything down for him. I drew him a sketch . . . gave him all the instructions.")—must have ruined for Morris any sense that they were engaged in a collaborative venture. Instead, Beuys had taken the lead. Morris, no Echo, did not choose to follow.

Beuys did one performance with the San Francisco-based conceptualist Terry Fox, which seems to have been somewhat more balanced, if not, strictly speaking, a collaboration; according to Fox, they worked "simultaneously, although independently, but frequently came together, particularly in relation to sound."[22] The event took place on November 24, 1970, in a basement room at the Düsseldorf Kunstakademie; Fox had prepared a work entitled *Isolation Unit* and Beuys performed, in the same space, a work called *Action the Dead Mouse*.[23] Beuys wore a prototype of his *Felt Suit* multiple and carried a dead mouse in his hand, presenting its body to the spectators as he moved about the room. Fox washed his hands in a basin, smashed glass windowpanes with iron pipes, carefully smoked a cigarette without inhaling the smoke, and formed a cross of napalm-like cooking jelly, which he set aflame. Lighting was provided by a burning candle and a bare light bulb, sounds were the resonant tones of the pipes being tapped on the concrete floor, and the high-pitched ring of fruit seeds being spit into a metal bowl. The proceedings were documented in photographs taken by Ute

19 In a 1970 article Ursula Meyer quoted Morris as saying that he felt it would be impossible to duplicate Beuys' environment, but that he had "echoed specified sounds." See "How to Explain Pictures to a Dead Hare," *ArtNews* 68, no. 9 (January 1970), p. 57. However, Morris has since stated that he planned to perform the action at the Judson Church but didn't go through with it and never performed any sounds. Correspondence with the author, September 6, 1998.

20 René Block recalls overhearing their conversation in New York in 1974, when Beuys was there to perform *I Like America and America Likes Me*. See Schneede, *Die Aktionen*, p. 69.

21 See Schneede, "Beuys & Block," p. 107.

22 Terry Fox, quoted in *Terry Fox: Metaphorical Instruments* (Essen and Berlin: Museum Folkwang and daadgalerie, 1982), p. 30.

23 The action was first announced as a collaborative work between the two artists under the title *Isolation Unit*. Beuys later gave his contribution a title of its own, perhaps feeling it was too substantial a piece to be subsumed into Fox's work. See Schneede, *Die Aktionen*, pp. 306–11.

24 A portfolio of Klophaus' images was published in *interfunktionen* 6 (September 1971), pp. 34–54; and a 45-rpm record was made from the tape and later issued as part of the exhibition catalogue *Fish Fox Kos* (Santa Clara, Calif: De Saisset Museum & Art Gallery, University of Santa Clara, 1971).

Klophaus and on audiotape.[24]

Fox had traveled in Europe during the late 1960s and had come across Beuys' work in books and journals, particularly Vostell's *de-coll/age*.[25] He sought out Beuys in 1970: "I came to Düsseldorf and I wanted to do something, to make an action, and I didn't have the space. So I went to Beuys and met him the first time and he showed me all the rooms of the Academy where it was possible to make an action. Then we went to the cellar and it was wonderful there: so I decided to make my action there."[26]

It is not surprising that Fox was attracted to Beuys' thinking, given Fox's own focus on the artistic possibilities of sound, and his preoccupations with such Beuysian themes as illness, healing, and ritual (not to mention, as Brenda Richardson has pointed out, the absolute seriousness of both men's approaches).[27] Beuys' ideas clearly resonated for Fox in a way they had not for Morris; perhaps it was related that within a decade Fox had moved permanently to Europe, where there was strong interest in his work among curators and critics.

❖

LEST WE SEEM TO BE edging toward a generalization about German solemnity vs. American playfulness, let us not forget the high seriousness of Conceptualism as it developed in the United States. In summing up the era of Conceptual art, Lucy Lippard wrote, "On a practical level, Conceptual artists offered a clear-eyed look at what and where art itself was supposed to be; at the utopian extreme, some tried to visualize a new world and the art that would reflect or inspire it." During its time, she says, even though most of the art was apolitical, Conceptual art looked and sounded radical because of its anti-object, anti–status quo stance; this in turn aligned it with the political activism of the day. "Non-object art" she writes, was a response to "the need for an independent art that could not be bought and sold by the greedy sector that owned everything that was exploiting the world and promoting the Vietnam war."[28]

Despite the fact that, in this stridently anti-object moment, Beuys continued to produce objects by the thousands, his ideas could easily have been absorbed into Lippard's "utopian extreme," with its debates on the reorientation of art within society, the reform of the art distribution system, the decentralization of information, etc. Beuys' actions, too, were consonant with the development of body art and process art, and, indeed, he was embraced by some of the leading American critics and curators involved with Conceptual art. In 1970 curator

25 Related by Fox in the interview "Terry Fox: 'I wanted to have my mood affect their looks.'" *Avalanche* 2 (winter 1971), p. 75.

26 Brenda Richardson, *Terry Fox* (Berkeley: University Art Museum, 1973), n.p.

27 Ibid.

28 Lucy Lippard, *Six Years: The Dematerialization of the Art Object* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1997), pp. vii–xxii. Remarks quoted are from Lippard's preface to the new edition of her classic 1973 book.

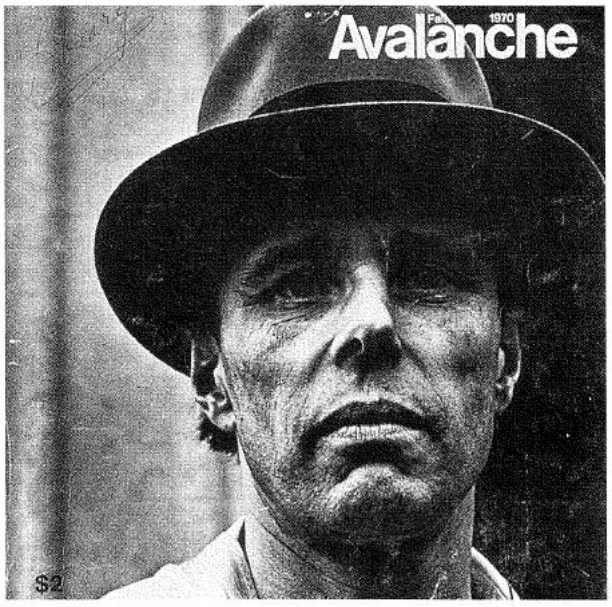

FIGURE 3.5
Cover of *Avalanche* #1, 1970. Collection of Walker Art Center, Minneapolis. Photograph: Shunk-Kender

Kynaston McShine purchased the important multiple *Sled* for the Museum of Modern Art's permanent collection and later that year screened Beuys' film *Eurasia Staff* in his important survey of Conceptualism, *Information*. That same year the inaugural issue of Willoughby Sharp's New York–based journal *Avalanche* bore an iconic photograph of Beuys on its cover (the magazine continued to give him extensive coverage during its brief life).

Beuys also merited a couple of dozen entries in Lippard's influential 1973 book *Six Years: The Dematerialization of the Art Object*, and he was (with Mario Merz) one of two European artists included in Grégoire Müller and Gianfranco Gorgoni's book *The New Avant-Garde*, also published in 1973, which traced an interdisciplinary strand in contemporary sculpture.[29]

A survey of English-language journal literature on Beuys between 1964 and 1973 gives a sense of viewers' unmediated reaction to Beuys' ideas and work during the early years of his presence outside continental Europe. In reviews of his first exhibitions in both Britain and the United States, he was called a "neo-dadaist" and an heir of Duchamp, a fundamental misunderstanding that led both writers to a point of frustrating mystification.[30] Beuys' statements were found to be in conflict with his practice: one writer noted that, though he claimed that "everyone is an artist," Beuys' performances were "par-

29 Kynaston McShine, ed., *Information* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1970); Lucy Lippard, *Six Years: The Dematerialization of the Art Object* (New York: Praeger, 1973); Grégoire Müller and Gianfranco Gorgoni, *The New Avant-Garde* (New York: Praeger, 1973).

30 See "A Kind of Death-In," *Design* (London) no. 262 (October 1970), p. 22; and Carl Belz, "Joseph Beuys' American Debut," *Art in America* 60, no. 5 (September–October 1972), pp. 102–103.

adoxically, very much one-man shows."[31] Detractors found his work polemical, maddeningly vague, simplistic, and pretentious; the few positive notices used words like "utopian," "revolutionary," "intense," and "fascinating."

But by far the most consistent reaction to the work, especially from American critics, was that it felt too German. In what seems to be the first review of Beuys' work in an English-language journal, a review of Documenta IV, the writer praised Beuys' contribution but noted that it "may be a puzzle to the foreign visitor" and concluded that it remains "a typically German phenomenon." Roberta Smith, in a review of Beuys' drawings, found him "fairly impressive," but representative of "an all-encompassing, romantic view of things which seems very European or German." Reviewing the Guggenheim's exhibition *Amsterdam-Paris-Düsseldorf* (which included only one sculpture and one multiple by Beuys), Carter Ratcliff found in him "the paradoxical case of an artist of international reputation whose work seems to have been emptied out in the process of crossing national borders." Even the positive assessments of Beuys' work sometimes had to concede the point: Lizzie Borden, in an insightful 1973 review, concluded somewhat wistfully that Beuys "seems to have little effect on American and English students." And, in 1972, when Sharp's *Avalanche* printed a lengthy excerpt of Beuys' public discussions at Documenta V, the editors made the extraordinary choice of setting the piece entirely in an old-fashioned, nearly illegible German gothic typeface. Perhaps this was an acknowledgment that, even when translated into English, Beuys' ideas remained deeply colored by their origin in German culture and history.[32]

The German issue had been pushed to a near-hysterical level in a 1971 article by John Anthony Thwaites, who questioned the whole of Beuys' practice, chiefly for the chasm between his utopian ideals and what he perceived as gross self-aggrandizement. He then aligned Beuys with "neo-Marxians" (a perception Beuys fought all his life) and ended by accusing Beuys of aestheticizing politics in the same manner as Hitler had.[33]

While equating the aesthetics of Beuys and Hitler may seem overwrought, the pairing is indicative of the discomfort felt in the United States and Britain with Beuys' relationship to Nazi politics. This has been and continues to be an extremely conflicted issue with American audiences, in large part because the subject has not often been discussed without either censure or apology. As scholars have recently begun to demonstrate, a large part of Beuys' artistic project seems to have been an attempt to heal the postwar German psyche. However, by refusing to approach the topic of the war openly in his discussions about his work, Beuys left himself open to criti-

31 Georgina Oliver, "Seven Exhibitions," *Connoisseur* 180, no. 723 (May 1972), p. 73.

32 Robert Kudielka, "Documenta IV: the German Contribution," *Studio International* 176, no. 902 (July/August 1968), pp. 29–32; Roberta Smith, "Joseph Beuys," *Arts* 47, no. 5 (March 1973), p. 74; Carter Ratcliff, "Amsterdam-Paris-Düsseldorf," *Artforum* 11, no. 4 (December 1972), pp. 89–91; Lizzie Borden, "Joseph Beuys," *Artforum* 11, no. 8 (April 1973), pp. 76–77; "Direkte Demokratie: Joseph Beuys Rapping at Documenta 5," *Avalanche* 5 (summer 1972), pp. 12–15.

33 John Anthony Thwaites, "The Ambiguity of Josef Beuys," *Art & Artists* (London) 6, no. 7 (November 1971), pp. 22–23. The same article had appeared a year earlier in French under the title "Joseph Beuys, les ambiguïtés" in *L'art vivant* (November 1970), and in German as "Das Rätsel Joseph Beuys" in *Kunstjahrbuch* 1 (November 1970).

34 See Gene Ray's essay in this volume.

cism for his role in it.[34]

Beuys had refused to visit the United States while its forces were deployed in Vietnam.[35] Perhaps as a result few examples of his sculpture or drawings arrived in the States before he did, and he was included in only a few exhibitions before the last American troops were evacuated from Southeast Asia in March 1973.[36] His first solo exhibition in the United States took place in June 1972 (during Beuys' boycott) at the Harcus-Krakow Gallery in Boston; the gallery worked solely through Beuys' dealer René Block and had no contact with the artist.[37] Appropriately, the exhibition consisted entirely of multiples, works of art that Beuys conceived as traveling vehicles meant to carry his ideas beyond the reach of his physical presence.

American critical response to Beuys before 1974 was thus based largely on exposure to his ideas (through the published exegeses of Willoughby Sharp, Ursula Meyer, and Georg Jappe and by secondhand accounts of his actions) and less on personal encounters with his work. Americans were introduced to Beuys in installments; this perhaps meant that they could never see his work as a synthesis of language, object, and action. Confronting it for the first time, reviewers were for the most part disappointed, deeming his objects—most often multiples—"by-products of his interest in politics and philosophy," or "almost meaningless and indeed, confusing and sinister, exhibited outside Beuys' life," or "cold and often rather meaningless documents robbed of the life and associations of the activity which created them."[38]

This reception must have disturbed Beuys, who made multiples precisely in order to communicate with the viewer in absentia, and whose methods of production rendered them hybrids that should have served to repair the very break that these critics mourned—the gulf between the artist's time and space and that of the audience. True, Beuys' multiples were mass-produced (sometimes even mechanically reproduced), but often by Beuys himself; many also bore the marks of his hand—signatures, stamps, drawings, or handwritten texts—that give them the character of personal messages from artist to viewer. Other editions had been worn, eaten, or hand-picked by the artist. The multiples thus had an intimate connection to their maker that should have allowed them to retain Walter Benjamin's celebrated aura. Instead, these traces of Beuys' presence seem to have served chiefly as reminders of what was missing, of an ever-widening rupture that could be filled only by the artist's presence.

Beuys visited America for the first time in January 1974 and returned only twice thereafter; Uwe Schneede has proposed that each of the three visits had a distinct character and contributed toward an ultimate effect that was quite

35 Caroline Tisdall, in "Beuys in America, or The Energy Plan for the Western Man," in *Joseph Beuys in America* (New York: Four Walls Eight Windows, 1990), p. 8.

36 Besides *Information* (1970) and *Amsterdam-Paris-Düsseldorf* (1972), my research indicates that Beuys was included in one other group show (*Multiples—The First Decade* [1971], at the Philadelphia Museum of Art) and four solo shows (in 1972 at Harcus-Krakow Gallery, Boston; in 1973 at Ronald Feldman Gallery and John Gibson Gallery, both New York; and Dayton's Gallery 12, Minneapolis).

37 Barbara Krakow, in a telephone conversation with the author, September 3, 1993.

38 Roberta Pancoast Smith, *Arts* 47, no. 6 (April 1973), p. 77; Peter Frank, "Joseph Beuys, 'The Most Fascinating of Enigmas,'" *ArtNews* 72, no. 4 (April 1973), p. 51; and Judith van Baron, "Joseph Beuys," *Arts* 48, no. 5 (February 1974), p. 57.

calculated by the artist. The first was a three-city lecture tour "to prepare the ground theoretically with talks and discussions." He returned five months later to perform *I Like America and America Likes Me*—it must have been titled with more than a touch of irony—which was meant to serve as a kind of object lesson for the conversations that had preceded it. He waited over five years before making his final trip, in the fall of 1979, to prepare his retrospective at the Guggenheim; Schneede calls this "the culmination of his encounter with America."[39]

Beuys' visits in 1974 generated curiously little media attention. The first, a lecture tour with stops in New York, Chicago, and Minneapolis, seems to have fallen flat despite a good deal of publicity and packed auditoriums in every city. His presentations were long, sometimes rambling, explanations of his aesthetic and political ideas, delivered in his competent, though heavily accented, English. Few published responses were positive, and even fewer contained considered critiques of his ideas. Instead, the level of mistrust was high: some reviewers were embarrassed by Beuys' earnest utopianism; some were insulted when what had been advertised as a dialogue played out more like a monologue; and others were simply baffled by his insistence on cloaking his objects with ideology. A breakfast meeting in New York with prominent feminist artists came off as patronizing and only angered the women with whom he had hoped to establish solidarity.[40] And Beuys' "coyote action," performed during his brief, second visit just four months later, went almost unnoticed by the art press.

The floodgates of American criticism opened five years later with Beuys' huge retrospective at the Guggenheim. With access now to the full range of his work, as well as to a comprehensive presentation of his ideas in English by Caroline Tisdall, the number and variety of commentators increased dramatically and their assessments became much more nuanced. At the same time, they were more strident at both ends: some writers fairly swooned while others were withering in their dismissal.

But the terms of the debate hadn't really changed. Rather than "too German" Beuys was now "profoundly German" or "quintessentially Germanic," but his German-ness was still an issue and some writers even drew brutal, extended parallels between Beuys' practice and Nazi ideology. As Fluxus had rejected his art as too egoistic and self-referential, many critics now sniffed that he was far too masterful at self-promotion and media manipulation; even his supporters wrinkled their noses at the "cult of personality" that overshadowed the true aim of his work. His position in art history was still being plotted in relation to

39 Schneede, "Beuys & Block," p. 117. Klaus Staeck and Gerhard Steidl, *Beuys in Amerika* (Heidelberg: Edition Staeck, 1987) documents the January lecture tour and Caroline Tisdall, *Joseph Beuys: Coyote* (Munich: Schirmer/Mosel, 1976) the action. Documentation on videotape includes Staeck and Steidl's "Beuys in America" (1974) and Willoughby Sharp's "Joseph Beuys' Public Dialogue" (1974), which documents the lecture at the New School for Social Research. A videotape of his lecture at the Minneapolis College of Art and Design can be found in that school's library.

40 Only Jeremy Gilbert-Rolfe, in "Public Dialogue with Joseph Beuys," *Artforum* 12, no. 6 (March 1974), p. 69, debated the content of Beuys' lecture. Other responses include Douglas Davis, "The Man from Düsseldorf," *Newsweek* 81, no. 3 (January 21, 1974), p. 100; Edit de Ak and Walter Robinson, "Beuys: Art Encagé," *Art in America* 62, no. 6 (November–December 1974), pp. 76–79; Peter Plagens, "Peter and the Pressure Cooker," *Artforum* 12, no. 10 (June 1974), pp. 28–33; and April Kingsley, "New York Letter," *Art International* (Lugano) 18, no. 3 (March 1974), pp. 49–50. Some of the women artists who met with Beuys in 1974—including Mary Miss and Dorothea Rockburne—participated in a panel discussion on the subject during the symposium "Considering Joseph Beuys" at the New School for Social Research, New York, April 3–8, 1993.

Duchamp (for some, he was fatally distant from that center). Many dismissed his utopianism as harmless and silly, comparing him unfavorably to fellow German (and, by implication, truly radical) Hans Haacke, whose politics had resulted in his being kicked out of the Guggenheim in 1971. A significant number of writers—despite a comprehensive installation conceived as an exegesis for Americans and supported by an English-language catalogue and Acoustiguide tour—still found Beuys' work enmeshed in a history, culture, and language so foreign that they were unable to connect to it.[41] For a decade or so after the Guggenheim retrospective, public dialogue about Beuys in this country remained static. The artist himself did not return to the United States, and Americans had to wait until 1993—seven years after his death—for another stateside museum to mount a major exhibition.

IN HIS MUCH-QUOTED FINAL PUBLIC SPEECH "Talking About One's Own Country," delivered at the Munich Kammerspiele in 1985, Beuys made an illuminating assertion about the basis and orientation of his work. Forty years after the end of World War II, he said, Germany still faced the difficult task of bringing about its rebirth. He proposed that this "resurrection" could be achieved through "the fountainhead of what we call the German language" and outlined the path his own work had taken through language into tangible form. He went on to state that "the concept of a people is elementally coupled with its language."[42]

The latter statement has long been understood (and even exploited by colonizing nations including Germany), but Beuys' claim that his work is fundamentally language-based is suggestive. Certainly he explored language and sound as sculptural forms in their own right, but his entire oeuvre also functions in some ways as a language: it is a closed system whose components have meaning independent of their material form. Those meanings are learned through reiteration and repeated use in many different contexts. There is no one signature work to which a viewer can turn for a concise presentation of all of Beuys' ideas: understanding comes gradually, like mastery of any language. Beuys seems to have been attempting nothing less than the creation of a new language that, through its intimate connection to Germany's history, culture, and mother tongue, would be a restorative for his country.

With this analogy it becomes somewhat easier to understand the obstacles Beuys' work might present to American viewers; it also becomes possible to

41 Some two dozen articles about the Guggenheim retrospective appeared in the American press; positive assessments outnumbered negative. Favorable pieces included John Russell, "The Shaman as Artist," *New York Times Magazine* (October 28, 1979); John Perreault, "Felt Forum," *Soho Weekly News* 7, no. 5 (November 1–7, 1979); Jack Burnham, "*Götterdämmerung* at the Guggenheim," *The New Art Examiner* 7, no. 3 (December 1979); Stuart Morgan, "Joseph Beuys," *Flash Art* 94–95 (January–February 1980); Kay Larson, "Joseph Beuys: Shaman, sham, or one of the most brilliant artists of our time?" *ArtNews* 79, no. 4 (April 1980); and Donald Kuspit, "Beuys: Fat, Felt and Alchemy," *Art in America* 68, no. 5, (May 1980). The most famously negative was Benjamin H.D. Buchloh's, delivered in two texts: "Beuys: Twilight of the Idol/Preliminary Notes for a Critique," *Artforum* 18, no. 5 (January 1980) and, with Rosalind Krauss and Annette Michelson, "Joseph Beuys at the Guggenheim," *October* 12 (spring 1980). Kim Levin, in "Joseph Beuys: The New Order," *Arts* 54, no. 8 (April 1980), found his work redolent of tarnished Germanic ideologies and, though intended to heal, ultimately "too bitter a pill for us to swallow."

42 Joseph Beuys, "Talking about One's Own Country: Germany," in *In Memoriam Joseph Beuys: Obituaries, Essays, Speeches*, trans. Timothy Nevill (Bonn: Inter Nationes, 1986), p. 35ff.

make a case that the work is "inherently German." Beuys' final speech suggests that the healing aspect of his practice was not meant to function outside Germany. There, the language he invented (a synthesis of his objects, actions, and words) could actively bring about a change in cultural identity (which itself is a synthesis of language, history, and culture). After his death, his objects might continue to speak, but perhaps only to those who understood what they were hearing.

Does the work also qualify as "universal"? To say that it does would be to accept Beuys' implication that, while his work was aimed specifically at healing Germany's debased postwar condition, this condition was only one case of an illness that had also infected the rest of the Western world; and, further, that his work could be used to treat the American version of this disease as well as the German. If this is true, and the undeniable impact of his work outside Germany suggests that it is, then his objects are apparently able to detach themselves from the rest of his linguistic system and find meaning on their own. If not, his work will become trapped in a self-referential loop like the Beuysian hare that gazes at its own reflection. For it takes a lot of effort to learn a new language, and only the enraptured speak in tongues. {See Plate 3.1}

Gene Ray

4} JOSEPH BEUYS AND THE AFTER-AUSCHWITZ SUBLIME

IN ONE OF HIS LAST MAJOR PUBLIC addresses, delivered at the Münchner Kammerspiele in November, 1985, as part of a lecture series entitled "Talking About One's Own Country," Joseph Beuys reflected on his decision to become an artist. After beginning studies in the natural sciences, he concluded that his "possibility" would not be realized within the confines of a narrow scientific specialty. His "gift" was "to initiate all-embracingly with respect to the task that the people had." He turned to art and developed a notion of sculpture that began with language and concepts, because that enabled him to produce "forward-looking images." But his decision had also to do, he continued, with his realization that such an art, linked to the German language and to the people who speak it, "was also the only way to overcome all the still racially-driven machinations, terrible sins, and not-for-describing black marks, without losing sight of them for even a moment."[1]

The project, which for two decades was both the subject and the asserted goal of Beuys' public discourse, and which is now firmly associated with his name, combined an ambitiously programmatic "expanded concept of art" with a deep engagement with the cultural tradition. While the first part of the project, striving for social transformation, was purported by Beuys to be "the end of moder-

1 Joseph Beuys, "Reden über das eigene Land" in *Hans Mayer, Joseph Beuys, Margarete Mitscherlich-Nielson, Albrecht Schönherr. Reden über das eigene Land: Deutschland* 3 (Munich: C. Bertelsmann, 1985) and reissued as Joseph Beuys, *Sprechen über Deutschland* (Wangen/Allgäu: FIU-Verlag, 1995), pp. 10–11: "Daß dieses auch der einzige Weg sei, um alle noch im Rassistischen treibenden Umtriebe, schrecklichen Sünden, nicht zu beschreibenden schwarzen Male zu überwinden, ohne sie auch nur einen Augenblick aus dem Blickfeld zu verlieren, ließ mich entscheiden für die Kunst."

In this context, "*schwarze Male*" carries the additional possible meaning "black/dark/dirty times." There would also seem to be a subtle difference between "*unbeschreiblich*" ("indescribable/enormous/staggering") and "*nicht zu beschreibenden*" (literally, "not-for-describing/not-to-be-described"). Taking into account the semantic possibilities which the German holds open, Beuys

nity, the end of all traditions,"[2] the second would seem to have rehearsed, in accordance with Ezra Pound's famous dictum, well-established modernist strategies for "making it new." The tension between the pull of tradition and the need to break with it fueled an enormous material production: drawings, sculpture, multiples, monumental installations. Beuys' objects are relics of his utopian program—of the public persona, the unceasing pronouncements and provocations, the lectures and actions, the challenging exhortations to create a new social order. But they are also relics of a conflicted relationship between the two parts of the project. Arguing for a conception of art that would take society and the whole world as the materials of a vast collaborative *Gesamtkunstwerk*, he nevertheless supplied the better known art world institutions with a highly individualized and stylistically coherent body of objects. The much-repeated claim that Beuys' life was his art, or at least that the two are inseparable, assumes that Beuys' stated intentions were always successfully realized in the works. As a few critics have noted, the reality is more complicated.[3]

As if that were not enough, there is alongside the "announced" project another one which the artist for the most part left unacknowledged. This parallel project's gaze was fixed somberly on the catastrophe and genocide of the Nazi period and encoded the production with another, grimmer level of meaning. Evoking and avowing the Holocaust through various strategies, Beuys' pieces and actions can also be read as objects and gestures of mourning. As the cited passage makes clear, it would be wrong to say that Beuys never acknowledged this other project.[4] But he never emphatically asserted it as a project per se, in the way he did tirelessly on behalf of the "expanded concept of art." It is clear from his words that he preferred to speak of the future and of the "forward-looking" aspect of his activities. However, on this occasion at least, Beuys acknowledged that the "task, which the people had (*die Aufgabe, die das Volk hätte*)," was inextricably linked to the legacy of the war years. But if his art—perhaps, as he implied, through the role the German language—carried the capacity to "overcome (*überwinden*)" "terrible sins (*schrecklichen Sünden*)" and "not-for-describing black marks (*nicht zu beschreibenden schwarzen Male*)," Beuys nevertheless chose in this regard to let the objects speak for themselves.[5]

This choice has proven fateful to Beuys' reception as an artist. Critics have focused on the announced project—on the expanded concept of art and the engagement with tradition—to the virtual exclusion of the second. Kim Levin had already remarked on this state of affairs in her perceptive review of Beuys' first Guggenheim retrospective. "There is," she wrote, "a secret narrative in Beuys, of which no one dares speak. Autobiography is now an accepted content for art;

seems to imply, or acknowledge, that these "black marks," related to "still racially-driven machinations" and "terrible sins" are not to be talked about among the German people, or at least can only be referenced indirectly. Hence, as strong as the wording is, neither the Jews nor the Holocaust is named. And yet it is clear that this "*überwinden*" ("overcoming"), without losing sight of, belongs to the "*Aufgabe*" ("task") of the German people.

Cf. Timothy Nevill's English trans. in Joseph Beuys, "Talking about One's Own Country: Germany" in Wilfried Wiegand et al., *In Memoriam Joseph Beuys: Obituaries, Essays, Speeches* (Bonn: Inter Nationes, 1986), p. 37.

2 Beuys, *Sprachen über Deutschland*, p.13; "Talking about One's Own Country: Germany," p. 38.

3 What is called "life" here can only be the sum of Beuys' public postures and utterances, including self-interpretations and his own account of his intentions. In general, both admirers and denigrators have accepted or rejected Beuys' life and art together, in an all-or-nothing approach. The number of critics who have acknowledged a disjunction, or the possibility of one, between the works and Beuys' words about them remains small. I count Edit de Ak and Walter Robinson, "Beuys: Art Engagé," *Art in America* (Nov./Dec. 1974): 78; Kim Levin, "Joseph Beuys: The New Order," *Arts Magazine* (April 1980) and reprinted in Levin, *Beyond Modernism: Essays on Art from the 70s and 80s* (New York: Harper & Row, 1988), p. 176; Thierry de Duve, "Le dernier des prolétaires," *Art Studio* 4, Special Issue (1987) and trans. as "Joseph Beuys, or The Last of the Proletarians," *October* 45 (Summer 1988): 58–59; and Armin Zweite, *Joseph Beuys: Natur Materie Form* (Düsseldorf: Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen; Munich: Schirmer/Mosel, 1992), pp. 37–39.

In so far as the objects bear words and the actions include speech, one cannot always distinguish clearly between Beuys' art and his discourse. Still, the distinction is a crucial one. At the very least, any artist's self-interpretations must be tested against the

the atrocities of Nazi Germany are not."[6] She went on to suggest that many of the pieces installed by Beuys as "stations" descending the Guggenheim's spiral ramps could be seen as allusions to the Holocaust, and in a later essay, she suggested that this "secret narrative" had been uncovered and accepted in the wake of the retrospective exhibition.[7] In fact, the analysis of Holocaust references in Beuys which she implicitly called for has never materialized. If Beuys' second project—the project of mourning—has any place at all in the literature, it is a marginal one, unsupported by any systematic reading of the works as a whole.

The reasons for this are complex and in America perhaps were exacerbated by widespread critical unease in the wake of Benjamin H.D. Buchloh's rhetorically forceful attack on the mythical foundations of Beuys' public persona.[8] In focusing on Beuys' asserted project and in accepting the purported unity of his life and work, critics have restricted themselves to a general dependence on Beuys' own discourse and self-interpretations. Such sources are of course primary for art historians seeking to reconstruct Beuys' intention or the genesis of particular works. But critics, too, whether discussing an action, interpreting an installation, or analyzing Beuys' theory of social sculpture, have followed the leads and borrowed the terms provided by the artist himself. "One is almost helpless," Rosalind Krauss bemoaned in 1980, "without the explanations supplied by the artist."[9] This is to say that the contexts by which the works are explained have been the biographical and the art-historical: private history and art history.

The Holocaust dimension of Beuys' work only becomes visible, however, in the light of a different context: that of major or public history, and in particular the massively-traumatic public history of the years from 1933 to 1945. Indeed, only by bracketing the distractions of the artist's still-charismatic afterimage and of art world lineages and rivalries do Beuys' avowal and evocation of the genocide emerge. One needs to look not to the story of the Crimean plane crash or to Beuys' personal wounds and war experiences, but to the shared, publicly-available facts and images circulating around that time.[10] Beuys' words alone do not suffice to establish the existence of a project of mourning. Any capacity for a "mourning effect" will have to be found in the objects and actions themselves. But if one works one's way through Beuys' oeuvre attentive to this dimension, then what I have called a "second" project will come compellingly into view. Once it has, it may be impossible to look at Beuys in the same way again.

This is not at all to imply that the announced project is unimportant, or that Beuys' objects do not mean what he and critics after him have said they mean. Uncovering the project of mourning as it is coded into Beuys' art will not negate the established interpretive approaches so much as deepen them. It gives

production itself. Ultimately at stake here are issues of intentionality and the generation of meaning which are, within a general shift in intellectual focus from production to reception, still much-contested.

4 Numerous published statements and interviews evince Beuys' usual reluctance to speak of the Holocaust and his tendency to deflect direct questions about it into discussions of the present or future. See, for example, his discussions with Caroline Tisdall included in the catalog to the Guggenheim's 1979/80 Beuys' retrospective: Caroline Tisdall, *Joseph Beuys* (New York: The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, 1979), pp. 21–23. The few important exceptions will be discussed at the end of the essay.

5 Beuys, *Sprechen über Deutschland*, p. 10. See also note 1 above. Alain Borer concludes from this that the Jews represent a "*dimension spirituelle absente*" in Beuys' thinking: Borer, "Déploration de Joseph Beuys," in Fabrice Hergott and Marion Hohlfeldt, eds., *Joseph Beuys* (Paris: Éditions du Centre Pompidou, 1994), p. 29. Borer's essay for the Centre Pompidou's 1994 Beuys catalog has now been trans., with some modifications, as "Beweinung des Joseph Beuys" in Lothar Schirmer, ed., *Joseph Beuys: Eine Werkübersicht, 1945–1985* (Munich: Schirmer/Mosel, 1996) and in English as "A Lament for Joseph Beuys," in Lothar Schirmer, ed., *The Essential Joseph Beuys* (Cambridge: MIT, 1997). See p. 29, both editions.

6 Levin, op. cit., p. 176.

7 Levin, "Introduction" in Carin Kuoni, ed., *Energy Plan for the Western Man: Joseph Beuys in America* (New York: Four Walls Eight Windows, 1990), p. 2.

8 Benjamin H.D. Buchloh, "Beuys: The Twilight of the Idol, Preliminary Notes for a Critique," *Artforum* (Jan. 1980) and reprinted in this volume, pp. 199. On the influence of this text in America, see Christopher Phillips, "Back to Beuys," *Art in America* (Sept. 1993): 90; and David Levi Strauss, "American Beuys: 'I Like America and America Likes Me,'" *Parkett* 26 (Dec. 1990): 124. Buchloh's essay also looms large behind the structure of the Tate Gallery

us, furthermore, an explanation for the force of Beuys' major works. At its best, Beuys' material production—the objects and installations that have outlived the artist himself—retains a power to strike, astonish and disturb us for which the biographical and art-historical explanations cannot account. In the history of aesthetics, there is a name for these effects: the sublime.[11]

In what follows, I will review what can be called Beuys' structural relation to public history, and then turn to the small number of works and episodes which deal explicitly, through content or title, with the Holocaust.

THE GENERAL SHAPE OF Beuys' biography is well known. Only a few major markers of its chronology need be reviewed here, in order to establish Beuys' position in relation to public, (as opposed to private) history. Born in Krefeld in 1921, Beuys grew up there and in Kleve and was twelve in the year Hitler came to power. After 1936, he belonged to the Hitlerjugend and, after the outbreak of war, was trained as a radioman, gunner and later as a pilot for the Luftwaffe. Beuys flew combat missions on the eastern front and was wounded numerous times. Late in the war, he was transferred to a paratroop division on the western front. After incarceration in a British internment camp at war's end, he returned to Kleve and in 1947 began formal studies at the Staatliche Kunstakademie in Düsseldorf. The precise details of Beuys' war career have been the subject of much speculation and dispute.[12] But there is no contesting the fact that Beuys belonged to what some cultural critics have called the "perpetrating generation."

That is to say that as far as we know, he played no direct role in and did not personally benefit from the Holocaust, but did nothing either to actively resist it. How much Beuys may have known about the genocide at the time, or what options would have been open to a twenty-one year old airman in the Luftwaffe, do not effect the basic relation to the Holocaust which history imposed upon him. Without knowing what Beuys felt or thought about the Holocaust at the time or in retrospect, it is perfectly clear that he, like every German veteran of his generation, had an inescapable relation with that catastrophe. Structurally, it makes no difference at all whether Beuys acknowledged this relation or was even fully aware of it. Nor did that relation change when Beuys became an artist. He remained that which public history had marked him: a veteran of the military forces of the Nazi regime. Issues of intention aside, then, his artistic production necessarily and inescapably relates to the massively traumatic events of that time. Whatever their relation to Beuys' private history may have been, his art actions and objects also

Liverpool's 1994 critical forum on Beuys. See David Thistlewood, ed., *Joseph Beuys: Diverging Critiques* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press and Tate Gallery Liverpool, 1995).

9 Benjamin H.D. Buchloh, Rosalind Krauss and Annette Michelson, "Joseph Beuys at the Guggenheim," *October* 12 (Spring 1980): 17.

10 Interpretations attempting to put Beuys "on the couch" in order to argue that his art enacts a personal catharsis of the war years have been, in my opinion, mere speculation, reckless more often than not, and of very slight value. Cf. Donald Kuspit, "Joseph Beuys: The Body of the Artist," *Artforum* (Summer, 1991) and reprinted in Thistlewood, ed., op. cit., pp. 95-105.

11 In Western aesthetics, the sublime has traditionally been associated with four names: Pseudo-Longinus, Nicolas Boileau-Despréaux, Edmund Burke and Immanuel Kant. My phrase "after-Auschwitz sublime" marks the return to this tradition in postwar continental thought and theory, especially in the writings of Jacques Derrida, Jean-Luc Nancy, Jean-François Lyotard and Slavoj Zizek, and links that return to the critical reflections, more familiar in this context, of Theodor Adorno. For an orienting discussion, with citations, of this trend and its relation to Beuys and postwar art, see the "Introduction" and "Conclusion" to my "The Use and Abuse of the Sublime: Joseph Beuys and Art after Auschwitz," Dissertation (Coral Gables, Florida, 1997).

12 For the generally-accepted chronology, see Götz Adriani, Winifried Konnertz and Karin Thomas, *Joseph Beuys* (Cologne: Dumont, 1994). The challenge to Beuys' account of the war years began with Buchloh's 1980 *Artforum* essay, already cited. For the latest version of that challenge, see Frank Gieseke and Albert Markert, *Flieger, Filz, und Vaterland: Eine Erweiterte Beuys Biographie* (Berlin: Elefanten Press, 1996).

relate to the Holocaust. Even if they did not refer to the Holocaust at all, they would still, so to speak, refer to the Holocaust. They must by virtue of the fact that their maker had served in the Luftwaffe while Jews and others were systematically murdered in Europe.

Reviewing that brutal fact will give no pleasure to many. But it does Beuys no credit to pretend that the situation is otherwise. If I have seemed to labor this point, it is only because the analysis of Beuys' project of mourning cannot get usefully underway until that relation has been formulated in the clearest possible language. Having done that, it can be seen that what Beuys personally knew, thought and felt about the Holocaust and to what extent he consciously, deliberately made it a theme of his art are questions that raise further issues. What is plain from the basic fact of his association with the Nazi period, is that we, as spectators and critics, are right to look in his art for such a content. We are justified in asking, are perhaps obligated to ask: what do these objects have to say about the Holocaust?

It can be quickly answered that they say a great deal. Beuys' strategy for evoking and avowing the Holocaust became one of indirection. The strongest works function through formal resemblance, material affinity, and allegory, rather than through direct representation or confrontation. But there were, early on, projects and actions which were explicitly concerned with the Holocaust and its place in public history; others alluded to the genocide bluntly and unmistakably. The analysis of the project of mourning must begin here.

❖

IN 1957 AND 1958, Beuys participated in the first round of an international competition for a memorial on the site of the Auschwitz II-Birkenau killing center, west of Krakow. Although mention of Beuys' participation in this juried competition can be found in the literature,[13] a fuller picture of the episode has only begun to emerge in the last few years. Two works on paper relating to Beuys' proposal, now in Schloß Moyland, were published with a text by Franz Joseph van der Grinten in 1995.[14] One of those was exhibited with eight more related drawings in Berlin in 1997.[15] Another work on paper and two wooden models can be found in the Beuys Block in Darmstadt.[16] The work on paper, a fold-out, panoramic photograph of the Auschwitz camp complex over-drawn by Beuys, was originally part of the application materials for the memorial competition. It is now in the vitrine *Auschwitz Demonstration 1956-1964*, in the company of thirteen other separately titled and dated objects, including a portable stove used by Beuys in his action at the 1964 Festival of New Art in Aachen. In a valuable and insightful

13 See, for example, Tisdall, op. cit., p. 21.

14 *Monument for Auschwitz* (1958) and *Design for Auschwitz Memorial* (1957), in Franz Joseph van der Grinten, "Beuys Beitrag zum Wettbewerb für das Auschwitzmonument," in Inge Lorenz, ed., *Joseph Beuys Symposium Kranenburg 1995* (Basel: Museum Schloß Moyland and Weise Verlag, 1995), pp. 199–203. The first had been published previously as fig. 71 in Franz Joseph and Hans van der Grinten, *Joseph Beuys: Wasserfarben/Watercolours, 1936–1963* (Frankfurt/Main, 1975), pp. 48–49; and as fig. 31 in Tisdall, op. cit., p. 22.

15 Figs. 2, 79–f, 280, 281 and 282 in the exhibition catalog: Eckhart Gillen, ed., *Deutschlandbilder: Kunst aus einem geteilten Land* (Cologne: Dumont, 1997), simultaneously in English as *German Art from Beckmann to Richter: Images of a Divided Country* (Cologne: Dumont, 1997), pp. 272–273.

16 In the Hessisches Landesmuseum, Darmstadt: *Auschwitz* (1957), an over-drawn brochure fragment, now in *Auschwitz Demonstration* (Vitrine 4, Room 5); *Transformation Sign* (1957), a pine construction now in Vitrine 1, Room 5; and Title Unknown, a smaller nutwood construction, now part of the cabinet assemblage *Scene from the Stag Hunt* 1961 in Room 2. See Eva, Wenzel and Jessyka Beuys, *Joseph Beuys Block Beuys* (Munich: Schirmer/Mosel, 1990), pp. 182–185, 158–161 and 40–73, respectively. A third model, of pewter and zinc, *Untitled (Table with Crystal)*, is in a private collection but is reproduced as fig. 18 in *Transit Joseph Beuys: Plastische Arbeiten 1947–1985* (Krefeld: Kaiser Wilhelm Museum, 1991), p. 54.

essay on this vitrine, Mario Kramer neatly establishes the chronology and relations between these objects and events, thereby clearing up incomplete and sometimes conflicting accounts in the literature.[17]

The juried competition for the Auschwitz memorial was announced in 1957 by an association of Holocaust survivors calling itself the "Comitée international d'Auschwitz." The British sculptor Henry Moore chaired the jury, and the Austrian resistance fighter Hermann Langbein acted as secretary for the committee from Vienna. Beuys was one of 426 artists who submitted proposals before the March, 1958, deadline.[18] His design consisted of a series of three elevated geometric forms— "landmarks," Beuys called them[19]—tracing the way from the camp's main entry gate to the site of the gas chambers and crematoria. There, a polished silver bowl-form would have been positioned to catch and reflect the sunlight. The three landmarks, each repeating the same slab-like, asymmetrical quadrangle in diminishing scale and each elevated on two pillars, were meant to function as additional gates along the infamous railway and ramps to the silver "monstrance."[20] According to Kramer, Beuys produced some two dozen sketches and reworked photographs, in addition to two wooden models and one pewter and zinc model, in the process of developing his proposal.[21]

The Darmstadt vitrine *Auschwitz Demonstration* included sculptural objects acquired by Karl Ströher and was arranged by Beuys in its present configuration in 1968. In addition to the overdrawn fold-out pages from the competition materials already mentioned, the vitrine contains a bronze or brass plate, cast from a delicate wood relief; a corroded and discolored metal disc with a blood sausage and sausage fragments tied with string; the two-burner portable stove used in the Aachen action and two cast wax blocks; two straw-filled wooden tubs, one containing a mummified rat or field mouse and the other, a manipulated folding carpenter's ruler; a crucifix modeled from clay and an old wafer or biscuit in a shallow soup bowl; a pencil drawing of a traumatized girl; four rings of shriveled, discolored blood sausage; and a centrally-positioned object group consisting of two medicine phials, a third bottle, a pair of sun lamp goggles and an aluminum tag on a string.[22] Kramer has ably discussed these objects, and in his essay in this volume, Max Reithmann offers additional insights into the related pieces in the Darmstadt Beuys Block.

Three other early and unambiguous references to the Holocaust complement the objects in *Auschwitz Demonstration*. *Death and the Maiden*, now in the Ludwig Rinn collection, is a 1957 sketch in thinned paint on the back of a manila envelope.[23] The envelope bears two ink stamps, prominently visible to the right of the girl's head: one reads "Comitée international d'Auschwitz"; the other,

17 Mario Kramer, "Art Nourishes Life—Joseph Beuys: Auschwitz Demonstration, 1956–1964," in Gillen, ed., op. cit., pp. 261–271. The debt my discussion owes at this point to Kramer's careful essay, originally a lecture given at the 1995 Beuys symposium at The New School in New York, will be obvious. His essay should be read in parallel with my abbreviated account here. As will be seen, however, I part from Kramer's conclusions that Beuys' position with respect to the Nazi period is "very clear and unambiguous" (p. 270) and that Beuys' early work can unproblematically be read as "a type of catharsis" (p. 261).

18 The winning design—a stark, pierced granite ramp by a team of Polish sculptors and architects led by Oskar and Zofia Hansen—was not accepted by the Committee and was never built. A compromise monument was dedicated in 1967. Robert Jan van Pelt and Deborah Dwork, *Auschwitz, 1270 to the Present* (New Haven/London: Yale, 1996), pp. 375–378 and Jochen Spielmann, "Auschwitz Is Debated in Oswiecim: The Topography of Remembrance," in James E. Young, *The Art of Memory: Holocaust Memorials in History* (Munich: Prestel; New York: The Jewish Museum, 1944), pp. 169–173. Cf. Adriani, op. cit., p. 42; Kramer, op. cit., pp. 261–262; Schirmer, ed., op. cit., p. 230; Van der Grinten, op. cit., p. 199.

Four documents relating to Beuys' participation are now in the archives of the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum: the registration of his entry, dated 15 March 1958; official confirmation of its receipt, dated 15 April 1958; a technical description of the proposal; and a photograph, marked "K283," of the two models, one of wood and one of pewter and zinc, submitted with the entry package.

19 "*Wahrzeichen*," in the written text accompanying Beuys' proposal, quoted in Van der Grinten, op. cit., p. 200.

20 Ibid. Franz van der Grinten has noted the relation of the bowl-form to the *Berglamp* drawings and sculptures (op. cit., pp. 200–201).

21 Kramer, op. cit., p. 261.

22 The corresponding titles (trans.) and dates are: *Fish*, 1956; *Storage*

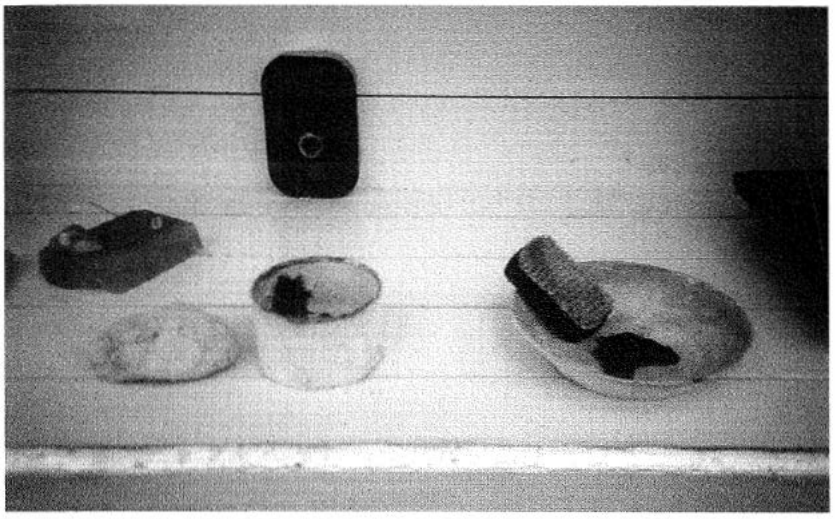

FIGURE 4.1
Joseph Beuys
KZ= Essen 2, KZ=Essen 1, 1963 (1998 vitrine installation view)
Plaster, painted can (*KZ=Essen 2*); painted porcelain dish, fingernail brush (*KZ=Essen 1*), c. 6 x 10 cm (*KZ=Essen 2*); c. 4 x 21 cm (KZ=Essen 1).
Neue Galerie, Staatliche Museen, Kassel

"Hermann Langbein, Wien 10, Weigandhof 5." As Kramer notes, the stamps from the Auschwitz memorial competition mark this watercolor as much more than the recycling of an old art-historical figure. Finally, two spare object groups now in Kassel echo the Last Supper in the Konzentrationslager theme from *Auschwitz Demonstration. KZ = Essen 1* and *KZ = Essen 2*, both from 1963, gather together a shallow bowl, a nail brush, a bit of plaster and a painted tin can.[24]

These pieces, then, represent a consensual core of works for which the Holocaust is accepted, for reasons of title or indisputable documentary evidence, as the primary referent. But while the directness of their titles may be unique in Beuys' oeuvre, the strategies by which the objects themselves evoke the catastrophe are not. Working from the linkages and material codes established here, general rules for reading such strategies across the rest of Beuys' oeuvre will soon be drawn. First, though, it is necessary to turn to the portable stove from Beuys' July 1964 action.

BEUYS' PART IN THE FLUXUS-INSPIRED Festival of New Art in the Audi-Max at the Technische Hochschule Aachen marks a crucial point in Beuys' emer-

Battery (Sausage), 1963; *Heat Sculpture*, 1964; *First Rat*, 1957; *Lightning*, 1964; *Cross*, 1957, *Sick Girl with Ambulance in Background*, 1957; *+ - Sausage*, 1964; *Bottle with Fat (Solid)*, 1962; *Bottle with Fat (Liquid)*, 1962; *Iodine (Bottle)*, 1962; *Sun Lamp Goggles*, 1964; *Non-Identification Tag (Aluminum)*, 1960. Eva Beuys, op. cit., pp. 182-187; and Kramer, op. cit.

23 Pl. 40 in Ann Temkin and Bernice Rose, *Thinking Is Form: The Drawings of Joseph Beuys* (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Museum of Art; New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1993), p. 150; pl. 48 in Schirmer, ed., op. cit.; and pl. 59/cat. 151 in Zweite, op. cit.

24 In the Staatliche Museen, Kassel, and pls. 72, 73 in Schirmer, ed., op. cit. In general usage, which Beuys has followed, as well as in wartime SS documents, "*Konzentrationslager*" is a blanket term encompassing what historians have come to distinguish as two different kinds of camps: prison/labor camps, *Konzentrationslager* in the strict sense, and killing centers, or *Vernichtungslager*—literally, "extermination camps." I leave this title in the German because *essen* does not force a choice between its three possibilities: "food," "meal" and, more actively, "eating."

gence as an artist.[25] It is the occasion of the first appearance of his "Life Course/Work Course," the textual self-presentation that would become the basic document of his public persona. And it resulted in the famous Heinrich Riebesehl photograph of Beuys with blood streaming from his nose which, widely published in the press, transformed the struggling artist into a media personality. Yet for all its importance, the event is only now emerging from clouds of confusion. The measure of that confusion can be taken by noting that although the event took place on the twentieth anniversary of the failed July 20th attempt on Hitler's life, the participating artists themselves have publicly disagreed about whether that timing was intentional or accidental.[26]

The event began with a performance by Bazon Brock, which included the repetition, at high volume, of the pre-recorded rhetorical question from Joseph Goebbel's infamous 1943 "Do you want total war?" speech at the Berliner Sportpalast. Reportedly, the mostly-student audience of about 800 immediately became loud and abusive. Beuys then began the first sequence of his action, a progressively distorted piano accompaniment, while Brock was still on stage. Beuys ritually revealed and displayed a number of objects that night, but what concerns us here is his use of the portable stove. During the *Kukei* sequence of his action, he activated the stove's two burners and mimed the increasing heat with open hands. By his own account, he then melted some blocks of fat and warmed a zinc *Fat Box*.[27] During another sequence with a felt wrapped copper staff some time later, a flask containing acid was knocked over, apparently by audience members who had stormed the stage. One, claiming his suit had been splattered, attacked Beuys and struck him in the face.

Both the July 20th context of the action and the knee-jerk response of the audience suggest that the melting of fat on the burner was a blunt allusion to the crematoria of the Holocaust. Beuys' later inclusion of the stove and two blocks of fat/wax in *Auschwitz Demonstration* confirms this view. In the artist's own self-interpretations, fat and felt are ambiguous, but ultimately benign and redemptive materials. They are discussed in the literature as the reportedly life-saving substances with which he was rescued by Tartars after the Crimean plane crash—the episode Peter Nisbet, in his remarks here, has aptly called "the Story." Sculpturally, fat is said to signify its capacity to change its form in response to changes in temperature. The fat corners and boxes, introduced in July of the previous year, enact this passage back and forth between solid and liquid, form and formlessness. But it must be said unequivocally that fat first of all refers to the body and to the vulnerability of the body to fire. Beuys could have demonstrated the sculptural principle by simply using wax. There was no

25 The long title of Beuys' action, indicating its planned component sequences, is *Kukei, akopee-Nein!, Brown Cross, Fat Corners, Model Fat Corners*. The clearest account of the Aachen event is now Adam Oeller's "Fluxus at the Border: Aachen, July 20, 1964," in Gillen, ed., op. cit., pp. 200–207. The standard account of Beuys' action remains Uwe M. Schneede, *Joseph Beuys: Die Aktionen* (Stuttgart: Gerd Hatje, 1994), action 4, pp. 42–56.

26 The event was not originally conceived to take place on that date, but early on the date's significance was seized upon by student organizers. The eleven participating artists were informed well ahead of time, and several of them "consciously integrated aspects relatable to July 20 in their works." Oeller, op. cit., p. 200. Cf. Schneede, op. cit., p. 42.

27 Adriani, op. cit., p. 62. Cf. Oeller, op. cit., p. 203: "Beuys took a packet of Rama margarine from one of his boxes of materials and dropped it into the partially filled, already warmed box of fat." See also Schneede, op. cit., p. 47, who emphasizes the miming of heat rather than the actual melting, and Heiner Stachelhaus, who in *Joseph Beuys* (Düsseldorf: ECON, 1991), pp. 165–166, has Beuys melt the fat while Brock recites the text of Goebbel's speech.

FIGURE 4.2
Joseph Beuys
Mein und meiner Lieben verlassener Schlaf (*My and My Loved Ones' Abandonded Sleep*), 1965 (installation view)
Wooden rack and felt sheets, 150 x 152 x 62 cm
Beuys Block, Room 2, Hessisches Landesmuseum, Darmstadt

need at all to use or name fat and involve the inevitable links to the body. That fat marks not just the body but the body of the holocaustal sacrifice is clear enough, but the implications have not been drawn in the literature.[28]

Felt has an even more specific historical referent that has nothing to do with the plane crash. It is a gruesome and unpleasant fact, but one that is not acknowledged in the published Beuys reception, that after 1942 the hair of Holocaust victims was shorn and collected at the killing centers and shipped to German-owned factories, where it was processed into felt.[29] This felt was used

28 I cannot agree at all with Caroline Tisdall that the juxtaposition of fat with the burner in *Auschwitz Demonstration* is "ambiguous." (Tisdall, op. cit., p. 21.) Holocaust historian Andrzej Strzelecki tells us more than we would wish to know about fat and the Auschwitz crematoria: "The fat that dripped from the bodies burned in pits or on pyres was collected in ditches dug for that purpose near the incineration sites, then used as fuel for the fires that burned the bodies. This practice was especially common on rainy days. From time to time, the bodies of new arrivals were thrown into the crematoria with the bodies of emaciated veteran prisoners so that body fat from the healthier new arrivals made the burning process more efficient." Andrzej Strzelecki, "The Plunder of Victims and Their Corpses," in Yisrael Gutman and Michael Berenbaum, eds., *Anatomy of the Auschwitz Death Camp* (Bloomington: Indiana UP; Washington, D.C.: United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 1994), pp. 261–262.

29 To my knowledge it is mentioned just once: Geiseke's and Markert's brief 1996 discussion (op. cit., p. 63), however, is tucked into the margins of a still-untranslated book that has been largely ignored by mainstream Beuys scholarship. There has been no discussion of the hair-felt link as far as I know in the published English-language reception.

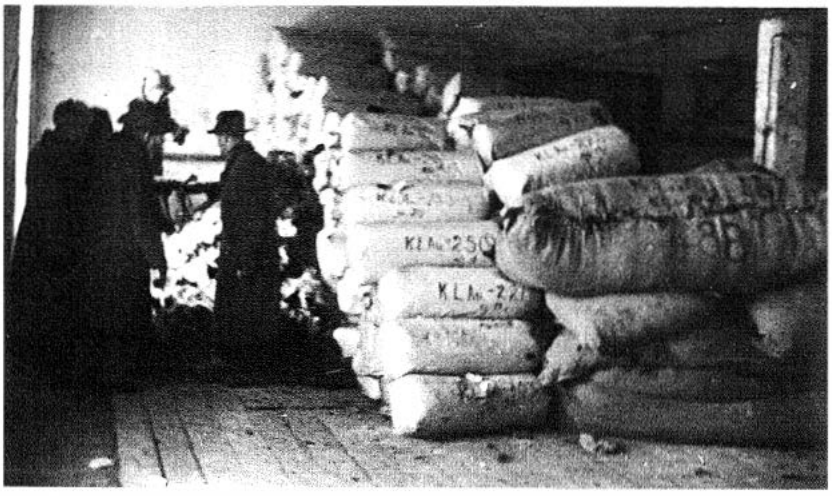

FIGURE 4.3
Photograph taken shortly after the liberation of Auschwitz II-Birkenau, showing seven tons of human hair packed for shipment to factories for processing into felt.
Collection of Archives of the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum, Poland.

for a range of wartime products, including slippers for U-boat crews and stockings for railway workers. Seven tons of human hair, packed and ready for shipment, were discovered at Auschwitz when the camp was liberated in 1945.[30] Whatever Beuys' personal experience of this pressed material may have been, and whatever its sculptural properties may be, felt has a place in the history of the Holocaust that cannot be erased or avoided.[31]

BY THIS POINT IT SHOULD be clear that a new and reoriented reading of Beuys is both possible and necessary. The darker resonance of felt and fat needs to be read back into the specific deployments of these materials across the whole of Beuys' oeuvre. Both materials are used extensively in Darmstadt. Felt is especially prominent in Room 2, where *Scene from the Stag Hunt* is kept company by felt piles and rolls, empty felt skins and suits, and felt-wrapped rods and angle beams. Near the center of the configured room, *My and My Loved Ones' Abandoned Sleep*, from 1965, is a five-tiered rack bed constructed of crude wooden boards and filled with layered sheets of felt.[32] No one who has walked through the block houses of the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum will fail to think immediately of the squalid racks where the prisoners of the work brigades slept under thin gray blankets. If felt and copper can function, as Beuys' self-

30 Strzelecki, op. cit., pp. 259-261. Copies of numerous SS documents reporting the quantities, destinations and uses are on display in Block 4, Room 5 of the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum. SS instructions and directives to the camps, dating from 1942 and 1943, have been published as Nuremberg documents 511-USSR and 3680-PS. A 1943 report of quantities shipped from Auschwitz has been published as Nuremberg document 1257 and trans. in John Mendelsohn, ed., *The Holocaust: Selected Documents in Eighteen Volumes*, vol. 12 (New York: Garland, 1982), pp. 197-200. I thank Steven Luckert for his timely help with these source materials.

31 Beuys himself came very near to fingering this link in a 1970 interview with Bernd Klüser and Jörg Schellmann. Asked why he works mainly with "anomalous, gray materials," Beuys launched into a defense of the colorlessness of felt, in the course of which he made an unprompted, albeit vague, reference to the Holocaust: "People are very short-sighted when they argue that way, when they say: Beuys makes everything with felt, he's trying to say something about the concentration camps. Nobody bothers to ask whether I might not be more interested in evoking a very colorful anti-image [*Gegenbild*] inside people with the help of this element, felt." Jörg Schellmann, ed., *Joseph Beuys Multiples: Catalogue Raisonné of Multiples and Prints, 1965-1985* (Munich: Edition Schellmann, 1985) and now issued in English as *Joseph Beuys: The Multiples* (Cambridge: Busch-Reisinger Museum, Harvard; Minneapolis: Walker Art Center; Munich-New York: Edition Schellmann, 1997), p. 11. As suggestive as this utterance is, one must conclude from the context that Beuys refers to the lack of color and hope associated with the camps, rather than the link of hair.

32 Mein und meiner Lieben verlassener Schlaf, in Eva Beuys, op. cit., pp. 90-91; and pl. 74 in Schirmer, op. cit.

33 In Block 5 of the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum.

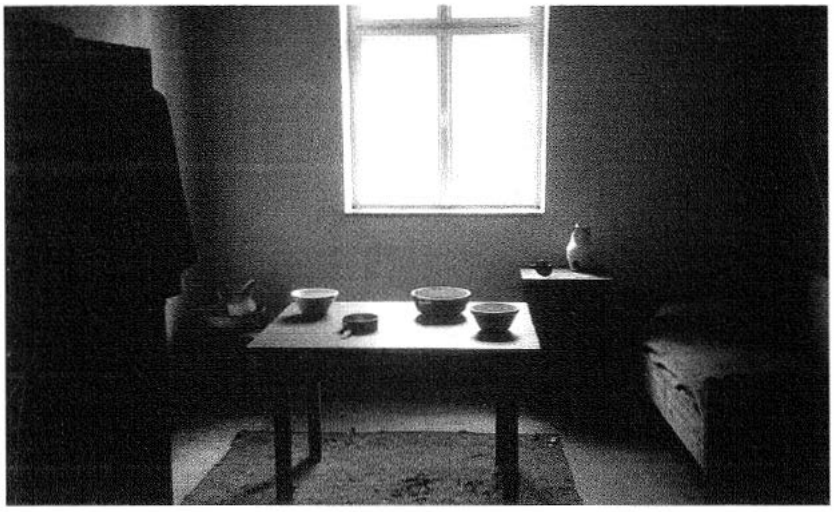

FIGURE 4.4
Recreated prisoners' room on exhibit in the surviving block houses at the Auschwitz I camp (1998 installation view).
Collection of Archives of the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum, Poland.

interpretations would have it, as generators or batteries of energy, that energy is not simply benign. Indeed, the dominant tone of the Darmstadt installations is that of desolation.

In Room 5, in which *Auschwitz Demonstration* is the only titled vitrine, the barrage of glass cases full of groupings of scarred, impoverished, quietly auratic objects powerfully evokes the museum exhibits now on view at the former site of Auschwitz I. There, similar glass cases display similar and even identical objects as evidence of "terrible crimes." Whatever the particular history and significance of the objects in Beuys' vitrines, they must evoke, for anyone who has visited the site of the Auschwitz camp (or the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C.), the countless bowls, brushes, leather shoes, suitcases and plundered personal effects from the so-called "Canada" warehouses at the killing center.[33] These tokens, each eloquent in its particularity, powerfully evoke their murdered owners through that mode of rememoration that Kant referred to as "negative presentation"[34]: in the presence of these personal traces, the absent victims are called to mind by the very fact of their absence. Beuys and others after him, like Christian Boltanski, would use this "negative" strategy of evocation to forceful effect, but the direct precedent and models for it have been sitting in the museum at Auschwitz since its establishment in 1947. Beuys' vitrines have been usefully compared to those of anthropological and natural history museums. To our understanding of the

34 Kant's notion of "*negative Darstellung*" is in the "General Remark on the Exposition of Aesthetic Reflective Judgments," in the "Analytic of the Sublime" of the 1790–3 *Critique of Judgment*. There, he makes the famous reference to the *Bilderverbot* of Jewish Law. Theodor Adorno implicitly pointed to this notion as the basis for an ethics of representation as early as 1961. See his "Trying to Understand *Endgame*" in *Notes to Literature* Volume One, ed. Rolf Tiedemann and trans. Shierry Weber Nicholson (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), p. 249 and *Negative Dialectics*, trans. E.B. Ashton (New York: Continuum), p. 380. In another context, Jean-François Lyotard has also indicated the rich potential of this notion. See his "The Sublime and the Avant-Garde," (1984) and "Newman: The Instant," (1985) both in L. ward, *The Inhuman*, G. Bennington and R. Bowlby, trans. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991).

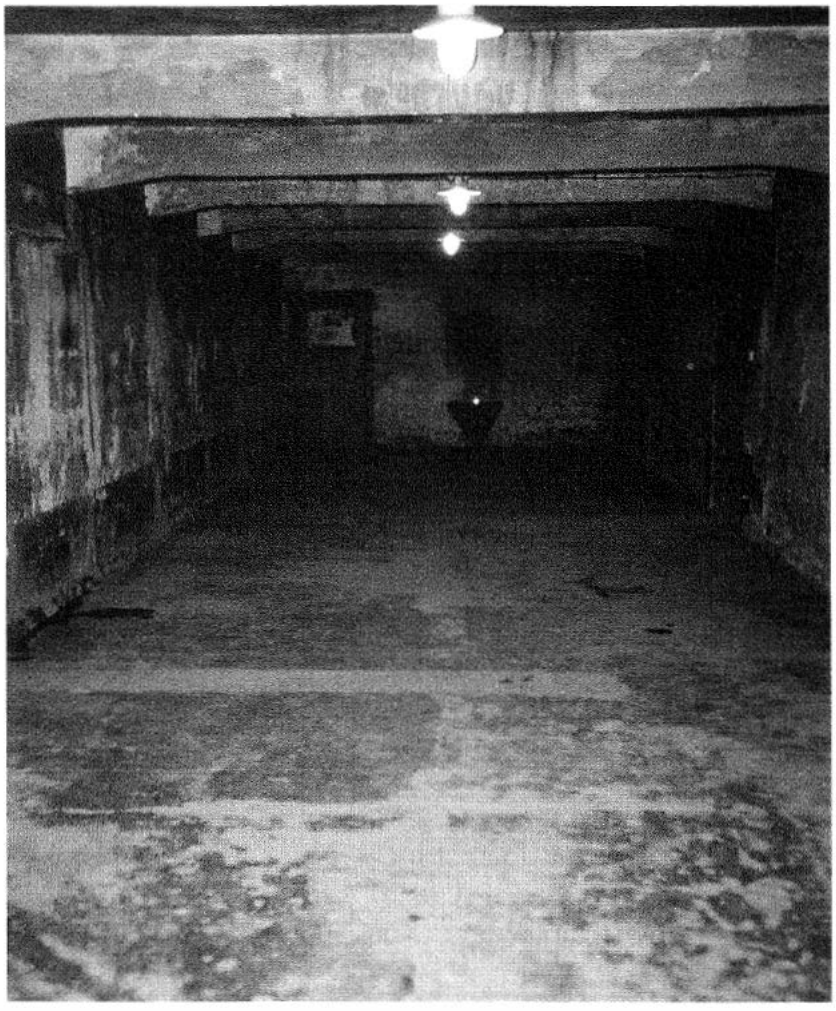

FIGURE 4.5
Reconstructed gas chamber at Auschwitz I. Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum, Poland.

Darmstadt "Beuys Block," however, we now need to add the real glass cases of the prison blocks at Oswiecim.

Ranging further, one is struck by the frequency with which Beuys wrapped himself in felt or wore it on his feet in his actions. *THE CHIEF Fluxus Song*, from 1964, and *I Like America and America Likes Me*, from 1974, are only the two best-known examples. Again, the standard interpretation has been that Beuys is rehearsing, with these gestures, his rescue by the Tartars. I would suggest that they have as much to do with the old Christian ascetic tradition of donning a hair shirt to mortify the body and atone for sins. This is the sense as well of the

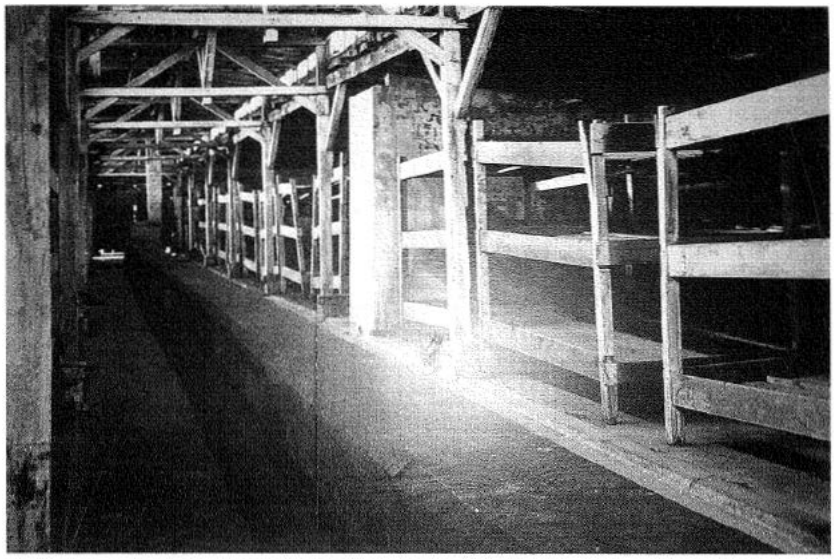

FIGURE 4.6
Rack beds in prisoners block houses on the site of the former Auschwitz II-Birkenau killing center. Collection of Archives of the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum, Poland.

famous *Felt Suits* of 1970. And in Block 6 of the museum at Auschwitz, the gray suits of the prisoners are displayed high on the wall, just as Beuys often hung his *Felt Suits*.[35] In his 1978 installation *Hearth II*, in Basel, Beuys piled more than sixty felt suits, most of them worn by members of the "Alti Richtig" club during carnival in the same year, directly on the gallery floor. This gesture, which evokes the mountains of confiscated clothes at the killing centers, reverberates through the whole double installation *Hearth I* (1968–74) and *Hearth II*. For seen in the context of the Holocaust, the numerous rods and small wagon of *Hearth I* visually echo the small wheeled car on rails which fed the bodies to the ovens in the crematoria.[36] This sense is only reinforced by the German title of Beuys' piece: *Feuerstätte*, which literally means, place or scene of a fire.

The full force of *Plight*, the great 1985 felt environment now in Paris, can finally be mapped. There, stacked columns of felt line the walls, floor to ceiling, of two rooms connected in an "L"-shape. In the dead end of one, a thermometer and an empty chalkboard marked for musical notation lay on top of a closed concert piano. The feeling in the silenced rooms is densely funereal and claustrophobic. Ranked along the walls, the felt columns place the two interior spaces under a kind of intense surveillance. This surveillance can now be named as the haunting of victims evoked by negative presentation. Should there be any doubt of that, there is in Block 4 of the Auschwitz-Birkenau State

35 In the 1970 interview Klüser and Schellmann cited above, Beuys scornfully evaded direct questions about the resemblance between the *Felt Suit* and "convicts" uniforms. Whatever else the suits may denote, the evasion was far from successful. Schellmann, ed., op. cit., p. 16.

36 One is painfully reminded of this scene at the reconstructed crematorium on the site of the Auschwitz I camp. Moreover, walking into the gas chamber there, lit darkly by bare hanging bulbs, one thinks of the dark, leaden space of Beuys' 1983 environment *Pain Room* (pl. 146 in Schirmer, ed., op. cit.).

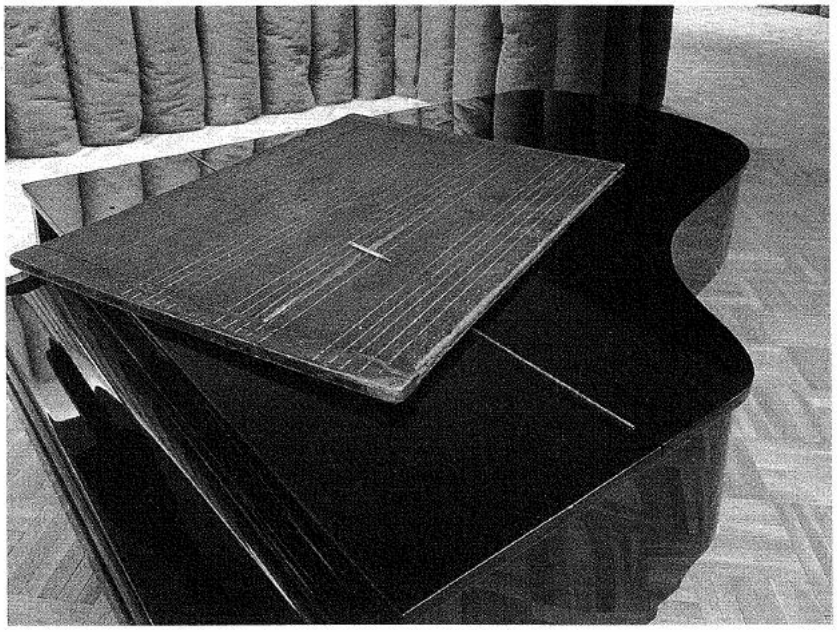

FIGURE 4.7
Joseph Beuys
Plight, 1985 (detail, 1990 installation view)
284 felt columns, piano, blackboard, thermometer, total dimensions 310 x 890 x 1813 cm.
Collections Mnam/Cci, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris
Photo: Photothèque des collections du Mnam/Cci
©1999 Artists Rights Society (ARS), NY/VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn

Museum, a blown-up photograph of a storage room taken shortly after the camp was liberated. It shows the seven tons of human hair packed tightly into 293 column-shaped sacks strikingly near in size and form to the felt columns of *Plight*.[37] (The total number of felt columns used by Beuys has been variously given as 284 and 301.[38]) The silenced piano encountered under the relentless gaze of the columns, and under the weight of the thermometer alluding to the crematoria, asserts the impossibility of conventional human art, even in that most abstract medium of music, to represent this catastrophe for mourning and rememoration.[39] Beuys' piece becomes a staggering allegory of ineffability that responds to Theodor Adorno's famous 1951 dictum: after Auschwitz, no more poetry. An art that would offer itself as an object or gesture of mourning, even more the art of a German of Beuys' generation, must refuse both the beautiful and the direct or "positive" modes of traditional representation. It must, like Beuys' art at its strongest, produce its effects according to different rules—those of the sublime. Only an art in that register, an art which evokes and avows, which strikes, hits and hollows, can hope to honor the major trauma of the historical referent. The link between ethics and aesthetics is

37 The Soviets filmed the room of hair to use as evidence in the coming war crimes trials. The SS did not, in this case, have time to destroy the hair, which was ready for shipment to factories. An enlargement of the photograph can be seen in Room 5, Block 4.

38 Fabrice Hergott has counted 284 in the Paris installation (Hergott and Hohlfeldt, eds., op. cit., p. 233). Anthony d'Offay, in whose London gallery the piece was first installed, has written that forty-three groups of seven columns were used, which would have put the total number of columns at 301. *Joseph Beuys: Ideas and Actions*, Exhibition catalog (New York: Hirsch & Adler Modern, 1988), pp. 104–105

39 The silencing of music, from early objects recalling broken phonographs to the felt-wrapped pianos and cellos, constitutes a line of its own within Beuys' oeuvre. That line leads directly to *Plight*.

confirmed in the English title: "plight," as most commentators have remarked, signifies a danger or risk as well as a duty.

❁

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE EVOCATIVE strategies at work in *Plight* can be traced from numerous other works roughly contemporaneous with *Auschwitz Demonstration* through to their most forceful and effective forms in the major sculptural installations of Beuys' last decade. Here, I can only indicate, in an all too cursory manner, some recurrent motifs and vehicles of allusion and negative presentation. Together, they constitute the lines of a symbolic and allegorical network that hovers grimly over this body of work.

Fat is shaped, melted, rubbed, flung, and spread across Beuys' oeuvre. The relation to the victims' bodies and the crematoria established in the Aachen action and acknowledged in the Darmstadt vitrine resounds through allusive sculptural forms which generate meaning through visual metaphor and metonymy. In the famous 1963 *Chair with Fat*, the seated human figure which the chair's form so strongly evokes is absent, but reappears stubbornly, in a kind of ghastly afterimage, in and through the wedge of fat Beuys has substituted for it. The mammoth, block-like forms of *Tallow*, cast in Münster in 1977 and now in Berlin, recall, through several degrees of abstraction, the forms of the trains and unloading ramps of the killing centers. {See Plate 4.1} The resemblance emerged from Beuys' configuration of the piece as "Station 23" at the bottom of the spiral in the 1979/80 Guggenheim retrospective. It is clearly, if startlingly, visible in published photographs of the installation, the effect intensified by proximity to *Tram Stop*.[40] And if the familiar fat, felt and flashlights on sleds of *The Pack (das Rudel)*[41] have been seen as so many rescue or care packages, they must also be read, as they spill out of the back of the "car of the German people," as the multiplying funeral sleds of the victims themselves, damned to the night and ice of oblivion.

The fires of the crematoria are evoked in numerous objects. The small 1948 bronze *Torso* was combined unmistakably with a 1950 work called *Oven*.[42] Another *Oven*, now in a private collection in Munich, was made in 1970.[43] This direction culminates in the two versions of the great installation and object group *Tram Stop*, created for the 1976 Venice Biennale. {See Plate 4.2} There, in the German pavilion rededicated with Nazi regalia in 1938 by Hitler himself, Beuys actually gives us an abstracted model of a functioning killing center. There is the railway to bring in the victims, there are the camp buildings dominated by the smokestack, through the opening of which the pained head of the

40 See, for example Hergott and Hohlfeldt, eds., p. 345.

41 From 1969, now in Kassel, pl. 107 in Schirmer, ed., op. cit. A single example of the sled-pack is in Vitrine 8, Room 7, in Darmstadt, strikingly juxtaposed to an object group titled *Bathtub*, 1961, and consisting of a small tub with electric immersion coil and a large fist of fat on a sheet of felt. Eva Beuys, op. cit., pp. 266–267.

42 Now in a private collection, but reproduced in Eva Beuys, op. cit., p. 357. The same assemblage, cast in bronze and combined with a small tub-form and an electric immersion coil, becomes the 1984 bronze *Bathtub for a Heroine*: ibid., p. 387; and pl. 20/cat. 55 in Zweite, op. cit. That these and other "ovens" can convincingly be read as representations of the alchemical crucible does not effect the holocaustal dimension of allusion.

43 Pl. 198/cat. 392 in Zweite, op. cit.

victim is squeezed, exhaled as ash through the dragon's teeth and thrown, as Paul Celan put it, "to a grave on the breezes."[44]

The maidens, girls, stags and hares which are wounded, hunted or killed repeatedly in Beuys' work constitute a targeted community the fate of which echoes the wartime genocide. Notably, hare fur is also commonly used to make felt. From the dismembered body of the 1961 teakwood sculpture *Virgin*[45] to the fantastically threatening hare in the rifle sights of a toy soldier in *The Unconquerable*, from 1963,[46] to the famous actions with dead hares, the process by which these symbols of innocence are transformed into hated alien objects is reenacted. If *Tram Stop* evokes a killing center, *Stag Memorials*, created in the Martin Gropius Bau in Berlin as part of the 1982/83 exhibition *Zeitgeist*, recalls the forced labor camps. Around the looming central slag heap, the violent potential of the pliers, hammers and numerous other work tools was evinced by the dismembered torso-form of an abstracted female body held in a vise.[47] A spindly wooden pole overlooking the scene sported not a flag but a blood sausage of the type used in the Darmstadt vitrine.[48] The cast bronze and aluminum elements of the spin-off object group *Lightning with Stag in its Glare* relate to the folding carpenter's rule from the same vitrine.[49]

Beuys' ability to find precisely resonant sculptural materials and to embed them in intensely evocative forms and visual allegories is forcefully at work in the four versions of *The End of the Twentieth Century*, from 1983.[50] {See Plate 4.3} The manipulated basalt columns evoke the human body by their scale and resemblance to stone sarcophagi and portrait mummies, and they recall disastrous human history by their resemblance to the fallen columns of a ruined classical temple. The funereal piece executed in the traditional medium of rememoration allegorizes the genocidal catastrophe at the same time that it counters the pompous monumentality of traditional history art.

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THE FIRST ISSUE POSED by a reoriented reading of Beuys concerns the status of what I call a "project of mourning." Confirmation of such a project in Beuys' own words is, as evidenced here, somewhat slim. In addition to the 1985 Munich address, three statements by the artist can be read as acknowledgment of a project parallel to and bound up with, yet importantly distinct from, the aims expressed by the "expanded concept of art." In a much-cited 1982 interview with Max Reithmann, Beuys asserted that the horror denoted by the place-name "Auschwitz" cannot be "represented in an image." Thus, he never sought to represent that horror in his art, but to "remember" it through what he called "its positive counter image."[51] This

44 Pl. 130 in Schirmer, ed., op. cit. It must be said that Kim Levin, in a line tucked into her review of the 1979/80 Guggenheim retrospective, hit the nail right on the head: "Besides the purely autobiographical childhood memories mentioned in the catalog, *Tram Stop*—with a head protruding from the end of the cannon—suggests the end of the line at the concentration camps." Indeed. Levin, "Joseph Beuys: The New Order," p. 176. Cf. Tisdall, op. cit., pp. 242–247; and Rieja Brouns, *Joseph Beuys: Straßenbahnhaltestelle* (Otterlo: Kröller-Müller Museum, 1994). If the Venice version avows subsequent configurations, now in Otterlo and Berlin in which the cast iron canon has been uprooted and razed to the horizontal, continue to rememorate.

45 Now in Room 3 of the Beuys Block in Darmstadt. See Eva Beuys, op. cit., pp. 106–107.

46 Now in Vitrine 4, Room 7 in Darmstadt. Ibid., pp. 256–259.

47 *Torso*, dated 1949–51, discussed as fig. 2 in Pamela Kort, *Lehmbruck/Beuys* (Cologne and New York: Michael Werner, 1997), n.p.

48 Pls. 144, 145 in Schirmer, ed., op. cit.

49 Of the four versions, one is in Frankfurt and another is in Philadelphia. Cf. Mark Rosenthal, *Blitzschlag mit Lichtschein auf Hirsch* (Frankfurt/Main: Museum für Moderne Kunst, 1990), p. 32.

50 In Berlin, Düsseldorf, London and Munich.

51 "In seinem positiveu Gegenbilde" in the original German Ms. transcription, trans. as "une contre-image positive." Max Reithmann, *Joseph Beuys: Par la présente, je n'appartiens plus à l'art* (Paris: L'Arche, 1982), p. 121–122. This is the place for a special thanks to Max Reithmann, whose helpful suggestions and ongoing meditations on Beuys have been invaluable to me.

52 "Also insofern ist diese Auschwitzvitrine eigentlich ein Spielzeug," trans. as "C'est pourquoi 'la vitrine d'Auschwitz' n'est en réalité qu'un jouet." Ibid, p. 122.

notion is far from clear, but can be read as a refusal of direct, positive representations in favor of what I have called negative presentation and other strategies of evocation and avowal. However, both Beuys' conclusion that *Auschwitz Demonstration* may therefore be seen as a kind of "toy"[52] and his glib suggestion that consumer capitalism must be seen as a contemporary Auschwitz[53] seem to me disturbing and regrettable; they simply subvert the gravity of his other statements.

In earlier discussions with Caroline Tisdall, Beuys again explained that the objects *KZ=Essen* are not meant to "represent catastrophe," but to explore "the content and meaning of catastrophe."[54] He implied that they could function therapeutically, by "healing like with like" in a homeopathic healing process. But here as elsewhere there is a rapid shift to the present tense, with an assertion that "the human condition is Auschwitz." In a less-cited 1980 interview published in *Penthouse*, Beuys acknowledged the deep personal shock which came with his first realization, after the end of the war, of the full extent of the genocide. That shock, he said, "is my primary experience, my fundamental experience, which led me to begin to really go into art."[55] Together, these statements are as near as Beuys was willing to go toward an unambiguous acknowledgment of a project of mourning. In themselves, they would hardly be enough. But as confirmation of what can be read in the objects themselves, they suffice. Indeed, the consistent pattern of visual and material linkages I have pointed to does not need any confirmation at all from the artist: the links are there for anyone to see, trace and feel. At this point, the argument makes contact with an ongoing and still-contested contemporary analysis of the role of artistic intention.

We cannot know what Beuys actually felt and believed about the Holocaust. We simply do not have access to that knowledge. Moreover, Beuys himself may not have been able to know or understand his own deepest feelings about the Nazi period. In this sense, Beuys' own words cannot be taken as infallible guides. Given Beuys' relation to that time, we would expect that a personal confrontation with it would have been acutely painful, but we cannot know for sure if that confrontation took place or, if it did, how deeply it probed and with what effect. Further, we do not know for certain whether Beuys intentionally coded his objects with Holocaust references or whether that encoding was largely unconscious. Beyond that, claims by way of answer to this dilemma devolve into speculation. What we can say is that the objects do evoke and avow. When viewed in the correct context, they indeed generate such meanings. We can also say it was entirely possible that Beuys knew of the relevant facts and images pertaining to that context. He may have first encountered them while doing research for his 1958 proposal for an Auschwitz memorial. Kramer has noted that a major war crimes trial in Frankfurt in 1963 and

53 Beuys may have been alluding to Theodor Adorno, who linked Auschwitz to the logic of identity universalized under late capitalism, most famously at the end of the 1966 *Negative Dialectics*. But what has force and authority within a sustained and complexly nuanced philosophical critique became, in a few careless words from a German who fought for the Third Reich, painfully inappropriate.

54 Tisdall, op. cit., pp. 21–23.

55 "Joseph Beuys," in *Penthouse* 106 (1980): 98; and cited in Kramer, op. cit., p. 264.

1964 had created, at a crucial time in the development of Beuys' art and persona, the first public occasion since the war and the Nuremberg trials for Germans to confront and discuss among themselves details about the mechanics and logistics of the killing centers.[56] Beuys could at that time have come into contact with additional information about, for example, the use of human hair. He could have been shown or been exposed to the relevant images—photos, for example, taken by a visitor to the Auschwitz-Birkenau museum. In the strictest sense, the facts and images had been in public circulation since Nuremberg. One does not need to be an uncritical Freudian (with respect to the unconscious) or a missionary Derridean (with respect to intention and iterability) to realize that Beuys' works could function at one level as objects and gestures of mourning with or without Beuys' clear intention or full apprehension.

There are, then, two possibilities. Beuys may not have grasped how consistently and intensely his objects oriented themselves toward the Holocaust. That, though improbable, would most simply explain the relative paucity of clearer statements from the artist himself. Alternatively, Beuys may have known perfectly well what he was doing, in which case the pronounced evasiveness of his statements on the subject was no accident. That is, he may have wanted to avoid the association of his art with the too-facile "art about Auschwitz" label. He may have wanted to preserve for the objects and actions an opportunity to have their effects without the interference of such assumptions and expectations. There would have been good reason to do so; the effects of the sublime depend in large part on a certain openness or vulnerability on the part of the spectator. The expectation that one was about to view "Auschwitz art" would have functioned for many as a protective shield or barrier against the hit of the sublime. It would also have blocked any reflection on the "expanded concept of art." That would have been a major concern, since Beuys clearly did not want the spectator's reflection to end with or come to rest at Auschwitz. The issue is finally undecidable, but if the public evasions in fact reflect Beuys' deliberate strategy, then it must be said that the strategy worked too well. The myriad autobiographical banalities were readily seized on as iconographic certainties, and the "expanded concept of art" construed as the primary content of his work. Auschwitz was moved to the margins, where it has remained.

The question then becomes one of the effectiveness of the project of mourning. Much has been made of a purported German "inability to mourn." Instead of confronting and working-through national guilt for Nazi crimes, Alexander and Margarete Mitscherlich have argued, Germans of the perpetrating generation threw themselves into the less-painful labor of economic recovery.[57] While there is perhaps

56 Kramer, op. cit., pp. 262, 269.

57 The basic elements of this thesis were advanced by Theodor Adorno in *Was bedeutet Aufarbeitung der Vergangenheit* (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 1959), trans. by T. Bahti and G. Hartman as "What Does Coming To Terms with the Past Mean?," in Geoffrey H. Hartman, ed., *Bitburg in Moral and Political Perspective* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1986), pp. 114-129. The thesis was developed and elaborated along more technically Freudian lines by Alexander and Margarete Mitscherlich, *Die Unfähigkeit zu trauern, Grundlagen kollektiven Verhaltens* (Munich: Piper, 1967), trans. by B. Placzek as *The Inability to Mourn: Principles of Collective Behavior* (New York: Grove, 1975).

some truth to this analysis, anyone who has spent time in contemporary Germany will recognize it as a broad and problematic generalization. Working-through the Holocaust and mourning its victims is a slow, ongoing process that takes place across generations and on many levels. The Slovenian theorist Slavoj Žižek has made the point that the weakness of the major discursive analyses of Nazism carried out by Frankfurt School and poststructuralist theorists is that their focus on the levels of imaginary and symbolic identification misses the deep, "pre-symbolic enjoyment" which the Nazi fantasy activated. Merely rational critiques of Nazi fantasies of purity and omnipotence are ultimately ineffective in so far as they leave this deeper level of enjoyment untouched. To "go through the fantasy" is only possible at the end of a movement which first reenacts it, which puts its symbols back into play in order to call back and confront that deepest and most persistent level of support.[58]

Beuys may have intuited something similar, or have been on his way toward such an intuition. This may well be what he meant by his talk of a "homeopathic process." We can at any rate observe that after 1964 he avoided the kind of directly confrontational allusions to the Holocaust that are still more likely than not to provoke reflexive and unproductively defensive reactions. Whether he knew it or not, Beuys found a way to evoke and avow the genocide by means of subtler strategies of indirection, opening up the way to what Žižek calls the "traumatic kernel." And as one nears the irreducible kernel of catastrophe, one is exposed to the sharp and disturbing punch of the sublime. An occasion for mourning and working-through is created. There is no guarantee that Beuys' works will have this effect. One may argue that whatever their potential, the history of Beuys' reception indicates that they did not. I am not so sure. My own experience is that the force of the late installations is quite palpable.

The risk of the sublime is always that its hit not be followed by an adequate interpretation. An adequate interpretation, in the case of Beuys, would include the patient establishment of links to the Holocaust. That is the task of the critic. Only in the clarity of such links can one grasp Beuys' importance as a postwar European artist at the cutting edge of a new mode of history art. With respect to the project of mourning, only through such diligent linking can the "terrible sins, and not-for-describing black marks" be kept in view and not lost sight of "even for a moment."

The greatness of Beuys' work comes from its strong, simultaneous engagement with both the past and the future. The way out of the transgressive and traumatic past is the way into the redemptive future. Healing enables the creation of a better world. But it is no overstatement to say that the very dignity of Beuys' message of hope hangs upon the struggle and hard work implied in the posture of perpetual remembrance. Without that, the message—in all its ethi-

58 Slavoj Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (London: Verso, 1989), pp. 87–128. Žižek is inflecting terms, such as "*jouissance*" and "the Real" from Lacan's 1964 seminar, first published in 1973 and later in English as *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis*. Also useful in this regard are Žižek's *For They Know Not What They Do: Enjoyment as a Political Factor* (London: Verso, 1991); *Tarrying with the Negative: Kant, Hegel, and the Critique of Ideology* (Durham: Duke, 1993) and his defense of the "post-punk" group Laibach in a 1994 interview trans. and ed. by Andrew Herscher in *Assemblage* 33 (Aug. 1997):60–63.

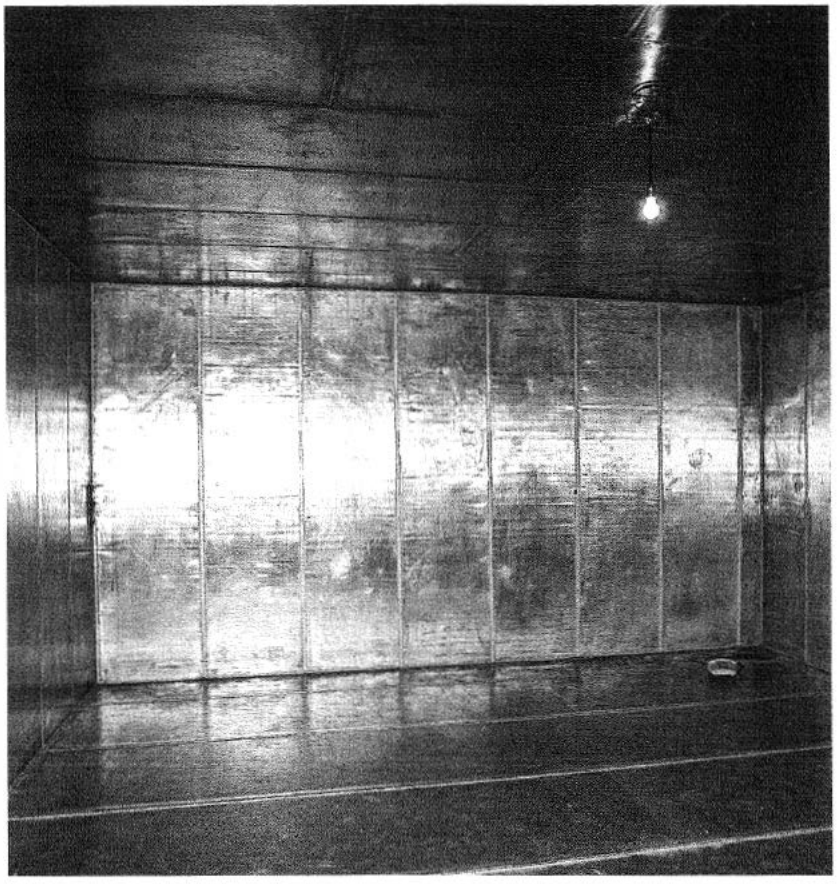

FIGURE 4.8
Joseph Beuys
Hinter dem Knochen wird gezählt/SCHMERZRAUM (Behind the bone will be counted/PAIN ROOM), 1983
Sheet lead lining free-standing construction of steel girders and sheet metal, two silver rings, light bulb, 545 x 735 x 295 cm
Collection of Contemporary Art Fundació "la Caixa", Barcelona
Photo courtesy of Dorothee Fischer, Konrad Fischer Galerie

cal and political dimensions—becomes less convincing. If the sins and marks Beuys spoke of seem to have slipped from view in the published reception, the corrective is available. As Beuys seems to have implied, it may have been too early, even in 1985, to "talk about one's own country" directly, with clear words and place names. It may have been too early to make the more brutal linkages I have made here. One trusts it is not still so.

Benjamin H.D. Buchloh

RECONSIDERING JOSEPH BEUYS
Once Again

I WOULD LIKE TO THANK GENE RAY for inviting me to the symposium. I'm obviously an outsider in the school of ever-increasing believers and passionate advocates of Joseph Beuys so I appreciate the invitation all the more. And I will try to make good on some of the mistakes I made twenty years ago.

I was more specifically asked to respond to Gene Ray's presentation today. I'm in a very peculiar difficulty of critiquing what I found deeply moving and in many ways convincing, and yet I have to voice my doubts and critical counterpositions.

Having written a lengthy critical essay on Joseph Beuys on the occasion of his first major exhibition at the Guggenheim twenty years ago, I have had, since then, many occasions to think about my motivations to critique Beuys in the scathing manner I did. I've also had occasions to reflect further on the furor that the essay generated among admirers of Beuys in the United States and, more importantly, on the rage that my essay engendered in Germany. And finally, I have also had many occasions to reconsider the work in subsequent large exhibitions in Europe.

There are of course several factors to be reconsidered, and I am glad to have the opportunity to share these critical self-reflections in the framework

of this symposium. First of all, the thinking and the writing about postwar European art history has undergone tremendous changes in the last twenty years. And Gene Ray's paper today is indicative of one such major change. The first of these changes is the common realization that it's not longer scandalous, but almost de rigueur, to situate an artistic practice such as that of Beuys', in a critical historical framework. You can now say that the earlier Beuys interpreters wanted to construct him in terms of a transhistorical genius by arguing that his work could be most adequately associated, and compared with, figures such as Leonardo Da Vinci or the tradition of German Romanticism. While these interpretive models are still operative, they have now given way to an almost exclusive concern with Beuys as the first German, if not the first European artist, to have incorporated reflections on recent political German history. More specifically, the German responsibility for the Holocaust in the Second World War. It is apparently Joseph Beuys who introduced these issues into the field of cultural production or postwar European reconstruction culture. Recent developments in the field of criticism of art history have, in fact, accumulated into the field, initiated by Dominique LaCapra and others, that we now call "trauma studies" or, in this specific context of German postwar history, "Holocaust studies." And it is quite evident that these methodological repositionings have had a tremendous impact on reading art history in the postwar period.

In a text by Enzo Traverso, the Italian scholar now working in France, called *L' Histoire déchirée* (The torn or lacerated history) Traverso points out a remarkable aspect that most of us might have been unaware of. He observes that with two exceptions—the German-Jewish émigrés who returned to Germany between the late 1940s and early 1950s and those who remained in the United States such as Hannah Arendt and Theodor Adorno—Europeans did not acknowledge the Holocaust as the major caesure of the twentieth century, the catastrophe after which all cultural, critical, and philosophical projects had to be rethought in a new way, until the mid to late 1970s. He points out in great detail that it is only in the writings of Adorno and Arendt that the Holocaust, as a divisive moment, initiates discourse, a changing discourse on cultural history, on the possibilities of culture, on the production of avant-garde art. Arendt and Adorno place the Holocaust as the irreversible caesura from which one will have to rethink culture at large. Clearly, therefore, it should not surprise us that the readings of Beuys, layered as they now are (one could almost speak of the necessity of an archeology of the Beuys literature at this point), gradually shift further and further in this direction, and that Gene Ray's essay constitutes possibly

the first major successful example of such a reorientaiton in the field.

One of the problems that social art historians (those art historians who reflect upon, if not develop, evidence of the interrelated interaction between ideology, social formations, and artistic practices) have witnessed and confronted throughout the last twenty years (when this methodological model was formed) is precisely the insuperable question of understanding why modernism failed when it comes to the question of the destruction of bourgeois humanity, bourgeois humanism, and bourgeois subjectivity, at the hands of Facism in the 1930s and 1940s. The subset of these questions would be parallel to addressing the situation of the Russian and Soviet avant-garde, where scholars in the field have to confront the peculiar difficulty of understanding why the most eminent figures in the Soviet avant-garde in the 1930s, with some exceptions, were willing and eager to collaborate in the totalitarian efforts of Stalin's propoganda ministry. And why artists, prominently placed, eminently visible, central in the definition of avant-garde practices in the 1930s and 1940s, neither reflected upon nor responded either prior, during, or after the immediate discovery of the destruction of European Jewry in both European countries and the United States. Looking at the project from this perspective, modernism is a failure. Neither Mondrian nor Schwitters, neither Albers nor any of the other artists that we know as key figures of the historical avant-garde, found it possible or considered it necessary, to make adjustments or reposition themselves as artists with regard to the emerging catastrophe that they barely escaped from. All of them insisted on a more or less uninterrupted continuity or more or less unaffected development of their project that began, and continued until well after, the experience of the greatest historical catastrophe of human history. Whether one approves or disapproves, this is the very calamitous condition of writing the history of modernism. It has passed—ignored, disavowed, repressed—in almost all instances (and of course there are some exceptions, the most notable one would be John Heartfield); in fact, most obliterated or ignored precisely the very threat, the very destruction, of that model of subjectivity, that model of human emancipation, with which artistic practices are supposedly centrally engaged.

Speaking of the changing models of interpretation, I would like to focus on the various shifts we have witnessed in the recent literature. These changing tides of interpretive projections, in the context of Beuys, are not necessarily to be construed as an indication of the work's inherent instability, for the opposite could also be true. But they cannot easily serve as indications of a guaranteed wealth of meaning and the work's evident complexity. What the inces-

sant projections and interpretive desires generated by Beuys' work do indicate is a much more profound instability, not to say a crisis, in the spectator, reader, and institutional apparatus with regard to the production of the meaning of culture after the Holocaust. Specifically with the problem of how the artist, as a subject, can be repositioned in the role of artist and in relation to society at large. This problem is uniquely embodied in the case of Beuys—cult figure, stag leader, as he called himself, *Hirsch Führer* (the word that associates him most directly with the infamous German term for the leader) shaman, healer, and redeemer, as well as producer of an extraordinary array of drawings and objects whose value has multiplied by hundreds in the last twenty years alone. And now, we are told Beuys is the exemplary mourner as well, the one who came to terms with the past for all Germans, absolving us from guilt by his acts of cultural commemoration.

But several aspects of these rapidly changing interpretive approaches to the work of what is undoubtedly one of the most significant postwar German artists, are not necessarily easily reconciled or even compatible with one another. Can one, for example, be concerned with the legacies of Auschwitz and at the same time, with the legacies of Leonardo? Can one reconcile the deep commitment to the continuation of the project of German Romantic culture and be an active participant of Fluxus? And, in fact, if this were possible, does this multiplicity of interpretive demands and desires that positions the work and positions the artist in the place of historical superiority not place him also in a relationship that dequalifies or declassifies artists who do not share such universalist claims? The perimeters of their works might have been so narrowly defined that now, from the perspective of Holocaust Studies, of postmodern multiplicity, such work could be easily misread as work that suffers from severe historical limitations.

Thus, I accept some of the interpretation of Gene Ray's paper on Beuys, that establishes him as the first, if not the only, artist of the 1950s and 1960s in Germany, if not in Europe to actually have addressed the conditions of cultural production after the Holocaust. And, in fact, to have been the first artist to have pointed to the necessity of building an "Ars Memorium." But if I accept both this paper and Ray's position that Beuys is also a pioneer of ecological art, I have to face at least two methodological problems. The first demands that I accept that an artist at the end of the twentieth century could, in fact, credibly and productively be engaged in a repertory that would span the gamut from the political, to the ecological, to activism, to a profound reflection on post-Holocaust culture, to a profound commitment to the development of a mnemonic art. The second, and

for me perhaps the more important, question is the result of a comparative approach. If I accept such a model of the artist at the end of the twentieth century, where does this leave other artists—the work of Robert Morris, the sculpture of Richard Serra, both contemporaries of Beuys' and working side by side with him in the early to mid-1960s? Their work then seemingly appears to be about nothing, or very little, or, if anything, only about the specific discourse of restrictions of a particular discipline within which they have chosen to work—the legacies of painting and sculpture after the Second World War. Those legacies were marked, particularly in the German context, with the legacies of Weimar avant-garde. It is one of the tragic indications of how difficult it was to rebuild and reformulate cultural practices in postwar Germany that it seems to have had an absolutely binding effect on all of the artists to disavow, to ignore, or to clearly repress the legacies of Weimar Germany. Pamela Kort's paper here shows us to what degree the dialogue with Expressionism was crucial for the repositioning of Beuys. What has always interested me more was to what degree it was crucial for Beuys to deny and disavow the specific legacies of the postexpressionist avant-garde in Germany, namely the German Dadaists, and importantly Kurt Schwitters and Hannah Höch. I think what I have argued elsewhere in discussions of Gerhard Richter can clearly be incorporated into discussions of Beuys' work as well. He would have learned about the techniques and the strategies of a reformulated object and collage aesthetic, not from looking at Schwitters' work, but from looking at the Parisian examples of a recent retranslation of the legacy of Schwitters in the work of Arman. In the same manner Richter would say that he never saw photomontage work anywhere when he was in Dresden or after 1961 in Düsseldorf, but that the discovery of an exisiting historical model called photomontage-aesthetic was a direct outcome of his encounter with Robert Rauschenberg. Clearly this is a reception condition that one should not underestimate when it comes to understanding the etiology of Beuys' early formation.

Secondly, what is immediately evident in this history of reception is that Beuys, as much as Yves Klein who was his closest historical colleague in the formation of reconstruction culture, was struggling with the ghost of Jackson Pollock and with the preeminence of American Abstract Expressionism that had been reestablished in Europe in numerous exhibitions from 1952 onwards. The pervasiveness of that model of abstract painting, the pervasiveness of the claims made for that painting, clearly forms one of the backgrounds against which Beuys' work had to be formed. One of the implications of the models of artistic meaning as they were purported by Abstract Expressionism, was precisely to found, or to lay the foundation of, formalist

thinking. Formalist thinking, with its antecedents in the first decades of the twentieth century in both the Russian and the English context, made incorporating the specific criteria of seeing, writing, and making into the interpretive approach to the works of art an integral part of artistic production and critical writing about artistic production. Therefore, the fundamental discrepancy between a European and an American approach to postwar art in general and 1960s art in particular, is not just a matter of individual historical formation, but precisely one of those differences, to what degree one has accepted those differences that were established by the artistic tradition developed over several decades in the American postwar context. These are profound disagreements in the conception of how aesthetic meaning can be produced and interpreted. What are the criteria? What are the modalities of its functions? Inherent in this discrepancy is of course the question of how aesthetic experience and how the conception of the viewer/reader can be related. That is, whether the artistic project recognizes that fundamental changes have occurred in the course of the twentieth century in the determination of the subject of viewing and reading and whether the work of art recognizes, incorporates, and furthers those transformations or whether, in fact, it attempts to obliterate them, revert them, and reestablish the earlier problematical modes of viewing and reading.

One aspect that formalist thought from the Russians onward insisted upon, as had its subsequent reincarnations in a much more diluted and diffused form in the writings of Clement Greenberg in the United States, and the writings that followed his, was the assumption that the contemporary spectator would share the conditions of advanced perceptual self-reflexivity and advanced forms of self-determination and linguistic competence with a self-conscious artistic producer. This assumption alone, and there are many others, would make it difficult, if not impossible, to maintain more traditional, not to say outright mythical, forms of representation, metaphorical forms of speech, and traditional forms of narrative within the production of contemporary artistic practices. If this were not enough of an obstacle to the reinvestment of artistic production with narrativity and traditional representation, a second caesura has to be inserted at this time. It is the caesura pronounced by Adorno in his often quoted 1952 statement that the continuation of the project of poetical writing is obscene after Auschwitz. This prohibition on speech, this prohibition on representation, this prohibition on particular types of representation was, in fact, the crucial factor that added to the already existing critical opposition against traditional narrative in the postwar peri-

od. As early as 1953, for example, in Adorno's text on coming to terms with the past, where he very critically assaults various recent attempts to address the question of German responsibility for the Holocaust, and to make the process of addressing that responsibility an active act of disavowal and repression in order to get over the historical past of recognition. In that text Adorno had already established that it is a question of individual responsibility rather than socially collective political forms of addressing history. I'm pointing backward specifically to the moment of the mid 1950s to remind listeners that Beuys' project is of course not at all an isolated one but one that positions itself within an already existing debate that had been developed as the sequence to Adorno's text.

Now to go back to the specific, what I would call epistemological, questions of how artistic meaning can be produced. In whatever historical context of artistic production we want to consider Beuys, be it that of French Nouveau Réalisme, specifically the work of Yves Klein and Arman whose importance for Beuys cannot be overestimated, after 1963 with the encounter with American Fluxus, or whether it would be by 1965 within the context of minimalism and postminimal art, it is evident that Beuys is an extraordinary player in as much as he anticipates and adjusts newly developed strategies for his own project. One such aspect that would allow us a critical distinction is precisely how does the artist present himself or herself to the public? In what role does the artist appear in public? What are the types of interactions—perceptual, cognitive, psychological, social—that the artist's performance engenders. Both Morris and Serra represent the American case. What is the case? The case is, in fact, the question of a very specific definition of performativity. What does performativity mean in the wake of Jackson Pollock, and the various readings and misreadings that his works has generated. It had in fact emerged as an irreversible condition that the artist's procedure, the artist's performance of the execution of the work of art, could or should become an integral feature of the work itself. The most devastating consequences of the presence of Pollock in France, most devasted consequences rather, would be a figure like Yves Klein, who would take Pollock's emphasis on the performative dimension of painting literally as a license to transform the act of production into a public spectacle. That is a very French and very typical postwar French misreading of performativity in the context of painterly production. As it happens, the spectacularization of performativity, French at first, and then expanded and elaborated upon and invested with numerous totally incoherent and contradictory narratives, would become Beuys' point of departure. Performativity in the work of Pollock, Morris, and Serra,

however, did not focus on the public display of the artist as a subject nor did it focus on the public display of action as spectacle, as theater, as substitute for theatricality. Performativity actually pointed to two aspects that were crucial in the reformulation of pictorial and visual practices after the war. First of all it pointed to the linguistic nature of painting and all visual practices as units—structural, formal procedures that were defined by their own inherent iterativity. That is, they were acts, practices, moments that were part of a linguistic system, of a discursive system, that at each time could be redefined and repositioned in regard to both spectator and participant-practitioner. Clearly that definition of performativity is at the very opposite end of the spectrum from which the artist as healer, the artist as shaman, the artist as public performer would emerge. It is the emphasis in performativity that situates the spectator at the very center of the production of subjectivity in analogue to the very production of subjectivity that the artist performs.

It becomes evident then that Beuys from the very beginning has insisted on folding formal parameters that artists of both the historical avant-garde as much as those of the postwar neo-avant-garde had defined as formal, as structural, as antimetaphorical, as antinarrative, back into the parameter of the mythical. What had been developed as the semiotic, as the phenomenological, as the linguistic, as the psychoanalytic model of meaning is now metaphorically reverted backward into humanism. As an immediate consequence of this, one would have to recognize that whatever models defining artistic spectator and producer might have been valid in Weimar Germany, specifically models such as collective production in the worker's photography clubs, models such as Heartfield's complex reconstitution of narrativity in the photomontage aesthetic, whatever models had been valid in Weimar Germany and were now reconsidered in the reconstruction culture of postwar Europe and the United States, the role model that Beuys reestablished did not only defy those advanced forms of structural-formal self-reflexivity traditionally identified as modernism, but also defied those of the artist as a highly secularized figure, an artist who would work in analogue to the scientist, an artist who would participate in the differentiation of public visual, perceptual, cognitive experience as a member of an advanced model of the public sphere. And Beuys opposed this model in favor of a renewed foregrounding of the artist as a privileged being, a seer that provides deeper or higher forms of transhistorical knowledge to an audience that is in deep dependence and need of epiphanic revelations.

This condition had been one of my initial difficulties in response to the work of Beuys and it remains my primary critique. But in the meantime it also has

become one of my major difficulties with Beuys' adamant interpreters, and I have therefore to confess it is one of my difficulties with Gene Ray's paper as well. The problem seems first of all to be one of method and epistemology, mainly in ascertaining the perimeters and the limits of interpretation. The question is whether or not one agrees on the need for art historical writing to critically reflect upon its own premises and tools just as much as one still aspires to certain standards of critical method when it comes to the writing of history at large. Or whether one accepts what some writers on Beuys consider the quintessential condition of postmodernity—the multivalence, the multiplicity, and ultimately the randomness and arbitrariness of the interpretive projections to which Beuys' work lends itself.

Directly related to this question is a second one that I will call the understanding of art as discursive formation. That is, to recognize it as an element in the historically determined ongoing process of positions and counterpositions. What Roland Barthes once called the theater of intellectual and artistic displays that fully acknowledges at the moment of its formation that it is only one of many possible positions to be taken. One that does not appear as a claim for transhistorical truth, one that does not look for deeper, more profound meaning, one that does not appear with a claim for social hegemony of the artist as the revealer or the redeemer or the therapeutically homeopathic feeler of the social, but one that very specifically recognizes the field, the perimeters, the framework, within which the aesthetic can and will be placed. Can and will be read.

One of the many virtues that has been attributed to Beuys is to have escaped from the specificity of the reflection on the discursive frameworks of art. And it is not always evident and it doesn't necessarily make it better whether this is the result of his ignorance of the history of artistic practices or whether it's the result of an intentional misrecognition on his part. One outcome of understanding these differences then, and one of the methodological discrepancies, if not a problem with Beuys and his interpreters, is that Beuys is considered by his interpreters as a universe of his own. All of the papers we have heard, and this is clearly not coincidental, have established him as the figure of centrality, the figure that forms his own legacy, the figure that takes on the legacy of the great figures of the past, as it were. Paradoxically, he is not measured or compared, in almost all of the literature with which I am aware with those closest to him both in terms of location and generation—that is, Yves Klein and Arman in Paris or subsequently figures in the United States. In all instances of such a comparison, if, in fact, it is made, comparisons that compose themselves by evidence of con-

text, by evidence of structural analogy, by evidence of morphological similarity, the inevitable conclusion of that comparison would always have to be to acknowledge first of all that Beuys' model of meaning exchanges specificity of perceptual structure and formal organization for generality, that is, verifiable conditions of procedure, matter, material, and formal organization for unverifiable pretences for the works, more or less infinite range of readings.

To clarify my point, the historical legacy of Dada or, more specifically, the legacy of Dada and Duchamp, had become prominent in the immediate postwar period in Paris earlier than in New York, and certainly earlier than in Düsseldorf. The manifestos, activities, and works of the Nouveaux Réalistes much prior to the official declaration of the new realists as a group would give indications of the intensity of that dialogue. Beuys, of course, living in Düsseldorf, was intimately familiar with all of the activities of the Nouveaux Réalistes in Paris since paradoxically and quite significantly the reception situation of the Nouveaux Réalistes was much more developed in Düsseldorf than it was in Paris itself. Yves Klein, for example, showed his monochrome paintings in 1957 to inaugurate the Alfred Schmela Gallery where Beuys would soon be showing his own work. Arman would exhibit his first Poubelle at Schmela's gallery in 1960 and the exhibition was so successful with the local collectors and museums that Iris Clert would instantly offer Arman an exhibition in Paris after that. Paul Wember, then the director of the most important West German museum devoted to contemporary art in Krefeld, Beuys' hometown and an old bastion of lower Romanian Westfalian Catholicism and entrepreneurial patronage for modernist culture, was one of the centers where Nouveau Réalisme was celebrated. Typically enough it was in the mansions that had been build by Mies van der Rohe for the local patrons Esters and Laughnger that the Krefeld museum would eventually hold these expositions of contemporary art. Wemberg was a central figure in establishing a postwar contemporary culture on the institutional level in the Rhineland. The second figure, and only slightly later, would be museum director Hans Claris. Their acquisition and exhibition policies contributed in a central way to the founding of West German new avant-garde culture. It is, however, one of the great ironies of that West German reconstruction culture of the mid-1950s, early 1960s that, as international as it was in scope, as shocking and provocative as it was in comportment, it enacted a profound need to internationalize itself on the background of the destruction of its own historically contaminated Weimar avant-garde. It is no longer a secret that the radical devotion of West German collectors, museums, institutions, curators, and writers of the mid-1950s to early 1960s to both American and French interna-

tional new avant-garde culture was an integral part of the historical process of disavowal and repression that we have encountered in all other contexts. That means of course making the situation even more complicated so that the motivation and the interpretive investment of that history, as is evident in the case of Paul Wember, would distort or disfigure in a major way the actual productions of the art of that generation. Thus it was that Paul Wember, for example, who in the early 1960s claimed in all earnestness that the work of Yves Klein should be seen as an example of how Catholic mysticism could now find a new articulation in the work of the Parisian Rosacrucianists. But, even more importantly, by positioning Klein as a new artist with deep links to religion and mystical experience he established the license and legitimacy for the reformulation of the artist as public figure. The artist as a mediating figure between the present day secularity of experience and the audiences' desire for any kind of transcendental experience to escape the banality of German reconstruction culture and its recently established models of accelerated consumption. What Klein embodied for both Wember and for Beuys was an artistic response to the spiritual crisis that attempted to dissimulate rather than to reflect upon the increasing entanglement of neo-avant-garde culture in the conditions of an emerging culture of spectacle.

Beuys, ever eager to position and promote himself, and gifted with an almost uncanny capacity to single out the artistic trends of the moment, to internalize, transform, and transmute them for his own artistic project would have learned several lessons from the presence of the Nouveaux Réalistes in Düsseldorf and Krefeld. First of all that there was such a thing as a dada tradition, not the tradition of Wieland Herzfelde, not the tradition of Raoul Hausmann, not the tradition of John Heartfield. It was the dada tradition of Weimar that was deeply contaminated—the project of a politicized avant-garde that was clearly unthinkable and clearly unmentionable in the immediate postwar years. It would have been clearly inopportune to have been associated with that legacy. The reemergence of that legacy in the work of Arman and Yves Klein, now specifically associated with a new type of spirituality, would be a fully desirable model for Beuys. Arman's projects, which Beuys encountered equally in Düsseldorf and Krefeld at that time, allowed him to recognize that the readymade itself had been historically transfigured. Now the readymade appeared as the mere serialized organization of found objects in which the ready-made was subjected to potentially infinite devalorization and falsification—a future that Duchamp himself had predicted. What was important, however, in Arman's treatment was that all objects, regardless of structure, relation, and internal tex-

ture, could qualify as ready-mades. Arman's embrace of refuse and trash as fully accommodating objects for his accumulations and for his Poubelles was, in fact, another license that Beuys would have taken at that time. The difference, however, the profound difference in Arman's project was that objects that were serialized, multiplied, and devalorized never took on meaning, at least no meaning other than the structural transformation of the ready-made model itself. Neither iconographic nor metaphoric nor representational narratives could be spun from looking at Arman's work. This was one aspect of Arman's postwar authenticity and epistemological specificity that set his work totally apart from Beuys' subsequent reinscription into the aesthetic of trauma and trash, of garbage and shambles, with an infinity of spectatorial interpretive projections.

Gene Ray does in many ways provide the most courageous attempt to go fully into the direction of a historically charged specificity of Beuys' objects and materials. Even in comparison to Mario Kramer's detailed account of the *Auschwitz Vitrine*, it is the first attempt to my knowledge in which issues, speculations, and desires that have been lingering around the particular material in Beuys' work are specifically pronounced.

All of Beuys' materials are no doubt derived from the shambles of postwar Germany, in the literal sense of a culture in shambles, a culture of debris. All of Beuys' materials, however, are also signaling their derivation from a certain regional subculture, the peculiar transitory moment of the lower Rhine regions suspended between artisanal and industrial forms of production embedded in an agricultural or rural environment that still permeated everyday life into the postwar period. Beuys' use of sausages, brown paint, domestic and medical objects, the peculiar hybrid between the wounded corporeal matter and the industrial object, can be, and have to be, situated in that historical framework. It is important to recognize, and Gene Ray clarifies this for us, that it is unthinkable to envision materials of this kind in the context of postwar Paris. Yet it is also important to recognize that it is precisely the conventionality with which Beuys, or shall we say his interpreters, reinvests in the gesture of the found object, reinvests in the gesture of the serialization of the ready-made, the matter, the procedure, and repositions them in nodes of metaphorical meaning that makes Beuys and others of national superiority. Or if one wants to flip that argument, I would say that makes him an artist of regional interest in the way that Antoni Tàpies is a painter of regional interest by comparison to other figures of his generation.

One other example in which this distinction can be clarified is Beuys' relationship to Fluxus. Joan Rothfuss has given us a detailed and wonderful account

of that complicated relationship, and I only want to add a few remarks that I had prepared before I came here. Fluxus defined the Duchamp legacy in a way that is very different from the Parisian redefinition of Duchamp as much as it is also an historical expansion or continuation of that project. I think there is a distinct chronological sequence in Beuys' acceptance of the Nouveau Réaliste aesthetic as the first layer and his acceptance of the Fluxus aesthetic as the second layer, and they have to be seen in context. Fluxus' definition of the Duchampian legacy of the ready-made could be described as follows. The object is in a state of total control in its commodity status. The object as commodity can no longer be the point of departure for artistic intervention. What the Fluxus artists introduce is the level and dimension of performativity as viewer-spectator participation thereby resuscitating the object as commodity from its fetish status and reliberating the object as a historically atrophied model of the Duchampian ready-made and bringing it back into a completely new circuit, into a completely new discourse, into a completely different type of viewer-author exchange. The object acquires the condition of the ludic interactive model in which participant and producer are equals. Thereby the object as performative object defies theatricality, denies the possibility of hegemony and hierarchy because its quintessential function is to abolish the narrative, the mysticism, the hierarchy that performance in the traditional theatrical narrative has embodied. The radicality of the Fluxus aesthetic once again was either deeply misunderstood or profoundly ignored or deliberately misled and deviated by Beuys' obsessive concern with the reestablishment of precisely the type of hierarchical relationships between spectator and author that Fluxus had set out to destroy. Beuys' entanglement with mythical forms of experience is of course a multiple one; for example he literally reinvested the aesthetic with the dimension of ritual and cult precisely reverting the very development that since the 1930s had already been discussed by Walter Benjamin as the fundamental tendency of the work of art under the conditions of modernity. The liberation of the work of art from ritual and cult was the key question of the twentieth century. But we would certainly want to remain open at least for the time being to the historical possibility and the credibility to re-engage artisitic practice within the domain of mythical experience. And certainly Gene Ray's proposal that Beuys' work was perhaps less involved in the reconstitution of myth as in an attempt to produce public acts of mourning would necessitate such a reconsideration.

But there are other aspects of Beuys' perpetual attempt to reposition the work of art in the perspective of spirituality and transcendentality that I find problematic. First among them is a persistence to situate his work within an

explicit invocation and exploration of Celtic and Christian mythology and religion at the very moment in Germany when Christianity has publically manifested its complete failure to confront let alone avert the destruction of European subjectivity under the impact of the Fascist regime. The insensitivity of Beuys' proposal that a Christian monstrance be placed as a monument at the center of Auschwitz is reminiscent incidentally of the recent attempt of the Polish government to place a Catholic monastery near the site of Auschwitz and is an indication of the problematic implications of Beuys' approach. But even in this respect Beuys seems to have looked across the Rhine as I have pointed out already. What Rosacrucianism and the attempt to reinvest artistic practice with transcendental mysticism had been for Yves Klein in his relationship with Max Hendel, would Anthroposophy and Rudolf Steiner become for Joseph Beuys. In both instances we can say that the loss of the grounding of culture in ritual and hence the destruction of the legitimacy and credibility of religion, specifically the religion of Christianity in Europe, were compensated now by an artistic reaction formation that attempts to reinvigorate the ritualistic dimension of artistic practices and performances by imbuing the artist with the public role of the priest, the shaman, the redeemer of spirituality. Even if I grant Gene Ray's point that it is more likely that Beuys wanted to engage in a public discourse of mourning, I have to make one objection: each and every member of that society—including its authors, its writers, its critics, its artists—needs to experience the process of mourning individually; it cannot be taken away or performed in public and in substitute by artists. Another paradox is that neither Beuys nor Klein understood to what extent the processes of mourning and memory with which they claimed to be deeply engaged would be instantly transformed, and one can say, perverted into other forms of spectacularization, which they would serve very well. To the very degree that these artists have claimed to be engaged with the resurrection of the ritualistic dimension of artistic experience, they not only place themselves within a perspective of myth but they also recognize that it was the advanced conditions of spectacle culture that would now determine who makes art, in what context, how art will be used and for what function. In fact, it is precisely this uncanny duality that since then we have seen explode in the work of Anselm Kiefer and more recently in the work of Christian Boltanski, where the project of mourning is in and of itself becoming the matter that is transformed into spectacularization, which is the deepest enemy and the total destruction of memory and mourning. To what extent Beuys needed to publically perform the role of the artist as a travesty of the role of the redeemer or as a travesty of the Führer and the leader, the hero, the cult figure,

the one that claims the legacy of the great figures of the past, becomes instantly evident if one compares other artists of his generation who disappear completely behind their work and whose work publically defies the transformation of the artist into the so-called public persona. The same duality exists within the formal structures and the procedures of the work itself. What Beuys lacks most of all is the understanding that artistic languages are public entries into the symbolic order, and as such they are both historically overdetermined and socially constructed. What makes an artistic formulation communicate even if it is structured around the principle of hermetic refusal or instrumentalized communication, is ultimately the result of a complex process that constitutes itself successfully precisely at that moment that the artistic formulation recognizes the degree of external overdetermination as its matrix and the moment that it recognizes the extent of its communicability as being dependent upon its more or less conscious positioning within those myriad dialogic relationships with the practices of predecessors and peers. The bands of influence and distanciation, of acceptance and defiance at all times, does not seem to follow first of all the Oedipal principle of hierarchy—of higher, greater, stronger, better, bigger fathers. It is not the dance of rivalry and displacement but rather the compulsion to differentiate precisely the register in which speaking artistically at this particular moment would be possible at all. Undoubtedly Beuys' historical situation was peculiar in terms of its historical demands and restraints. It had to articulate its message system from within the shambles of a destroyed avant-garde culture and against the social-political background of a nation state that had not only destroyed avant-garde culture but had brought European humanist subjectivity to the threshold of total extinction. Thus the literal historical grounding of Beuys' work is dramatically different than, for example, the grounding of the work of Robert Morris. But here the difficulties begin. Does this fact necessitate or justify the application of profoundly different models of reading and interpretation? Or to reverse the perspective, is it then precisely the local, regional, and national specificity of Beuys' culture that would justify the interpretations of his work in terms that we would otherwise no longer admit into any other context, any other theorization, into any other interpretation? Can territories and strategies of artistic meaning—the spirituality of the work of art, the artist as healer and transcendental redeemer—can these be reclaimed at will or are artistic practices successful and relevant precisely at that moment when they recognize that these concepts of transcendentality and metaphysical experience have been wrenched from our hands?

Lukas Beckmann

6! THE CAUSES LIE IN THE FUTURE

When some people take a dim view
of humanity, I have to ask:
Of whom do they take a brighter view?
—Joseph Beuys

IN NOVEMBER 1978 A TWO-DAY EVENT was arranged in Kassel under the title *Do We Need a New, Ecologically Oriented Party?* Joseph Beuys and Rudi Dutschke, a leader of the student movement, were scheduled to participate in the panel discussion. I drove to Kassel with a friend, but the event never took place. We were the only guests. Germany was covered by snow. Trains and flights were cancelled: the roads were impassable. Only later on the second day did Joseph Beuys himself arrive: it would be my first personal encounter with him. Beuys had just come from Vienna, where he had been offered a guest professorship. "After the first interview, I was still uncertain whether I should do it," he laughed, "then I went into a café, and I knew: I won't do it." He described how the waiter had demanded he remove his hat, because they would not serve guests wearing hats. "That settled it for me," Beuys said.

We talked for about half an hour. Beuys wanted to intensify the cooperation between the Free International University (Freie Internationale Universitaet) and

the Aktion Dritter Weg (Campaign for a Third Way). I had just completed my studies in Third World sociology at the University of Bielefeld. We agreed to meet to work together in Duesseldorf. "I have a great work space for it there," Beuys said. I, in turn, had a typewriter and a few ideas about politics in the Third World. During that conversation with Beuys, I was not yet aware that a few weeks previously he had won a case in Federal Court overturning his dismissal from the State Art Academy in Duesseldorf, and now had the lifelong right to use his former studio, Room 3 in the Academy in Duesseldorf. From where he had been evicted six years earlier. We agreed to work on the "Interentwicklung" (Interdevelopment) project of the FIU. We wanted to bring together ideas from developing nations and industrialized nations, to develop a financial and legal basis for a new relationship between developed and lesser-developed nations, in order to set a new direction for domestic political work. Room 3 became the headquarters of the FIU in 1978. When I entered the room with Beuys, it was filled with utensils of wood, metal, and rolls of felt. It was all covered with a thick layer of dust. "Everything looks great," he said, and only then did I realize that he had not seen this room since his dismissal in October 1972.

During the transition period, I would have to sleep in the office as well, so I took a couple of mattresses along. As soon as I had unpacked, the police were at the door: the janitor had called them, because he thought he saw signs that Professor Beuys was planning to occupy the university again.

IN THE AUTUMN OF 1978, a national ecological conference took place in Troisdorf, near Bonn. Here, too, the central question was the future of the environmental movement and the necessity of a parliamentary arm for a non parliamentary movement. In December 1978, the *Frankfurter Rundschau* newspaper offered Beuys the opportunity to write an article expressing his basic principles of social politics and his ideas for a new type of party. Beuys used this opportunity to write "*Appeal for an Alternative*" (*Aufruf zur Alternative*).[1]

In early 1979, Beuys came into our office with a newspaper article and was pleasantly surprised to see that a number of smaller ecological parties and regional Green parties had already agreed to participate in the first direct election of the European Parliament in the summer of 1979. "Our party system is very stable," Beuys said, "and if this train takes off without us, it will be some time before we have another opportunity like this one. We have to join them." We formulated a letter to the president of the GAZ (Gruene Aktion Zukunft;

1 *Frankfurter Rundschau* of 23 December 1978.

FIGURE 6.1
Joseph Beuys at a peace demonstration for nonviolence and disarmament in Bonn on June 9, 1982, the day before American president Ronald Reagan's visit.
Photo: Lukas Beckmann.

Green Campaign for the Future), Dr. Herbert Gruhl, and Beuys indicated that the FIU and the Campain Third Way were interested in working to form a Green party for the European election. He sent another letter to the AUD (Campaign Coalition of Independent Germans), which also took part in the founding of the Green Party. In October 1976, Beuys had already stood as candidate for this group in the state election for the Bundestag. At the center of the program were a "unified Germany," "the creative freedom of the individual and social security for all," a "free culture," "free schools and universities that are independent of the state" as well as "democratic financial laws" seen as a "legal form of money to serve the free development of people's abilities " and "the introduction of petitions and referenda."[2]

In March 1979, along with 19 other representatives of the FIU, Beuys became a founding member of the Greens. He was a candidate for the European Parliament. {See Plate 6.1} In June 1979 the Party won 3.2% of the vote, falling short of the 5% needed to gain representation. In the Bundestag election of October 1980, Beuys was the leading candidate on the Green Party's list for the state North Rhine-Westphalia. With 1.5% of the vote, it was not enough to enter the parliament. Still, in the years that followed Beuys used every opportunity to work within the framework of the Green Party for social reform: in television debates, at events, and through campaigns. In October 1980, Beuys took part in

2 From the Archiv Gruenes Gedaechtnis of the Heinrich-Boell-Foundation in Berlin. Taken from a pamphlet by Joseph Beuys for the Federal election in 1976.

FIGURE 6.2
Joseph Beuys singing "Sonne statt Reagan" (Sun instead of rain/Reagan) with the rock group BAP in front of more than 500,000 people at a peace demonstration in Bonn on June 10, 1982.
Photo: Lukas Beckmann.

the occupation of the Westdeutscher Rundfunk (West German Radio) in Cologne, because the station refused to let the Greens participate in television advertisements for elections as other established parties did. In the early eighties, he took part in numerous demonstrations by the peace movement against the stationing of new atomic weapons in Germany. In June 1982, the day before a state visit in Bonn by the American president Ronald Reagan, he led a protest against the military dictatorship in Turkey. He used a branch to draw the initials NATO in the dripping blood that demonstrators had poured in front of the Turkish embassy. Later that day, he took part in a demonstration in the section of Bonn where the government buildings are. With enormous photographs of Martin Luther King and Mahatma Ghandi, the participants called for nonviolent policies for both East and West. That evening, he appeared as a singer for the rock group BAP, then the most popular German band, and in front of Bonn's main train station before a crowd of 30,000 he sang the song called "Sonne statt Reagan" (Sun Not Reagan/Rain). He also appeared the next day in front of 500,000 demonstrators from the peace movement.

In the Federal election in 1983, Beuys was not selected by the Greens to stand for state elections. He was very disappointed. Beuys was a political person. He was never a politician. That was precisely what made it possible for him to have an essential, substantial influence on the momentum during the

FIGURE 6.3
Joseph Beuys at the founding convention of the Green Party in Karlsruhe, January 12, 1980. Photo: Lukas Beckmann.

founding era of the Green Party. Beuys was convinced that politics had to be overcome: Social Sculpture, a design process that spanned all of society by means of human creativity, would have to replace it. His goal was a social and economic one, and, unlike the Greens, his demands did not begin and end with "conservation of nature" and the use of natural energy sources like sun, wind, and water. "The Greens have a hard time seeing," according to Beuys, "that ecological politics calls for a concept of creativity and culture that truly embraces human beings and makes them aware of how the whole can be conceived. Only then a convincing power is generated: this is a path that will not only bring us energy that doesn't harm the environment, but will also raise up ourselves. It will bring us into a new state of power and energy. It is not just a question of conserving nature, but creating nature: the idea of human beings as creators gets such short shrift from the Greens."[3]

JOSEPH BEUYS WAS BORN on 12 May 1921 in Krefeld, Lower Rhine. On 12 January 1986, he won the Wilhelm Lehmbruck Prize of the city of Duisburg. There he gave his final public speech. He died eleven days later.

In his "Lehmbruck Speech,"[4] Beuys thanks his "teacher" Wilhelm Lehmbruck (1881–1919) and asks, "How can a dead person teach me something

3 "Interview mit Joseph Beuys: Erlaeuterungen zur Honigpumpe," *Spuren* (January 1985).

4 *In Memoriam Joseph Beuys: Obituaries, Essays, Speeches.* Translated into English by Timothy Nevill. Bonn: Inter Nationes Bonn, 1986, page 57 ff.

like that something decisive for my life?" He tells how he found "totally by chance in a little book" a sculpture by Lehmbruck. For Beuys, the work touches upon a "threshold situation in the concept of sculpture."

"When I thought of a sculptural form which could comprehend both physical and spiritual material I was absolutely driven by the idea of Social Sculpture." This experience was the origin of Beuys's realization that "Every human being is an artist."

Beuys says, "Thinking is sculpture. A thought is the product of human creativity. I would like to make this thought, and the process of its creation visible to people in a way that I treat it as an object. A thought that is born of creativity is already a work of art, a sculpture."

There is another important aspect to the Lehmbruck Speech that is of deep significance for Beuys's lifework. "One day," as he told the audience, "I found in a dusty book shelf Rudolf Steiner's appeal 'An das deutsche Volk und an die Kulturvoelker' (To the German Nation and the Civilised Peoples, 1919)."

In this appeal, shortly after the end of the First World War, Steiner (1861–1925) detailed the importance of a tripartite structuring of the social organism and most of all the independence of cultural life, which would be crucial for the peaceful coexistence of human beings and peoples. Beuys found that Wilhelm Lehmbruck was listed in the appeal as one of the first committee members.

Beuys's engagement with Rudolf Steiner's ideas had a lasting influence on him. In his private library—according to his son, Wenzel Beuys, who is active in the Beuys archive in Duesseldorf—Beuys had well over a hundred books by Rudolf Steiner, many of which are heavily annotated.

For Beuys, the sculptor Lehmbruck's work casts light on the development of the individual, his or her creativity and artistic powers. And in Steiner's "Threefold Social Organism" Beuys sees the basic form of a society that is founded in liberty in the world of culture, equality in the world of law, and solidarity in the world of economics.

"To form a social order like a sculpture, that is my task and the task of art." In this transmission of the principle of sculpture, as Beuys put it in his Lehmbruck Speech, "Wilhelm Lehmbruck passed the flame to us. I have seen it."

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BEUYS WAS DIFFERENT in many ways. I heard him give speeches in which he talked for more than two and a half hours in front of over 500 students; yet when he was finished, he continued the discussion for two more hours.

Although the doors of the auditorium were all open, no one left early—an intensity I never experienced anywhere else. Beuys gave a direction to his thinking that made it possible to see reality in a new way. The phenomena of the life of humankind and nature brought him into a future whose laws are already reality today. They could already take effect, if they were recognized, respected, and understood. In this sense, Beuys was working with a future that was already present. In thinking, this future becomes the focus of a Social Sculpture, which has yet to take shape as a society suited to humankind. Beuys was a messenger of the future, a medium between the realities of the everyday world and the phenomena of a future age that are already active in the present. This mediation between two worlds—between two "qualities" of reality—makes it difficult, even today, for many people to understand Beuys. Beyond mere sense perception Beuys saw a reality in ideas as beings."[5]

Beuys's creativity worked from a source of true inner perception that was often hidden from his audience, yet they intuitively grasped how profoundly he had developed the particular within the context of the whole.

IN THE BOOK *Globalisierung: Eine Satellitenaufnahme,* William Knoke, the president of the Harvard Capital Group (an international investment bank), writes "The suppression of the work force by technology creates new problems. Roughly two thirds of all jobs in industrialized nations (some 95% percent of all jobs worldwide) are characterized by constant repetition and could thus be automated."[6] In its most recent "World Employment Report 1998/1999," the ILO[7] writes, "From the crisis in Asia alone, 10 million people will be unemployed by the end of 1998."[8] It assumes that at year end some 150 million people will be unemployed worldwide, and 30% of the world's three billion workers will be underemployed.

Beuys confronted the consequences of globalization even before the term had been invented. He saw that worldwide social problems would be the inevitable consequence unless the reality of the interrelations of work, property, and income could be understood in a new way. The following questions were always primary for Beuys:

- What is the task of the government? What should be its limits?
- The essential capital of a society is human creativity. Art=Capital.
- How can a currency system be created that recognizes that fact and develops abilities rather than maximizing profits?

5 *Was ist Geld?* (Wangen: FIU Verlag, 1991).

6 *Globalisierung: Eine Satellitenaufnahme* (Frankfurt: Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung GmbH Informationsdienste, 1997), p. 31.

7 International Labour Organisation, a special organization of the UN.

8 *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* of 24 September 1998, page 17.

- What is money?
- How can production, consumption, and trade work together in a way that results in altruism?
- Why is it possible to buy land even though no one has produced it and no one has invested in its creation?
- Why are things turned upside down when the government subsidizes the economy?
- What is the task of the government in education? In which of its tasks should it be limited? Why should the goal be independent, self-governing schools and universities rather than private ones?

Beuys always emphasized that our economy and its laws are not given by nature, but were made by man.

He placed his hope in knowledge and development, in a revolution in thinking and in the evolution of a society that would be suited to humankind. To achieve this goal, he worked within numerous groups, some of which are mentioned here.

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THE GERMAN STUDENT PARTY (*Deutsche Studentenpartei*) was founded in the summer of 1967, on Beuys's initiative, in a meadow in front of the Duesseldorf Academy. He wanted to give the student protests a direction and a substance that would point toward the future. In addition to demands for the self-determination of the University for the Arts, the ecological question was also on the agenda. "The German Student Party is the world's largest party, but most of its members are animals." Other points on the program included: liberty in the world of culture, equality in the world of law, and fraternity in the world of economics; the elimination of dependence between East (communism) and West (capitalism); for a united but not centralized Europe.

In June 1968, Beuys participated in *documenta IV* in Kassel for the first time. That same year, many applicants to the Art Academy are rejected, for the first time. A limit (*numerus clausus*) is placed on the number of students who can study art. Beuys takes a stand against it. "Every human being is a student. Anyone who wants to study must be allowed to study! That is a human right. The availability of space cannot be the measuring stick. The government is not responsible for science and the arts—that has to be clear once and for all! All these questions have to be discussed publicly. That is why the Art Academy is there after all!" The conflicts between Beuys, the directors of the Academy, and the minister of culture escalate; the Academy is temporarily closed for several weeks.

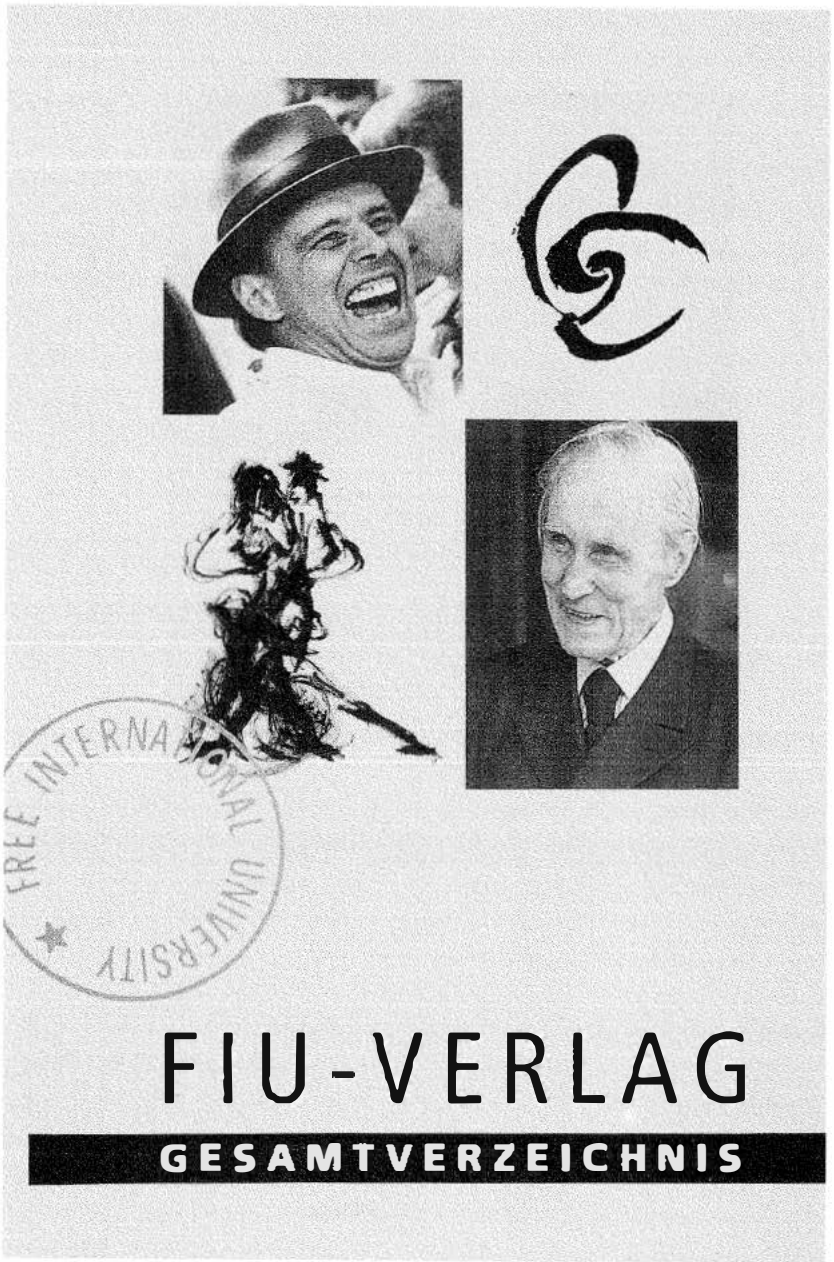

FIGURE 6.4
Joseph Beuys and Wilhelm Schmundt, on a 1974 FIU brochure.
Photo: Lukas Beckmann.

In March 1970, Beuys opened an *Office for Political Public Relations (Buero fuer politische Oeffentlichkeitsarbeit)* in the Andreas Strasse in Düsseldorf. He used it to call for a boycott of the elections for the State Parliament in North Rhine-Westphalia. "Bring your voter notification to our office in the Andreas Strasse for an *Organization of Nonvoters*" "Vote for art, that is, vote for yourself!"[9]

In June 1971, the *Organization for Direct Democracy by Referendum* was founded; its central message was "Never vote for political parties again." The *Environmental Protection Workgroup of the Organization for Direct Democracy* organized a "happening" in December 1971 in the Grafenberg Forest near Düsseldorf, whose message was "Overcome the dictatorship of the political parties. Save the forest!"

The situation at the Academy did not change. In the summer of 1971, applicants for art studies were once again rejected. Once again, there is a rush into Beuys's class. He went to the registrar's office with the students, demanding that they be admitted. They occupy the registrar's office; the ministry of culture intervenes.

From June to October 1972 Beuys took part in *documenta V* in Kassel. He was present there for 100 days, and during this time he initiated the idea of a *Free International University* as an "autonomous research institute" based on an extended concept of art. The work was intended to address the design of all aspects of life and work.

In April 1973, came the foundation of the Association for the Promotion of the *Free International University for Creativity and Interdisciplinary Research* at the Academy in Duesseldorf. Beuys was the founding director. The primary concern was the realization that education and art cannot fall within the power of the state. The state should establish the legal framework and provide the necessary financial resources. On this basis, then, the principle of self-determination should apply.

In September 1972, the tense situation at the Academy had repeated itself. Beuys wrote to all of the 227 rejected applicants. This time, however, the minister of culture refused to accept additional students. Beuys occupied the registrar's office and spent the night there with more than 60 students. The next morning, the police appeared. Beuys was dismissed without notice. The legal battle with the state government continued until 1978. It ended successfully: Beuys could keep his studio at the Art Academy as his personal workspace until the end of his life.

Beuys participated in *documenta VI* in 1977 with his work *Honey Pump at the Workplace (Honigpumpe am Arbeitsplatz)*. Here he finally founded the *Free*

9 "Mein groesstes Kunstwerk" (Duesseldorf: Free International University, 1980), a chronology of the FIU compiled by Johannes Stuettgen. From the Archiv Gruenes Gedaechtnis.

International University (Freie Internationale Universitaet, FIU) and the *Organization for Direct Democracy* was integrated into the FIU. From 1978 until Beuys's death in 1986, the office of the FIU was located in the Art Academy in Duesseldorf.

The *International Cultural Center (Internationales Kulturzentrum Achberg,* founded in 1971) served as another important workplace for Beuys.[10] The public appeal for its establishment states: "We are faced with the challenge of breaking open the outdated social and economic orders." There was an agreement that the problems could not be solved by simply shifting the relationships of power or by additional bureaucracy.

In 1973, the first year of operation, the meeting place of the Cultural Center (the Humboldt-Haus) was already filled to capacity, with more than 2500 people. The Cultural Center held annual summer universities and working conferences in which sometimes several hundred people would participate over several weeks. Participants including, among others, Joseph Beuys, Otar Sik (the minister for economic affairs during Prague Spring, and later economics professor at the University of Saint Gall, Switzerland), and Rudi Dutschke. Important issues of the Cultural Center were the Threefold Social Organism" of Steiner and close discussion and cooperation with the leading representatives of the Prague Spring, which had been ended by military force on 21 August 1968 when Soviet tanks invaded. The focus of the Cultural Center was to find a "Third Way" between capitalism and communism.

In 1973, the first face-to-face meeting between Joseph Beuys and Wilhelm Schmundt (1898-1992) took place in Achberg.[11] In his book *Der soziale Organismus in seiner Freiheitsgestalt* (The Social Organism in Its Free Form, 1968),[12] Schmundt had developed the principles of an "economy based on ability" and redefined the interactions of work, income, property, money, and capital anew according to Beuys's idea of Social Sculpture. Beuys's understanding of art ("Every human being is an artist") finds one of its central statements in his slogan "Art=Capital" and he refers to Schmundt who sees the concepts of money and capital as two entirely different qualities. "Without Schmundt," according to Stuettgen, "Beuys would not have hit upon this central formula Art=Capital."[13]

In his public lectures beginning in the seventies, Beuys frequently refers to Schmundt. In a letter to Wilhelm Schmundt of August 1976, Beuys writes, "I am following the debate surrounding your economic theory. I find that your opponents are unable to bring warmth into the ground of volition with their deadly, intellectual approaches, which inhibits their true feelings, so that in the end they produce ideas that have not passed through the furnace, which is, of

10 Achberg on Lake Constance, in southern Germany.

11 (1898 - 1992), Waldorf School teacher of mathematics and physics. For twenty years prior to become a teacher, Schmundt had held an important position in an electrical utility company.

12 Wilhelm Schmundt, *Der Soziale Organismus in seiner Freiheitsgestalt*, Dornach: Philosophisch-Anthroposophischer Verlag, 1968). On this, see also Wilhelm Schmundt, *Evolution und Revolution* (Achberg: Achberger Verlag, 1973).

13 Johannes Stuettgen (student of Beuys), *Die Kunst des sozialen Bauens*, (Wangen: FIU Verlag, 1973), page 16.

course, so important when considering concepts of money and economics."[14]

Out of the working processes of the International Cultural Center, the idea developed in 1973 to establish a "regular annual Conference of the Third Way." It was to be "a free forum for the exchange of ideas and experiences for those who view the existing social relations critically and wish to work on the conception of a third way." This constitution, too, was signed by Joseph Beuys.

One concrete result of this conference occurred a few years later with the consolidation of several firms under the auspices of the *Business Association 'Campaign for a Third Way' (Unternehmensverband Aktion Dritter Weg)*. After long negotiations with the tax authority in Hamburg—in which Beuys took part personally—the individual companies were integrated into one system. The business association saw itself as a "practical attempt to overcome the crisis of humankind by reforming society, especially in the area of business." The Campaign Third Way comprised three subsections:

- An association of businesses from the areas of production, research, and education.
- A foundation as the holder of the assets of the economic, social, and cultural institutions. (The means of production are property of the Foundation. Property rights cannot be sold; rights of use are open to all).
- The Organization of the Members as an association of people and organizations with the goal of creating the "economic, legal, and cultural conditions to enable a human existence in dignity." Its founding principles included common property arrangements and an agreement on income that was based on a separation of work and income.

BEUYS WORKED INTENSIVELY WITH the social theory of Rudolf Steiner and especially the Threefold Social Organism." Without a general grasp of these principles, it is almost impossible to understand Beuys.

Steiner describes this threefold structure of society as one that has to establish freedom in the cultural sphere, equality in the rights sphere, and solidarity in the economics sphere. He emphasizes that those who attribute "a utopian character" have misunderstood this threefold structure and its fundamental intentions completely.[15] The realistic character of this structure might be explained here using the example of Goethe's view of nature. Steiner worked in Weimar for many years as the editor of Goethe's writings on natural science.

14 *Was ist Geld?* (see note 6), p. 63.

15 Rudolf Steiner, *The Threefold Social Order*, (New York: Anthroposophic Press, 1972).

Goethe relies on his method of "rational empiricism," which examines the *Primal Phenomenon* (*Urphaenomen*). In the *Archetypal Plant* (*Urpflanze*),[16] Goethe observes what for each individual plant is the foundation of its nature. Goethe calls *metamorphosis* those changes that take place in a plant's growth that constantly alter between expansion and contraction. The particular significance of Goethe's theory of metamorphosis lies in the discovery that leaf, calyx, and corolla, etc., are identical organs that develop from a shared basic form, and that the idea of the nature of a plant is a living whole.

Beuys's Social Sculpture is founded on Steiner's Threefold Social Order as its archetype . Steiner indicates that it is necessary to go back to the *Primal Ideas*—the social archetype-that form the basis for the social arrangements and guidance for social action that are appropriate for the human being. Steiner's idea of the Threefold Social Order is seen as the archetype of a society that has, as Wilhelm Schmundt described, developed from an economy of exchange to an "economy of abilities." In this form of economics, the focus is on the individual human being as the true source of power in productive economic and social processes.

According to Schmundt, the development of human life within communities is characterized by various metamorphoses: starting from a community based on natural associations, to a barter society and finally to a society based on the division of labor. The society based on the division of labor is unique in that it is based on providing for others (work as work for others). The individual no longer produces for his or her own use, but for other human beings. One takes from the output of others that which serves one's own needs. Seen in this way, altruism is structurally institutionalized in a society based on the division of labor.[17] Everyone voluntarily contributes his own abilities to an integral global system. The value of the work can no longer be measured within the context of the whole. Consequently, income and work have to be separated. Income is not "earned" income for a particular piece of work, but rather a fundamental right of human beings. Income is seen as a prerequisite, given upfront, that makes it possible to apply one's abilities to help others without having to worry about one's own needs, which are instead served by others.

This social possibility of the division of labor is largely blocked under present conditions, since structurally it is not altruism but egoism that determines life. Beuys saw it as an essential task, that the metamorphosis of society from an economy of exchange to an economy of abilities would have to be redefined conceptually, to create the basis for a new understanding of the relationships and interdependence between property, work, and income. This is where he met Wilhelm Schmundt.

16 Johann Wolfgang Goethe, *Die Metamorphose der Pflanzen* (Stuttgart: Verlag Freies Geistesleben, 1977).

17 "The prosperity of a community of human beings working together is the greater, the less the single person claims for himself the proceeds of his labor—that is, the more of these proceeds he makes over to his fellow workers and the more work done by the others." The fundamental social law in: Rudolf Steiner, *Anthroposophy and the Social Question* (Spring Valley: Mercury Press).

Beuys's slogan "Every human being is an artist" means that humankind itself is the focus of society. How must the social relations be established in order for mankind to take advantage of its capabilities? Wilhelm Schmundt writes in this context: "It is not the power of corporations but the power of concepts hostile to mankind" that destroy the possibility of a social order that is appropriate for the human being.[18]

What is money? Beuys always emphasized this question as well as the demand for a democratic monetary system. The new legal system of money would have the effect that the successful ones would no longer be those who aim for ever-higher profits, making more money from money, but rather those who produce with human needs in mind.

Money can no longer be seen as an economic value today. For Schmundt, this is a consequence of the evolution money has undergone, though in general this qualitative transformation of money hasn't been understood conceptually yet. Money has been transformed by the possibility of creating money with money. It is not a commodity, nor does it have economic value, it is simply a token of rights and obligations. Joseph Beuys, Wilhelm Schmundt, et al., saw the main causes of economic crises, of inflation and unemployment as being rooted in the fact that the economy is working with a concept of money that is no longer oriented around the factual world. Otherwise we would see money as a legal means.

Beuys often surprised his audience by making explicit his demands for transforming the three ideals of the French Revolution by making radical demands on the centers of economic power. He wanted to democratize the nature of money which would touch the interests of banks and large industry. On the other hand, he did not hold them morally responsible for their actions, because he was convinced that what was destroying the social system was not the power of banks and corporations but the power of concepts that have long failed to understand the nature of reality today.

Schmundt demonstrates that earlier forms of exchange value also had use value, that is, at some point they were *used up*. In modern monetary circulation, there is no process for using up the used money. For Beuys, Schmundt's great insight was to recognize that the legal character of money in circulation is constantly changing. Money is always subject to transformation, to metamorphosis, in the process of production and consumption. In the hands of an entrepreneur, money is capital for production. It requires that abilities be put into practice. This requirement is satisfied by the payment of wages to those involved in the production process. This puts money in the hands of con-

18 *Revolution und Evolution* (see note 14), p. 111.

sumers, making it available for the acquisition of consumer goods. If consumer needs are being satisfied, and money is used for commodities or services, then this money loses its relation to value, and thus its rights. It must be returned in full to the investment bank. In the area of production, money is related to abilities = capital. In the area of consumption, it becomes associated with consumption values, loses its value and must therefore return to its starting point. A healthy currency system, in Schmundt's view, is one in which the rights that are given out along with money flow back into the system entirely, and thus production and consumption are in equilibrium.[19]

IN HIS "APPEAL TO AN ALTERNATIVE,"[20] which appeared three months before the founding of the Green Party of the Federal Republic of Germany, Beuys wrote, "The aim is to break through into a new social future . . . In response to the question 'What can we do?' we have to explore the question 'What must we think?'" Beuys articulated the goal of focusing his motivations "politically and organizationally and then putting them to work in a concentrated extraparliamentary and parliamentary action." In the first section he described a new concept of work in an economy based on abilities, a new concept of income by separating work and income and the functional transformation of money. In the second section he elaborated on the "tools for transformation." It would be necessary, Beuys felt, "for alternative solutions to be made available for the entire public sphere. For that to happen, people who were familiar with such models would have to be voted into parliament. How would they manage that? By concentrating all their energies on a shared voting initiative. Beuys addressed the whole of the extraparliamentary movement and made it clear that "a shared voting initiative does not imply a party organization, a party program, party debates in the old style. The unity we require can only be a unity in diversity." Beuys saw that the various groups with their different world views nonetheless were, to a large extent, in agreement on many points. This represented the "*community in unity*." On the other hand, the same people had differing views in other areas. "This is the basis of *freedom in unity*." With these basic principles, during the early years of the Green Party, Beuys helped to lay the cornerstone for a political force that can manage to pursue shared action despite all the differences among the ideas of its members. These basic principles later led to an agreement in the party constitution that allowed for the party program of the Greens to have two parts, Part A and Part B. Part A would represent the shared

19 The following assumptions are made here, without going into them further:
- The separation of work and income: In an economy based on the division of labor, the individual works for others. The part that work plays within the whole cannot be determined. It is thus false to speak of a wage in exchange for output. With the division of labor, wage is transformed into income and becomes a basic right (a human right).
- Land and property are not produced, but are given to us. Thus they cannot be sold. At most, the right to use it can be given to someone.
- Self-determination: Corporations active in production are obliged to follow the principle of self-determination, since this is the only way the human creativity can develop. In Beuys's view, schools, universities, social organizations, etc., are also corporations in this sense, though not in the sense of classical economics.

20 *Frankfurter Rundschau* of 23 December 1978.

FIGURE 6.5
Joseph Beuys and Petra Kelly at a press conference calling for direct democracy throughout Germany in the spring of 1984.
Petra Kelly Archive.

goals and create the unity that would be the basis for political action. Part B would express the differences that still need to be discussed. These parts are an example of freedom in unity.

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DURING THE PREPARATIONS for the founding of the Green Party and at the founding meeting itself, Beuys documented that his support for the Greens as a "new kind of party" was not, in his view, connected with the typical demands of a traditional power structure. Five different parties and voter lists from various states took part with 150 delegates in the founding. Beuys knew that many of them had reservations about the FIU, in part connected with the fear that they would be outnumbered. "If all groups have 150 votes total," Beuys said, "then the FIU needs just 15"—a statement that met with general astonishment. In the end, the representatives of the FIU received 20 votes.

The founding members of the Greens produced a draft program and a draft constitution that was prepared by the participating groups. The FIU distributed to all the delegates an additional document with the title "The Basic Direction of the Green Alternative for the European Elections."[21] The distribution of this pamphlet caused a great disturbance in the assembly. After all, the argument went, everyone had agreed to *one* basis for the discussion, and the FIU had assented to it as well. Beuys went to the microphone. "This 'Green Alternative' simply describes what we are thinking, in what direction things need to develop, in our view. For that, we need a dialogue. We still know very little about each other. This document is in no way intended to come to a vote." Beuys left many confused for a second time. Still, the majority was put at ease. The assembly could continue as planned.

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IN THE EARLY YEARS, Beuys was directly involved in the political and programmatic discussion and evolution of the Greens. He expressly supported the choice of the sunflower as the symbol of the Greens, took part in meetings of the board, participated in election campaign plans, and from 1979 to 1982 took part in many informational events and discussions. Still, Beuys's ideas remained foreign to many members of the Greens. As the traditional left advanced within the party, Beuys's influence faded. In the end, he was not selected for the federal election in 1983. This was a bitter experience for Beuys, which was made even worse when the Greens

21 Reprinted in *Petra Kelly-Joseph Beuys* (Wangen: FIU-Verlag, 1994).

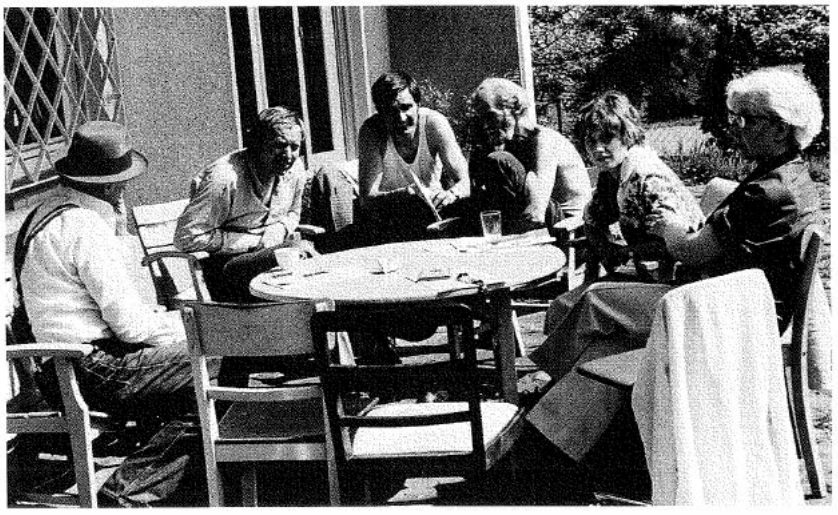


FIGURE 6.6
Joseph Beuys with Petra Kelly and other Green Party members at a session to prepare for the European Parliament election campaign, May 1979.
Photo: Lukas Beckmann.

were elected to the Bundestag for the first time in March of that year.

From that point until his death, in his workings with the Greens (he did not leave the party even after 1983), Beuys concentrated almost entirely on trying to achieve direct democracy through petitions and referenda at all levels of politics. Beuys felt this represented an indispensable way of enriching and supplementing parliamentary democracy on all levels. He participated in conferences on the theme of referenda and in the development of draft laws to lay down the legal principles for the introduction of petitions and referenda—especially on the national level. For Beuys, no other political goal was as important as the introduction of direct democracy as a supplement to the parliament. He wanted to mobilize the "warmth" of the human being (i.e., creativity), to transfer power, and to appeal to individual responsibility.

Beuys provided important stimuli for the Greens. His intellectual and social-political influences were far greater outside the party. Still, when Beuys gave a lecture, discussed his principles, or interacted with other people, it was easy to get the impression he was speaking for the Green Party ("these are all Green ideas"). But Beuys did not view the Greens as a party in the traditional sense, rather as the expression of an emerging ecological age that had begun to understand the relationship between humanity and nature as a unity—a unity whose very existence in the age of industrialization and division of labor on an international scale was threatened by the economics and lifestyle of humankind.

FIGURE 6.7
Joseph Beuys with a working group of the FIU in room 3 of the Düsseldorf Kunstakademie in autumn, 1982.
Photo: Lukas Beckmann.

Freedom, democracy, and ecology were a unity, in Beuys's view, which led to his call for a "social-ecological" politics.

The ecological question as a question about the coherence of humanity and nature, and the natural and intellectual relationships between the two, was for Beuys increasingly important as a historical question. This message found its most forceful expression in the "Campaign of 7000 Oaks" and in the campaign "How I Explain Paintings to a Dead Hare."

AT DOCUMENTA VII IN KASSEL IN 1982, Beuys started the campaign "7000 Oaks." Beuys said, "Along with every oak I place a stone. The stone stands for the status quo; the tree for the desired creative process." For an epoch at least—the life span of an oak is about 800 years—Beuys wanted to record the process in which people begin to resist the enormous "lethal process" and counteract "what mankind has caused through its concept of work, its concept of technology, its materialism, its political strategies and processes of production." The 7000 oaks represent the beginning of a "process of rectification, a process of revitalization, not only of nature but also of the social-ecological, i.e., the social organism."[22]

22 *Gespraeche mit Beuys* (Klagenfurt: Ritter Verlag, 1988), 66 ff.

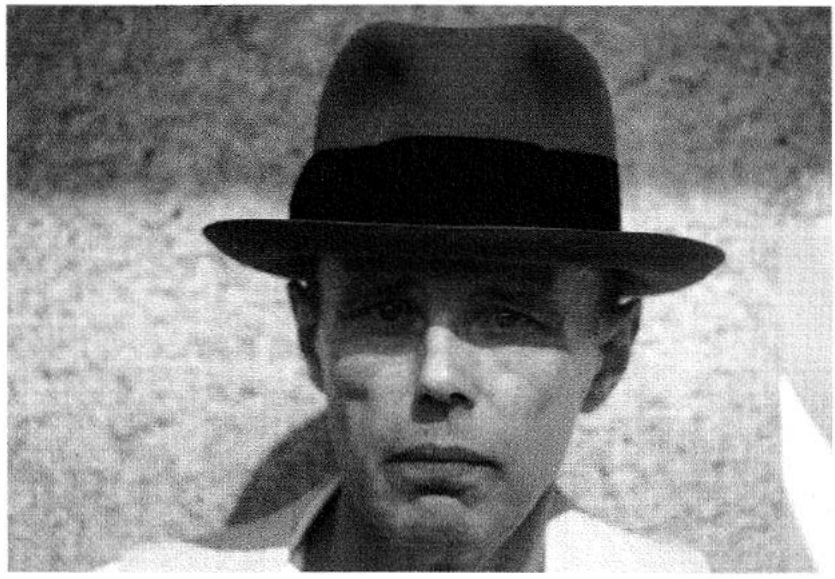


FIGURE 6.8
Joseph Beuys, 1979.
Photo: Lukas Beckmann.

BEUYS' CAMPAIGN "How I Explain Paintings to a Dead Hare" is also intended to make people aware of the ecological damage that results from the actions of humanity. The dead hare is a dead external organ of humanity. "And if I am able to explain the paintings to this external organ," Beuys remarks, "then, I believe, art will be understood as a genuine rectification of human creative powers."[23]

We are killing nature, animals, soil, forests—the external organs of mankind—all of which we need as oxygen sources or sources of food. In order to understand what we are doing, we have to enter into a dialogue with the animal world, with the plant world, with the soil, without which we cannot live, because mankind's progress in its evolution has only been achieved with the help of the creatures that we are now destroying.

JOSEPH BEUYS IDENTIFIES THE CAPABILITY of freedom with the ability to institute new causes. "Mankind can establish new causes in history on the basis of human creativity, on the basis of human thinking—new causes that can deter-

23 *Gespraeche mit Beuys* (see note 26), 132 ff.

mine the historical progress of the future. [. . .] The past and the future only exist because mankind continues to establish new causes. We must realize that it has always been this way."[24]

We observe natural processes by causal methods. That which precedes determines that which follows. If we have a goal, pursue an end, the effect influences the cause. That is how human activity works. The human being performs an action that he has envisioned. From this envisioned future, he causes it to happen. How else, Beuys asked, could the future be created at all? {See Plate 6.2}

Translated by S. Linberg and R. Brenner.

24 Joseph Beuys, in Ingrid Burgbacher-Krupka, *Prophete rechts, Prophete links: Joseph Beuys* (Nuremberg: Edition fuer moderne Kunst im Belser Verlag, 1977), 63 ff. Quoted from Hiltrud ●man, *Joseph Beuys* (Munich: Wilhelm-He.me-Verlag, 1998), 111.

Mel Chin

7} MY RELATION TO JOSEPH BEUYS IS OVERRATED

After a year's time, I have inspected these pages. I am certain that they reflect truth, but in the first chapters, and even in certain paragraphs of the others, I seem to perceive something false. This is perhaps produced by the abuse of circumstantial details, a procedure I learned from the poets and which contaminates everything with a falsity, since those details can abound in the realities but not in their recollection . . .

—Jorge Luis Borges

EDITOR'S NOTE

This text is a reworked transcript of artist Mel Chin's talk at the Ringling Museum Symposium. That unconventional, highly performative, and often humorous presentation begins with a playful appropriation of Beuys' own chalk-talk format and shifts to a poetic-rap homage to the German artist before settling into a more conventional slide talk. Chin's choice of these incongruous discursive modes was itself an intervention into and commentary on the academic tone and conventions of the symposium. (We are reminded that the trickster figure of the Coyote was one of Beuys' preferred guises.) Moreover, Chin's discussions of his own work reveal themselves to be eloquent, if indirect, responses to many of the themes and topics that had emerged over the course of the symposium. To the extent possible, therefore, the spontaneous and idiosyncratic character of the original talk has been preserved here, with notes added by Chin for clarification.

—G.R.

MEL CHIN

"My Relation to Beuys Is Overrated," but I also have alternate titles: "Not Everybody Is an Artist, but That's OK", "Beyond the Beuys Club", "What About Me?"

MORE ON TRIPARTITE STRUCTURES

We'll begin with a little chalk talk if you don't mind. This section is also titled: "More on Tripartite Structures, or Circles of Power and the Nature of Their Nutritional Composition."

Let's start with the one circle. Oh, too big . . . too big . . . much too big . . . this big. (Draws smaller and smaller circles and notes in the interiors "G", "M", "C").

G, M, C, Can anyone tell me what that stands for?

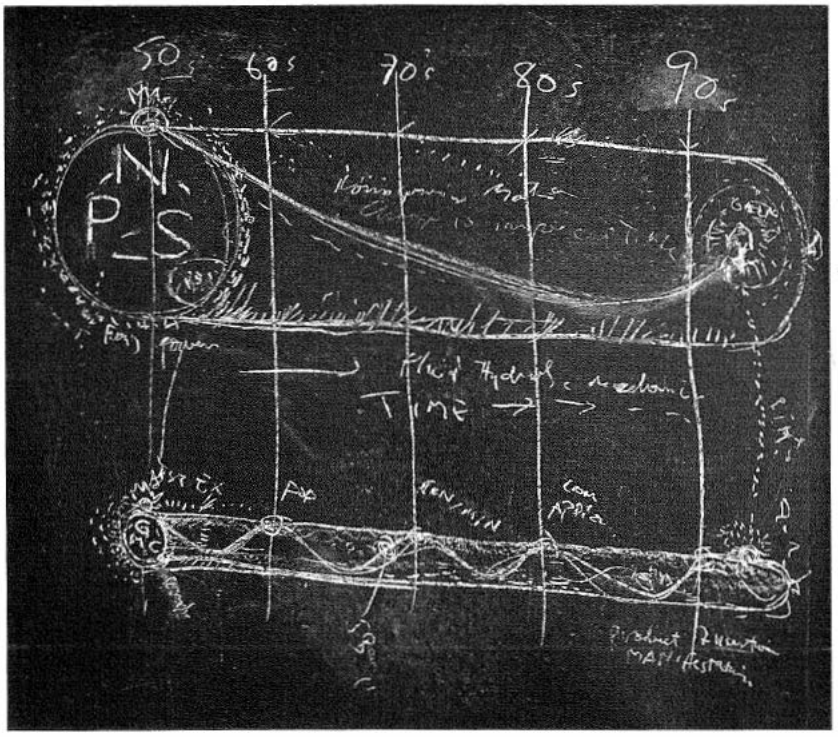


FIGURE 7.1
Mel Chin
Circles of Power and the Nature of Their Nutritional Composition, 1999.
Chalk drawing on blackboard
Photo courtesy of the artist

AUDIENCE

General Motors Corporation.

MEL CHIN

Wrong. Anybody else? Gay Men's Caucus? Wrong. It stands for Gallery/Museums/Collectors, a three-part structure that exists in the world of art. If we examine this mapping of power, we see it is consistent with all circles of power which concentrate, redefine and hold themselves together by allowing margins to exist to define their center. So these little dots and dashes on the edges are the Ringling Museum here, this tiny little thing there is my studio, Cal Arts is here . . . and all these little things, they're all struggling artists squirming around the outside. How about that?

Let's do another comparable circle. That's not big enough . . . that's OK. (Draws a much larger circle and notes "N", "P", "S")

N, P, S, any guesses?

AUDIENCE

No Possible Solutions.

MEL CHIN

Very good, give her an A. It stands for Networks/Producers/Sponsors, another huge circle of power with all its attendant margins. Here's Public Television trying hard to do the right thing and all the fan-network of billions surrounding it, an incredible circle of power. If I stop here, we can go home and say, "Well, now I understand." But I don't think it is that easy. In order for me to grasp the reality of this diagram, I'd like to stretch things out. (Draws out the circles) Let's give them dimension and substance, and make some metaphorical links. Let's consider this the Art World of G, M, C, a wonderful world—a hard, San Francisco-style, fungus-encrusted salami; and let's consider the Television World of N, P, S to be another meat by-product, like bologna. Look at all the chunks of nutrition within both. If I stop here, then we can say, "OK, now I understand." But what we'd probably be thinking, because there has been a critique of television and art with issues of high and low culture for quite a while, is that one is better tasting than the other.

I don't think we should stop there; I think we can cut it. I was a butcher in my parents' store in Texas and I sliced the bologna and the salami. If we cut it, then we can start giving it other values, like the fourth dimension. Let's divide the meat into timelines: the 50s, 60s, 70, 80s, 90s.

If we look at the salami and we look at the history of art (and I am sure there are historians here who can correct me if I am wrong) we have major movements that correspond to the knife, at certain peaks; the waves cresting in ten-year intervals.

In the 50s, maybe, we have the beginning of Abstract Expressionism, 60s Pop Art, here comes Joseph Beuys, right here in '64, a huge fat particle that moves up to the 70s and then Conceptualism, Minimalism and all that contrary stuff comes in. Appropriation, Commodity Art and then we have our 90s and who knows what it might be, Post Modernism some say. I have always not followed this oscillating path. I think I am a tiny chunk of meat here, not at any peak, yet still proud to be part of the salami. So if we look at these mappings, we can now see, in terms of flow, the movement of the nutrition as it weaves through the salami and we see the thick, hardening crust protecting itself and its dramatic development within the realm of G, M, C. Its rapid-wave action, bouncing off its interior walls, gives us the art highlights we love to refer to.

If we look at a bologna, on the contrary, it has a plastic coat, but television promised similar goals to those the art world proposed in the 50s. The head of

NBC at the time, Sylvester "Pat" Weaver, said that television would be this amazing, life-giving, reaffirming, art-like event. Therefore, art and television found themselves, according to some, in similar places with the new international and modern movements occurring.

Bologna's track, or TV's track, however, may just be slower, and its apogee or first crest may not have arrived. The larger volume and diameter, along with its homogenized nature, may mask an imperceptible rise or fall. So before we are too quick to judge television, or any of these large entertainment structures, we should hold back and look at the nature of hydraulic fluids. Somewhere around here (points to spot on board) in the 90s there was an aneurysm that occurred in the world of art. This aneurysm released its contents, wandered within the ether of larger frameworks, and they spilled into the soul of television.

Don't let me forget to come back to this diagram, all right? This is an interactive kind of situation. You have to ask me about the pimple.

All right, this is excellent. I have an audience. I have a chance to do prose poetry. This is like the 50s.

Home Spin

Deep in the cold North Carolina night on a long winding hiway
past Hard Scrabble Road and barns of blighted chestnut
the whine of the econo-car cuts through these hollers.
High beams cast a theatrical drama onto a hard bit land.
Caught on spotlight tonight . . . legs straining
frozen on the edge of an incline
where woods meet my asphalt path
a majestic doe.
I pass so close she surely sees the surprise and recognition in my eye.

I have seen her companion.

He sits on my shelf.

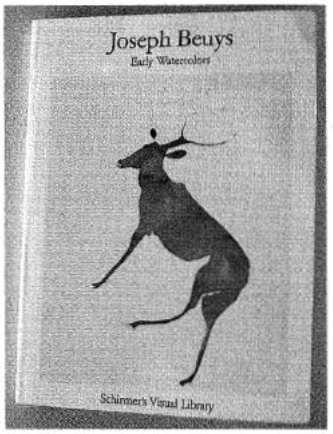


FIGURE 7.2
Joseph Beuys
Publication cover *Joseph Beuys' Early Watercolors*, Schirmer's Visual Library/Norton, with reproduction of Stag (1957, feric chloride, pencil, 37.7 x 39.8 cm; © 1999 Artists Rights Society [ARS], NY/VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn)
Courtesy Schirmer/Mosel Verlag, Munich

On a long winding hiway past Hard Scrabble Road
the road always whips in another direction . . .
1977 model honey pump winds up in its mechanical fat in Kassel.
The master of *Honey Pump in the Workplace*
delivers his sweet message and Documenta debate for a hundred days.
Human fat bears down on a more modest fluid in Houston, Texas.
Pressure mounts cylinders push.
The specific gravity of Honey . . .
the specific Gravity of Oil . . .
a fluid warning weighs the same . . . ESCAPE THE PULL
(that cripples the flight.)

Murmur and mumble the isms of art.
Wander through gray historical compactions.
Come upon a black and white metallic oxide iconic memory.

the curious coyote transfixed
before a crooked cane

Crooked cane!
Shepherd us by ambulance to the place
where two minds can be
    wild and instinctual
    premeditated and mediated.

Actions inform me!
It's okay to be strange.

By the way, whatever happened to Little John?
and what will happen to me?

Throughout the winter of '86
The Operation of the Sun through the Cult of the Hand
gestates and is born in '87.
Euro/Sino, alchemic, scientific and mythic ores entrapped and loaded
patiently waiting for those to mine its puzzle.
It's transmutation incomplete.

On a long winding hiway past Hard Scrabble Road
I aim toward Tulipidendon targets.
The lumbering truck's rear, a moving wall of clear-cut poplar
White years of growth and dark green eyes
are hearts freshly hacked out of a recovering land.
Both our wheels sweep up a dust of uncertain future
over more subtle species.

If the night is seen in negative, glowing with all the internal possibilities
in this cinema of eternal struggles, then there is an usher with a low-beam
light seating me in the oddest places.

On a long winding hiway past Hard Scrabble Road
I live where *Tulipidendon lyrofolium* grows outside my window.
I have known its leaf before I ever saw one;
its symmetry laid out in careful metallic washes.

Under the *lyrofolium*.
there is a shelter
an inescapable climate.
The shape of the green light ahead
only defined by its shadow
changes with rapid fluctuations of spotlights and sunlight.
The shadow meets its source with each new cold cascade.

EXAMPLES: MATERIAL INFLUENCES

The use of fat is felt.

Let's look at some slides. *Inescapable Histories* is a piece about Palestine and Israel. It is a chunk of Hebron trapped in a woolen sling, pegged by an olive wood stake, scraping an incomplete circle into the wall. The mark it makes is about an eternal problem that has existed since David and Goliath, the battle between the Palestinians and the Jews. So art can be metaphor, I suppose, for political tragedy and conflict. Rilke wrote: "Beauty is only the first touch of terror we can still bear/ and it awes us so much because it so coolly disdains to destroy us." Art can be about poetry and all its dimensions. Rilke also said, in front of an archaic torso of Apollo, "You must change your life."

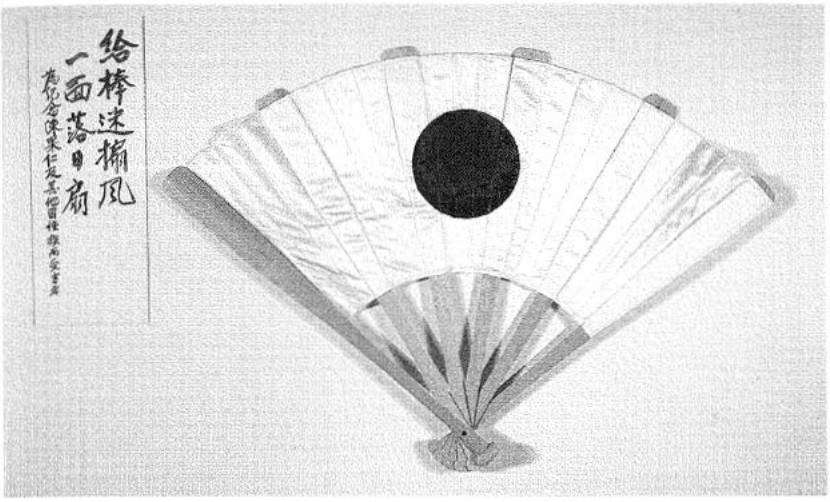


FIGURE 7.3
Mel Chin
Fan Club, 1994.
Ash wood, Chinese silk, blood, ink on paper, approximately 35" x 35" x 3".
Collection Weatherspoon Gallery
Photo courtesy of the artist

The Chinese inscription on this piece reads:

Something to whip up the baseball fans – a setting sun fan.

In memory of Vincent Chin and all victims of racial violence.

This is a baseball bat in honor of Vincent Chin who was murdered brutally in Detroit back in 1982. Art can also be memorial.

Here is a landscape painting, oil on canvas, unusual gold frame—sort of Blakelock, sort of Ryder.

A small Persian Islamic miniature. Kind of muddy, not quite right, but based on the concept from the 14th century Northern Iranian idea of the earth as a spiritual angel.

A blue green-style landscape in the manner of Chao Meng Fu. It is kind of wacky, no trees, no people, made with references from the 11th century encyclopedia of Daoist thought forms. Also based on the five sacred mountains of China.

Three paintings, all in one room and there is one little problem: all around the edges, two thousand pounds of landfill behind the walls seep into the room through a jagged crack along the base. In the museum, you walk into a room of painted landscapes with a creeping infusion of dirt and human garbage. You can think it is about paintings and it may be about pollution, too. I think it is about nei-

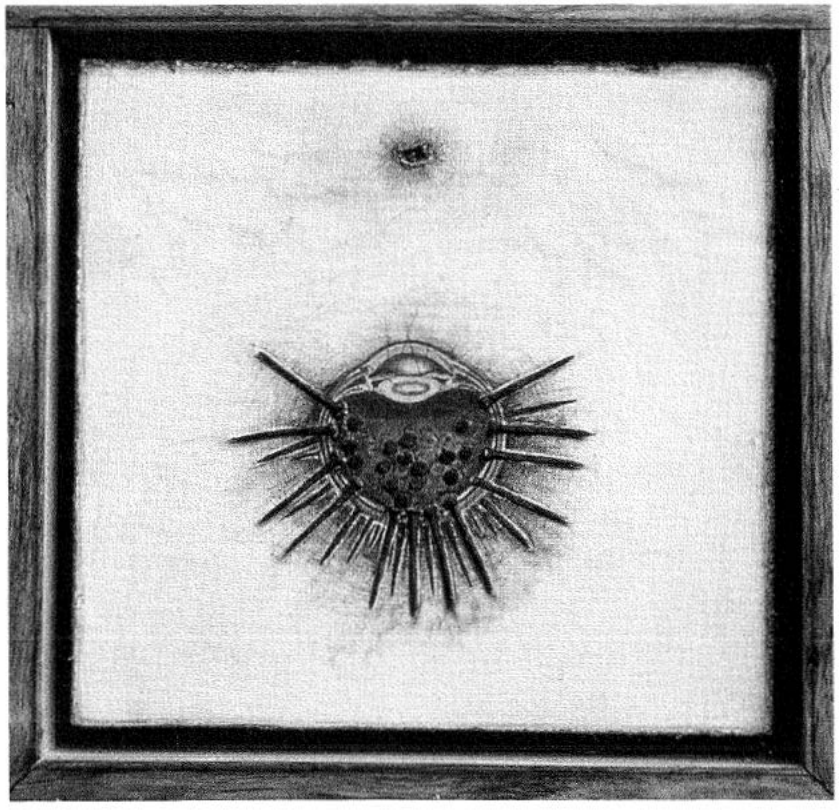


FIGURE 7.4
Mel Chin
Thomas of Coventry, 1987
Paper, graphite, nails and textbook illustration in a maple frame, 7" x 7.5" x 1.5"
Private collection
Photo courtesy of the artist

ther. This is a portrait of the position I'm in when the philosophies that surround me are too difficult to grasp and apply to my life; when my own relationship to my consumption is trucked further and further away from my grasp. The cut line, by the way, is based on the mountains, valleys, rivers, oceans, contours that surround the earth and each wall represents about 5400 miles of our planet. The paintings represent philosophical windows that we can't leap through easily at this time. The piece is about representing where I stand on a fulcrum: right on top of it.

Art can describe the difficult places were you stand.

Party Mask for 1999. What do you think about that millennium? What do you think? Man, we're all gonna party I guess!

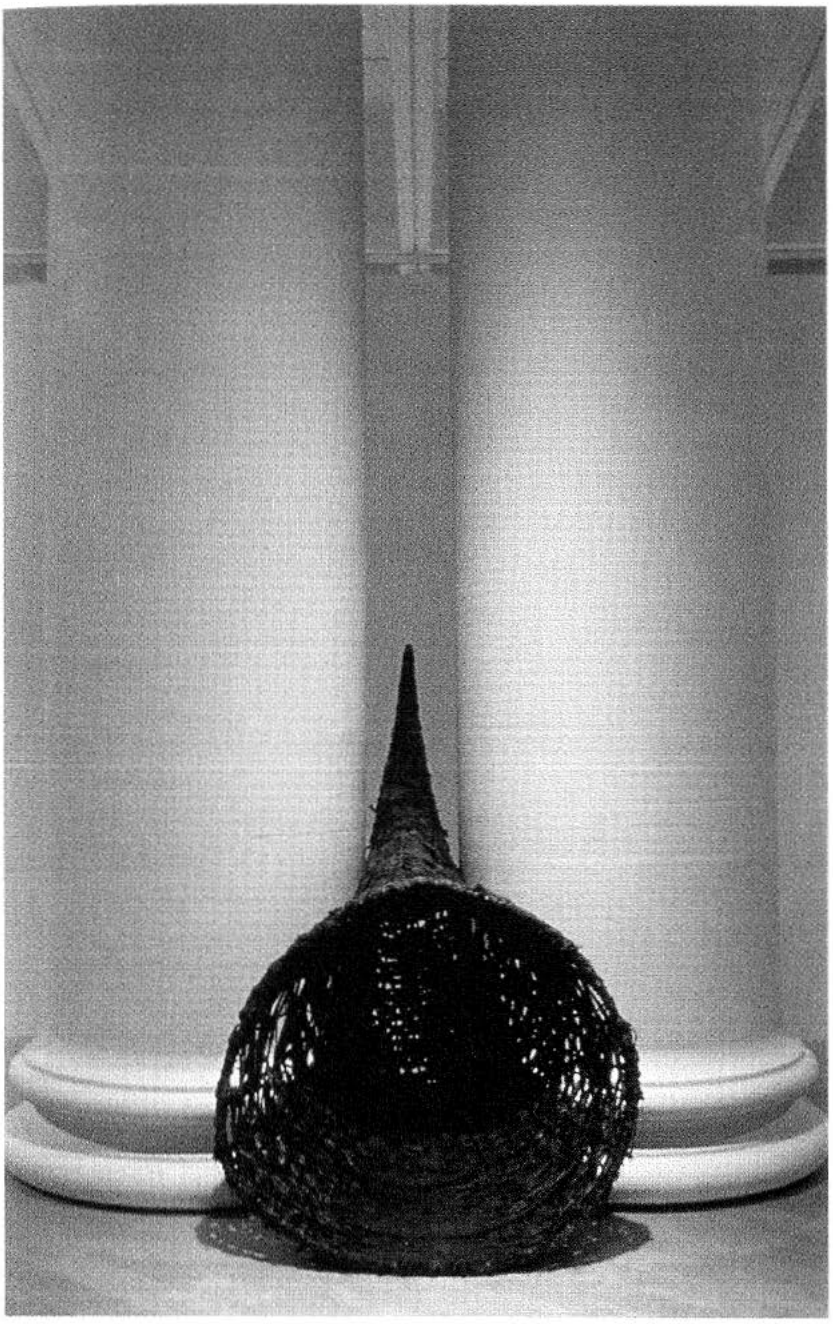


FIGURE 7.5
Mel Chin
The Extraction of Plenty from What Remains: 1823–, 1988–89 (1989 installation view at the Hirschhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.)
Wood, plaster, pulverized sandstone whitewash, steel, banana tree, mud, coffee, blood, 144" x 105" 68"
Photo courtesy of the artist

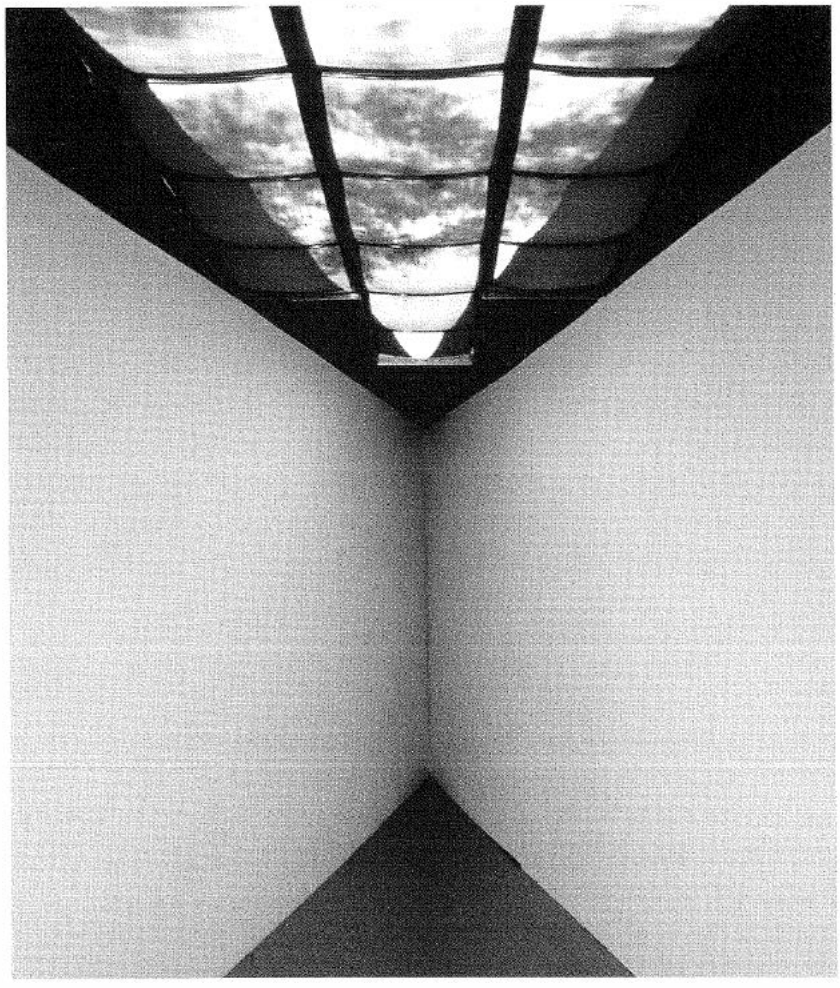


FIGURE 7.6
Degrees of Paradise/Motor Room, 1991 (installation view)
Sheetrock, wood, metal tubing, rubber, slate, wool, video monitors, laser-disk playback of mathematical program, 9' x 60' x 12'
Storefront for Art and Architecture, New York

AUDIENCE

Reports of its eminent arrival are greatly exaggerated.

MEL CHIN

I think it is an excellent business opportunity for those who want to try it. I always ask, Whose millennium is it? I mean, Chinese calendar—4000-something, Jewish calendar, 5000-something. I don't have too much excitement about it, but I had a dream.

I was at the party for 1999. Everybody was having a great time; Prince was playing in the background. I didn't want to be there. I was blind. Suddenly I realized I had a mask over my face. I pulled it off and saw an ornate, internally gilded mask and mirrors where my eyes were. My black pupils stared back into themselves and that was the end of the dream. Art can come from a dream.

There are other dreams too, like trying to describe a mathematical puzzle and being incapable of that for six months while trying every trick of perspective and Renaissance-style that I have at my disposal. Then, I was awakened by a startling, erotic, *Tantric*, sad dream of a lotus coming through the mud and as its petals opened up, the petals transformed into sections of this atmospheric envelope with swirling clouds. It unfolded itself. The thing within, a ball of dark earth, died. Dreams can conform to problem solving and depictions of problems. The *Tantric Dream Diagram* is the centerpiece of a work called *Degrees of Paradise*. This work is art that pays homage to multi-dimensional fractal physicists in Montreal and Kurdish weavers in Eastern Turkey.

Degrees of Paradise is part of another, larger, still-incomplete piece called *State of Heaven*, which is an attempt to weave a carpet, with each knot representing five square miles. The carpet is to be destroyed from its core, in relationship to the accretion and depletion of the ozone hole. It will be a floating carpet about 66 feet square. We got as far as creating this smaller work, *Degrees of Paradise*, which was only a section, as a test. In one room, the monitors are playing back the first examples of multi-dimensional fractal clouds, developed at McGill University by the physicist Sean Lovejoy during our collaboration. In another room is a 9 x 23-foot section of a carpet woven by Kurdish women (based on what they saw in a Global Area Coverage satellite map) which depicts a pie section of the atmospheric envelope. This work is another kind of piece where the dream is actually the fulcrum and the levers are the ideas that others produce.

WATCH OUT IT'S LOADED

My very first lecture in New York City was in 1987 and I was nervous because it was at the New School for Social Research. I was paralyzed because I was asked to address graduate students of philosophy and psychology. I was so worried that the philosophers would know that I didn't know what I was talking about and the psychologists would understand and dig out this buried secret of my early childhood trauma. Being freaked, I decided to make something. I took a two-by-four and cut an ax handle. I took a book and cut

out the ax head. I stuffed some notes in there and I sharpened it up and waxed it shut. I wrapped the whole thing in newspaper, went downstairs to the local store, bought a six-pack of Budweiser and went to the lecture. They had placed a U-shaped table in the room and everybody was smoking pipes—a bunch of guys smoking pipes. I sat down and put the newspaper down and I started drinking beer as fast as I could.

After the third beer the head of the school of philosophy said, "Mr. Chin, I think it is time to start." At that moment, being allergic to alcohol, I suddenly turned red. I had a headache and I was already edgy, so I just ripped off the newspaper, picked it up and said," This an ax!" The head of the psychology department said, "What the fuck you gonna do, man?" I turned around and slammed the ax into the blackboard. It broke apart and the notes fluttered down. I read from the notes. I was still shaking but I was drunk; it didn't matter.

When the guy from the school of philosophy said, "I'd like to talk a little bit about Plato's shadows." I said, "I don't want to talk about no damn shadows." He said, "That's fine, cool, that's cool."

Actually, it was a very successful lecture, but the lesson it taught me is that objects are incredibly loaded. Words and human expression can do some of the work yet objects themselves are loaded with a wealth of information and power and possibilities. Even as noted in Homer, "the arrow that strikes Achilles is freighted with dark pain." I call that piece *Lecture Ax*.

HERMETIC PURSUITS YIELD THE WEALTH OF UNAUTHORIZED INTERPRETATIONS

The Operation of the Sun through the Cult of the Hand was a mythic, alchemic, scientific expression of the origins of words, materials and forms. It had complicated alchemic names like *Earth: Cerration and Putrefaction*. Scientific information layered each component. The shape of Earth corresponds to Berkeley's scientific results of layers of the core of the earth along with cast iron, rock and other organic materials. In *Venus: Conjunction and Entrapment*, the copper and steel correspond to Venus and Mars.

The tilt of the piece corresponds with the tilt of the planet. The net is from the mythological net that Vulcan threw over the two, catching them in their adulterous affair. The shape of the net itself is based on a Pioneer 10 transmission of patterns of "Y and C" bands of sulfuric acid clouds that wrap a poisonous net around Venus. So, these are very funky abstractions.

FIGURE 7.7
Mel Chin
Pluto: Projection and Permutation (detail from the *Operation of the Sun Through the Cult of the Hand*), 1987
Anthracite coal, bitumen, arsenical copper, porcelain, tea, ink, alchemical gold, 36' x 35.24" x 28.5"
Photo courtesy of the artist

Jupiter: Circulation and Self-Sacrifice, Neptune: Filtration and Purification of Desire. Here the materials are marijuana and 80/20 bronze from a recipe from the Chinese *Book of Odes.* When you want harmony and heaven, you have these correspondences of metals. You all know about the origins of metals in human culture. This is one example—*Mercury: The Principle of Polarity, The Orbital Rebus.* The references are visual and formal: the Men-an Tol, from ancient England; the Chinese pi, or jade viewing discs from the Shang dynasty; Descartes' idea of vortices in space and the fluid motions of ether. The Ourobouros from second century Greek Alexandria served as inspiration in Kekulé's dream. From that, he postulated the benzene ring of modern chemical construction, a contemporary nightmare with its harmful carcinogenic side effects. All these references are loaded within the piece. Apply the loading of the ax to this particular work where its shape and form are derived from the inner orbital space of Earth around the sun and Mercury around the sun and the corresponding elements.

What was I doing? I was researching to destroy my preconceived notions about words, about materials and forms. It took about a year of looking through old alchemic texts and focusing mainly on Greek and Chinese sources in order to not confirm but destroy, and go through this permutation of invention, to show how unoriginal I was. The resulting abstractions were indeed this *Operation.*

One of the last pieces in *Operation of the Sun* is Pluto, based on many of the same notions. It is an "Ilyrian" helmet of alchemic gold we successfully transmuted in a little furnace in the hills of Leesburg, VA. I used the same

coal that made the "gold" to form the 400-pound helmet you can get into and look through. The "helmet of invisibility" is one reference and there are other associations, even the finding of the planet Pluto by Clyde Tomball in 1930. He used a blink-comparator to look at a million slides, backward and forward. Visually, he was finally able to detect the motion of this invisible planet in the skies.

Underneath this piece is a labyrinthine grate from a Greek coin, rendered in a mixture of Chinese arsenical, or poisonous, copper. Its colors are from the alchemical cycle: the reddening, the blackening, and the whitening. When *The Operation of the Sun* was on view at the Hirshhorn Museum in 1989, Vincent van Allen was a security guard there who began to give tours spontaneously. I had talked to Vincent about these pieces so he was quite articulate about many of them, except we didn't get to Pluto. So, he didn't hear about Agamemnon's tomb or any of that stuff, he just started taking people through. My friend and assistant, Barron Brown took everybody through and when he got to this piece he said, "And this is the headdress of an African king." Barron called me and said, "Mel, Vincent is making up stuff about the work." It had taken a year of research at the Library of Congress, slowly figuring the piece out and then about a year to fabricate it. Now, Vincent was saying this is the headdress of an African king. Well, I said, I've got to call Vincent. I was so excited. I called him first to thank him. Out of a lifetime of working in art and thinking I was an artist, I felt rewarded beyond anything I had imagined. I had finally made a work that had propelled another person to respond creatively and to speak out. I was able to create a work that propelled another person's voice to come forward. At the same time I called to thank him, I called to apologize because he had actually exposed my plagiarism. The name of the exhibition was *The Operation of the Sun through the Cult of the Hand*. The Cult of the Hand exists in Africa, and The Cult of the Hand speaks of the power of the hand when objects of strength are made. The objects represent the power of the human hand to give life and to take it away. He showed me how I, in my zealous pursuit of scholarly Chinese and Greek sources, had ignored one of the most fundamental and powerful cultures around; and he showed that even when I knew about it, I had not recognized it. He exposed my ignorance and he exposed my inability to make those connections. I thanked him because it is true that while I was doing all those fancy investigations of metallurgy, the continual history of metallurgy exists within Africa, the Caribbean Islands and South America.

REGARDING PAIN AND IMAGINATION (WAR AND ART)

This is the end of the world as You Have Never Known It. It is a little thing painted on a piece of tin, like a retablo or ex-voto. It is not a heavenly light that is coming down, raining upon the earth and burning it up. It is actually an image from the New York Times of a MX missile test.

You know the story of Peeping Tom, right? Lady Godiva, political activist, is out there to bring down the taxes for the poor people of Coventry. Rides bare-ass-naked on a horse. People love her to death and they decide not to look, except for Peeping Tom. Peeping Tom raises the shade and looks and he is struck blind for this. This drawing is an attempt to depict the optical orgasm of poor Tom. Now, I love and hate the story because I love the social activism of Godiva but I hate the moralizing end. Because of Tom's curiosity he is struck blind. I have to believe any gateway for the human imagination and human expression is probably a special thing.

In Elaine Scarry's book, *The Body in Pain*, she speaks of the world as being unmade and made through two terms, pain and imagination. Pain is her idea of unmaking the world; its final incarnation is war and torture. War is about the destruction of human life and when you kill enough people, you win. In war, when you kill people, what you're killing off is the potential for the foundation or the formulation of language. Under torture, she says, language fails you. It is impossible. So it is a tragic circumstance when pain reaches that level. On the other side, if you just shut your eyes and just forget Mel, or forget Joseph, forget all that and close your eyes and imagine anything, something should pop into your head. Because imagination, not in a simplistic term, but in a fundamental term, is the portal for language. An object is born there and an object is so necessary for that remaking process. These two pieces convey what I feel is a constant reality.

COMPARTMENTS AND ECOLOGY

This is *Dispense and Distribute*. Do you ever get invitations to participate in group shows? There was an invitation to be in a flag show. When I got the invitation, I just put it aside and thought no, this is kind of a clichéd idea. Nevertheless, I closed my eyes and something came forward. I rushed to the New York gallery and said to the dealer, I must be in the show. I think it is a

great show, great idea. He says it's too late to participate and shows me the announcement. All my friends' names are on there, however, there on the bottom it reads, "among others." And I said, That's me. I just want a plug in the hallway.

This is a vending machine where you put a dollar in and get a section of the American flag back. It is thirty flags, cut into thirty pieces and each piece is cooked in junk food spices: Ramen Oriental, French Dip, Taco Cheese, Soul Food, German Chocolate, layered with BHT oils, ironed and cooked, sealed in cellophane. You could buy one for a dollar. It is a piece that actually consumed itself, sold out. The piece devalued itself over time. Now, in a joking fashion, we could speak of it in terms of junk food patriotism and all its non-nutritional effects. In my deeper critique I was trying to convey how compartmentalized our world has become; not fragmented, but compartmentalized to the degree that the understanding of undeniably rich cultures is limited to junk food descriptions in our American culture.

> *. . . not to discover anything new, but to observe according to my method the things that have already been discovered.*
>
> —Goethe

I tried to get beyond that kind of compartmentalization in *Revival Field*, where I worked with Dr. Rufus Chaney, a research scientist from Beltsville, Maryland. It is quite a simple piece, in its formal configuration; but that is not the whole piece. When we began our art/science collaboration, there was no solution to heavy-metal contamination in soils. From *Revival Field One* came the first *confirmation* in the world that plants have the capacity to suck up heavy metals from soils in such quantities that the leaves could be resold as high grade ore and generate enough energy to pay for the remediation costs. Originally, I was interested not so much in the science as in the poetics of the process. The poetics of sculpting an ecological environment, fundamentally dead, into something that is alive, and to invent the tools needed to make that happen, was exciting to me.

Poetry drove responsibility. Therefore, the confirmation of the science was a priority. The work was to find the scientists, find the location, make all the political negotiations and the legal negotiations, then to plant the field and to be responsible to the scientific needs, etc. This took a year and a half, and the idea was that art could propel science.

ALCHEMIC METAPHOR YIELDS ACTION

When I had finished a large body of work, including the *Operation of the Sun*, I asked a deep question. What do you love most, Mel? and I answered, I love to make stuff. Then the second mind said, OK quit. So I quit and floated through many things and I was lucky enough to stumble upon the idea that plants have this capacity to accumulate heavy metals. The more I researched, however, the less evidence came up, until I found Dr. Rufus Chaney. All the work he had been doing in this field, however, had been shelved during the conservative Reagan/Bush era.

I applied to the NEA to support *Revival Field*, the idea was passed by both panels, and then rejected by the Chair. I went to the Chair, John Frohnmeyer, and argued for my case. What I spoke to him about that day was the same thing I've talked about here. I said, "You know, John, according to Elaine Scarry, the world is divided into two camps, Pain and Imagination. One is hell-bent on the unmaking of language and the world, and the other on its reconstruction." I said that artwork, whether it is about homosexuality, politics or ecology, are all in that camp of imagination and I asked, "Which camp are you in?" We had a philosophical discussion and I was lucky to have him reverse his original decision.

The NEA money allowed the first *Revival Field* to take place and now, nearly ten years since I began to work on the idea, that technology is developing. The U.S. Department of Agriculture, the Department of Energy, the EPA and many organizations now accept the concept. Several corporations and over 200 scientists claim they were first to develop the technology. My response to them is yes, you were. Because to make it happen, to realize *Revival Field*, the idea had to be given away. The whole concept had to be shared. I thought of it as a project that would not necessarily be completed during my lifetime. The issue was about time. I didn't realize that the technology would develop so quickly once articles about that first *Revival Field* were published. *Revival Field* intended to sculpt ecology. The work goes on and I am proud to be a fundamental player in the game.

FURTHER NOTES REGARDING INTERPRETATIONS AND ASSESSMENT OF AN ARTIST'S POSITION IN SOCIETY

Two full-scale, replicated White House columns, cracked at the entasis and a cornucopia wedged between them. Let' s look at this formally for a second. If you

want to engage in a psychosexual reading, you can look at the work and see this as an upsidedown image of Sheela-na-gig, a pagan from Ireland. If you are looking from the side, you can see it as a lithophallic Greek Herme. We can surmise we know what this is about. It is not what it is about, but it is intended to be there. We live in a world that emphasizes cultural forgetting and it is important to invent certain possibilities for entrapment. Works that have a luring capacity through formal aesthetic conventions can serve as poetic traps. With the image retained, the digestion of meaning can occur over time; the desire to understand can be provoked. *The Extraction of Plenty* is about Central America and U.S. foreign policy. The cracks on top are actually from presidential signatures from James Monroe to Ronald Reagan. Over the last 100 years, these presidents applied disastrous policies that effected the people of Central America. The cornucopia is constructed of mahogany, bananas, coffee, mud and blood. Making *The Extraction of Plenty* required the collection of goat blood. While making columns by hand, my brother would turn and I would slap the plaster on and we'd do it again and again and again until it reached its full weight. One got so heavy that it fell and cracked.

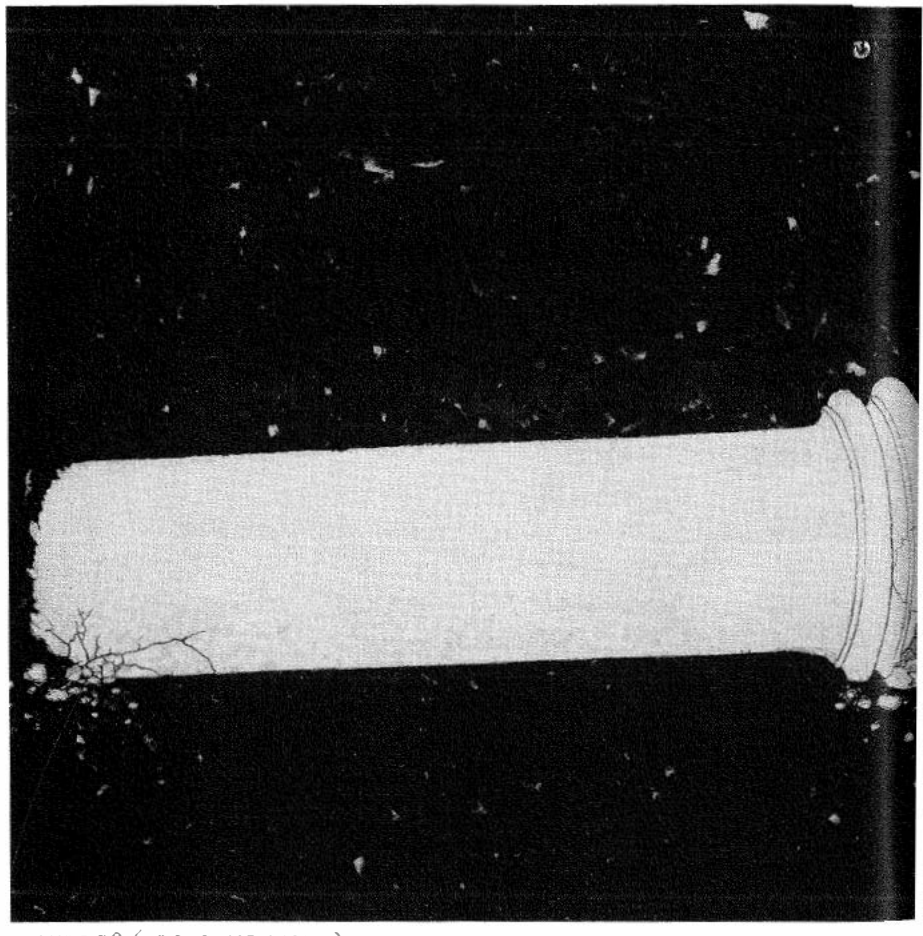
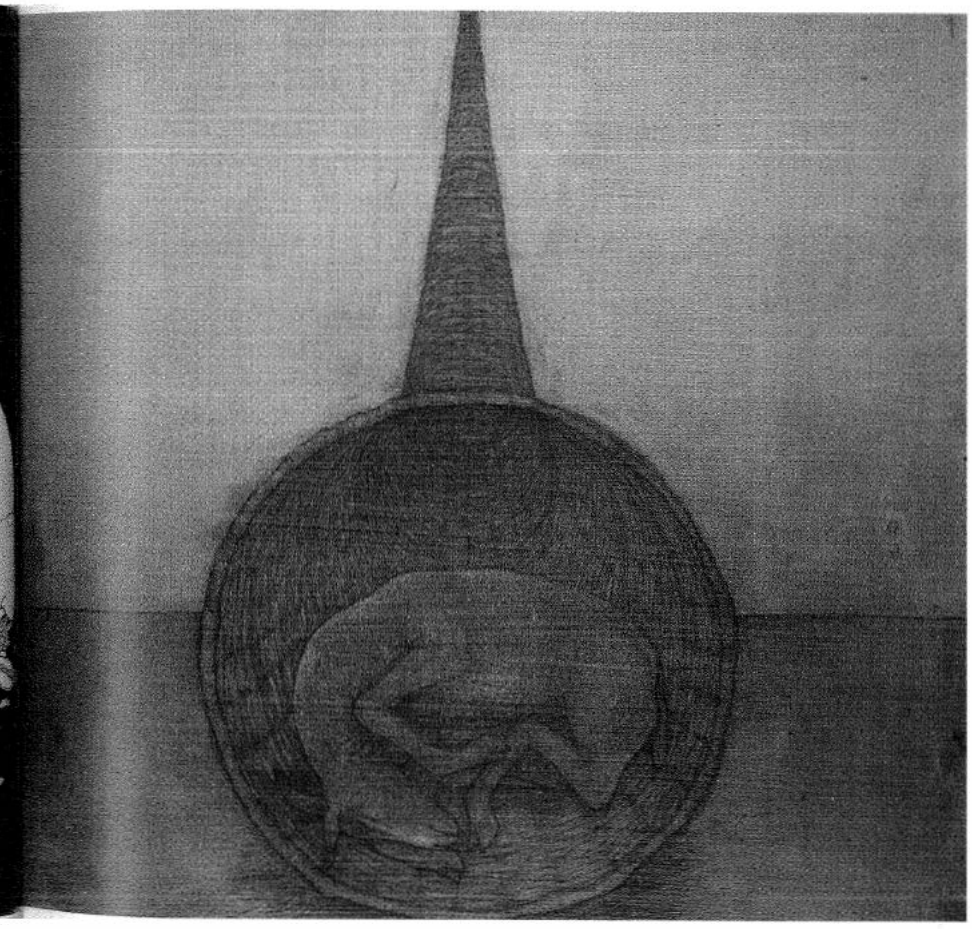


FIGURE 7.8 (ABOVE AND RIGHT)
Mel Chin
Biographic Diptych (study for *The Extraction of Plenty from What Remains: 1823–*), 1989.
Plaster, steel, porcelain, graphite, acrylic and enamel on wood, 19" x 19" x 4.25" each
Private collection. Photo courtesy of the artist.

The work below is *Biographic Diptych*. It is a drawing made in homage to what I learned while making it. The memory is clear of that crash and I rendered it clearly, etched in the porcelain steel. The companion piece is less distinct. It is a muddy drawing of a goat and cornucopia.

To get the blood, for *The Extraction of Plenty*, I went to a slaughterhouse on the edge of town where there was an illegal goat-butchering operation in progress. I had all my art material with me, my paintbrushes, my buckets and all the stuff required, but I was not prepared for the conditions I found. It was a horrific scene. The guy who was doing the slaughtering (and as I said, I have been a butcher, I have cut bologna and I am no stranger to the job) was torturing the animals on top of destroying them. I tried to make the art, the brushes useless around the steaming heaps of skin and flesh. I was inefficiently scooping the coagulating blood at my feet, placing it on the cornucopia. I just wanted to make the art and get out of there, away from this man. Then we looked at each other directly in the eyes; there was a forbidding sense of recognition and glee. He killed an animal, picked it up and threw it at the basket. It crashed into the piece and died within it. He started throwing



them at me and I kept grabbing them and pouring their blood, their life, over the piece. We did it until the job was done and didn't say a word. I walked away with the bloodied, woven cornucopia and I was incredibly, psychically disturbed. All my life I had thought I was a pacifist. I was making work about politics and all these good notions. Suddenly I couldn't believe how delusional I had been. There I was, thinking, I am an artist and the reason I am the way I am is because I am alienated from society—and all the myths that go with that. At that moment, that Raymond Chandler "under the right circumstances you'll do anything" moment, I was transformed. I realized I am common and thoroughly linked with the rest of 'em. That was a major understanding, that I am part of the rest of the world, common with the horror of the world, part of that same pain that I had critiqued. As I review the politics of our world, that critique is incomplete without self-examination, and that examination is not free from the mythology I have built around myself as an artist.

> *When people take a dim view of humanity, I have to ask: Of whom do they take a brighter view?*
>
> —Joseph Beuys

We can be unaware of the darkness that is also humanity. The first illumination must be internal but it exists in a constantly shifting wind. In such a tempest, the motivation to keep it lit must be continually remanufactured. This is a job description. I am not looking for a brighter view but for any view not enshrouded with the delusions of my own making.

The New York Times Magazine asked me to do a project about murder in Manhattan. The subsequent piece was *Gouge*. At 6th Avenue and 19th Street, I learned that Mr. Perez had been brutally murdered in an act of random violence. The idea was to sculpt away the site or to gouge, with this deep-cut graffiti, into the existing columns at the site. I wanted to make a hollow and angry space, symbolizing disgust with the janitorial approach to human tragedy in contemporary life. This piece appeared in the magazine, but I want to talk about the piece they rejected.

The rejected idea required something much simpler than photo retouching. It called for only a single printing error on every page. On every page you would see the same damn red dot. At first one would be annoyed, then eventually find its source, a photo of a young murder victim. From real estate ads to crossword puzzles would be evidence of murder's permeation through and through our society. I wanted the published edition to be the sculpture, the monument. The response from the editors of the *Times* was, "*The New York Times Magazine* is not a monument." End of that.

THE COVERT METHODOLOGY: IT'S STILL LOADED

I'm stuck on yer block wid my Glock ready to shoot any imitator that I spot.

Who sang that? It's Lil' Hershey Loc from Snoop Doggy Dog's first album.

The Glock 9 mm is the official sidearm handgun of the NATO military police and popular among many law enforcement officers here in the United States. The Glock has a terrifying capacity to do a lot of damage.

This particular work was a challenge; how do you make art from a gun? I thought it was impossible. The image of a gun is so pervasive in contemporary society that the depth of any message can be lost to the image. (Freighted with dark pain . . . felt and Beuys?) I bought a Glock, gutted the thing and replaced it with other working components. It is a complete gun shot trauma kit, with an auto-injector of epinephrine for blood pressure drop, an Ace bandage, and oxycodone hydrochloride for pain. It's held in a 9mm casing with a saline injector bag in the magazine, a wireless transmitter that activates as you pull the gun apart to save your or another's life. Most importantly, there is a 14-gauge angio-catheter for pnuemo-thoraxic shock. All these elements are within the piece. This is a working demonstration that transformations are sometimes/necessarily covert. They can be internal. In addition, they can be like viruses. I was studying military and medical relationships. The transformations of our culture or any culture are predicated not so much by art but by covert business and military agenda as well as different strains of bacteria and viruses. I thought — think of viruses as self-replicating concepts and apply that to the world of ideas.

PRIME TIME SOCIAL SCULPTURE BY THE GALA COMMITTEE (SALAMI VIRUS ENTERS THE BOLOGNA HOST OR ANEURYSM ANALYSIS)

In 1995, the Museum of Contemporary Art (MOCA) in Los Angeles invited me to construct a project for *Uncommon Sense*, an exhibition intended to present interactive, interventionist public art in Los Angeles. Flying away from LA one day, I was looking through my window and thought, the world knows LA through television and film and there are reverberating consequences of these amazing constructions. The possibility of being truly interactive and making a conceptual public artwork available on prime time television became the intent.

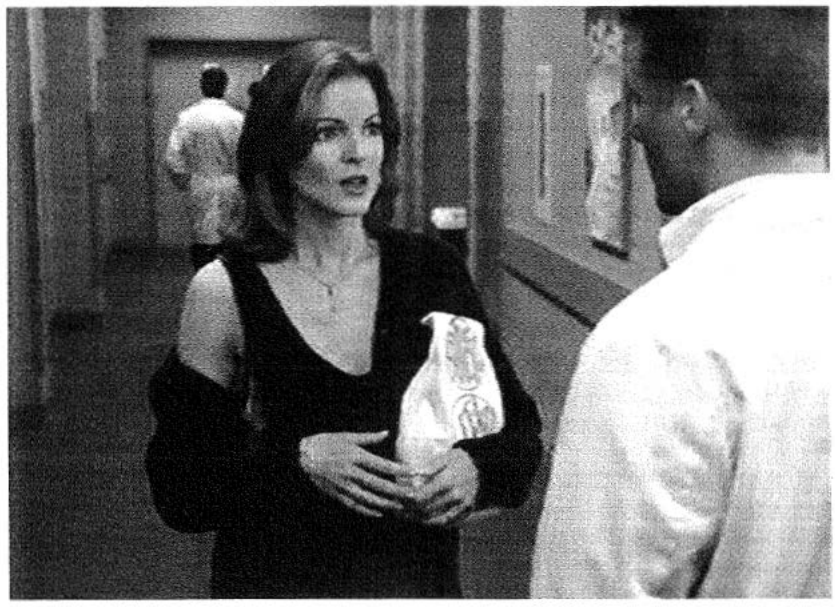


FIGURE 7.9
GALA Committee/Mel Chin as collaborative member
Chinese Take Out (sample still from *Melrose Place* broadcasts, from *In the Name of the Place* project), 1996–98
Courtesy of GALA Committee

Over two years, a covert project called *In the Name of the Place* took place. I put together a team, the GALA Committee, which made hundreds of works of art to be placed as props on the set of a prime time, television soap opera called *Melrose Place*. GALA was a group of nearly ninety different individuals from Georgia, LA, Houston, New York and Kansas City. It was a collective which included the writers and producers of *Melrose Place*, young artists, seasoned artists, academics and others. We all conspired and created. We should look at some of that.

The Chinese characters on this character's takeout bag are "human rights" and "turmoil" (*dong luan*). *Dong luan* was the term invented by the Chinese government to help crush the pro-democracy demonstration in Tiannamen Square, to label it a negative event. It was our hope to reach an international *Melrose Place* audience in over 60 countries, showing the possibility of speaking to people in terms of layers. Obviously the project is not only about *Melrose Place* but it was complicit with the executive producers and writers. What this piece was trying to do was create an oscillation within television where information beyond the expected, in the background, could come forward.

This next short clip shows how far advanced we got into this relationship

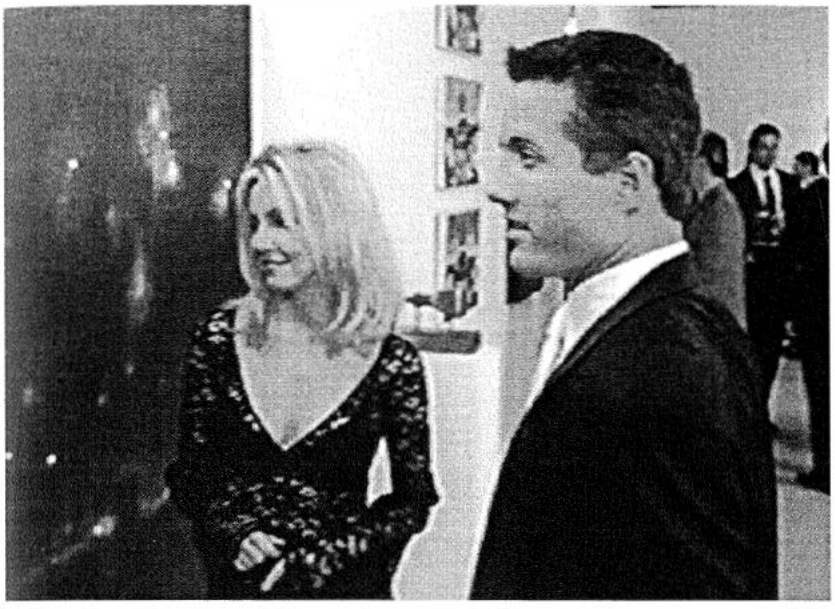


FIGURE 7.10
GALA Committee/Mel Chin as collaborative member
Art Lovers (sample still from *Melrose Place* broadcasts, from the *In the Name of the Place* project), 1996–98
Courtesy of GALA Committee

between reality and fantasy. We recently held an auction at Sotheby's in Beverly Hills. All the art made for this project was sold to raise money to benefit women's education. The MOCA exhibition (Uncommon Sense) of the work made for Melrose Place was used as a set for the television show. The characters walk through the gallery and talk about the art that appeared on the television broadcast. The conceptual directive to blur the distinction between television fiction and art history was fulfilled when the Melrose Place production used MOCA as a location.

Fundamentally, the GALA project is about the generational transfer of information. GALA Committee insertions on prime time, network television meant that subtle messages that complimented, enlarged or contradicted existing storylines could be tolerated and transmitted (globally in reruns for the next twenty years). Messages of our times reflecting art and war, human rights and turmoil, popular culture and humor were embedded in the medium deeply criticized as commercial and superficial. Such messages can be uncovered over time—and time again.

There was no word about who inserted this project on the production's scrolls and script. The GALA Committee remained anonymous, a creative force

within a host structure, inserting the possibility of information waiting to be discovered and self-replicated. Or NOT. In other words, television, which is primarily there to sell you products or give you commercial information, has within its structure an oscillating possibility. The flat plane of television was given dimension and a choice that didn't exist before and this was offered to millions of viewers. The knowledge of the existence of these objects in this field allows freedom of imagination and creative possibilities to emerge.

> *Beuys was convinced that politics had to be overcome: Social Sculpture, a design process that spanned all of society by means of human creativity, would have to replace it.*
> —Lukas Beckmann

ART= CAPITAL or ART = EVOLUTION and RAPID MUTATION?

Then what will replace Social Sculpture? I am not convinced that politics can be overcome. As challenging as "forming a social order like a sculpture" may sound, it should not be the task of an individual. It seems too final, dogmatic and smells of too much power. I'm not convinced that art should be focused on those issues. Entering existing structures (such as TV or politics) that have a profound impact on our society is a strategy, not to subvert but to assist with a creative process, thus infecting the host with the possibility of options not open for discourse within their existing, rigid, tripartite structures.

POST SYMPOSIUM ANNOTATION

The title of my talk was an homage and act of humility rather than the ambivalent, elusive and critical performance by Beuys entitled The Silence of Marcel Duchamp is Overrated. Beuys and Duchamp contributed much to mapping and expanding the concept of art. My understanding of their legacy (and that of the Tartars) has necessitated a nomadic, creative life. Meandering from a socially directed project in one camp to making personally introspective objects in another allows other unknown horizons to appear.

Throughout the talk, I've made scant reference to Beuys. I hope that the case I've laid for my own attempts would point out obvious connections, similarities and contradictions. It would be safe to say that the aura or trace of Beuys is evident. In the case of *Revival Field*, with or without Beuys, it is not easy being green. Beuys set up conditions for my development as an artist. He left considerable

traces to the artworld and political world, which have osmotically, if not directly, influenced the work I present. While I would agree with Beuys that the causes lie in the future, the actions we take now must also set up conditions for the causes to have meaning and critical forms. So whether there are direct connections or not is not my point. The role of the artist is to take on a catalytic posture. I must take action beyond Beuys with Beuys. The treachery of the present is indicative of more to follow. On August 25, 1934, Walter Benjamin presented a Brechtian maxim: "Do not build on the good old days, but on the bad new ones."

Max Reithmann

8} IN THE RUBBLEFIELD OF GERMAN HISTORY
Questions for Joseph Beuys

JOSEPH BEUYS INTENDED HIS "EXPANDED concept of art" to meet the highest of standards. Influenced by the writing of Johann Gottlieb Fichte and Friedrich Schiller, it takes as its basis the self-determination of man. But where he reassessed the idealist assumptions underpinning his concept of art, Beuys was convinced that the Ego is, in its behavior toward itself, able to lock into that need for freedom which is also at the source of human creativity within the social and political body. By returning into itself, the Ego is able to experience its free independent activity (*Selbsttätigkeit*) as a creative/formative occurrence and is then willfully able to undertake such activity as the process of shaping the life-world. The return into the Ego, Beuys believed, initially ensures that the "perceptual field" was turned "inward" and thus empowers the Ego to experience "its own free independent activity consciously." The expansion of the perceptual field inwards enabled the Ego to cross a "threshold of freedom" and in doing so recognized "the connection between inner and outer worlds . . . "[1]

Beuys developed this description of the Ego's creative/formative activity in the framework of the Free International University held in 1977 at *Documenta*

1 Joseph Beuys, "Eintritt in ein Lebewesen," in Harlan, Rappmann and Schata, *Soziale Plastik. Materialien zu Joseph Beuys* (Achberg, 1984), p. 127.

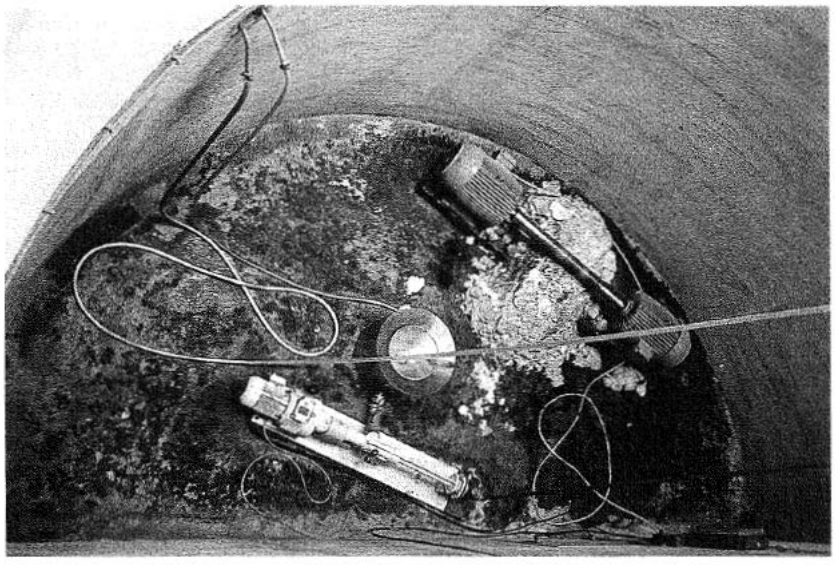


FIGURE 8.1
Joseph Beuys
Honigpumpe am Arbeitsplatz (Honey pump in the workplace), 1977 (*Documenta 6* installation view showing *Bewegungsmaschine* [Movement Machine])
Electric pump, fat, honey, rubber hose
Photo courtesy of Volker Harlan ©1999 Artists Rights Society (ARS), NY/VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn.

VI in Kassel. At the same time, in another exhibition room there, he presented his installation *Honey Pump in the Workplace*. He understood the latter merely as a "sign" in an overarching, intersubjective context. He felt it was a sculptural depiction of an idea and therefore represented, "in sign-like form," something that first emerged in conversation between individuals and which, we could add, is already the creative/formative energy triggered in such discussions. For this reason, it was only possible "to justify" this sculpture as a machine "to the extent" that it "integrated" the polar formative forces of "humans with their other [form] of energy." [2]

However, Beuys also maintained that *Honey Pump* depicted the processes of circulation and movement of which working humans in the social body have always been a part due to their active involvement in life and their behavior. Here again, as in the Ego, interior and exterior are opposites that nevertheless interact. Humans admittedly have an awareness of their activity in life, yet according to Beuys this is alienated through the "commodity character" of money, just as for Karl Marx the personal activity of labor encounters itself as something alien in the finished product. To counter Marx, Beuys insisted that there is "a core in the Ego" independent of social being and by which humans

2 Joseph Beuys in Volker Harlan, *Was ist Kunst? Werkstattgespräch mit Beuys*, (Stuttgart, 1986), pp. 55 and 60.

FIGURE 8.2
Joseph Beuys during the action *Honigpumpe* (*Honey pump*), November 2, 1984.
Photo: Jochen Hiltmann November 2, 1984 in the Düsseldorf studio of Jospeh Beuys.

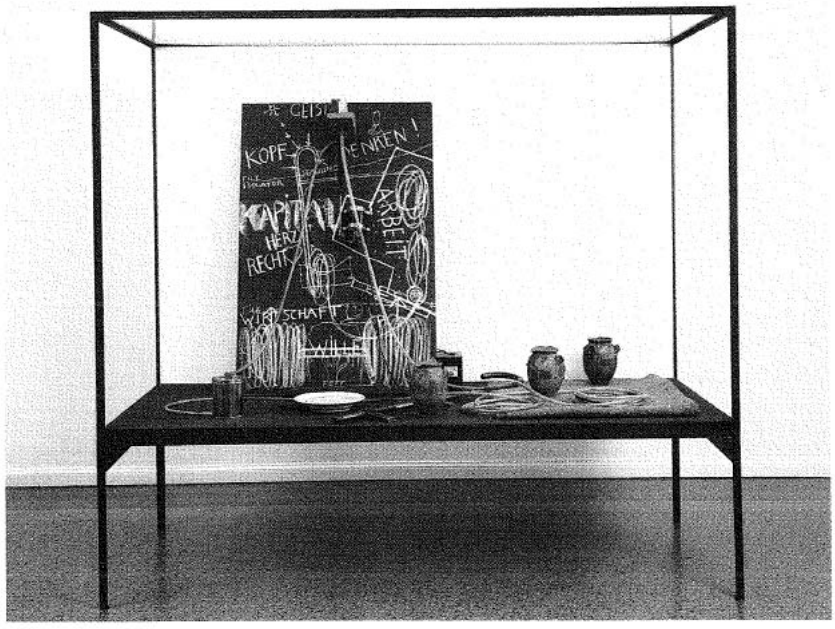


FIGURE 8.3
Joseph Beuys
Honigpumpe, 1984, 2. November (Honey pump, November 2, 1984), 1984
Blackboard with electric motor, three bronze pitchers, copper can, felt, pyrite, honey, table with margarine, transformer, 108.5 x 72 x 26 cm (blackboard)
Collection Kunstmuseum Bern, Hermann-und-Margit-Rupf-Stiftung
Photo: Kunstmuseum Bern.
©1999 Artists Rights Society (ARS), NYNG Bild-Kunst, Bonn

can construe themselves as intellectual and creative beings.[3] As a result, the relations of production can only be changed by recourse to this free Ego. "To my mind," Beuys said, "it is by no means self-evident that humans are the product . . . of the relations of production . . . I think [conversely] that the economic processes are the products of free humans, of their free creative activity."[4] For this reason, Marx (whom Beuys called a "spiritual mind" and "giant" as the critic of capitalism) inevitably "lost sight" in his later work of what he had elaborated in his early writings: namely the "idea of freedom." In doing so, Marx also bypassed the element that mediates between material and mind, namely "justice as the link in-between."[5]

What, in the context of socially necessary labor (and considering the alienation it involves), Beuys meant by "justice" and its connection to the sovereignty of the Ego and human dignity can be grasped, on the one hand, in terms

3 Joseph Beuys, in *Gespräche mit Beuys* (Klagenfurt, 1988), p. 110.

4 Joseph Beuys, in "Werkstattgespräch," Beuys with Harro Reuther, 1969, in *Joseph Beuys*, exh. cat. (Kunstmuseum Basel, 1969), p. 39.

5 Joseph Beuys, op. cit., note 3, pp. 111–2.

of Marx's notion of alienation and, on the other, with reference to Schiller's development of the relation between reason and nature. It was Schiller who, before both Hegel and Marx, had developed his own concept of alienation when critically studying the events of his age and because of his keen awareness of the "disruption" of human life during that period. The dramatic events of the French Revolution enabled Schiller to clarify his views about human history and about the process by which men become alienated from history and their real selves. Against this background, I rethink and investigate Beuys' notions and concepts, as they are reflected in his own biography and in the barbarism of German history under the Third Reich.

For Marx, the process of alienation revealed itself not only in the products manufactured by human labor. Instead, the relationship between worker and product illuminated "at the same time the relationship to the sensuous external world . . ." As a consequence of this relationship, "natural objects" confront the worker in the form of an inimical and alienated world. Humans, by dint of being reduced in the production process to a means, are not only stripped of their freedom and capacity for "life-fulfilling activity" (*Selbsttätigkeit*), but also of the sensuous outside world as a means of subsistence and life (*Subsistenz- und Lebensmittel*).[6] The term *Selbsttätigkeit* was first used by Marx in connection with alienated labor in the *Paris Manuscripts* of 1844. Beuys, by contrast, spoke in his 1977 lecture at *Documenta* VI of the life-fulfilling activity of a free Ego, which is able to discern the link between inner and external worlds. However, in its movement and its recourse to itself, this Ego undergoes change. To Beuys' mind, the revolutionary would therefore have been someone who not only triggered this change within himself but who could also make the transition from inner world to external world, with a transformation process in praxis. This presumes that within the Ego the subject breaks through the threshold of knowledge and thus arrives at a new notion of art that includes the element of labor. Beuys initially resorted to Schiller when he stressed: "That was already the case for Schiller when he said that thoughts are free, humans are free, even if born in chains. In other words, the revolution can only take place within us. We must have new ideas."[7]

Nevertheless, Beuys held that Schiller did not take a sufficiently radical approach. For Schiller could, were he to have stressed the inner person, "also have said: man is a work of art. I believe Schiller could have seen man as equal in ranking with art, as equal in ranking with creativity." In this way, Beuys distances himself from both Schiller and Marx—after all, in the formula "art=man=freedom=creativity," he raises Schiller to the status of a precursor of

6 Karl Marx, *Texte zu Methode und Praxis II. Pariser Manuskripte 1844* (Hamburg, 1968), pp. 55, 53.

7 Joseph Beuys, in *Ein Gespräch/Una Discussione. Joseph Beuys/Jannis Kounellis/Anselm Kiefer/Enzo Cucchi* (Zurich, 1986), p. 154. The discussion was led by Jean-Christophe Ammann at Kunsthalle Basel. Here, Beuys is paraphrasing a few lines from Schiller's poem "Die Worte des Wahns" (1799) is widely considered an antithesis to the earlier poem. In the later poem he writes that the veil of truth is not lifted by "mortal hand," for humans are not divine. Unlike Schiller, Beuys regards the human being as a kind of god: "We can say that the human being is a god, or at least an extension of God's finger. . . ." The creativity of humankind even has the responsibility to destroy the world. (op. cit., note 8, p. 81.) Humans are therefore able not only to redefine their relationship to freedom and justice through the creative principle "owing to their omnipotence," but also their relationship to history. Humans are able, Beuys maintains, to re-create "history and truth out of nothing." Humankind has today, Beuys avers, reached an intellectual stage that enables humans to see themselves "practically as God." (op. cit., note 3, p. 112). Unlike Beuys, in the metaphysics of the Bible, omnipotence and with it the possibility of *creatio ex nihilo* are characteristics only of God. Moreover, both Schiller and Plato before him refuse to equate the human being with God. For both, virtue is juxtaposed to the hubris of man. The human measure is not the measure of the gods. For this reason, in the *Nomoi* we can read that the human who transgresses the divine measure is subjected to the "justice of due punishment" and he "fully destroys himself, his house, and the state" (716b).

the expanded concept of art.[8] In a 1981 interview with Ryszard Stanislavki in Lodz, Poland, Beuys explained that it was also vital to "correct the historical errors we find in both Marx and Hegel." Schiller at least placed man at the center of things, and could therefore form the basis for the correction.[9] Beuys felt that in the work of art, work was presented as a "basic aesthetic element." Schiller, he maintained, had recognized this when he said: "Man is most himself when he plays. That is, when his work has an aesthetic element to it. Only here is there freedom, only here is there humanity." Understood this way, the aesthetic dimension is bound up with "the moral quality of human dignity."[10]

Schiller did, in fact, speak of work in "Letter Six" of his *On the Aesthetic Education of Man*. However, Schiller treats the concept within a discussion of the French Revolution and the history of his own period, whereas when Beuys elaborated these notions he failed to mention the history looming behind, for example, his own first trip to Poland. For Schiller history and culture—and this is the case not only in his discussion of the Kantian philosophy of the Enlightenment—not only comprised elements that rendered the alienation of man visible for all to see, for to his mind they also constituted elements that participate actively in this process. In other words, it becomes necessary here to assess Beuys' own role within history in the sense of an alienated realm of action.

In "Letter Five," Schiller asserts that the French Revolution had lost sight of "the dignity of human nature." "Society untrammeled, instead of hastening upwards toward organic life," had, he claimed, "regressed into the realm of the elementary." Life as an organic whole had been destroyed, and degeneration and barbarism now characterized the alienation of man from both himself and society. Schiller goes on in "Letter Six" to discuss a double alienation based on the political force of the state and the alienated force of culture itself. Schiller emphasizes that what art and culture initiated as "disruption" within the "inner man," is now being effected "quite generally and perfectly by the new spirit of the government." This "double force . . . from within and without," had, he continued, not only led to the mind confronting an alienated world of the senses, but also to enjoyment now being separated from labor and thus the means being severed from the end. As a consequence, man lost sight of the free whole. What instead prevailed was a petty-minded business spirit that reduced everything to conform with its own limited fragments of experience. At the level of society and state, the fragmentary and mechanical workings of the machinery of state corresponded to the pedantic petty-mindedness of this business spirit. Given this severing of nature and freedom, man was robbed of his self-determination. However, Schiller argued, precisely culture

8 Joseph Beuys, in conversation with A. B. Oliva, in *Beuys zu Ehren*, (Munich, 1986), pp. 76 and 81. The formula art = humans, like freedom = creativity = humans, implies that "freedom can (only) be attained through the creative principle." For this reason, Beuys concludes that "If humans are not God, then who is?" transposing the creative principle as the divine principle and the stimulus of Christ into humans.

9 I asked Beuys in an interview, when he started talking about Schiller, whether in Kant's thought aesthetics did not have a different role than it does in the expanded concept of art. Kant construed the beautiful in the aesthetic domain as the symbol of the ethical. Beuys sidestepped Kant's greater precision here and answered that aesthetics had started off in the wrong direction shortly after Kant. Nevertheless, Schiller had "written the most fundamental aesthetics." For Schiller "had attributed everything to the human being and the human essence: the drive to create form, the drive to play, the ethical drive, etc." (Joseph Beuys, in *Parle présente, je n'appartiens plus à l'art*, [Paris, 1988] p. 123). As early as the Kallias Letters, Schiller had found a new interpretation for Kant's definition of freedom. Kant had believed that freedom could not become the object of sensuous contemplation. The transition from nature to freedom thus becomes possible thanks to aesthetically reflecting judgment. This reflects "as if" nature were subject to purposes. Only in this way can the aesthetic be given symbolic justifications, for here the sensuous is referred to a supra-sensuous justification. In Schiller's thought, by contrast, the "as if" is construed as an analogy for pure definition by the will. For this reason, beauty can now be posited as form in the sensuous world, which can itself be considered "a depiction of [freedom" (letter of February 18, 1793). And in letter 23 of the *Aesthetic Letters*, the "state of aesthetic freedom" enables the transition from nature to the activity of thought and intention. Beuys ignores the intermediate character of the aesthetic in the thought of both Kant and Schiller, claiming "there is no aesthetics, for aesthetics is Man"

itself had inflicted this wound on the new humanity. Schiller went on to suggest that the separation of emotions and Reason (*Verstand*)—and Kant had laid the grounds for this division with his separation of nature and freedom—had led to the image of the species being present in man from then on only in fragmentary form. And the task at hand was, or so Schiller continued in "Letter Nine" and "Letter Seven," to re-create human dignity through a higher art, starting precisely at that juncture where man had "lost his dignity" owing to art and culture. Neither the state nor an "Enlightenment of the mind" such as had regressed into "moral tyranny" was able to make people forget that man is a "purpose in himself" ("Letter Five").[11] All forms of political liberty derived from this latter fact. By this definition, man can never be reduced to the undignified state of being a means to an end, it enables man to live in harmony with himself and all things "outside himself."[12] At the end of "Letter Seven," Schiller went on to stress that degeneration and barbarism in politics and culture go a long way toward convincing us that man is destined to "neglect his own purpose owing to a purpose outside himself" and thus to make man a slave of mankind.

Schiller's polemic can be read as a rejection of totalitarianism in any guise, for man always becomes a butcher when he justifies terror and violence. We can thus sense in Schiller's words a warning not only with regard to his own day, but one that equally applies to our century. The words with which Eugen Kogon prefaced his book on the SS state bear citing here. It is doubtless no coincidence that Kogon's critique of terror as a system of rule concurs with Schiller's underlying ideas. Kogon writes:

> The Age of Enlightenment, in other words the optimistic belief in the unlimited progress of Reason, more or less completely failed beyond the immediate domain of science in Europe. The power of the will once unleashed, pushed on by myths and interests, have liquidated it. It was, from the outset, undermined by the constant . . . division of modern man into labor power, consumer, party member, voter and private person . . . Thus, under the claim European man makes to the dictate of Reason, he himself has become the object of fateful . . . dependencies. Encumbered with knowledge and technology, he has returned to a state resembling slavery.[13]

These words describe the preconditions which during the Third Reich led to all law being breached and to the elimination first of all civil liberties, then of all democratic rights, and finally to the death camps. Now, when Beuys cites Schiller for his own purposes while in Poland in 1981 and speaks of freedom, self-determination, and human dignity, we must ask how aware he really was of the full reach of Nazi terror, destruction, and desecration of human rights.

(Beuys, op. cit., p. 124). He is thus at loggerheads with Schiller's notion of education and the latter's notion of political liberty. For "there is no other way of making the sensuous human being rational than by previously making him aesthetic" (letter 23).

10 Joseph Beuys, in *Polentransport*, (1981), (Milan: 1993) The Museum Sztuki, International Honorary Council, p. 53.

11 Friedrich Schiller, in *Über die ästhetische Erziehung des Menschen*, (Stuttgart, 1973), pp. 16, 20, 22, 19, 33, 26, 15, and 26.

12 Fichte took this definition, which he had borrowed from Kant, as the basis for his idea of culture in his lectures on the destiny of the scholar. "It [culture] is the final and highest means for the final purpose of Man, his complete concordance with himself. . . ." J. G. Fichte, in: *Fichtes Werke*, vol. VI (Berlin, 1971), pp. 298–9.

13 Eugen Kogon, *Der SS-Staat* (Munich, 1997), p. 23.

Beuys' youth coincided with the Hitler era. Thus, Poland for him was more than just a part of the dead past: it was a living part of his own personal history—that same history he had drawn upon for the framework of his own expanded concept of art. However, he does not mention this personal history during the interview in Lodz, nor is it integrated into the "symbolic gesture" with which Beuys at the time endeavored to build a bridge between East and West.[14] Yet in his own *Life Course / Work Course*, we indeed encounter this prior history during the War. There we can read: "1940 Poznan Exhibition of an Arsenal (together with Heinz Sielmann, Hermann Ulrich Asemissen, and Eduard Spranger)."[15]

Beuys considered the data of history as having been incorporated into his expanded concept of art in the sense of "life as action." For the drama of war could, he felt, only be overcome in images and in concepts at the imaginative level. As image and concept, it constituted "a nucleus, if we are to address the actual counter-projects."[16] The lines from his *Life Course / Work Course* are initially meant to be understood as images that, via counterimages in language, may then lead us to new projects. Yet Beuys provided no clue as to how these images relate to the real events of history.

When Beuys traveled to Poland in 1981 he termed the action *Poland Transport*. At the time, he donated some 1,000 works to the Museum Sztuki. They included, among other things, "a series of thirteen pencil drawings on paper mounted on card," which were also entitled *Poland Transport*.[17] The donation also included the panel "Art = Capital." In a public meeting, as in the interview, Beuys pointed to the parallels between his notions of social sculpture and the ideas of the Solidarity Movement in Poland. Nowhere in the interview did he speak of the devastation that German history had inflicted on Poland, nor of his own stay in Poznan as a soldier. It was there that he had first been trained as an in-flight radio operator. It is not known whether at the time Beuys knew what had happened in Poznan, Warthegau, and Lodz before, during, and after his training. A few facts at least bear mentioning: in early 1940 the first ghetto was set up in Lodz. The same year, the first people were deported from the ghetto to the death camps. The logic of the ghetto was from the very outset designed with the final solution in mind, for in the ghetto people simply starved to death. The logic was that of annihilation.[18] As of 1939, some 87,000 Jews and Poles were systematically deported from the Warthegau, the capital city of which was Poznan. This Gau was reserved only for Aryans, and Jewish property there was confiscated. In this way, the Jews were made to finance their own transportation to the death camps, for there was no separate budget for the

14 Jaromir Jedlinski, "*Polentransport 1981*," in: *Joseph Beuys-Tagung. Basel 1.-4. Mai 1991* (Basel, 1991), pp. 83 and 84. In his essay, Jedlinski states that behind Beuys' symbolic gesture there was not only the wish to overcome political borders. The gestures also comprised an "element of repentance" by this "former German soldier in the Second World War, who had been trained in Poland and had even studied botany for some time in Poznan."

15 Joseph Beuys, in *Joseph Beuys*, exh. cat. (Kunstmuseum Basel, 1969), p. 4.

16 Joseph Beuys, in *Par le présente, je n'appartiens plus à l'art*, op. cit., note 9, p. 110.

At the time, my question had referred to the following "date" in the *Life Course / Work Course*: "1940 Exhibition Erfurt-Bindersleben Airfield / 1940 Exhibition Erfurt North Airfield." My question was: "As you assume an expanded concept of art . . . in which the social domain is completely integrated into the artwork, one could ask what reference then exists here to your own biography? If we take a glance at your biography, and see, for example, that retrospectively you wrote that you exhibited in Erfurt in 1940. Did you enter that . . . after the event?" Beuys answered: "Yes. That is life as action. Life as permanent action; one could also say as a continual tragicomedy, wouldn't one. In other words as drama."

As regards the dates in his biography, Beuys did not correct them in any way during the interview. Most biographers, and this includes the standard monograph by Adriani, Konnertz and Thomas (*Joseph Beuys*, Cologne, 1973), simply adopt the dates from his *Life Course / Work Course*. In the case of Heiner Stachelhaus (*Joseph Beuys*, Düsseldorf, 1987), we can read on page 21 that "School leaver's exam and conscription papers arrived almost simultaneously in 1940." Even Hans van der Grinten, who should really have known better, declared: "Under the impression of 10 May, 1940 we both spontaneously decided to become soldiers, because we had the feeling that we were participating in something important and to do with destiny and it was high time to take up arms in order to play a direct

extermination.[19] Real historical events, in other words, yield a very different kind of Poland Transport. Moreover, as of 1939–40, in the vicinity of Poznan, experiments in extermination were conducted with truck-mounted gas chambers. By the end of December 1941, "a permanent gas extermination camp" was established in Chelmno, near Poznan.[20] Even if Beuys was not familiar with these ghastly facts during his stay in Poznan, he was no doubt acquainted with Hitler's speech to the Reichstag of January 30, 1939, in which the aim of "the destruction of the Jewish race in Europe" was publicly announced.[21] The impact in the Warthegau of Hitler's statements and policy was immediate. Its Gauleiter could report to Himmler in May of 1942, that the "special treatment" of 100,000 Jews in the Warthegau was now complete. That was the phrase of Gauleiter Greiser, who on taking office there had termed the Germans "masters" and the Poles "knaves." He also demanded that Himmler release the "Special Unit" that, or so he said, had gained so much practice in Chelmno in exterminating Jews, for the task of killing 35,000 Poles.[22]

If we bear these facts in mind when considering the statement by Heinz Sielmann, Beuys' instructor in Poznan, describing their joint hikes around the Warthegau, during which the men had discussed humanitarianism and humanity, then the latter fact sounds like pure mockery in the face of history.[23] Given that we know the facts, Sielmann's words are truly scandalous, yet they are all the more scandalous if we consider that by 1990 the crimes the Nazis had committed in Warthegau were certainly no secret to Sielmann. How Beuys would have reacted to Sielmann's words—they were broadcast by a public television station after his death—we do not know. What we do know is that in Lodz in 1981 Beuys did not mention Nazi crimes in the interview, nor did he mention the extermination camps or reveal any grasp of how the Nazis abused human dignity during that period. Rather, with reference to Schiller, he spoke of freedom, self-determination, and human dignity in connection with his expanded concept of art. He evidently did not notice that Schiller, like Fichte, had derived his notion of freedom from a direct appreciation of history. It is hard to comprehend how, according to Jaromir Jedlinski, he could countenance that his gift of the *Poland Transport* was an act of expiation (*Sühneaktion*).

The manner in which the notion of penance/expiation was perverted under the Nazis can be seen from the events surrounding *Kristallnacht*. The Nazis termed the destruction they carried out in the night of November 9, 1938, as "expiation measures" (*Sühnemaßnahmen*). The Jews were ordered to obviate the damage themselves and to pay a total sum of one and one quarter billion reichsmarks to the German Empire as a "penance payment." As early as 1933,

part in this conflict" (Hans van der Grinten, in "Beuys und Jünger," in *Joseph Beuys Tagung*, 1–4 May 1991, Basel, p. 9).

It was on 10 May, 1940 that the Germans invaded Holland, Belgium, Luxembourg and France. On 1 Sept. 1939 they had invaded Poland. Hitler's war was a war of expansion and destruction intended to lead to the subjugation and elimination of other peoples. As of 1939, deportations were systematically underway in the Warthegau, making room for so-called Aryans. It is therefore incomprehensible how Beuys, many years after the War, at a time when he had long since developed his notion of freedom in connection with the expanded concept of art, answered Johannes Stüttgen's question why he had enlisted as follows: because "he felt the need whatever the circumstances to be where all the others had to be, too" (*Beuys Tagung*, p. 18). This answer and Beuys' interpretation of the reality of the War both entail an inversion of a sense of duty.

Fichte, to whose thought Schiller resorts in his *Letters*, once emphasized in his essay "Some Lectures on the Fate of the Scholar" (op. cit., note 12, p. 309) that "anyone who believes himself the master of another ... is himself a slave. Even if he is not always such in reality, he certainly has the soul of a slave and he will basely go down on his knees before the first stronger person he encounters.—Only he is free who wishes to make everything around him free...." The opposite person, by contrast, has "not yet formed humanity within himself...." He would therefore not "even have matured" such as to feel his "freedom and independent activity ['Selbsttätigkeit']...." Beuys likewise speaks in connection with the expanded concept of art of the independent activity of the free Ego. However, what was the state of such activity in his own case, we could ask, looking back on the years 1933–45? Freedom and independent activity become empty concepts the moment you bow down to a totalitarian power in history, thus degrading the human being to the status of a means. Fichte writes: "Man may use things bereft of reason for his purposes, but not reasoning beings...." And in his *System for*

the population, in particular young people were systematically inculcated with racial hatred as a matter of course, a fundamental world view. In this process, schools were supplied with anti-Semitic materials for lessons in order to "prepare the climate for the 'final solution' of the Jewish question." (Walter Hofer, op. cit.) In a 1982 conversation with students at the Gerhart-Hauptmann School in Kassel, Beuys himself confirmed that "the synagogue in Kleve was burned down" and then "two Jewish pupils from school . . . disappeared" by emigrating to America. However, Beuys continued, he had not noticed any racial violence at high school. "No book there and no person either" advocated that the Jews were an inferior race, and "I must therefore say quite objectively that this was not the case at our school." For the autonomy of the school was relatively great back then. On the contrary: "The intervention of the state such as occurs today was by no means as pronounced back then." When students persisted in asking whether schooling during the Third Reich could not best be described as "education to/for death and not for life," as Heinrich Böll described it, Beuys answered, "It may well be that that was the case for Heinrich Böll, but it was not for us. Let us say, it led to death; many of my school comrades are no longer with us." And he added that his year at school was thus "systematically exterminated" (*systematisch ausgerottet*). However, with this statement Beuys shifts the result of Nazi educational goals, namely death, away from the victims and onto the perpetrators. Beuys thus inverts the contents of history, speaking of the death of his schoolmates who had been systematically exterminated, but not of the Nazi measures that led to the death camps. In the manner of this discussion, he was not only able to accept the notion of education to/for death, but also to redeploy the term "extermination," which the Nazis had used, in a different sense. Jaromir Jedlinski understood *Poland Transport 1981* as a symbolic gesture that Beuys, as a former German soldier, had based on the motif of an "element of penance." However, in 1982 Beuys maintained that his school year had been "systematically exterminated." Beuys not only takes the motif of penance to the point of absurdity, but also displaces (*verschiebt*) its linguistic meaning from its original historical context. By shifting the meaning in this way, he falsifies (*verkehrt*) it.[24] And we can therefore justifiably doubt whether Beuys' critical reflection on history had any particular depth. Yet the degree of autonomy of a private individual vis-à-vis a state that abrogates democratic rights is surely shown by that person's concrete actions in history. And we must also ask to what extent Beuys can justify using the notions he borrows from Schiller and Fichte for his expanded concept of art—not just as a private individual, but as an artist. For anyone producing art

an Ethical Doctrine he writes that he who destroys or is "induced by pure force of nature to destroy" is "of no other rank than that of the forces of Nature and certainly does not have that of an ethical human being." Freedom and prudence, by contrast, are Man's goals. Fichte avers. He who makes use of violence and yet "has no knowledge of duty, can be forgiven this fact . . . but he who possesses such knowledge acts against his own conscience. . . ." (J. G. Fichte, in *Fichtes Werke*, vol. XI, pp. 85 and 86).

Now, if the expanded concept of art allows biographical dates to retrospectively be presented as the dates of exhibitions in the sense of Beuys' understanding of action, then we must ask what such "retrospection" entails given the violence of history and its mechanisms of alienation. Moreover, if Beuys can term the War years as an "educational experience" (in Stachelhaus, op. cit., p. 23), then he is not only at loggerheads with the concept of freedom as used by Fichte and Schiller, but will also fall victim to his own alienation of history and to himself. As regards the actual dates of his biography, they were corrected "retrospectively," in this case after his death. Franz-Joachim Verspohl, who has conducted reliable research into the source material, writes: "In the Easter of 1941 B. left High School with his 'Leaver's Certificate.' Although he wanted to study medicine, B. voluntarily enlisted on 1 May 1941, pre-empting conscription. After training as a flight radio operator attached to the air fleet in Poznan and Erfurt, as of 1 Dec 1942 he was stationed as a member of the 7th Pupils Company of the Air Fleet Intelligence School in Hradec Kralove. He then became a flight radio operator attached to var. Stuka Squadrons, where he was instructed in 'all types of weaponry,' crashed on 16 March 1944 along with pilot Hans Laurinck on flight 1026 '200m east of Freifeld, Crimea.' The pilot died. On 17 March B., seriously injured, was admitted to Mobile Field Hospital 179, which he was first able to leave on 7 April 1944." According to Stachelhaus, written in 1987, Beuys "crashed in winter 1943" and was looked after by "Tartars for eight days" (op. cit., p. 26). Verspohl continues: "Later, B. gave these traumatic experiences of

in Germany after Auschwitz not only comes into conflict with German history, but also with the notions innate in his or her artistic work to the extent that such notions have been borrowed from German intellectual history.

In 1985, Anselm Kiefer rejected Beuys' idea that every human is an artist. He did so during a discussion involving, among others, Enzo Cucchi and Jannis Kounellis. In that conversation Beuys again cited Schiller as a precedent for his expanded concept of art. We can assume that Kiefer was not aware at that time of the complete range, let alone the full meaning, of the expanded concept of art.[25] Beuys had not said that each human being *is* an artist; rather, his formulation addressed the creative potential of each human as a *possibility*. By contrast, Kiefer simultaneously attacked the related notion that "humans . . . are at the center" of things. Kiefer believed that upholding such a notion would be tantamount to an act of "evocation." To his mind, the artist was a medium and example who by means of perceptual processes renders something visible as it passes through him. "I wish to perceive something with my senses," he said, "that in general is at present not perceived." For this reason, he argued that it was not the human being as such who is at the center of things. He did not maintain that "humans . . . move toward a certain point where they can all become artists. I am of the opinion that there are artists and there are non-artists." Before speaking about other people, he continued, each person should take himself as an example, and this includes a reference to history and biography. In this manner, he only experienced the Third Reich as an individual.

Beuys reacted aggressively to this remark, and it is one of the few points in the talk when he alluded, with a passing shot at Kiefer, to the actual practice of annihilation during the Nazi period. However, the allusion also points to a different scenario and thus to a displacement, to use Freud's notion of the *anderer Schauplatz*, that is not that which he had corrected with humanist commonplaces when casting his eye back over history. But let us first hear Beuys. He stated that the example Kiefer had mentioned demonstrated precisely the opposite of what Kiefer himself had set out to prove. For Kiefer had after all "himself . . . emerged healthy from the Third Reich" and more precisely had "not been burned up in an oven." And this example, Beuys continued, also shows "how very much more important it is to think of the others than of oneself." Beuys then emphasized in the further course of the discussion with Kiefer and Kounellis that he deployed a different concept of art than they did. And precisely this, he claimed, was the grounds for the "difficulty . . . I work with an expanded concept of art," he stressed, "with the concept of social sculpture as the most important art."[26]

the War mythical form in a poetic biography, in which the report on his rescue by Crimean Tartars who cared for him for a longer period of time takes pride of place. . . ." (Franz-Joachim Verspohl, in "Joseph Beuys," entry in *Saur, Allgemeines Künstlerlexikon*, vol. 10, ed. Günter Meissner [Munich & Leipzig, 1995]).

17 Jaromir Jedlinski, in op. cit. note 14, p. 84.

18 Claude Lanzmann, in Marc Cherrie, Hervé Le Roux, *Cahier du Cinéma*, no. 374, 1985. In this interview, Lanzmann also emphasizes that the Nazis' "system of legitimation" after the War consisted in their "self-understanding" of "having only been *agents*" of the extermination process. However, quite the opposite was the case: "the entire perversity" of their stance consisted in their transforming the victims, "the Jews into agents of their own extermination, . . . into *laborers of death*." In his film, *Shoah*, Lanzmann therefore focused on outlining the extermination and on turning his back on any aesthetics. The Nazis had attempted to extirpate all traces of the extermination. In his film, Lanzmann transposes former camp internees into the situation back then. With their gestures and words they "embody" in an excruciatingly painful manner the destruction process. In this way, the former camp prisoners experience themselves once more, giving duration/presence in the present a new value. Here, words receive a political function, "attesting to what the survivors saw, and *saying* it for them. . . ." (Marc Cherrie, in op. cit.). Given that it is integrated into the presentation without any aesthetic or artistic trimming, the "embodiment" of the destruction process that the film-goer thus experiences has nothing to do with "incorporation" or "identification" such as is demonstrated by Beuys in his *Auschwitz Vitrine* with his "thing presentations" (see text and note 64). At the same time, by extending time for the viewer, the film enables us to break open our perceptual system and the mechanisms of censorship associated with it. Accordingly, traces of memory can be brought back into consciousness, traces that are not present to consciousness in its

He explained in another interview just how this concept of art can be related to Auschwitz. In the conversation, held on the occasion of an exhibition in Paris in January 1982, he described the expanded concept of art as the single most important precondition for overcoming the trauma of Auschwitz "by making . . . the human being dynamic inside." This entailed, he stated, setting the contents of this concept of art themselves in flux. He considered "thinking activity," "emotional activity," and the "activity of the will" as all coming under the heading of such contents. These could, through processes of people becoming conscious of them, lead to people dynamically "becoming awake" and "developing creative forces," and only thus could "Auschwitz be overcome," Beuys added. The propulsive thrust of these three psychological forces could, or so he continued, only be brought to bear in the present if it were to be based on a concept of freedom and creativity.

Now, Beuys also identified Auschwitz with the present: "For Auschwitz continues to exist in another form," he asserted. Just how Beuys construes the transition from the Auschwitz death camp to the present sheds light on his understanding both of history and of language. In this context, he compared two types of annihilation: the one is ostensibly "primitive," whereby "people are thrown into the fire," the other, he termed a "refined method." It refers to "today" and consists of "destroying the souls of humans . . . inwardly by Auschwitz methods." However, there is no third criterion, no point of comparison in this rigid opposition of the destruction of body and soul in Beuys' statement. He believed he had identified such a point of comparison in the form of economic practice that served to bring together image and counterimage. Beuys accordingly stated:

> What has an effect today is no longer this primitive method, namely throwing people into fires and thus destroying them; instead, today they are destroyed by the contemporary type of the economy, which hollows people out inside and makes them slaves of consumption . . . and in doing so tears their souls out of their bodies. . . . In other words, the souls of humans have already been destroyed internally by Auschwitz methods.

Auschwitz, he concluded, continues to exist.[27] When Beuys speaks of the "type of economy" he forgets just what economic practice meant with reference to the death camps in the Third Reich. This denial of the reality of history becomes possible thanks to a metonymic shift from one semantic level to another, whereby the two are by no means compatible. Beuys, after all, spoke of "destruction" by economic practice today and by doing so played down the actual practice of annihilation in Auschwitz.[28] However, by leaving out of the comparison what is actually decisive, his own language points to a "different

"usual" state but have long since been repressed in our awareness of history and jettisoned. The occurrences occluded from our awareness of history include the fact that the "deadly traffic" of the "Jew transports" were declared quite "normal" and regular traffic by the German Railways at the time (see Hilberg, op. cit., p. 181). Now if Beuys talks in 1981 of "Poland Transport," then one could have wished that he had at least called the connotations the label has by their name.

19 Raul Hilberg is cited in Claude Lanzmann, *Shoah* (New York, 1995), p. 134. Hilberg documents that the money for the transports stemmed "from confiscated Jewish property" used precisely for this purpose: "This was a self-financing principle. The SS or the military would confiscate Jewish property and with the proceeds, especially from bank deposits, would pay for the transports." *The Jews paid for their own death!* There was one exception, one instance of a bill left unpaid: the Reichsbahn transported Jews to Auschwitz free of charge.

20 Walther Hofer, in *Der Nationalsozialismus. Dokumente 1933–1944*, ed. Walther Hofer, (Frankfurt, 1957), p. 275.

21 Adolf Hitler, in op. cit., note 20, p. 277.

22 Raul Hilberg, in *La destruction des Juifs d'Europe*, vol. II., p. 863.

23 Heinz Sielmann, in *Rieve—eine innere Mongolei*, film by Hannes Heer, produced by WDR, 1991. Stachelhaus, (op. cit. note 16) presents something else which Sielmann, who was later to produce films on nature, remembered: "Beuys, or so Sielmann recollects, at the time came upon a half-starved Pomeranian, which he smuggled illegally back into camp and cared for until it was healthy again."

24 Jaromir Jedlinski, op. cit., note 14, p. 83. Joseph Beuys in Geert Platner & pupils of the Gerhart Hauptmann School, Kassel (eds.): *Schule im Dritten Reich. Erziehung zum Tode. Eine Dokumentation* (Cologne, 1988), pp. 130 and 132. In psychoanalysis, *Verkehrung*, that is reversal into the opposite, is considered a product of the Ego's defense mechanisms. It enables "identification with the aggressor." In this way, the individual in question turns away from his own

scenario" (*anderer Schauplatz*) than the one he himself was aiming at. At the same time, the ideational contents that he had excluded from consciousness (by rejecting them) were no longer available as an "object" for conscious working-through. While Beuys was able to apply the same word to these ideational contents, he was, in fact, referring to two distinct events. It bears remembering that the economic practice of Auschwitz was that of an economy of death, with the goal of leaving no traces of its perverse production practices while never ceasing to produce. Rudolf Vrba, a survivor of the camp, called it a "production of death" accompanied by a different form of production, namely that of usable products. The slogan over the entranceway to the camp attests quite cynically to this double function: "Work makes free." This reification of death in Auschwitz enabled it to be "incorporated" as property by the Nazi butchers. In the process, the individual was robbed not only of his freedom but also of his human face. Vrba's words bear citing here:

> Auschwitz-Birkenau, apart from being a mass murder center, was a normal concentration camp too, which had its order, like Mauthausen, like Buchenwald, like Dachau like Sachsenhausen. But whereas in Mauthausen the main product of the prisoners' work was stone—there was a big stone quarry—the product in Auschwitz was death. Everything was geared to keep the crematorium running. This was the aim. [. . .However, in Auschwitz] there was [also] an element of a normal concentration camp—the Krupp and Siemens factories moved in and utilized slave labor.[29]

Auschwitz survivors like Rudolf Vrba certainly know what it means to be a slave laborer. And they also know who degraded the victims to the status of producers of their own death. However, Joseph Beuys evidently ignores all this. By indirectly drawing an analogy between the slave laborers then and the slaves to consumption today, he not only treats the praxis of annihilation in the camps as something harmless, but at the same time plays down the singularity of Auschwitz. By stripping the victims of their testimony and sparing himself the confrontation with German history, he also takes his concept of freedom to the point of absurdity. For by looking away from the actual events he also elides the traces of memory. In this way, these traces are prevented from being liberated by the word.[30]

The precise form in which the reality of Auschwitz was accessible for Beuys—and the further question of whether Beuys was ever able to confront that reality—must initially remain moot points. However, it bears mentioning here that in connection with his vitrine *Auschwitz Demonstration 1956–1964*, Beuys emphasized, in the same 1982 interview cited above, that events in Auschwitz could not be depicted in images. {See Plate 8.2} It was "only possible

person. Critique internalized through the Super-Ego is postponed and not transformed directly into self-criticism. Sigmund Freud used the term "emotional ambivalence" (*GW*, vol. 10, p. 225) to describe the "transformation of an instinct into its (material) opposite," such as occurs when love is reversed and becomes hate. In such a reversal that which is denied also incorporates aspects of perception that are not recognized by the Ego and are split off from consciousness. For this reason, in the present case of Beuys we can hardly talk of the mirroring in history or in the Ego of a consciousness determined by freedom and should instead assume we are dealing with disassociation of the Ego. Here, an unbearable conflict with the Ego is instilled with the opposite meaning in order to better defend against it. Denial and recognition co-exist here in an ambivalent relationship. By 1982, one could have expected Beuys to have worked through German history for himself in a different way. After all, he laid claim as a person to the education of man through human dignity and as an artist to freely reshape the social organism in the sense of a sculpture. Painfully working his way through recent German history was something undertaken instead by the poet Paul Celan, who, born in 1920, belonged to the same generation as Beuys. Celan's view of history was decidedly different. He does not need to deny the "dates" of history or keep them secret. For Celan, these dates have entered into language in another form. They have initially blocked any possible paths that language could take—until Celan succeeds in breathing life back into the word in the face of the language of the murderers. On the morning after the Night of the Crystals, Paul Celan arrives in Berlin at the Anhalter Station. His poem *LA CONTRESCARPE* speaks of this: "Via Cracow / you had come, to the Anhalter / Station / toward your gaze floated smoke, / it was of the morning. Beneath / Paulownien you saw the knives standing, again, / sharp from the distance. There was dancing . . . // Oh, this frater / -nization."

With the word *Verfreundung* (fraternization) Celan evokes associations with *Verfremdung* (alien-

. . . to remember these events by presenting a positive counter-image" of them. Beuys spoke expressly of memory and counterimage in this regard. How these concepts are understood will depend largely on the role Beuys ascribes to the word in the creative process and also on how we choose to define the limits of his expanded concept of art.[31]

Kiefer had already spoken of the limits of the expanded concept of art. By giving his expanded concept of art a status above all other notions in his discussion with Kiefer and Kounellis, Beuys not only placed it beyond all criticism but also robbed it of any roots in history. After all, Beuys believed very strongly that the concept of social sculpture was the art form par excellence. By contrast, history is at the very center of Kiefer's work. Kiefer clearly stressed this in another interview, one conducted without Beuys. There he said that he was admittedly not interested in historiography, but in "processing history. . . . I attempt in an unscientific manner to get close to the center from where events are controlled."[32] For him, history thus becomes work with the memory that has stored "basic experiences, basic conditioning" and also intimations and feelings that can then be deposited in the pictures like sediment where they gradually ripen.[33] However, precisely because of the Third Reich, Kiefer sees history as "a fundamental view of the world." In this view, humans are no longer posited at the center of the cosmos. For at the latest since the Copernican Revolution, we have been confronted by "thought bereft of hope." It is not until the artist confronts this "cosmic meaninglessness" that he will succeed in "forging meaning." Only by "stepping out of the world and therefore himself making something meaningless" will the artist be able to meditate. And the moment he returns from meditation to the "level of consciousness" there will be a loss of memory. For this reason, according to Kiefer, there "can also be no historiography." The artist replaces it with the interaction of sensuous experience, intimation, and knowledge. Only then can we speak of "the unity of a human being or the wholeness of a work." The task of art in this context is to express precisely this ineffable property, which cannot be represented by "concepts" and "language." Only this brings us closer to a center from where history can be processed.[34] Beuys by contrast positions his project of an expanded concept of art somewhere between coping with history by the imagination and the actual counterprojects. Kiefer, when asked about the apocalypse of the Third Reich, spoke more forthrightly of deep concern (*Betroffenheit*). Responding to a question on his assertion that the "kiln chambers in the brick factory" where he worked were "blackened by soot" and the "ash-colored clothes" in his pictures brought to mind associations with Auschwitz, Kiefer answered: "Yes, but that is

ation) and *Verfeindung* (estrangement, to become enemies with someone). The semantic thrust refers again to the Third Reich, to the fact that back then "friend" and "foe" were separated under the Nuremberg Laws (1935) by different rights into citizens of the Reich and national citizens.

25 Beuys' formulation draws on an expression Novalis used in his "Glauben und Liebe." There, we read: "Ein wahrhafter Fürst ist der Künstler der Künstler . . . Jeder Mensch sollte Künstler sein" (A veritable nobleman is the artist of artists. Each man should be an artist) in *Novalis Werke* (Munich, 1969), p. 367. See also my discussion in "Un Art humain: Beuys, Joyce et Novalis," in Max Reithmann, *Joseph Beuys: La mort me tient en éveil* (Toulouse: édit. ARPAP, 1994), pp. 91–212.

26 Joseph Beuys and Anselm Kiefer in, op. cit., note 7, pp. 109, 112, 124, 115, and n 6.

27 Joseph Beuys, in *Joseph Beuys. Par la présente, je n'appartiens plus à l'art*, ed. Max Reithmann, "Dernier espace avec introspecteur," propos recueillis par Gaya Goldcymer et Max Reithmann (Paris, 1988), p. 121. See also note 9 above. For similar information see Caroline Tisdall, in *Joseph Beuys*, exh. cat., (New York: The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, 1979), pp. 21–2.

28 In a similar sense, Beuys also spoke of "rooting out" (*ausrotten*), whereby he was referring now to his classmates at school and to his comrades in arms (see text and note 24 above).

29 Rudolf Vrba, cited in Lanzmann, op. cit., p. 112.

30 Paul Celan demonstrated in his poems what the traces of memory and words can mean. And he also showed that a word is prevented from "arriving" by the gaze of those who use it to turn their backs on the abyss of death in the death camps. "Mit Worten holt ich dich wieder, da bist du" (With words I recalled you, there you are) he wrote in the poem "DEIN HINÜBERSEIN," *Gesammelte Werke*, I, p. 218. See also Max Reithmann, "Wort, Bild, Erinnerung: Klee, Runge, Celan, Beuys," in *CELAN-JAHRBUCH 7*

not a product of the brickworks, but of our knowledge of history. This form of experience and knowledge quite simply defines our view of things. We see a railway siding somewhere and think of Auschwitz. That will remain the case for a long time to come." With reference to events during the Nazi era, he considered himself "one of the perpetrators, at least in theoretical terms" because "today I simply cannot know what I would have done back then. Anything is possible in the case of humans. Hence my *Betroffenheit*."[35] In contrast to the Beuys statements I have cited, Kiefer's words here establish a position that neither tries to sidestep real events during the Third Reich nor is based on ambivalent behavior. However, in 1980 Beuys likewise commented quite unequivocally when asked by André Müller how he had felt after the Second World War on being confronted by the factual scale of the Nazi horrors: "That was a shock, for sure, an irreversible one . . . Actually, that shock has been my primary, my basic experience since the end of the War, and it led to me starting to tackle art critically in the first place, in other words to my orienting myself anew in the sense of a radical new beginning."[36] This radical new beginning and this new orientation referred, as he later stated, to the expanded concept of art.[37]

By referring to history in a different way than does Beuys, Kiefer does not rely on any expanded notion of art. His 1989 sculpture entitled *Poppy and Memory* attests to this. {See Plate 8.4} The sculpture consists of an airplane, the wings and tail fins of which bear books of cut sheet lead. Poppy stalks protrude from beneath the layers of leaden books. They are arranged as if they were blocking the plane's flight forward. The airplane's name alludes to the volume of Paul Celan poems of the same name published for the first time in 1952 and which contains the poem "Death Fugue." In 1989–90, while on exhibition in the Paul Maenz Gallery, the same airplane was also given the name *Angel of History*. "This double designation is repeated on the exhibition poster, where we can read in the artist's own hand the words 'Angel of History' beneath a triangular winglike edifice in the upper section and the words 'Poppy and Memory' over an airplane in the lower section."[38] In this manner, the entire exhibition bore a double name. The Maenz exhibition also included, among others, the wing sculpture *Berenice*, made in 1989; Kiefer used lead, glass and women's hair for it. This title again alludes to a Celan poem.[39] The third sculpture of interest in the present context bore the title *Melancholia* and was made in 1989. A stereometric body positioned on the left wing brings to mind Dürer's polyhedron in his engraving *Melencolia I*.

The first airplane, today called *Poppy and Memory*, also fits under the title of the exhibition: *Angel of History*. The first name is derived from Celan's poem, the second from Walter Benjamin's "Theses on the Philosophy of History." Both labels

(1997–98), ed. Hans-Michael Speier (Heidelberg, 1999). It must remain for an analysis of each individual work to reveal how memory manifested itself in the work process in Beuys' oeuvre. With reference to the expanded concept of art, however, the stance of "looking away" from the historical dimension of the past entails a reduction, if not indeed a questioning of how it functions. Precisely this is what makes it unmanly, and this defines not only Beuys' conflict-laden tragedy as a person, but constitutes a reference to history that it is impossible to cope with. If the experience of the past is erased, the individual finds himself in conflict with himself. This thwarts any attempt by the psyche's emotions the find a balance. Plato termed such a balance of emotional forces justice. Conversely, if a communality based on law/right is destroyed, and this was the case under the Nazi dictatorship, then the emotional forces of the individual again become embroiled in destructive conflict, whereby we find within the individual a reflection of the state of lawlessness. The problematic relationship of logos and sculptural form in Beuys' oeuvre, which I adumbrated in my essay "Bewegungsprinzip und Plastik" (*Joseph Beuys Symposium Kranenburg 1995*, Basel/Moyland, 1996, pp. 138–56) with reference to Plato, shows that the project of the expanded concept of art can only be upheld if inner and outer action concur. Such concordance is only possible given a mirroring of a state of peace within the polis, within the domain of the human's emotional forces. (See on this op. cit. in "Bewegungsprinzip und Plastik," note 46.) For this reason, any attempt, and be it Beuys' own, to posit present and past as direct analogies, must be rejected. Present and past can only be assumed to be analogous if both guarantee adherence to a joint form of reason and justice, both within the communality and within the soul. Paul Klee has shown that "abstraction," when referred to history, can mean something quite different from the looking away ("ab-sehen") through empty abstraction that Beuys advocated. (See my essay in *CELAN-JAHRBUCH 7*, op. cit.).

focus on forgetting and remembrance. The poppy stalks in the books on the plane's wings are placed like the traces of forgetfulness between the leaden pages (symbolizing the weight of memory). In Paul Celan's poem "Eternity" in the volume *Poppy and Memory*, he speaks of the "poppy of forgetting." And he also talks there of a "word which slept when we heard it."[40] The books and poppy stalks on Kiefer's plane thus refer us to the world of Celan's word. "Eternity" mentions the "poppy of forgetting" and is part of the fourth section of the poetry collection; the section is entitled "Stalks of Night." The entire volume *Poppy and Memory* is introduced by early poems which Celan brought together under the heading "Sand from the Urns." They include the poem "Aspen Tree" that tells of the death of Celan's mother. Celan had learned of the death of his mother in the winter of 1943; the Germans had deported her to the Ukraine.[41] The theme of death is, in other words, from now on a constant companion here. For this reason the very first poem in the *Poppy and Memory* volume speaks of death.

In the fourth section, Celan takes up another, related motif: the poems talk of sleep and the night of forgetting, and, conversely, of the bitterness that keeps one awake. (*Gesammelte Werke*, vol. I, pages 65 and 78). Here, too, it is a word of death and forgetting however, which brings the "stalks of the night" to life: "Aus Herzen und Hirnen / sprießen die Halme der Nacht, / und ein Wort, von Sensen gesprochen, / neigt sie ins Leben. // Stumm wie sie / wehn wir der Welt entgegen . . . ." (*GW* I, p. 70) In the "Death Fugue" death is then called by its name: It is "a master from Germany" represented by a man who has his slave laborers shovel "a grave in the air" for the "ashen hair of Shulamite" (the bride from the Song of Solomon and by extension a name associated with the entire people of Israel). Not until it becomes dark does the man write home to Germany: "your golden / hair Margarete." His writing is accompanied by whistles and the order to kill: "he whistles up his hounds / he whistles up his Jews has a grave dug in / the earth."

In some of his pictures Anselm Kiefer has used the names of the two women in the "Death Fugue," Shulamite and Margarete, as well as the last two verses of the poem. In the canvas entitled *Your Golden Hair, Margarethe* (*Dein goldenes Haar Margarethe*), made in 1981 and part of the Sanders Collection in Amsterdam, Kiefer used straw, which he glued onto the canvas to symbolize Margarete's hair.[42] {See Plate 8.5} The dried stalks of the flayed wheat lie like lichen on the absent outline of the face. Also left absent is the shape of the body, though its placement across the landscape is indicated. Margarete's face and body are represented in the picture both by straw and by her name. The name is added as part of the quotation from the penultimate line in the "Death Fugue," the words of which Kiefer included in his piece. The over-painted words trace the shape of her hair like an

31 The quotation from Beuys is to be found in *Joseph Beuys, Par la présente . . .*, op. cit., note 27, p. 122.

32 Anselm Kiefer, in: "Bei Anselm Kiefer im Atelier. Werkstattgespräch von Axel Hecht und Alfred Nemeczek," in *Art* 1 (1990), p. 42.

33 Anselm Kiefer, in "Nachts fahre ich mit dem Fahrrad von Bild zu Bild," in *Süddeutsche Zeitung, Magazin*, Nov. 16, 1990, pp. 24 and 28.

34 Anselm Kiefer, in op. cit., note 32, pp. 40, 42., 43, 44, 45. Kiefer emphasized in this interview: "Of course, the head is important, too. I am not a painter who paints by impulse" (p. 44).

35 Anselm Kiefer, in op. cit., note 33, pp. 28 and 30.

36 Joseph Beuys, in *Penthouse* 106 (1980), p. 98.

37 Joseph Beuys, in *Reden über das eigene Land: Deutschland* 3 (Munich, 1985), p. 35. And likewise Joseph Beuys, in: *Joseph Beuys: Wilhelm-Lehmbruck-Preis 1986*, (Duisburg, 1986), n.p.

38 Angela Schneider, in "Resurrexit oder eine tour d'horizon zu den neueren Werken," in *Anselm Kiefer*, (Berlin: Nationalgalerie, 1991), pp. 119 and 120.

39 In the poem "HINAUSGEKRÖNT," we read: "hinausgespien in die Nacht. // Bei welchen / Sternen! Lauter / graugeschlagenes Herzhammersilber. Und / Berenikes Haupthaar, auch hier,— ich flocht, / ich zerflocht, ich flechte, zerflechte. / Ich flechte" (spat out into the night. Under such stars! All in ventricle silver streak gray. And / Berenice's hair, here too,—I braided / I unbraided, I braid, unbraid, / I braid) Paul Celan, in *Gedichte*, I (Frankfurt, 1985), p. 271.

40 Paul Celan, in *Gedichte I* (=*Gesammelte Werke*, vol. I), (Frankfurt, 1985), p. 68.

41 In another early poem that dates back to an event he experienced together with Ruth Lackner in November or December 1943, entitled "STERNENLIED," Celan talks of a strand of "hair that shines from Berenice's head." See Paul Celan, *Das Frühwerk*, ed. Barbara Wiedemann (Frankfurt, 1989), p. 131.

arch, giving visual reinforcement to her naming and representing "Margarete" as a whole. However, the dried straw stalks also stand for her absent face and her absent body. They also refer metaphorically to the night of forgetting and to death—as do the poppy stalks in the airplane in *Poppy and Memory*. It is Death the Reaper who now encounters us in the guise of the absent shape of a master from Germany—and not of the ashen hair of Shulamite but of the flayed and plaited hair of "Margarete."[43] In the painting, Kiefer makes use of a single characteristic—straw—to refer to the whole. The whole is conveyed to the viewer both by the title of the picture (the Celan verse) and by the name it contains ("Margarete"), and themselves merely part of a larger whole, as they need to be supplemented by the second part of the double verse, "your ashen hair Shulamite." For his part, Kiefer chooses to replace Celan's oxymoron (the last line in the poem) with a synecdoche (the straw). Here, he also succeeded in referencing the name as a part of the whole—a twofold figure (Margarete *and* Shulamite), which both in the picture and the poem now enables us to trace a memory.

In Kiefer's picture a black arch now accompanies the curved form of the straw, functioning almost as the aura of death, as it were. This aura bonds like a shadow with the corporeal-tangible form of the straw, holding both in the balance. This floating balance also permeates the circling dance—and the deadly rhythm of the poem. Thus, the tracks of the text again point the viewer to the fact that the insistent rhythm of death elides the oxymoron in the picture—the "your ashen hair Shulamite." In the poem we read:

> Ein Mann wohnt im Haus der spielt mit den Schlangen der/ schreibt / der schreibt wenn es dunkelt nach Deutschland dein goldenes/ Haar Margarete / er schreibt es und tritt vor das Haus . . . / er pfeift seine Rüden herbei / er pfeift seine Juden hervor läßt schaufeln ein Grab in der/ Erde / er befiehlt uns spielt auf nun zum Tanz // Schwarze Milch der Frühe wir trinken dich nachts / wir trinken dich morgens und mittags wir trinken dich abends / wir trinken und trinken.
>
> A man lives in the house he plays with the snakes he writes / he writes when it grows dark to Germany your golden hair Margarete / he writes it and steps from the house . . . / he whistles up his hounds / he whistles up his Jews has a grave dug in the earth / he orders us to play up now for the dance // Black milk of the dawn we drink you at night / we drink in the morning at noon we drink you at sundown / we drink and drink. (GW I, p. 41)

Just as the opposition between "he" and "us," between the "man" and the "Jews" persists and is repeated in the rhythm of the poem, visualizing the tunes and figures of the fugue in order to render death visible Kiefer also composes his picture rhythmically and by means of movement.

42 The name "Margarete" can also be linked to the name "Gretchen" in Goethe's "Faust." (See Mark Rosenthal in *Anselm Kiefer* (Philadelphia and Chicago, 1987), pp. 95, 96, and 99). In Celan's work, the name "Shulamite" refers also to the bride in the Song of Solomon in 7: 1-2 of the Lutheran translation. The theme of dance described in this passage is taken up again by Celan in the poem, repeating the main theme ("Black milk of morning") although now under the sign of death.

43 With reference to the context of Celan, Kiefer also used straw elsewhere, for example in the picture *Dein blondes Haar, Margarethe* (1981) in the Collection Edwin L. Stringer, and in *Margarethe* (1981) in the Saatchi Collection. Illus. in *Anselm Kiefer*, exh. cat. (Chicago and Philadelphia, 1987), pp. 96 and 98.

The horizon is close to the upper edge of the picture. Painted furrows cross the terrain like rail tracks leading to a distant vanishing point beneath the upper left-hand corner. At upper right, beneath the horizon, house roofs are visible as mere abbreviations. There is nothing static about them. They are positioned beneath the horizon in the rhythm of its interrupted brushstrokes, thus also being torn or sucked toward that vanishing point. It is as if the viewer were crossing unknown terrain by train, a countryside where the objects themselves have lost any constancy and substance. However, this terrain is also occupied by markings that cross the ploughed furrows diagonally, in an abstract counter-rhythm. This serves to obscure still further the view of the few objects depicted. The entire pictorial space is set in motion. The markings, the source of the intimated movement, are accompanied by the black curving line behind the straw arch. It can be read as both an abstract brush line and also figuratively as a hook or arch. In front of these two shapes, a figure applied with a thick brush stands out, resembling a stake. The weight of this figure serves to anchor the two arch forms in the middle of the picture. But its gravity simultaneously eliminates the insistent depth of the perspective and by contrast emphasizes a brush rhythm that runs from the lower left of the picture diagonally across it to the upper right. This rhythm is also repeated by the two arch shapes, in the form of an almost circling movement. Kiefer's handwriting, which also follows a broken curve, likewise cuts into this movement. At the same time, it almost touches the horizon in the middle of the picture. Thus, an acute triangle emerges between the horizon and the left section of the writing, itself interrupted in its upward movement by the direction of the writing. A comma and the name "Margarete" point downward, towards the stake. In this way, the vanishing point on the extreme left top edge of the picture is again given a counterpoint. The writing itself stands out against the insistent depth of the perspective and the sharp marks left by the brushwork. It hovers like an arch over the landscape, which, battered by the fierce brush and characterized mainly by swift movement, conveys a true sense of lightness.

Returning to the content of the inscription, it repeats the penultimate sentence of the double verse of the "Death Fugue": "your golden hair Margarete." However, Kiefer has elected to place a comma after the noun "hair" and to include an "h" in the name "Margarete." The sentence itself ends in a row of dots next to the stake and thus blends with that zone in the landscape in which sharp rhythms prevail. The furrows next to it are covered in blue-gray. Taken together, the color and the sharp brushstroke rhythm that leads us away into the depths—and meshing with the lines of the arches, the stake, and the blue-gray

latticework beneath the adjective "golden"—form two pictorial signs, which trigger associations of metal and barbed wire. Thus, the inscription is robbed of its lightness. It now reads like the inscription above the entry gate to a death-camp. The configuration of script and form thus enables us to access long since forgotten and repressed traces of memory, from the palimpsest of the "untreated" canvas ground of the picture (as if from the grounds of a collective unconscious that has fallen prey to forgetting and a loss of history). Something emerges into consciousness through the proximity of language and pictorial signs—an inscription in the terrain of painting—and becomes visible, something to do with death and forgetting that would otherwise have long since fallen prey to repression.

The signs of the picture can be read like marker stones assembled in a circle surrounding the key event: a catastrophe brought by the Germans. As stones marking out a path, they burrow into a field that has long since become a grave. Perhaps this is what is alluded to by the comma prior to the name "Margarete." It divides the first part of the sentence from the name, and thus evokes the context of the second, elided name: "your ashen hair Shulamite we are digging a grave in the / air." (*GW* I, p. 41) Kiefer simply leaves out the second part of the verse. This certainly reveals that Shulamite is present in the painting (though bearing the name "Margarete" in its title)—due to the omitted name and section of the text. Indeed, there is no marked end either in Kiefer's picture or in Celan's poem: the poem ends without punctuation and is simply left open. The name "Shulamite" takes the place of the concluding period.[44]

Kiefer also gave the significance of name and word material form by using poppy stalks in his 1981 *Poppy and Memory* airplane. Some of the poppy stalks still bear the dried husks containing the poppy seeds. Although natural products, they point like relics of an earlier era to time itself, to time's destructive side, namely transience. The milk in the heads containing the poppy seed has long since dried up, although a long time ago opium might have been extracted from it. In this way, intoxication and forgetting are also both part of the past.[45] Positioned in the clockwork and engines of the airplane, the coldness of the lead and the dry character of the poppy have inverted our gaze forward into the future, indeed have inverted forgetting and sleep. "We slept no longer, for we lay in the clockwork of / melancholy" run the words in *BRANDMAL*, another Celan poem. The elements Kiefer uses in his sculptures and pictures, namely straw, ash, and lead, can therefore be read as attributes of melancholy and of Saturn, God of Time and Sowing—who is its agent. Saturn was also the God of Time Until Death. In the Middle Ages, he was represented as Death the Reaper,

44 Kiefer says of names that gain importance for his work: "At the beginning is a concept, an immense idea not yet filled in. For example, a name. There are names which have a certain aura to them: March Sand, Königgrätz [Hradec Králové, where Beuys was stationed], Dreilinden. Or Jewish names, for example Lilith. To work with them, you do not need to know much about them. The name creates an intimation, a feeling that something is hidden behind it" (Kiefer, in op. cit., note 33, p. 24).

45 Opium is generally considered both an analgesic to alleviate pain and also an intoxicating substance that causes users to forget.

with a scythe that mowed down mankind. The destructive and fateful power of Saturn is also revealed in his dissemination of melancholy as an illness. In the tradition of the Medieval doctrine of the temperaments melancholy is also equated with that "other" mania, which fosters the imagination, the ability to think, and to remember. Thus, the melancholic has something creative about him, and Saturn also has a positive role. Saturn was also considered the source of wealth, the ruler of measurement, time, and space. Kiefer himself pointed to the double side to Saturn, to his destructive and creative thrust, when emphasizing that lead as a heavy and blunt material "was always associated with Saturn" and yet also contained an "indication of that other, more spiritual and intellectual level." For this reason, his lead airplane expresses not only heaviness: "It stands there, leaden and heavy, and cannot fly; but it claims to be able to transport ideas." For lead, Kiefer continued, resembles "the aura of names," and is "a material for ideas."[46]

Perhaps not only the lead itself speaks of this transportation of ideas, but also the points where we can see the heads of poppy in the airplane, sealed away under the lead skin and behind glass. They can be seen at four points, all of which refer to the movement and directional thrust of the airplane. Poppy heads are placed behind glass below the left of the horizontal section of the tail fin as well as beneath the left flank of the vertical rudder. Poppy seed has also been placed beneath lead or glass on the rear lower engine. By contrast, poppy stalks protrude from the front of one jet turbine. The position of this engine and that of the tail fin is thus doubly determined. Here again poppy stalks extending from a leaden book are spread out against the direction in which the plane travels. Finally, poppy seeds are visible behind the left side window of the cockpit. If we imagine a pilot inside the plane, he would only be able to see through this side window. The view forward is blocked by the thick skin of lead covering the forward windows. In this way, the gaze of the viewer—like that of the contemplative figure of Dürer's *Melencolia I*—is directed back into his own imaginative inner world. The viewer's gaze is thus focused (analogously to his own Ego, which is given an eye of its own, as it were) on the inside of the plane's fuselage, which like the inner shell of the Ego, is able to seal itself off from the outer world. This enables the viewer to consider the poppy seed behind the leaden skin as used in burial rites and thus inaccessible to the human hand. They function for the Ego like thoughts in the field of history, which remain closed away and preserved in memory, perhaps to be liberated one day by the creative power of Saturn when they will come floating back to the surface of remembrance.

46 Anselm Kiefer, in op. cit., note 33, p. 28.

Outside, lead books lie heavily on the wings, attesting to the sheer weight of memory. On the inside, the poppy heads point to the residues of a past time and to an interim, floating state that (like the narcotic drowse induced by opium) allows us to forget both physical pain and also moral conflicts. The sculpture of the airplane alludes to this floating state of flying, empty time between past and future, but also the possibility of a second future that we cannot yet see clearly. The second title of the sculpture, *The Angel of History*, reminds us of this. For the present the plane remains grounded, caught up in its own contradictions; like Benjamin's angel of history, its view forward, into the future, is obscured.[47]

The double meaning of the title also points in another "direction." Saturn as the God of Time, would appear to be responsible for that contradiction between gravity and flying, which is manifested so visibly by the airplane. By using lead as a material, Kiefer had already stressed the negative side to Saturn, who is held responsible for the psychological and also physical weight of humanity. However, there is a bright side to this heavy earthbound state both in man and in sculptural creation. Kiefer highlighted this with another airplane in his sculpture *Melancholia* (1989). Here, he placed a transparent polyhedron on the left wing, the shape of which is reminiscent of the heavy stone in Dürer's *Melencolia I*. In Kiefer's sculpture the use of glass brings to mind precisely the opposite feeling—lightness. The glass container is meant to indicate that the physical weight of the lead, the fact that human life on earth inexorably ends in death, can be overcome by imagination and intellectual clarity, and life can, through images, be transformed into a floating/suspended state. Kiefer also used the glass polyhedron in this way in his 1987 sculpture *Census*, where he placed it in front of a wall of books made of lead. By attempting to overcome gravity, Kiefer's saturnine art thus alludes to Dürer's "saturnine art of measurement" in which the notions of Saturn, melancholia, and geometry merge to form a unit. Peter-Klaus Schuster has stated in this context that it would more accurately be called a saturnine art of Mercury.[48] Kiefer's 1989 winged sculpture titled *Berenice* already attested to Mercury. It was likewise exhibited in 1989–90 at the Maenz Gallery and addressed not only the idea of ascent but also that of the messenger of the Gods. The exhibition bore the title *Angel of History*. Here, again, the title points up the ambiguity of Saturn.

In Dürer's engraving *Melencolia I*, which takes up the tradition of the doctrine of the temperaments, we can sense not only the presence of Saturn's negative influence, but also the balancing force of Mercury, which bridges the distance between heaven and earth. As a planet, Saturn is held responsible for the creation of suffering, madness, melancholy, and war. Its negative influence

47 Walter Benjamin's "Angel of History" has "his face . . . turned toward the past." Benjamin takes Paul Klee's watercolor "Angelus Novus" (1920), which he had purchased in 1921, as the occasion for his ninth thesis on the philosophy of history.

As early as his essay on Karl Kraus, he had mentioned the new angel in connection with death and destruction as a messenger from old engravings of Melancholia. Benjamin, himself born under the sign of Saturn, attributes inhuman qualities to the new angel in the latter essay, saying it was "no new human being." In the ninth thesis—the theses were written in 1940 after his internment in a camp in France—he describes the angel as follows: "But a storm is blowing from Paradise; it has got caught in his wings with such violence that the angel can no longer close them. This storm irresistibly propels him into the future, . . . while the pile of debris before him grows skyward. This storm is what we call progress." Walter Benjamin *Illuminations*, tr. Harry Zohn, (Glasgow: Jonathan Cape, 1970), pp.259-60.

48 Peter-Klaus Schuster, *Anselm Kiefer*, op. cit., note 38, p. 157. Schuster states: "This little difference must be tenaciously upheld, because in the final instance it is all-important." Ficino smoothed over this difference: "For Dürer, by contrast, in the context of the Mercurial arts brought together in his engraving on Melancholy, the Magic Square with its four rows, dedicated to Jupiter, ensures that the damaging influence of Saturn on the figure of Melancholy cannot gain the upper hand."

FIGURE 8.4
Albrecht Dürer
Melencolia I, 1514
Engraving
Collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art
Photo: The Metropolitan Museum of Art

causes indolence or acedia among men. Walter Benjamin held, however, that the torpor of the heart can also be classified historically under power politics for it prevents, as he wrote in the "Theses on the Philosophy of History," the image of the past being read as an authentic historical image. Acedia, Benjamin claimed, can be understood as "the root cause of sadness." But even in Dürer's *Melencolia*

I (or so it would seem at first glance), acedia inserts itself between art and the use of this art in the process of creation. Saturn's unholy influence has separated the contemplative angelic female figure seated on a cubic stone from the figure of a cupid next to her. The latter has an engraving stylus, an artistic tool, in his hand, while Melancholy remains motionless, with the pommel of the compass in her right hand pointing toward the planet Saturn. Dürer felt that by means of the freedom of art itself he could overcome the dichotomy of creative contemplation and unconscious action, the two having been divorced by the negative influence of acedia. For it was the interaction of creative imagination and the artist's intellectual self-experience that struck a balance between knowledge and hand. The artist's skill, Dürer believed, rested on virtue and on God's art, which also spawned a knowledge of good and evil. Only in this way can the contrast between *ars* and *usus* be overcome. According to Erwin Panofsky, the unconscious action of the cupid symbolizes *usus*. The cupid can then be considered "a figure which contrasts with Melancholy," its thoughtless activity inverting the contemplative posture of the winged figure. The cupid thus juxtaposes "the power of the mind . . . to the activity of the hands" and thus the "writing instrument" to the compasses.[49]

Almost three hundred years later, in 1799, Goya replaces the compass with writing instruments and a brush in his etching *The Dream (Sleep) of Reason Gives Birth to Monsters (El sueño de la razon produce monstruos)*. The dark side to Saturn, which causes man to allow himself to be ruled by destructive manic images, is expressed even more clearly in Goya's fresco *Saturn Devours His Children* in the Quinta del Sordo. In Goya's oeuvre, the creative process can become a nightmarish state in the picture where imagination and reason are separated from each other—as, for example, in the second etching from the *Disasters of War* which bears the title *With or Without Reason (Con razon ó Sin ella)* and which also reflects historical events of the time. By contrast, in Dürer's engraving creative imagination always remains bound to measurement and thus to moderation. For Dürer wishes, in the true humanist sense, to ensure that the imagination has a strong ethical basis: "In other words, in his emphasis on the creative, Dürer addresses Man . . . , in keeping with the humanist notion of human dignity . . . as a moral being, who is free to choose how he wishes to employ his abilities."[50]

For this reason, in Dürer's work the violent eruptions of the imagination are constrained by a careful study of nature and geometrical measurement—in the engraving, among other things, the stereometric shape of the polyhedron stands for the latter. The main figure of *Melencolia I* clearly embodies both sides of creative power and melancholy. The seated figure, sunk in contempla-

49 See Raymond Klibansky, Erwin Panofsky, and Fritz Saxl, *Saturn und Melancholie* (Frankfurt, 1990), p. 482.

50 Peter-Klaus Schuster, *Melencolia I Dürers Denkbild*, vol. 1 (Berlin, 1991), p. 215.

51 Peter-Klaus Schuster rejects Panofsky's assertion that the figure of melancholy can be grasped as the personification of geometry. (op. cit., note 50, p. 123). The thinking stance adopted by the figure can, he suggests, also cannot be derived from the iconography of acedia. Dürer's figure of melancholy is, instead, a personification of astronomy. The contradictory attributes in the engraving point to the humanistic agenda of a process of education. For reasons of space I cannot contrast the views of Schuster and Panofsky. To my mind, the contradictory attributes of the educational agenda and those of the allegorical visual idiom point to the over-determination (in the Freudian sense) of the engraving's composition. The strongly contradictory dichotomies are offered in condensed form in the figure's enigmatic gaze.

52 Erwin Panofsky (op. cit., note 49, p. 450) differentiates between the gaze of the figure of Melancholy in the Dürer engraving and "an eye turned toward earth which was once attributed to melancholics and children of Saturn." Schuster's interpretation (op. cit., note 50, pp. 123 and 126) contradicts what Panofsky terms a gaze "directed into a distance bereft of objects."

53 See Peter-Klaus Schuster, in op. cit., note 50, pp. 221 and 225ff.

54 Albrecht Dürer, *Albrecht Dürer. Schriften und Briefe* (Leipzig, 1978), p. 119. Dürer's reliance on measure, numbers, and weight stems from the "Book of Wisdom," where we read: "Thou [God] hast arranged everything according to measure, number and weight" (Sap. Sal. 11, 21). "When he prepared the heavens, I [Sophia] was there: when he set a compass upon the face of the depth" (Proverbs, 8, 27).

55 Albrecht Dürer, op. cit., note 54, pp. 118 and 202. Gottfried Boehm, *Studien zur Perspektivität* (Heidelberg, 1969). See text.

56 Joseph Beuys, quoted in Franz Joseph van den Grinten, "Beuys'

tion, and also the black, shadowed face allude to the influence of Saturn. The acute angle of the compasses in her lap corresponds to the broad, right-angled rays of the planet Saturn in the heavens. Next to the planet, the title of the engraving is sited within the wingspan of a bat in flight. This demonic creature of the night, whose flight begins with the fall of darkness, is thus referred to the seated figure of the angel as the latter's animal opposite. Melancholy's gaze is inward. She simply does not focus on the external world, her gaze is turned from the objects laid out before her.[51] And even the grasping action of the hands exhibits a contradictory expression, evincing an "empty" activity. The left hand is a balled fist, serving only to support the head, while the right hand is just as motionless and holds the compass. The latter, like the straightedge on the floor, can also be categorized as an instrument of geometry. However, the figure neither takes note of nor uses them. She sits, inactive, and only the spatial proximity of the concentrated gaze and tense hand convey a sense of its projective creative power. While Melancholy's overall stance attests to the fact that her use of the compass has been brought to a halt by deep sadness, the intense gaze of the face, like the fist, offers a concentrated image of the contradictions the composition as a whole describes. It is as if the empty clenched fist is unable to grasp anything tangible, the gaze into emptiness unable to comprehend the visible as a form. In connection with the figure's fist, Panofsky has therefore emphasized that it symbolizes the power of the mind to concentrate, that is to say the fact that we can truly grasp a problem, on one hand, while simultaneously remaining powerless to solve or disregard it on the other. The clenched fist thus "expresses the same thing as the gaze directed into the empty distance."[52] In other words, for Melancholy the pure view of things through what Dürer called the "*Gegenwurf*" has dissolved into an emptiness that the gaze can no longer fathom. In the *Gegenwurf* of perspective, things first become tangible to the degree that, by dint of the spatial construction, they are subordinated to a uniform mathematical reference.

The stone polyhedron, positioned in terms of perspective, attests to this within the structure of the engraving. It faces the gaze of the viewer, whereas Melancholy's gaze is turned away from it. Thus, the difference between the perspectival appropriation of the world (*Welthabe*) in the image and the inwardly directed gaze of the main figure underscores not just a rupture, but a full loss of world. The weight (*Schwere*) of the stone, within view of the objects and the horizon, is presented as a measurable entity, and now corresponds to the melancholy (*Schwermut*) of a gaze that focuses on emptiness. Thus, the measurable world reveals its most uncanny (*unheimliche*) quality: in the end, like the human figure,

Beitrag zum Wettbewerb für das Auschwitzmonument" in *Joseph Beuys Symposium Krumenburg* (Basel & Moyland, 1996), p. 200. See also the illustration, *Entwürfe für Mahnmal Auschwitz* (Museum Schloss Moyland, 1957).

57 The happening went under the title: *in uns . . . unter uns . . . landunter*. See on this Mario Kramer, "*Lebensmittel*," in: *Deutschlandbilder* (Berlin, 1997), p. 295. Mario Kramer's text forms an exact description as well as a comprehensive, new interpretation of all the elements connected with the "Auschwitz-Demonstration" vitrine.

58 Sigmund Freud, in *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. XIII (London and Frankfurt, 1940), p. 272.

59 Sigmund Freud, *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. X (London and Frankfurt, 1946), p. 300.

60 See Eva Huber "Der kontrollierte Körper," in op. cit., note 56, p. 99.

61 I would like to point to the extensive and fundamental portrayal offered in Eva Huber, *Joseph Beuys: Hauptstrom und Fettraum* (Darmstadt, 1993)

62 Joseph Beuys, op. cit., note 2, p. 23.

63 Joseph Beuys *Spuren in Kunst und Gesellschaft*, no. 30 –1, (Hamburg, 1989), p. 73. In this happening, Beuys attributed the polyhedron to the pole relating to the mind.

64 Quotations are as follows: Immanuel Kant, *Kritik der praktischen Vernunft / Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten* (Frankfurt, 1968), pp. 68 and 63 (BA 78, 70); Karl Marx, op. cit., note 6, pp. 58, 103, 53; Saul Friedländer, in: *Kitsch und Tod / Der Widerschein des Nazismus* (Munich, 1986), pp. 92, 93, 17, 126; Immanuel Kant, op. cit., pp. 68, 67, 61 (BA 78; BA; 76,77; BA 67). In this context, the "principle of humanity and of all rational nature per se *as a purpose in itself* (which is the foremost limiting condition of liberty for the action of any person)" cannot be derived "from experience." It bears comparing these sentences with Marx's views on alienation, where the latter assumes that alienated labor is not a free activity and degrades the independent activity of the worker "to the status of a means." It reduces "Man's *species being*" to a mere "means of his physical exis-

it eludes the grasp of rational comprehension and conceptualization. So the main figure has fallen into mourning for this loss of world. As Dürer's intellectual self-portrait, the figure combines both sorrow (*Trauer*) *and* melancholy. The loss entailed in turning away from the world can only be overcome by turning toward the inner world, an inner measure, which equally amounts to returning the world to the intellect. This measure, a measured inner approach, and its correspondence with a cosmic measure are referred to both by the scales on the tower behind Melancholy and by the magic square. The latter was considered Jupiter's square and as such was capable of offsetting Saturn's negative influence. At the same time, it is also a visible pointer to human creativity that enables us to decipher the relation between microcosm and macrocosm. The square also suggests the possibility of going beyond that merely numerical order of the cosmos accessible to human intellect. The left wing of the angelic figure points to the number one. For Dürer, who was wellgrounded in the Platonic tradition, this number not only expressed the principle of all numerals, but also the "One" as the basis of all being, the One inaccessible to human knowledge.[53] The One also has to be located beyond everything visible. The clenched fist in the engraving refers to this, for it functions as a vivid counterimage of all that can be grasped by the conceptualizing intellect. It is positioned not only lower than the wing, but also lower than the figure one in the square. So Dürer tells us in his own words that before turning to the conceptualization of the world, he gave himself over to contemplation of the "inner Ideas . . . of which Plato wrote," in order to find the right measure and good form.[54]

At the same time, a date is inscribed in the magic square, one that refers directly to an event in Dürer's life, the date of his mother's death: 16.5.1514 (May 16, 1514). The main figure thus indicates that Dürer turned his back on the world in melancholy, in the sense of a creative turn inward, while at the same time confronting a loss, which filled him with sorrow. In the engraving, melancholy *and* mourning thus link in such a way that access to creative imagination is only possible as a consequence of successfully working through one's mourning (*Trauerarbeit*). The inward focus of the concentrated power of the central figure's gaze and the eyes' confused disquiet attest to this ambivalent conflict between mourning (*Trauer*) and melancholy. The face left in the dark, in the shadows, occupies the most enigmatic place in the engraving, initially resembling a mirror by means of which the emotional mood of the melancholic figure is simply expressed as the empty shadow of its own self. Dürer himself likened the face to a mirror that was supposed to give "the feelings various forms through our eyes." Thus, he expected artists to use the "right measure" in order to present things in

tence." Man's loss of his self in labor results in the loss of human dignity. In this process, money inverts all human qualities. It takes on the role of intermediary "between life and the means of life (*Lebensmittel*)." Thus, money is now also able to convey "the existence of the other person for me." However, wherever humans are degraded to the status of slave laborers, nature ceases "to be a *means of life* (*Lebensmittel*) of his labor . . ." The wage laborer thereupon only manages only to subsist as a physical subject stripped of human dignity. As a slave laborer, the human being is thus reduced to the status of an animal, or, as Marx puts it: "The animal becomes human and the human becomes animal."

We know that the goal of production in the Auschwitz concentration camp was to produce death. In Auschwitz, however, the prisoners were no longer treated as humans, but as animals. Moreover, they had to finance their own death. In view of these facts, it is quite inconceivable how, with reference to Beuys' display case *Auschwitz Demonstration* (1956–1964), some interpreters have been able to speak of a "means of life" (*Lebensmittel*) or even a "means to life" (*Mittel zum Leben*). Georg Jappe has used these expressions in his book *Beuys Plastken Dokumente 1968–1996* (Regensburg, 1996), p. 283. Jappe's statements assume that the *Warmth Sculpture* in the vitrine attempts to "grasp" the "horror" of Auschwitz "in the manner of a model . . . as decay [*Verwesung*] and ingestion [*Verspeisung*]." At the same time, he construes this model as being able to show that through the agency of the vitrine the horror of Auschwitz can be transformed into a "means to life" (*Mittel zum Leben*). Jappe sometimes uses the French term *produits alimentaires* (or "means of life." Both terms belong in present usage in a semantic context that has nothing to do with sustenance. One ingests sustenance, but not a *produit alimentaire*. Before being inputted into the body as sustenance (sustenance has to be prepared) a "means of life" belongs to the domain of commodity circulation. The latter distinguishes the function of monetary value from that of use value,

an image of "good form." Moreover, it was such an approach that granted not only the feelings but also the work of art its freedom. By basing the visible measure of moderation on an ethical measure, the artist succeeds in balancing melancholy and mourning, *ars* and *usus*. Indeed, Dürer goes so far as to suggest that the artist has "instilled" the artwork—analogous to the work of God—with "justice." Physical gravity (*Schwere*) and psychological melancholy (*psychische Schwermut*) are thus first given the right measure by the freedom of the imagination, which informs our gaze.

The compass in the hand of the figure of Melancholy functions attributively to allude to geometry and perspective. Gottfried Boehm has already pointed in this context to the fact that the perspectival vanishing point itself already indicates the loss of a hold on the world (*Verlust an Welthabe*). The linking back of the perspectival vanishing point to the self of the artist shows, precisely in the case of the *Melencolia I* (where construction and affect not only supplement but also contradict each other) that creative self-experience always also entails the loss of the object and thus a gaze that loses itself in emptiness or is turned toward the self's own inner world. In the case of the engraving, we can read the loss of object world as a parallel to Dürer working through a trauma that he himself has identified with the inclusion of the dates of the death of his mother. Freud called this the work of mourning (*Trauerarbeit*), and it initially entails a loss of interest in the outside world. Interest is turned away from the world at the same time as the person finds that the loved object is lost. Freud writes: "In mourning it is the world which has become poor and empty; in melancholia it is the ego itself." The melancholic thus identifies his Ego with the lost object, whereas the mourner gradually detaches himself from the lost object of love. Thus, the melancholic finds himself in a conflict due to ambivalence, whereby hate and love contend with each other. This conflict is then assigned to the unconscious, to "the region of the memory-traces of *things* [*sachliche Erinnerungspuren*, as contrasted with word-*cathexes*]," where it remains "withdrawn from consciousness."[55]

Beuys incorporated not only Dürer's polyhedron in various phases of his own art. He even adopted the seated posture of the figure of Melancholy in one action, and citing Plato, included the fifth regular form in another work. The Platonic dodecahedron was the subject of Beuys' 1949 stereometric study. Its image reappears in 1976 as the right side of a multiple postcard entitled *Bee Magazine (Bienenzeitung)*, and its real stereometric body wound up in one of the cabinet spaces (upper row, third from left) of the 1961 object group *Scene from the Stag Hunt*. {See Plate 8.3} For Plato, the regular pentagonal dodecahedron signified the world in its entirety. In the *Stag Hunt*, the *Platonic Form* of

which is precisely desubstantiated by the monetary value. A *produit alimentaire* is produced and can be purchased. Production also took place in Auschwitz. Only there the Jews had to finance the "economy of death" themselves.

Appropriation of Jewish property and death went hand in hand. Only the Nazi economic system profited from this "economy of death," without having to make any investments. The inevitability and hopelessness of death in Auschwitz is to be distinguished quite fundamentally from the "mortification" that Marx describes in the cycle of alienated labor, as self-sacrifice and self-loss on the part of the laborer. In Auschwitz, the starting point and goal of "production" were identical: namely death. In the "death economy" of Auschwitz there was no "system of credit" for the prisoners. For an investment had to be made in death. The medium of "exchange" was no longer the human being, but death. Death, however, or so we read in Celan's poem, was a "Master from Germany." This system's "ventricle" was called the crematorium. In the case of the *Warmth Sculpture* in the vitrine *Auschwitz Demonstration* Jappe also speaks of a "force field," which according to Beuys was to psychically "get rid of energies." (Jappe denotes this expression as a quotation from Beuys but does not indicate in what context Beuys used the notion.)

Transposed onto the psychological level in psychoanalysis, ingestion of sustenance is considered a model for the mechanism of introjection and identification. Incorporation in the psychoanalytical sense has three different levels of meaning. Introjection leads to increased pleasure, for either an "object" is absorbed or destroyed. The properties of the object can also be appropriated in such a manner that the subject preserves them within himself: "The original pleasure Ego . . . wishes to introject all that is good and repulse all that is bad. The bad, that which is alien to the Ego, which is outside it, is initially identical to it" (Sigmund Freud, *GW*, vol. 13, p. 13). We can therefore consider introjection and rejection as precursors of the faculty of judgment. The latter not only ascribes properties to things, at the same time it has to create a

FIGURE 8.5
Joseph Beuys
Szene aus Hirschjagd (*Scene from the Stag Hunt*), 1961 (detail showing *Geometrische Studie/Platonischer Körper* (*Geometric Study/Platonic Body*), 1949)
Beuys Block, Room 2, Hessisches Landesmuseum, Darmstadt
Photo: Günter Schott
©1999 Artists Rights Society (ARS), NYNG Bild-Kunst, Bonn

harmony between the representation of the object and its real existence through affirmation or negation: "Expressed in the language of the oldest, oral instincts: I wish to eat it or I wish to spit it out, and in further transference: I wish to introduce that into myself and I wish to exclude that from me" (Sigmund Freud, loc.cit.). At the level of language, where introjection and rejection (*Verwerfung*) are now replaced by affirmation or denial/negation (*Verneinung*), negation enables *only one part* respectively of the repressed contents of the representation to be reversed. In this process, the intellectual acceptance of the repressed remains distinguished from the emotion. In his sentence, Jappe likewise makes use of "denial/negation" in order to accept the horror of Auschwitz. He says that the *Warmth Sculpture* in the "Auschwitz vitrine" grasps "the horror not in a strident and episodic manner, but as a model . . . as decay and ingestion." In this way, Jappe's statement denies that the *Warmth Sculpture* could narrate facts or bring them to mind. For this type of recourse to memory would be "strident" and would reduce the horror to an episode. (The term "episode" is encountered in a political context today. Revisionists claim that the crematoria in the death camps were only one detail in the overall events of the Second World War. In this way, Auschwitz is rendered banal, becomes a mere detail among many. Now Jappe says quite the opposite: the *Warmth Sculpture* avoids the banal because it is not strident or episodic in its presentation.)

By kicking out against any banalization of the horror of Auschwitz, and in order to be able to accept the horror Jappe resorts to a linguistic image that turn things upside down. "Decay" (*Verwesung*) and "ingestion" (*Verspeisung*) are images to be situated at the level of oral and anal regression. As images they either suggest that the horror of Auschwitz as a "good" characteristic is incorporated, "ingested," or that as a "bad" quality it is repulsed from the Ego and destroyed by "decay." Perhaps Jappe was thinking of the biscuit next to the figure of Christ in the plate (*Cross*)

1949 is fastened to the upper back wall of the cupboard. In its present state here, the original form is no longer preserved. Beuys attached a roll of paper to the right wall next to it. On the role stands a Bunsen burner, the upper section of which points outward like the barrel of a gun. Positioned vertically beneath the *Platonic Form* and, in the lower section of the cabinet space, the pages of an open book are visible. The two pages show two illustrations of machine guns as well as instructions on how to use them. A door handle on its own is placed against the side-wall of the cabinet space housing the stereometric body and points to the adjacent space (upper row, second from left). There, if we follow the line of the handle, we can discern a pair of compasses rammed into the left cupboard wall. Next to it we can make out an unraveled string that hangs downward to touch a ladderlike structure. A little further back in the space and to the left is a metronome, while in the background (as a motif for movement), a rabbit on a motorcycle is visible. Like the cross in another cabinet space (upper row, fifth from left), the metronome is originally from a 1964 Beuys action marking the twentieth anniversary of the failed July 1944 attempt on Hitler's life. Across from the "ladder"—which, like the compass, perhaps alludes indirectly to the Dürer engraving—a trapezoidal structure made of walnut wood leans against the right wall on two legs. The surface of the wood has impressed on it in stenciled script the date of Beuys' birth in the form of a series of numbers: 125 [1] 921 (May 12, 1921). Beuys made the sculpture in 1957 for a competition for a monument for the former Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp. He took part in the competition in 1958. {See Plate 8.1} On one of the designs connected with his entry, we can make out a trapezoidal shape towering over the gateway to the Auschwitz camp. Beuys termed this shape a "landmark" (*Wahrzeichen*). He intended to have it built of reinforced concrete, bridging the tracks that led to the ramp and "visible from a long way off." A further, somewhat smaller landmark located 375 meters behind the entrance gate was to lead to a monument. Beuys intended the latter to be a sculpture that conveyed the meaning of a beacon, a bowl, a crystal, but also that of a monstrance.[56] Beuys also produced a second wooden model for the competition entry. He later sawed it into pieces and reassembled it in a different shape. It can be seen now as the 1957 object *Transformation Sign* in the first display case in Room 5 of the Beuys Block in Darmstadt. The two open lateral sides of the wooden figure point in the direction of the vitrine *Auschwitz Demonstration, 1956–64*. Between the lateral sides, opposite one of the viewing sides, we can see the bone of an ungulate entitled *Radio* (1961) and on its left a bronze sculpture entitled *Foot* (1955). The feet and lateral sides of the figure thus resemble the dislocated parts of one body. And

behind the *Warmth Sculpture* when he thought of "incorporation." The notion of "decay" could perhaps refer to the mummified rat (*1st Rat*) in the tub next to the hot plates of the electric stove in the *Warmth Sculpture*. Both sculptures, the *1st Rat* and the *Cross*, show the face of death. The two linguistic images Jappe uses enable us at the psychological level to shift the drive (*Trieb*) within the unconscious one respective step into its opposite. What is repulsive about the object, as signified by the word "decay," engenders a propensity for aggression, while incorporation points to greater pleasure (*Lustgewinn*). In this manner, those of Beuys' sculptural constructs that speak of death are given an emotional ambivalence. Through this affect, this enables the actual contents of the notion of the practice of extermination in Auschwitz to be transposed onto a psychological thing-presentation (*Dingvorstellung*), which can now be split off all the more easily from consciousness. In this way, the affects that allowed us access to the original ideational contents (*Vorstellungsinhalt*) of Auschwitz only through the affect of mourning are cathected in a new, ambivalent manner.

Whether the model of the *Warmth Sculpture* that Jappe finally interprets at the psychological level in the sense of emotional ambivalence actually corresponds to a "real object" in the vitrine *Auschwitz Demonstration* is a matter to be explored in a closer analysis of the overall context of the display case. In such an analysis we might find that by means of a constellation of signifiers entailing form and material, Beuys bridges the gap between the symbolic structure of language and the ideational contents denied and repressed in it. No such bridging or clarification can be found in Jappe's interpretation. Possibly, through the sculptural images—and Beuys always understood the sculptural process as analogous to language—the affect then has more direct access to the repressed and rejected contents that have thus been split off from consciousness. In 1982, with reference to specific images generated in art, film, and literature in connection with Auschwitz, Saul Friedländer spoke of exorcism. Jappe's interpretation

both wooden models—that in the *Scene from a Stag Hunt* and that in the Room 5 vitrine—were used by Beuys in a 1965 action in Wuppertal.[57]

Transformation Sign also bears an inscription with Beuys' date of birth, although it is invisible, positioned on the rear. The manner in which the two wooden objects have the sequence of numbers impressed in stencil script onto the wood recalls the way prisoners in the concentration camps had their numbers tattooed onto their skin. Beuys opts for his own birth date instead of the concentration camp number, thus substituting not only one series of numbers for another, but also changing their meaning. He puts his own living person in the place of a dead prisoner. In other words, the former soldier in the German Luftwaffe quasi-symbolically dons the skin of a dead person. Beuys, never in danger of being condemned to a concentration camp, thus transposes the memory of a real situation in the Auschwitz concentration camp onto a new sequence of numerals as part of an object with which he can identify thanks to his own birth (like his own biography or the list of his works, the *Life Course/Work Course*). In doing so, he inverts the relationship between life and death. Psychoanalysis typically regards such an inversion as an Ego defense mechanism. According to Freud, this move permits what was once a hated object to become loved or to be transformed into the object of identification.[58] In swapping names by means of changing numbers—and one object tellingly bears the name *Transformation Sign*—Beuys denies the memory of Auschwitz a voice. Thus transformed by substituting numbers and names, the content can now be replaced with a new idea. At the same time, the wooden model functions as a substitute for a psychological "object" or what Freud termed a "thing-presentation" (*Dingvorstellung*), thus enabling the Ego to split off certain mnemonic traces from the word-presentation (*Wortvorstellung*). As Freud has shown, such a thing-presentation, a notion not contained in words and thus a nontranslated psychic operation, remains in the unconscious as something repressed.[59] The walnut wood model and the shape of *Transformation Sign*—intended originally to tower up over the gate to the Auschwitz death camp—can thus be read as the signifier in the process of the "return of the repressed" (*Wiederkehr des Verdrängten*) and rejected in which a "missed reality" rears its head. In other words, for Beuys there is a rupture between perception and consciousness, and also between consciousness and the unconscious; this enables him to block from his consciousness the real contents, namely Auschwitz's practice of destruction. In contrast to Beuys, Dürer opted in his *Melencolia I* to include the date of a death. Mourning and Platonic anamnesis of the "inner ideas" thus move down a joint path through the agency of a measured ethics.

of the *Warmth Sculpture*, where he speaks of "decay" and "ingestion," can certainly be regarded as exorcism. For with these expressions Jappe not only inverts the symbolic language, but also the contents of the course of extermination. In this way, the images block access to mnemonic work. For Friedlander, one characteristic of this exorcistic discourse is that "by means of linguistic artifice, shifts in meaning, aestheticization and the inversion of symbols . . . a border is transgressed" and precisely by this transgression "a feeling of discontent" arises. This exorcistic act can at the same time lead to the cathexis of new emotions, which were previously located as contents between "the impossibility of the individual either remembering or forgetting." In his book, Friedländer quotes from a speech by Himmler, which the latter held on Oct. 4, 1943 to SS generals in Posnan, and in which it becomes clear that even for the Nazi killers the acts of extermination had to be accompanied by "forms of exorcism." This act of making something undone then enables the Ego to "'unkill its own actions with neutrality . . .'" In his speech, Himmler said: "Most of you will know what it means if 100 corpses lie together . . . . To have endured this and to have . . . remained decent, that is what has made us tough. This is a sheet in our history books attesting to our fame the likes of which has never been written and will never be written . . . The wealth they [the Jews] had we have taken from them . . . We have taken none of it for ourselves . . . We had the moral right indeed we had the duty towards our people to kill this people [the Jews] which wished to kill us" (quoted from Friedländer).

In view of the barbarism of this deed and the language, it is necessary to recollect what Kant understood human dignity, duty, and ethical life to mean: "Now, morality is the sole condition under which a rational being can be a purpose in itself; for only through it is it possible to be a law-giving member in the realm of purposes. In other words, ethical life and humanity, to the extent that it is capable of the former, is the only thing which had dignity." For this reason every action must

Perhaps Dürer was reminded of the path of the soul in the "Ur-mythos" in Plato's *Politeia* (621 a–d). There, the soul is commanded to only drink carelessly a certain measure of forgetting (*lethe*) from the Ameles, the "Forgetful River." Anyone drinking too much forgetfulness loses any notion of justice, prudence, or virtue for the rest of his life. The melancholic whom Beuys (but not Dürer) has in mind thus allows the shadow and the "negative form" of his objects to fall across his own Ego. This is also evidenced by Beuys' stance when, during the >>*Hauptstrom*>> action of 1967, he sat in a corner in the same position as that of the figure of Melancholy in Dürer's engraving. He gazes at the earth, at the wedges of fat in the bed of fat he himself had made. In a Saturnine gesture, his right hand touches the floor and the left hand supports his head. Here again, the actions of grasping and comprehending, and not just the supportive hand holding his head, allude to imaginary processes in Dürer's *Melencolia I*, for during the happening Beuys created mouth-made sculptures and fat corners from impressions of his own body.[60] The highly complex sequence of actions cannot be narrated in its entirety here.[61] It suffices to state that at a certain point Beuys included his mouth and ear as organs of his body. This is demonstrated by the row of impressions of his teeth placed along a chalked line—biting into the soft fat and wax mass thus becomes a negative of a body sculpture—as do the "ear cones" next to them. Not only can we see in this compulsive gestural repetition an approach to the sculptural potential of his own body. This act also refers to Beuys' theoretical principle of an extended concept of art: "Speaking= Sculpture." The 1967 *Mouth Sculpture* made during >>*Hauptstrom*>> action is to be found today in vitrine 8 in Room 5 of the Beuys Block in Darmstadt—the visible sign of this creative sculptural principle attributed to the Ego through language. The same room houses the vitrine *Auschwitz Demonstration*.

During an action in his studio on November 2, 1984, Beuys used a piece of pyrite to visualize the function of the *Honey Pump in the Workplace*. He linked the pyrite in terms of shape and content with Dürer's polyhedron in *Melencolia I*. The stone is also reproduced on a postcard multiple called *Klanggebilde / Sound form*. Today, the stone used in the action is in a vitrine in Kunstmuseum Bern. That vitrine, like the *Documenta 6* installation, bears the title *Honey Pump*, with the additional remark: *1984, 2. November*. One of the versions of this vitrine (it is doubtful whether Beuys arranged the display case himself) has the pyrite stone placed on a little plinth at the upper end of a panel alongside the word "*Geist*" (mind/intellect/spirit). The panel was produced during the action and symbolizes in diagrammatic form the three stages of the action model used in the *Honey Pump*. The lower section of the panel corresponds to the roller driven by the two electric

have arisen from the will of a human being as a rational being, whose principle of liberty says that "by virtue of its maxims, the will can at the same time consider itself law-giving." The categoric imperative is thus oriented to reason and liberty. Only from these two qualities can we, through pure will, derive and justify actions. For this reason, only he acts ethically, who refers his will to reason and liberty. Reason as an idea, however, underlies humanity per se. Duty as the precondition of any action therefore refers to reason. It holds true for all rational beings: "The practical necessity of acting according to this principle, i.e. duty, does not rest on feelings, instincts and inclinations, but simply on the relationship of rational beings to one another . . ." The rational nature of human beings and human dignity thus exists as a purpose per se. They can be heeded, or violated, and trodden underfoot, but they can by no means be purchased. In the commonality, human dignity is secured by human rights. However, these were annulled by the Nazis, because for them not "all were equal who bore a human face." This barbaric stance contradicts Kant's categorical imperative according to which no "human being is a thing." The human being can therefore not "be used *merely* as a means, but must in all his actions be considered a purpose in himself. In other words, I can *in no manner* dispose over the human being in my person, cannot maim him, spoil him, or kill him."

65 Joseph Beuys, op. cit., note 2, p. 55. Beuys' organistic notion of the monetary process contradicts not only Schiller's theory of alienation, but above all that put forward by Karl Marx.

66 Joseph Beuys, op. cit., note 4, p. 39.

67 Joseph Beuys, op. cit., note 63, p. 82.

68 Beuys says of the Christ impulse as a driving principle that it lives "in man and in his labor. The laborer is the transcendental quintessence of man." Christ, by contrast, who simultaneously releases the human Ego, can "be contemplated, like something that is before you, such as the electric stove here." Joseph Beuys, *Der Christusimpuls. Ein Gespräch mit Joseph Beuys, Frau Arbeitsamt* 1, (Berlin: Boers &

engines, which rotated over fat and thus warmed it. In the case of the drawing on the panel, Beuys wrote the word "*Wille*" (will) above the roller as its driving force. In another version of the same display case we can see the stone situated in front of the blackboard. From below, a hand intervenes in the dynamic action. In both versions, this renders the chaotic state of the mass of fat malleable—the fat is simultaneously assigned to the economic domain. As in the action, the upper section is the zone of thinking, corresponding to the lower section. The zone of thinking is now assigned the form of a polyhedron as a crystalline structure. Here, the formal juxtaposition of chaos and form again visualizes Beuys' belief that "free thought" requires "will as the stimulus of heat."[62] In other words and in contrast to Kant, Beuys here attributes the force of natural energy to will power as a drive—this bears emphasizing as regards his definition of human dignity. He himself says: "The will also exists in nature. And also in the human being . . . The ability to reflect can be seen in the uppermost principle, in the human nervous system and sensory organs." The opposite lower pole would be "the pole of the will."[63] In Kant's thought, on the other hand, all action as a mental act stems from the will. For Kant pure will is related only to Reason and not to the empirical conditions of nature, because, or so Kant suggested, only Reason, as independent of sensuousness and instincts, can serve as a basis of human freedom. As a consequence, only those actions that can be derived from pure will serve a moral end or "purpose" (*Zweck*). The goal of free will in the peaceful coexistence of free humans can therefore be formulated as a metaphysics of morality: possibilities for action in the domain of experience first arise under the precondition that free will exists, and this cannot be equated with a will directed toward material ends. Empirical will is conditioned by instincts and desire. Free will, by contrast, considers itself as "justifying" (*gesetzgebend*) all action. Kant goes on to give such free will a purpose, albeit it one radically different from the purposes of empirical acts. He speaks of "self-purposiveness" (*Selbstzweck*). Man is able to co-exist in freedom with others and to act in a binding manner in such a setting because he can act self-purposively when such an act is directed toward his own existence. The principle of humanity and of the human being thus prevents man from being degraded to the status of an object. In his *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, Kant emphasized that human dignity has no "market price." There he wrote: "In the realm of purposes, everything either has a *price* or it has *dignity*. An *equivalent* can always take the place of each thing which has a price; what, by contrast, is above all prices and quite simply does not allow for an equivalent, that has dignity."[64] For Kant, freedom and free existence can be derived neither from the domain of nature nor from that of pure intellect and knowledge. Nature and

Ramin, undated), pp. 9 and 8. Accordingly, we encounter bronze vessels both in the vitrine and in the installation of *Honigpumpe 3*: "these should contain spirit/mind" (Joseph Beuys, op. cit., note 2, p. 63). On the panel in the vitrine, Beuys drew his hat above the word "thought" and above the hat, a vessel. The form of the vessel crops up in the lower section, too. During the action, the panel served as a working top and bore no writing. The writing was added toward the end, as a kind of record that pin-pointed what the action had been like.

69 Joseph Beuys, op. cit., note 63, p. 69.

70 The writer of the *Oldest Systematic Program* has not yet been identified conclusively. It could have been Hegel, Schelling, or even Hölderlin. Quotations from Hölderlin stem from Friedrich Hölderlin, *Sämtliche Werke* (Berlin & Darmstadt, 1958), pp. 1089–91.

71 Immanuel Kant *Critique of Judgment*, tr. J. Bernard (New York: Hafner, 1951), pp. 65, 218.

72 Ibid., p. 219.

73 Ibid., p. 20. By assuming that nature is subject to purposes, Kant regards these as a requirement because therefore "the idea of the whole . . . determine[s] the form and combination of all the parts." (Idid. p. 220.) The concept of the purposiveness ("*Zweckmäßigkeit*") of nature can, in turn, be defined by that of reflective judgement. It is, as a "transcendental concept . . . neither a natural concept nor a concept of freedom, because it ascribes nothing to the object (of nature), but only represents the peculiar way in which we must proceed in reflection upon the objects of nature" through a "subjective principle (maxim) of the judgment." (Ibid. p. 210). In other words, the concept of purpose is not able to render visible any objective "order of nature in accordance with its empirical laws" (Kant, op. cit., p. 21). Thanks to this subjective principle, however, unity can be construed in terms of purpose. Nature itself is thus subjected to a "should." By virtue of the link back to this principle a priori a "natural order [should be] cognizable by our understanding (op. cit., p. 22).

74 Ibid., p. 32.

75 *Systematic Program*, op. cit., note

freedom remain distinct domains as regards human action derived from the categorical imperative.

For Beuys, by contrast, in the model presented in the panel of the *Honey Pump* (and it is representative of both the happening and the installation) honey as the distribution system acts as the interface to thought by means of an organic cycle. The tubes function here to visualize the intermediary organ. In the human, the heart and lung correspond to this domain of interchange and distribution. Moreover, Beuys believed the *Honey Pump* depicted man's three "creativity levels": the will, sensibility, and thought. As a machine and as a model presented on the panel, the *Honey Pump* could likewise serve as the description of a social organism. It is a double reflection, for it portrays man's creative function in interaction with the social commonality. This interaction is pinpointed in the middle section of the panel, on the left by the word "*Recht*" (law) and on the right by the term "*Arbeit*" (labor). Beuys intends this to express that the input of labor—in the sense of a creative ability—being brought to bear can only be regulated by a democratic order. In other words, to Beuys' mind human creativity therefore also constitutes the heart of the process of economic exchange. Just as in the human domain, exchange is regulated by the idea of justice, so, too, in the field of labor and the economic domain it is deemed to be rendered possible by the application of law. In line with this notion of exchange, Beuys believes that the circulation of money must also be subjected to an organic process of expansion and contraction, something that would lead to a restructuring of the debt system. Given that money, as in a blood circulation system, repeatedly returns to the "source of creation" (in humans, as in the *Honey Pump*, the area of the heart fulfills this function), this "cycle" also guarantees that in the area of the heart "not a penny more and not a penny less" returns to the source than was previously inputted into the system. It goes without saying that this organic notion of money circulation is quite patently not applicable in the economic domain or that of the world of finance.[65]

In the Bern vitrine, the horizontal regulatory principle between law and labor corresponds to the vertical balance between the polarities of cold and warmth, mind and matter. All four fields communicate with each other thanks to the inflow and outflow of honey, something Beuys indicated among other things by means of arrows on the panel. At the same time, the structure of the panel also corresponds to the tripartite division of human life into "a natural being at the lowest level, a social being and a free being."[66] Beuys called the upper section the head zone and located thought, freedom, and mind there. He visualized the zone during the installation by bending a pipe beneath the roof

71, pp. 1089–90.

76 We could define the difference to Kant's thought as follows, perhaps: "Now if the idea of practical reason can no longer be accepted as a postulate, as it is in Kant's thought, then the position of the analogical comparison, the 'as-if,' is now fleshed out by the 'aesthetic idea' itself. Qua aesthetic productivity, it would then become a projected mythology of reason, which, in its utopian function, would replace the absent criteria for legitimating the state. For this reason the 'Systemprogramm' demands: 'Monotheism of Reason and of the Heart, Polytheism of the Imagination and in art . . . .'" Max Reithmann, *Joseph Beuys: La Mort me tient en éveil* (Toulouse: édit ARPAP, 1994), p. 289.

77 *Systematic Program*, op. cit. note 70, p. 1090.

78 Beuys can resort to Fichte when, on the occasion of his lecture at *Documenta* 6, where he had installed *Honey Pump*, he emphasized that the Ego can perceive its own power through the "independent activity" of the Ego. For, by virtue of this activity, the Ego is also able to become "the concept of freedom" (op. cit., note 1, pp. 126–7). Kant had likewise already emphasized the free independent activity inherent in the acts of the conscious self, although in a manner unlike that adopted by Fichte. In his *System of Ethical Life* written in 1812, Fichte spoke in a similar way, or so it would seem, of the "consciousness' absolute creative force" which, in the contemplation of an image, provides the concept as a faculty of possibility (J. G. Fichte, *Fichtes Werke*, vol. XI, ed. I. H. Fichte, [Berlin: Walter de Gruyter & Co., 1971], p. 10). Unlike Beuys, Fichte indicates clearly that intellectual contemplation is involved and not empirical perception. Fichte refers to an inner eye of the mind and to a gaze directed inward, something to be distinguished from the gaze of the physical/empirical eye. (Perhaps it would be possible here to establish some remote connection to the inward-gazing eye of Dürer's figure of Melencolia.) Fichte terms this act by an Ego that posits itself while simultaneously contemplating itself in tellectual contemplation. It is to be distinguished from that in

of the Fridericianum, which is flooded with light. In the Bern panel, the bent section of a walking stick takes the place of the organ of reflection. As in the happening, the crystalline shape of the polyhedron is intended to symbolize thought. The constellation of stone and rod also refers to a quite specific act during the happening. While isolating the head zone with felt, Beuys held his hand over the bent stick and polyhedron in the gesture of someone blessing them. In his own words this was meant to visualize "baptism in the River Jordan iconographically."[67] The function of the mind was thus construed as, in turn, influencing the distribution and exchange system in the sense of a principle of movement and the power of the Ego. However, Beuys equates the principle of movement with the intellectual form of the "stimulus of Christ," which he believed was inherent in all humans and in human labor.[68]

Beuys himself termed the way his *Honey Pump* functioned as "organic," and it was meant to present the transformation processes between humans and society as a flow of energy with human creativity at the center of things. This is intended to generate a new concept of capital, different from that of Marx, and takes its leave of the latter's notions of state and society. Beuys said that anyone lacking "an organic notion of the human being" also had no notion "of the organism of society in which humans live."[69] This comparison is based on an analogy that construes the form of the human organism as parallel to society as an organic form of organization. In this scheme, humans and—thanks to the extended concept of art—art itself functions as the intermediary between the two. In this regard, Beuys is able to rely on prior versions of such a scheme among the German Idealists and Romantics, whose notions of nature and society went back to Kant.

The so-called *Oldest Systematic Program of German Idealism* presented the relationship between nature and society in the form of an organism (and in connection with art and poetry) for the first time. In order to buttress the analogy between nature and the state as an organism while at the same time having an angle from which to criticize the state for being a mere "machine" that treats "free individuals as mechanical cogs," the originator of the *Systematic Program* relied on Kant's *Critique of Judgment*.[70] There, in his analytical treatment of the teleology of judgment, Kant had attributed to the organized being of nature a "formative power" and not the mere "moving power" he ascribed to machines.[71] At the same time, Kant notes here that the body of the state can be construed as an "organization." In this context, he cites the instance of the French Revolution when speaking of a recent "complete transformation of a great people into a state." In this organizational form of the state, "each member . . . should be not only means but

Kant's thought primarily because Kant believes human consciousness does not possess the faculty of intellectual contemplation. According to Fichte, contemplation in Kant's system can only be sensuous contemplation.

However, Beuys' statements with regards to his understanding of contemplation and pure contemplation are by no means unequivocal. Beuys usually blurs the differences between contemplation, perception, and pure contemplation. At one point, he speaks of an active and a pure will that "becomes perception in thought." This then corresponds to "pure will" as the independent activity of the free Ego and as a creative energy (Beuys, op. cit., note 1, pp. 126–7). On another occasion, he assumes that the substance of Christ as Ego substance (which for him is identical with the Ego as creative energy), can be perceived empirically. Of this Ego energy (Christ) he says one can "contemplate it, you can have it before you like this electric stove here" (Beuys *Der Christusimpuls*, op. cit., note 68, p. 9). However, Beuys not only contradicts Fichte's notion of pure contemplation but also the latter's understanding of practical reason and the practical concept, from which Fichte then derives the imperatives of ethical life. Indeed, as a *Warmth Sculpture* an electric stove in the *Auschwitz Demonstration* display case represents the principle of warmth. Behind it is the crucifix on the plate and thus the sculpture of the Cross, which stresses the principle of movement.

Fichte emphasizes that although we can understand the concept of "the image of God" by means of the doctrine of science, we cannot grasp it in the doctrine of ethical life: "the doctrine of ethical life can and should know nothing of this: He is not this at the vantage point of reflection of the doctrine. . . ." (Fichte, op. cit., vol. XI, p. 4). In this context, neither in Fichte's thought nor in the Kantian system can freedom become an object of sensuous contemplation. Beuys, by contrast, believes that the Ego energy can be perceived as free action and as the "independent activity" of the Ego and thus "become the concept of freedom." In his *Doctrine of Ethical Life* (1812),

at the same time also an end," such that all work together toward the possibility of the "whole."[72] This possibility entails the self-purpose of free humans who cannot be treated as things. The *Systematic Program* is substantially more radical and speaks of the state as a machine that reduces free humans to the status of things—such a state has no right to exist: "so it shall *cease*" the *Program* declares. In strict analogy, Kant held that the transition between nature and society was possible because teleological judgment enables the concept of nature and of freedom to interlock. Given that in judgment (*Urteilskraft*), nature is attributed a purpose in the sense of a merely regulative principle, this presumes a unity "for otherwise there would be no thoroughgoing connection of empirical cognition in a whole of experience."[73] Reflective judgment thus functions as an intermediary between the poles of nature and freedom. Kant's concept of purpose therefore always remains bound to a moral precept, even in the case of the state. For the concept of purpose is the concept "of a causality through freedom, the *effect* of which is to take place . . ."[74] In order to be able to accomplish actions in freedom, purposes are therefore not given in advance but are given as tasks.

This is precisely the assumption in the *Systematic Program* in its critique of the state. The state as a mechanical structure is based on neither a purpose in the Kantian sense, nor an idea. For "only that which is the object of *freedom* is *idea*." If the state is understood thus (and the model was the Jacobin state during the French Revolution) and the commonality is reduced to a mere mechanism, then human beings can likewise be treated as mere things and thus as means. For this reason, both the human being and the way the state functions are detached from an idea of freedom. The *Systematic Program*, however, wishes by contrast to maintain the "principles for a history of mankind." For this reason it demands quite radically that "the entire miserable human workings" of that state that ignores human dignity be stripped "to its very skin."[75] At the same time, the *Systematic Program* also demands that freedom be restored. It thus goes much further than Kant did: it calls for poetry and art to take up a central position in the social organism.[76] The artwork, it declares, is a work of freedom that enables even history to be incorporated into the equation. For, or so the *Systematic Program* would have it, "one cannot reason acutely even on history without a feel for the aesthetic."[77] And it is this that constitutes the utopian character of art and poetry.

Beuys' notion of organism is borrowed from German Idealism, as is his concept of a form of art that is meant to provide new legitimation for the social commonality thanks to its character of freedom. However, perhaps Beuys overlooked the point that human and artistic freedom (and the *Systematic Program* stresses

Fichte specifically emphasizes the opposite, namely not only that in freedom, being is grounded by the concept, but also that the model for freedom is the pure and absolute concept. The concept understood thus would first be "in possession of free energy as the model for self-determination and action. . . ." (Fichte, op. cit., p. 16). In this act, the Ego's own energy, in other words, the Ego itself, "always entails an eye constantly accompanying it" (Fichte, op. cit., p. 17). This enables Fichte to construct the concept in the identity of seeing and acting. By virtue of this inner eye of the mind, the Ego can be grasped not only as the identity of seeing and acting, but also as the absolute identity of seeing and living. However, the fact that the inner eye accompanies the Ego energy, "self-determination" emerges as the transformation of the self as a purely idea. principle into a real. i.e. *objective vision*" (Fichte, op. cit., p. 18). Beuys, too, speaks of an inner eye. Thanks to it, man can perceive Christ as "a purely spiritual form" (Beuys in Franz Joseph Crinten, Friedhelm Mennekes: *Menschenbild, Christusbild*, [Stuttgart 1984], p. 115.) And man is therefore able to shed the tradition of religion and its revelatory nature and to himself become the creator and "producer of the sacramental, the warm being which links humans in the field of labor" (Beuys, op. cit., note 1, p. 128). Beuys states that here love and the heart shall mediate between will and thought.

For Fichte this would mean that where the Ego raises itself to the status of the principle underlying its own reality, there "the Ego is not ethical" (Fichte, op. cit., p. 87). Ethical life, by contrast, is characterized, he suggests, by selflessness. One's own life would then "be absorbed by ethical will in the concept, in the command of duty . . ." (loc. cit.). He who acts ethically is no longer an object to himself. He has relinquished his natural self "and the love of the same, into which he was born, has thanks to ethical life clearly shed it" (Fichte, op. cit., p. 89). Now Beuys emphasizes that the activity of the selfless will forms the justifications for "the freedom to act" in which the "love of the thing" becomes the cause of the act, but he links the will to a stu-

FIGURE 8.6
Hermann Kleinnecht and Hartmut Lerch
Einleitung einer Erinnerung (Introducing a Memory) (detail), 1992
Video installation at the German Reichstag, Berlin
Photo courtesy Hermann Kleinnecht

this quite emphatically) can only be established if history is taken into account. With regard to a few areas of his social sculptures and the forms he used, I have rudimentarily indicated in the above remarks the extent to which in Beuys' oeuvre the work of mourning is overshadowed by melancholy and by his forgetting of recent German history. Light will first be shed fully on this issue once the entire context of *Auschwitz Demonstration* has been studied with regard to his expanded concept of art, among other things with special regard to the criteria of history. In order to be fair to Beuys, we should emphasize that the notion of the "self-activity of the free Ego" (*Selbsttätigkeit des freien Ichs*), which he borrows from Fichte and on which he bases the expanded concept of art, contains an ethical demand.[78] However, with reference to Fichte's understanding of the Ego, it is riddled with contradictions. In Beuys' scheme we should understand the pure activity of the Ego to be a sculptural process, which triggers transformational processes in humans and in society. And the personal tragedy of Beuys should thus perhaps be located precisely in this tense relationship between the Ego's desire for freedom and the historical reality of a society that represses the past and thus the destruction of the idea of a free commonality.

tus of man in which man as sculptor raises himself to the status of creator. The pure activity of the Ego energy can in this setting be understood to comprise a sculptural process itself. The difference here to the notion of the human being as *plastes* and *fictor* in Pico della Mirandola stems from the fact that Beuys was not interested in balancing the emotions through virtue and contemplating with amazement divine creation in order thus to approximate an image of God. For Beuys, man is admittedly "a being that you yourself can form" but he equates the creative element in man here with that in God, saying: "the essence of the creative" in man "must be the same essence as the creative nature

The Nazis rode roughshod over freedom and human dignity, among other things, because they had given the concept of society as organism (which presumes a free, democratic constitutional order) a biologistic footing. The Nazis consequently placed biological selection on the plinth occupied previously by freedom of choice. This went hand in hand with a division of state and ethical life, as a consequence of which the Nazis were truly able to treat humans as "mechanical cogs." Thus, the Nazis avoided the need to provide any legitimation for their reign of terror. However, their rule remains inscribed as a date and as traces in the wound that is history. In his Büchner Prize acceptance speech in Darmstadt, Paul Celan spoke of these dates in the sense of commemoration. His understanding of freedom differed from that of Beuys, for he said: "Expand art? No. Instead, enter into your very own closeness with art and make yourself free."[79] That language and images are necessary to come to grips with memory is shown by a still in Hermann Kleinnecht's and Hartmut Lerch's five-hour film *Introducing a Memory*. The photo shows the entrance gate to the Auschwitz death camp, placed in the gables of the former Reichstag building. Here, the Auschwitz gate resembles a warning, a monument that places its finger on the wound of German history. At the same time, the Auschwitz photo positioned in the gables of the German parliament has the appearance of an ornamental set piece. The image suggests that Auschwitz is only present to the "German people" as such a set piece. Nevertheless, this image is a sign of deferred sorrow and announces its proper place in the split consciousness of post-war Germany.

Translated by Jeremy Gaines, with support from the Joseph Beuys-Stiftung Basel.

of God" (Beuys, *Der Christimpuls*, op. cit., note 68, pp. 13 and 12). Here, Beuys assumes an identical essence between the creative elements of God and man, something that would have been unacceptable for Pico, Cusanus, and Dürer, and likewise for Fichte.

For Fichte, the basic law of the Ego is freedom. What functions as a concept or as God in man must therefore appear "as directly caused by means of his own freedom" (Fichte, op. cit., vol. X, p. 38). For Fichte, this means that only where man works at his own freedom does God realize His design in man. However, everything that divided man from reason (for example, religious conventions or indolence) is therefore leveled against freedom, and unethical. An unethical stance, Fichte continues, enables indifference and indolence as regards the Good. This is the source of cowardliness, which leads to both "physical" and "moral" slavery among men (Fichte, op. cit., vol. XI, p. 60). For this reason, man should always remember that commonality exists, as absolute, supra-empirical substance. With reference to the notion of community, seeing in its reflexive form transpires to be non-empirical vision. In this way, the individual transcends all "*mere* seeing" and enters the world of ethical life (Fichte, op. cit., p. 67). Only where Reason appears to the Ego "as the life of the absolute concept" can there be ethical life (Fichte, op. cit., p. 37). Only in this way can the social commonality be construed as "an organic whole composed of individuals" (Fichte, op. cit., p. 66).

79 Paul Celan *Ausgewählte Gedichte, Zwei Reden* (Frankfurt, 1980), p. 146. Incidentally, Beuys also defined the relation between date and memory via sculptural images not only as that of a rupture between language and image. This can be seen in his installation *Transstop* presented in Venice.

Kim Levin

9½ SOME NEGLECTED BEQUESTS
The Inheritance of Beuys

THE TITLE OF THE SYMPOSIUM FOR which this essay was written presumes, certainly not without reason, that Joseph Beuys has bequeathed to the art world the legacy of his teachings, his actions, his sculptural relics, and his elaborate vision of social and anthropological sculpture and art as a benevolent therapeutic device. Unless I misunderstood, the intention was that this collection of essays, and the symposium from which they were culled, would take as a starting point the legendary figure of this major artist in order to explore his colossal influence on subsequent developments in contemporary art. However, I decided to use my own previous research, and to respond to this basic premise regarding the legacy of Beuys, in the hope of providing an antidote to the prevailing notion of Beuys as prime mover.

I expected to provide a lone contrary voice by focusing on what the past bequeathed to Beuys rather than what he bequeathed to the art world. However it seems I was not the only one with this idea. Almost without exception, each contributor has had a similar impulse to interpret "The Legacy of Beuys" in terms of the legacy from the past inherited by him, rather than the legacy he left to the future. It may be too soon to evaluate the legacy that Beuys himself left,

for the complex and problematic legacy Beuys was heir to has not yet been thoroughly explored or understood. However, after two days of discussions that were, without exception, fascinating and provocative in unearthing aspects of Beuys that have long been buried, it may also seem that there is nothing left to say. But it is important to note that the task of excavating the strata of buried meanings in his work, both intentional and unintended, has barely begun.

Inquiring into someone's inheritance is never quite polite, and it is especially impolite in a culture that has collectively inherited the primal myth of modern art: the myth of genius. The myth of parthenogenetic genius is our century's dwindling but still considerable legacy. And therefore to delve into the influence that contributed to any modern or even quasi-postmodern artist's oeuvre is to tread on dangerous territory. It is to question that artist's originality, to deny his or her sacrosanct uniqueness. It is particularly tricky business when the artist is Joseph Beuys. The prevailing attitude, encouraged by Beuys himself when he was alive and by those in control of his reputation afterward, has been that his work could only be considered within the parameters that he himself defined, within the bounds of his own intentions and his own views of correctness and incorrectness, and his own language and forward-looking emphasis on the future of humanity. I believe that this attitude has long served to severely constrict and distort our understanding of Beuys' work.

Moreover, a catch-22 principle has long operated with regard to the work of Beuys. In 1995, a Beuys exhibition took place at the Center for the Fine Arts (now the Miami Art Museum) in Miami. In the catalog for that show, the curator, Goetz Adriani, inadvertently defined this catch-22 when he wrote about Beuys: "Skeptics have accused him of being a charlatan. Others—woefully lacking in critical judgement—have tried to pin labels on him, describing him as a shaman, romantic utopian or as a figure of scandal, all in an attempt to render him ineffectual. . . ." In other words, you are damned if you do believe in his messianic persona and equally damned if you do not.

During his lifetime Beuys exerted a powerful pull on the scholarly practice of art history. One might say a directorial—an almost dictatorial—pull. The only acceptable view was what could be called the authorized version: the life and work according to Beuys. All else was heresy. But as with all parthenogenetic myths of unique creation, this was in the end as limiting as it was protective. His convoluted iconography of personal ritual and cultural symbolism left no room for influences. His charismatic persona coupled with his need for control led to a near total suspension of independent thought. His socio-aesthetic stance dis-

couraged independent investigations of sources, roots, influences, or inheritances, as well as discouraging attempts at independent interpretation.

The catch-22 resulted from these factors, with the paralyzing effect that a great deal of the Beuys literature was reduced to the cultlike parroting of his words and ideas. It is only recently that scholars such as Mario Kramer in Frankfurt, whose doctoral dissertation was an in-depth study of a single work, Beuys' *Auschwitz Demonstration*, and Gene Ray at the Ringling, who discusses Beuys elsewhere in this book in terms of the "After-Auschwitz Sublime," have begun to look into the historical legacy that was bequeathed to Beuys.

It may, however, have been too soon in 1980 to open the door to an unspeakable past. It has taken nearly twenty years for anyone else to take up this area of investigation and carry it further, and it is gratifying to see it being done now. I am also one of a group of art critics and art historians in the United States and Europe who attempted to write books on Beuys during his lifetime and were prevented from doing so because of the difficult process of approvals Beuys placed on books reproducing his artwork. Besides turning scholars into acolytes, total control by an artist of the interpretation of his or her work or life tends to lead to distortions and omissions. Artists are rarely fully conscious of the discrepancies between their intentions and their results, which is where the most interesting things tend to happen. Total control also leads to legend rather than fact, and people who create legends about themselves usually embroider the truth. Just as he mythologized the documentary evidence of his work by insisting on grainy black and white, Beuys mythologized his own history in the name of social sculpture. And then he disclaimed responsibility when critics and journalists took him at his word.

In 1983 I interviewed Beuys and asked him about the biographical element in his work and the fact that Benjamin Buchloh and others had questioned the veracity of the plane crash. In my unpublished interview, he replied:

> That's not my activity. I didn't promote this point of view so much, with the exception that I once told a kind of biographical description and said it more symbolically, you know, so everything was related to the idea of sculpture. So I did already a sculpture when I was born, on the first day. So every point of my life was considered under the point of view of sculpture. That is the whole biographical thing I did personally. But I didn't promote, I didn't speak about war, I didn't speak about crashes with airplanes. Once I mentioned the thing, I was with Tartars in the steppes when I had a car crash, yes, and they handled me with some grease and felt and things. But I find it not so important to specify biographical things.... That's in every person's work: the biography plays a role. But now, after a time, some people felt this whole work of mine is a kind of autobiographical description of my life. That is not the fact. That's not the fact. That's a falsification.

German scholar P. Moritz Pickshaus, who for many years has been doing extensive investigative research on Beuys, is still trying to recover the historical facts by tracking down childhood neighbors, war buddies, and historical documents. It is curious to realize that we are not yet in full possession of, or agreement about, even the most basic facts of Beuys' life. I have been told, with some authority, that at the time of the famous plane crash, which Beuys inexplicably referred to in my interview with him as a "car" crash, there were no longer Tartars in the Crimea: Stalin had relocated them all to Siberia. But now it seems that even the date of that relocation is in dispute.

I regard Beuys as one of most complex and influential artists of the second half of our century, and I do not wish to cast aspersions on his work. Trained as an archaeologist, I am somewhat uneasy about the general unquestioning acceptance of his pronouncements and theories, the cultlike attitude of reverent faith, and the lack of investigative rigor that has prevailed for decades in Beuys scholarship. What has been needed in Beuys scholarship for some time is a certain scholarly suspension, not of disbelief but of belief.

Also, as could have been predicted, once someone who exerted such magnetism, charisma, and control is gone, there is a void waiting to be filled. In this void, we can sometimes glimpse things in ways that Beuys was trying to prevent. But the catch-22 comes into operation here, too. In posthumous exhibitions and installations of his work to date, it has become apparent that something has gone amiss. Harald Szeemann's large Beuys exhibition in Paris in 1994, at the Centre Georges Pompidou, formalized and glamorized Beuys' art so that it looked like it never looked when he was alive. The extensive exhibition of Beuys' drawings at the Museum of Modern Art in New York entitled *Thinking is Form* (1993) made Beuys look like a conventional old master draftsman. The large installation at the Hamburger Bahnhof in Berlin got the relationship of objects to space somehow wrong. And his vitrines materialize in museum exhibitions looking as if some conservator had been doing too much tidying up. {See Plates 9.1 and 9.2} In the recreated installation *News from the Coyote*, which was originally a site-specific gallery deconstruction, the ten fingernail clippings appear to be missing—a minor detail, perhaps, but a symptomatic one.

Regarding the specific content of his inheritance, and the neglected and even unwelcome bequests that enriched and complicated Beuys' work, there is, to begin with, his botanical and homeopathic inheritance. Beuys spoke of his art as therapeutic. Yet to my knowledge, its therapeutic allusions and metaphors have not yet been fully explored. I refer to homeopathy, a common medical practice in Germany and the rest of Europe before, during, and since World War

11. Homeopathy is not only the metaphoric healing of like with like, of which Beuys often spoke, but a specific mode of therapy based on a principle similar to that of vaccination. Homeopathic remedies are diluted medications that trigger the body's own defenses and healing energies. They are derived from plant, animal, and mineral substances that in greater quantities would cause the same symptoms they are used to cure.

To give one example, in Beuys' action *Vitus Agnus Castis*, which he performed in June 1972, he lay on the floor rubbing a piece of copper for four hours. He has been described as quivering the whole time. A sprig of an herb named *vitus agnus castus* was fastened to his hat. *Vitus agnus castus* is a homeopathic remedy prescribed specifically to cure excessive sexual desire. Among the several layers of meaning in this action, which he performed in Naples, Italy, there are site-specific references to ancient Roman cults and vestal virgins. But in addition to all its other references, *Vitus Agnus Castis* may well have been a response to Vito Acconci's masturbatory *Seedbed*, which occurred in January of the same year.

In *Seedbed*, Acconci lay for four hours hidden underneath a slanted ramp that had been constructed over the gallery floor, masturbating while viewers walked overhead. Beuys' more sublimated quivering action five months later focused on the homeopathic remedy. It is possible that Beuys' action was not an oblique comment or a remedial reaction to Acconci's *Seedbed*. It is also possible that the similarity of "Vitus" and "Vito" is not a clue but pure chance, and that Acconci's Italian origin has no bearing on the matter. But this seems unlikely. Knowing the specific facts, it is certainly probable that this additional layer of meaning exists and can be added to the interpretations of Beuys' actions. Throughout history, artists have embedded clandestine critiques of one another's efforts in their work. The specific homeopathic properties of other substances used by Beuys in his art remain to be investigated, as does the extensive covert dialogue that Beuys conducted with his contemporaries through his work and throughout his career.

This leads to another inheritance, his aesthetic inheritance. Beuys didn't speak of Acconci, or Carl Andre, or Richard Serra when I interviewed him. He spoke of his interest in Leonardo da Vinci. He spoke of his students who perhaps misunderstood him and went back to painting. He said that the American artist who interested him most was Jackson Pollock. About Pollock, he remarked: "It has a lot to do with the general consideration of the energy problem. This was also my idea of art, to start with the energy problem." He also mentioned Andy Warhol. "His idea of a factory, this comes very near to a kind

of economic sense of art." Yet the probable reference to Acconci in *Vitus Agnus Castis* is hardly an atypical occurrence. There is a dialogue between Beuys' work and that of other contemporary artists that has been explored, yet there is more that remains unexplored.

Beuys' connections with Fluxus and Nam June Paik have been much discussed. The connection with Jannis Kounellis' horse installation has been remarked on. The resemblance between the work of Beuys and Robert Morris (who worked in his studio and appropriated his use of felt) and the resemblance between Beuys' work and the work of the minimalists and conceptualists are obvious, if misleading. He apparently influenced Eva Hesse, who spent 1964–65 in Germany, at a formative stage in her career. He crossed paths with Marcel Broodthaers. Less has been said of Beuys' connections to and collaborations with Yves Klein, with whom he exhibited twice in Germany, and with whom he made public dialogues at the start of the 1960s. Yves Klein, while working in Krefeld and Düsseldorf, had already conceived his "Blue Revolution" piece and was a more fully developed artist than Beuys. What effect did Klein's radical social concepts have on Beuys? This remains to be explored. And for that matter, what was the effect on Beuys' work, later in the '60s, of the German student movement and the radical activists with whom he continued to maintain contact into the 1980s.

Next there is his political and historical inheritance. Besides his deliberate recovery of discredited Teutonic mythology as a therapeutic social strategy, Beuys' work received a very specific bequest from the philosophy, science, and education that existed within the Third Reich, as well as the other events of the era. At a certain level, the content of Beuys' oeuvre can be read as a specific point-by-point refutation and antidote to Nazi history and ideology. At another level it can be read as an unconscious reflection of the teachings of that time. Beuys' references to the Third Reich include conscious parody (for homeopathic healing purposes) and critical revision (also for corrective purposes), but also ambivalent and unconscious echoes of early exposure to Nazi education.

Mario Kramer, writing about the small but key piece, *Auschwitz Demonstration*, has thoroughly traced its references to the infamous camp. Gene Ray has spoken of Beuys' substances, fat and felt, as materials with Holocaustal significance. The twenty-ton piece of tallow that occupied a central position in the retrospective exhibition at the Guggenheim—losing its heat, having its temperature monitored—is certainly more than autobiographical. Although we have been told that its shape was cast from an architectural shape under a ramp at a German university and is a comment on urban planning, its

formal allusion to boxcars and its material allusion to the millions executed in concentration camps is inescapable.

Hearth II has been exhibited as a heap of felt suits surrounded by metal rods. The first hearth—a sacrificial fireplace or, more literally, a place of sacrificial fire—had been carried through the streets of Basel during Carnival in 1978 by pallbearers wearing the felt suits and carrying the metal rods. The rods were later clamped together by Beuys into bundles that resembled the Roman sheaves of wheat (wrapped and tied around an axe) that were known as *fasces*. It was the *fasces*, an ancient symbol of power, that had bequeathed its name to fascism. *Tram Stop*, with its startling human head, can also be interpreted as an allusion to the stations and tracks that led to concentration camps.

Then there are the significant dates of Beuys' actions, some of which are well known by now to Beuys scholars, and most of which were certainly culturally specific common knowledge within Germany. His proposal to raise the Berlin Wall five centimeters on the twentieth anniversary of the attempt to assassinate Hitler was self-explanatory. His founding of the German student party on June 22, 1967, the same day on which in 1941 Germany's ill-fated invasion of Russia began, was somewhat more oblique. Beuys' action, *24 Hours* . . . , which was full of coded references to the wartime past and aviation signals of dire emergency (such as PAN), ended at midnight on June 5, 1965, another wartime anniversary: D-Day was June 6, 1944. He performed *Eurasia* on October 14, 1966 and *Vacuum Mass* on October 14, 1968. October 14 was the date Hitler was wounded in 1918. It was also the date Hitler announced Germany's withdrawal from the League of Nations in 1933. When I interviewed Beuys, he claimed that while the other dates were intentional, October 14 was not. We will never know whether it was a bizarre coincidence that he performed two actions on this doubly significant date or whether some subliminal memory was at work.

There are other types of unconscious references in Beuys' work, extending even to his choice of words. Hitler spoke of "the bloodstream of our people" and called for restoration to racial health. Beuys called his *Honey Pump* the "bloodstream of society." Hitler spoke of *Lebensraum*, or living-space. Beuys spoke of living-feeling, *Lebensgefühl*. Hitler promised Volkswagens to the people. Beuys brought a Volkswagen bus to the art world, and expanded the basic idea of German nationalism to include all mankind. As Third Reich historian Lucy S. Dawidowicz has written: "The Germans were in search of a mysterious wholeness that would restore them to primeval happiness, destroying the hostile milieus of urban industrial civilization."

A more esoteric and scientific bequest came from the mystical German scientist Hans Horbiger. Horbiger's "doctrine of eternal ice" became a widespread belief in Germany in the late 1920s and '30s. Hitler supported Horbiger's theory that ice was the elemental matter of the universe (moon, stars, Milky Way), and called it Nordic science. A letter delivered to the scientists of Germany and Austria in the summer of 1925 stated: "While Hitler is cleaning up politics, Hans Horbiger will sweep out of the way the bogus sciences." Horbiger's doctrine was promoted with newspaper announcements, posters, and pamphlets delivered by volunteers from the Hitler Youth. It has been suggested that the inexplicable winter invasion of Russia, in which Beuys was wounded and thousands of German soldiers were frozen to death, resulted from Hitler's mystical conviction that he had formed an alliance with ice and could conquer the cold. Horbiger's Nordic science may also account for the large number of freezing experiments carried out on concentration camp inmates, as described by William L. Shirer in *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich.*

An unlikely parallel can be drawn between Hitler, who wanted to be an artist, and Beuys, who claims the creation of a political party as his greatest artwork. Hitler came out of World War I wanting to restore order to a people. Beuys came out of World War II wanting to restore order to humankind. Perhaps parallel is the wrong word. The similarity is more like a parallax: Beuys, subtly appropriating the symbols and catchphrases of an odious ideology, shifts the direction, alters the meaning, and by a corrective change in observational position, provides a new line of sight.

His philosophical or spiritual inheritance requires further study, too. The influence of Rudolf Steiner's teachings has been often cited, but the specific resemblances between Steiner's blackboard drawings and those of Beuys remain to be examined, not only in terms of their similar pedagogic method but in terms of cursive form and content. Also, the influence of Henri Dunant on Beuys has not yet been examined. There is a reference to the Rosicrucians in Beuys' signature red crosses. And there may also be a reference to the pre-Nazi Vril Society, which was inspired by Rosicrucian ideas in a novel by Edward Bulwar-Lytton titled *The Coming Race.* There is moreover in Beuys' red crosses a direct connection to the Red Cross. The omnipresent red crosses—often the color of dried blood—that served as emblem and signature stamp in Beuys' work provide a clue so blatant that it long went without comment.

Like Rudolf Steiner, Henri Dunant lived in Switzerland. He was a nineteenth-century visionary artist who made large colored drawings that were diagrammatic, systematizing, religious, cosmological, utopian, and elaborately

symbolic. He was also a social reformer and the founder of several short-lived utopian projects, one of which was called The World Association for Order and Construction. He was also the founder of the Red Cross, winning the Nobel Prize for his efforts in 1901. Dunant's attempts to invent a new human form of society and to save the world find parallels in Beuys' work, and appear to have had a major impact on Beuys' vision of the function of art. In my interview with him, Beuys suggested that Dunant founded the Red Cross as an artwork.

Dunant very probably bequeathed to Beuys a major intellectual legacy. Beuys insisted his felt piano had absolutely nothing to do with John Cage's prepared piano. He also informed me of the existence of Dunant's fire-piano, known as *Das Pyrophon*. The original is in London and a period replica is in Zurich. It has only seven or eight white keys, one octave C to C, and five black keys. It has vertical glass cylinders like an organ's pipes. When the piano is played, gas flames rise up in these cylinders, burning and flickering.

Beuys apparently wasn't aware that although the fire-piano was closely associated with Dunant, and was played by Dunant, it was not actually invented or built by him. My own research on Dunant and his fire-piano unearthed the fact that it was invented for Dunant by a physicist named Friedrich Kastner, whose father had invented other instruments for cosmic music and whose mother had apparently saved Dunant from bankruptcy. However, this should not distract us from its significance to Beuys. Whoever designed it, Dunant's fire-piano is a bizarre hybrid object, a combination of musical instrument, pulpit, and furnace. As a sculptural object created specifically for performance use with spiritual overtones, giving off heat and energy, the attraction it must have held for Beuys should be obvious.

"The time of modern art is finished," Beuys remarked in our 1983 interview. "It has to go beyond the egoistic privacy of people's intentions to be alone and not involved in the needs of the others and the needs of nature. And so they have to be interested in wheat and barley and corn and oaks and spruce and people and children and work and economy and law." It is time also for us to go beyond intentionality and to examine Beuys' oeuvre as it extends beyond his intentions and in the absence of his persona. And it is time to move beyond the limitations of our own inheritance, which contains remnants of a formal logic and an aesthetic discourse that Beuys tried to reject.

Georg Jappe

10} INTERVIEW WITH BEUYS ABOUT KEY EXPERIENCES

September 27, 1976

TRANSLATED AND ANNOTATED BY Peter Nisbet[1]

BEUYS

Key experiences can come in many different forms. For example, wholly external key experiences—practical life encounters with various matters can become a key experience, but there are also obviously key experiences which, how can I put it, have an almost visionary character, say childhood or eidetic images, or ... one can even have key experiences in dreams, and—well, I think I've had quite a few such key experiences. (*Pause.*) But I think it's always right to start with the practical, that is factual, key experiences. Those that arise somehow from working.

One can also say that true key experiences always inherently have something experiential about them in the broadest sense, something that cannot be purely accounted for by rational cognition. Anyway, in the consciousness of a human being with a completely rational stance towards life, these experiments often appear as something mythical, graphic or simply put, as something mythological. I believe that key experiences of the second kind, those that happen in childhood or up to the age, say of fifteen, are often far more decisive than external key experiences later; or that decisions which are made in connection with later key experiences—say in a work situation

1 Jappe's interview was first published in a condensed version in *Kunst Nachrichten* vol. 23 no. 1 (March 1977), pp. 72–81. This literal translation has been made from the more complete transcript, published in Georg Jappe, *Beuys Packen. Dokumente 1968–1976* (Regensburg, 1996), pp. 206–220. In neither published version were the illustrations chosen to relate to the text. For the present publication, the illustrations have been chosen by the translator. Through the courtesy of Professor Jappe, I was able to conduct a preliminary comparison of the interview tape with the more complete transcript in Cologne on 30 June 1998. I have indicated a few of the discrepancies, either in square brackets in the body of the text or in my notes. Misspellings of names have been silently corrected. This translation © George Jappe, the Estate of Joseph Beuys, and Peter Nisbet.

where one has decided to proceed in a certain way and discovers that it's not going to work out—these decisions link up with key experiences which lie much further back and exist in a wholly different, let's say a spiritual stratum. (*Pause.*)

Anyway, my most important key experience as far as work or method is concerned, came when I made the rather spontaneous transition from an interest in science to an interest in art. Let's say quite simply that I experienced the feeling of being forced by a specialized concept of science into a particular field of work, as no longer a possibility for myself. Let's assume that I had decided, after embarking on a general study of science, as I did, to specialize in chemistry; then, at the next crossroads in this field, I would of course have had to proceed to yet a narrower field, and then again from this narrower field to another narrower one at the next crossroads, and so on, until, had I become a good chemist—and I always stress, had I become a good one—I could have become influential and effective as a leading authority in a very narrow scientific field. That was a real anxiety experience for me during the war. When I got a study leave as a soldier—you could do that then—during which I attended a few lectures at the Reich University in Posen (which might have been an opportunity to be completely excused from duty at the front through so-called scientific service, as many people I know did),[2]

I began to say to myself that I must have this worked through by the end of the war; that I must decide—science or art?

JAPPE

And where did you have the experience where these things became clear for you?

BEUYS

I experienced it as a shock, quite graphically in a professor's lecture about amoebas. There are all these microbes that exist on the border between plant and animal life. And I experienced the fact that this man devoted his entire life to a few small animacule-like creatures. That terrified me so much that I said: No, that is not my understanding of science. It was this . . . image of the amoebas, it still recurs again and again today. I can literally still see the blackboard with these few little animals.[3] I wasn't very old then, I didn't incorporate this into a conceptual scheme, I just experienced it![4]

When I later studied at the art academy here, I saw that the concept of art is equally limited.[5] That was another experience, being sent to a particular teacher. At that time, you were still assigned to a teacher. You were received in a very friendly manner at the door, unlike today. On the first day as a stu-

2 This study is most likely to have taken place between May and December 1941, when Beuys was stationed near Posen in occupied Poland, as proposed by Frank Gieseke and Albert Markert, *Flieger, Filz und Vaterland. Eine erweiterte Beuys-Biografie* (Berlin, 1996), p. 51. On tape, Beuys mentions more about medicine, biology, and the occupied regions in this section of the interview.

3 On tape, Beuys stresses that he is not implying any criticism of this professor, but simply commenting on his ability.

4 Given the huge role of diagrams on blackboards in Beuys' later activity as an artist, teacher, and politician, this key experience carries a lot of weight.

5 Beuys enrolled at the Düsseldorf Academy on 1 April 1946, transferring to Ewald Mataré's master class in Winter 1947 (until 1951). He remained enrolled at the Academy until early 1953. In this passage, Beuys mentions two professors at the Academy, both of whom began teaching there in 1938: Josef Mages, who taught monumental sculpture until his retirement in 1961 (when Beuys assumed the position), and Joseph Enseling (1886-1957), a student of Maillol who retired in 1952 (see *Joseph Enseling, 1886-1957. Skulpturen* | Düsseldorf, 1986]). For information on the history of the Academy in general, see Eduard Trier, ed., *Zweihundert Jahre Kunstakademie Düsseldorf* (Düsseldorf, 1973).

dent, you were greeted warmly by the Director, and as in those days you didn't yet have the opportunity to choose your teachers freely (the entire academy was burnt out, with no roof, and you could see through to the sky), you were allocated to specialized classes. "Go to Room 20," where my class is now, he would say. "Go to Professor Mages." I went, and he was just coming out of the door; I turned on my heels (*laughs*). "OK," said the Director, "then go instead to this other one, to Mr. Enseling." Well, he approached me almost like a surgeon, wearing a white smock, with modeling tools instead of a stethoscope like a doctor. It felt like going into an operating room. This experience—finding in art another specialist. With him it was pure academicism, drawing the human figure with constant reference to the musculature. He would say, "Look, you haven't got the muscle right at all," then he would tap on the studio model, on the muscle. As if art could be built up from the muscle.[6]

Enseling was always very nice, though I presented him with things that drove him to despair. At times like that, he would always say something like, well, I know almost all sculptures, but I've never seen one like that (*laughs*)—he put it so naively! Or, on one occasion, I took part in a competition for a fountain which he had announced. And what I submitted really wasn't very adventurous, but it had free forms[7]; and he said, "I know almost all fountains, Mr. Beuys, but I've never seen a fountain like that!" (*Laughs.*) But that was a judgment for him, because a muscle just doesn't exist in that way, i.e. what I had done was wholly off the mark. Halfway through my studies, I made the effort to transfer to Mataré, who had some freer views about art; that was like a revolution for me.

JAPPE

Well, what's the story here? It is often said that the flying vest, fat, felt, were all inspired by the crash and the Tartars' tent where you were cared for . . . wasn't that also a key experience?[8]

BEUYS

Yes, of course! That lies on the border between the two types of key experiences. It was also a real event. (*Pause.*) Without the Tartars, I would today not be alive. These Crimean Tartars were behind the front. I already had a good relationship with the Tartars. I often went to them, and sat in their houses. They were against the Russians, but certainly not for the Germans.[9] They would have liked to take me away, and had tried to persuade me to secretly settle down with some clan or other. You not German, they would always say,

6 At this point in the 1977 and 1986 published versions of the interview, there appears the editorial interpolation "(amusing academy experiences)." This summarizing note surely refers to the contents of the next paragraph (not included in the 1977 version) and so has been omitted here. On tape, Beuys does conclude his anecdotes with the remark, "that was also a graphic experience for me."

7 Perhaps Beuys is referring to his "Fountain" (1952) in stainless steel and rubber tubing, now in the collection of the Kaiser Wilhelm Museum, Krefeld, illustrated in Götz Adriani, Winfried Konnertz, and Karin Thomas, *Joseph Beuys*, rev. ed. (Cologne, 1994), p. 29.

8 For more discussion of this well-known incident, see my essay "Crash Course: Remarks on a Beuys Story," in this volume.

9 On tape Beuys says "but in part certainly not for the Germans." He also remarks on the Tartars' history of collaboration with the Germans and their deportation by Stalin.

you Tartar. Implicitly, of course, I had an affinity to such a culture, which was originally nomadic, though by then partially settled in the area.

Then when I had this crash, and they hadn't found me because of the deep snow, if they hadn't accidentally discovered me in the steppe while herding sheep or driving their horses . . . then they took me into the hut. And all the images I had then, I didn't have them fully conscious. I didn't really recover consciousness until [approximately] twelve days later, by which time I was already in a German field hospital. But all these images fully entered into me then. In a translated form, so to speak. The tents . . . the felt tents they had, the general behavior of the people, the issue of fat, which anyway is like . . . a general aroma in their houses . . . also their handling of cheese and fat and milk and yogurt—how they handle it, that all in effect entered into me. I really experienced it. You could say, a key experience to which one could forge a link. But of course it's a bit more complicated. Because I didn't make these felt pieces to represent something of the Tartars or, as others say, to represent something that looks like a concentration camp mood, gray blankets . . . that plays a part of course, that is what the material itself brings along with it. Especially when it is gray. But those are all admixtures. Later I took felt and tried to insert it fully into theory. As an insulating element. That adds a theoretical element. But I probably would never have come back to felt, without this key experience. I mean to these materials, fat and felt. Just as I would also, without my inner conditioning, never have come to these people and to such a sphere of life. So one can trace it all further and further back, but the real experience with the crash, that was definitely very important for me. (*Pause.*)

JAPPE

Did you actually experience the crash, or was it all so quick that . . . ?

BEUYS

No, I experienced going down. I said let's all bail out. Then I probably said briefly, I'm not a hundred percent sure, that there's no point any more, because we were already—the altimeter had failed, and—I could judge this by instinct—that, if we had jumped, the parachute wouldn't have opened. But I don't really know any more. When I said that, the impact came probably two seconds later.

JAPPE

And that you didn't . . .

BEUYS

No, not at all . . .

JAPPE

And there were others in the plane?

BEUYS

Yes, one other. It was always a two-man crew.

JAPPE

And he . . . he died?

BEUYS

Nothing could be found of him. He was atomized. Basically, one found nothing but small bone fragments. Everything else was pulp in the cockpit because he had the bad luck to be strapped in. I hadn't . . . actually, I never strapped myself in. (*Pause.*)

I always wanted to have freedom of movement. And I had only one belt, in which one could move forwards and backwards. And this belt must have torn at a very opportune moment, when the plane impacted. And as it tore, the cockpit canopy slipped off—it was a sliding canopy—slipped down, and I went out with it, and then onto me came the entire tail section of the plane. So basically, I came down at the same velocity, no longer fastened into the plane, but next to it. Otherwise, I'd have been . . . there'd have been nothing left of me. Well, then I—they, I did just experience them, hearing voices, these Tartars, and rummaging in the metal, which . . . lay over me, and how they found me, and were standing around me, and then I said "woda," i.e. water, and then everything got interrupted. (*Pause.*) Well, all that just to introduce the sequence of events, why I survived what normally no human survives. (*Pause.*)

JAPPE

Also, you said in Venice that "Tram Stop" (FIG. 10.2) realized an early experience, without which you would never have become a sculptor.[10]

BEUYS

Yes, that's the reason why I always wanted to realize it, and often made initial attempts to execute it, . . . this project that I've always carried around with me. Because I really would probably not have become a sculptor. I experienced, at this place, as a small boy, that one can express something tremendous with material, something quite decisive for the world. That's how I experienced it. Or, let's say, that the entire world depends on the constellation of a few chunks of material. On the constellation of where-something-stands, of the place, geographically

10 Beuys' contribution to the German Pavilion at the 37th Venice Biennale (18 July to 10 October 1976) was the sculptural installation *Tram Stop*, which incorporated casts of an upright field cannon and four seventeenth century mortar shells, a monument in his boyhood home of Cleves, which had marked a tram stop. The installation (with the column now horizontal) is now in the Kröller-Müller Museum, Otterlo, The Netherlands, with a second version in the Hamburger Bahnhof (Erich Marx Collection), Berlin. See Caroline Tisdall, *Joseph Beuys* (New York, 1979), pp. 242-247, and Rieja Brouns, *Joseph Beuys: Strassenbahnhaltestelle* (Otterlo, 1994). For an provocative interpretation of this piece as "an abstracted model of a functional killing center," see Gene Ray's essay in this volume.

FIGURE 10.1
Fritz Getlinger
Tramstop/Monument in Cleves, 1950s
Photograph
©2002 Artists Rights Society (ARS), NY / VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn

speaking, of the how-things-relate-to-one-another, quite simply. Without any content coming into play—for example, I did not register then that there were ornaments on top, that there's a kind of dragon head on it, and so on. (FIG. 10.1) That didn't—I didn't even see all that. I saw only that there was an iron post, and there were iron elements, in various forms lying around sunk into the earth and peeking out; when I came from school, I regularly sat there, because there was a stop for changing trams there, and, to use current language, I let myself sink down into this—yes, into this state of being seen by the other things. I often sat there for hours, probably, absorbed in the situation, quite simply, entered into the situation. So, the experience that . . . one can make something with forms.

Something similar . . . that connected up again, another of these linking situations, in Cleves, shortly before I became a soldier. I was glancing through a few books which I had saved from the book-burning, which of course we had in our school-yard,[11] all kinds of things by Thomas Mann, and who knows, by . . . Hanns Heinz Ewers, and a couple of art catalogs, I looked at them again, some I had already read, there were incidentally a couple of Dada magazines in the group, with

11 According to Gieseke and Markert (note 2), a book-burning took place in Cleves on 19 May 1933, shortly after the first such demonstration undertaken by a German students' organization in Berlin on 10 May. Among the authors and artists whose works Beuys here remembers rescuing, Hanns Heinz Ewers (1871-1943) is perhaps unexpected. The author of, among much else, sensational stories on occult themes (such as *Alraune* [1911, a book about artificial creation of life involving the mythical properties of the mandragora plant], and *Vampir* [1920]), a popular scientific work on ants (1925), and a laudatory novel, personally commissioned by Adolf Hitler, about the Nazi "martyr" Horst Wessel (1932), Ewers was both praised and criticized by various National Socialist leaders after 1933, eventually falling into disfavor later in the decade. In 1933, it was works of lurid fantasy such as the widely popular *Alraune* and *Vampir* that were consigned to the flames (Wilfred Kugel, *Der Unverantwortliche. Das Leben des Hanns Heinz Ewers* [Düsseldorf, 1992], pp. 346-47, and *passim*).

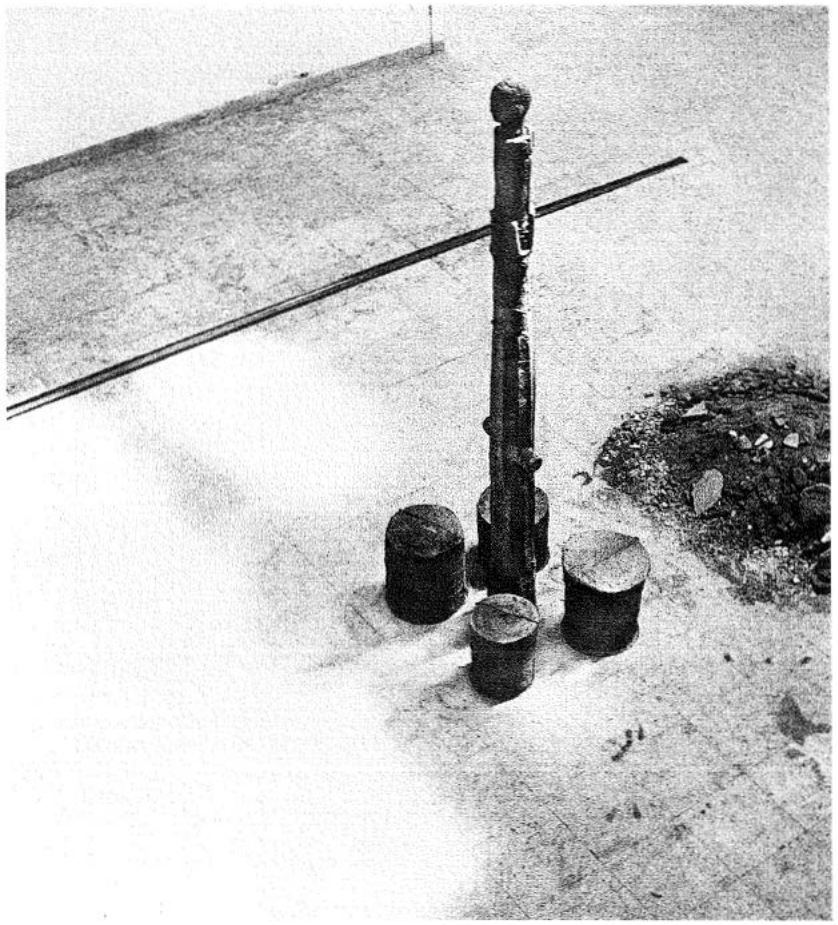


FIGURE 10.2
Tramstop, 1961–1976
Installation in the German Pavilion at the 37th Biennale, Venice, 1976.

drawings by . . . George Grosz . . . that actually didn't affect me, and by Klee, that didn't affect me, but there was an illustration of a torso by Lehmbruck.[12] There again I experienced, but not so powerfully as earlier, that it's all a question of forms. That one can do something tremendous with form [art]. That was another bridge of a sort which led further, also to the later decision. (*Conversely, the sculptures in Cleves and his art-classes both "slipped right by" him.*[13])

Although I still remember the film about Michelangelo, that I was tremendously fascinated by it. And the teacher, he fascinated me. And the entire situ-

12 For the best exploration of Beuys's relationship to the sculptor Wilhelm Lehmbruck (1881–1919), see Pamela Kort, 'Of Song and Silence' in Michael Werner Gallery, *Lehmbruck/Beuys* (Cologne and New York, 1997), n.p. (though I am inclined to date the book burning to 1933 and the more intense look which Beuys is here describing to 1938, rather than to Kort's dates of 1938 and 1940–41). Kort also quotes a line from Beuys's autobiographical sketch of 1961: "1938. First encounter with photos of sculptures by Lehmbruck, Experience!" (which surely implies that it was in 1938 that looking at these reproductions led to the kind of key experience that is the subject of this interview).

13 On tape, Beuys mentions seeing the Michelangelo film (discussed here) and a schoolbook reproduction of the Bamberg Rider. The famous early 13th-century equestrian statue in Bamberg Cathedral came to play a major role in the chauvinist historiography of German art in the 1930s.

ation. You must remember, I went to school at a time when, firstly, there was hardly any talk about art, and, if you did see some art, it was Nazi pictures hanging in the hallways, but above all it was rare to go into a dark room where there was a modern projecting device, let's call it. I recognized nothing in this film. I looked intensely at this film, the whole thing struck me as one seething chaos. So I really . . . Michelangelo, among other things, is actually the initiator of the baroque style . . . that is, all these ground-up forms, I saw it all like a huge sausage machine, one big seething . . . .like a kind of cloud-filled sky. Clearly, at that age I was not able to put things into context.

JAPPE

But you said that the teacher fascinated you?

BEUYS

The teacher fascinated me. Because he said something on the topic whose tone I found tremendously kind, tremendously kind. There too, I listened only to the sound.

(Change of tape. He referred to a key experience in the interview with Lieberknecht, a fictive interview because Lieberknecht didn't finish working on the text.[14]*)*

There is this experience, a kind of waking dream, which keeps recurring, for two whole years. An experience where . . . I'm sitting on the roof, on the ridge of a roof. And . . . I'm repeatedly being told by a figure, coming from outside, I don't know how to describe it today, well, naively put, one could describe it as a kind of an angel, which said to me over and over: you're the Prince of the Roof. So, quite simply, this sentence came to me stereotypically again and again, until the moment when the meaning became clear to me—that the roof is the head. That wasn't said, it came out of this hallucination or daydream, that happened while playing; I was still very small. Suddenly, boom, there it was, and I moved off to the side. Suddenly I couldn't play anymore, I focused on this situation. Usually I then left the playground, we used to play these great games, and often took the boat out too, anyway I then moved off to the side. Afterwards I was, how to put it, quite groggy, and had to work through the whole experience for a long time . . .

So, that's also a key experience. (*Pause.*) I would have to read up again how I expressed it there, in that book. Penninus is in my expanded Joyce . . . "Beuys extends Ulysses by six additional chapters"—if one can speak of a main character in that work, then it's this Penninus.[15] And, although many figurative things are drawn there, he is represented entirely in the abstract as a kind of

14 In an interview with Hagen Lieberknecht, the published version of which was written by Beuys, the artist had mentioned his experiences as a child, the source of "Prince of the Roof" and the "whole Penninus-story" ('Gespräch zwischen Joseph Beuys und Hagen Lieberknecht, geschrieben von Joseph Beuys' in *Joseph Beuys. Zeichnungen 1947-59*, vol. 1 [Cologne, 1972], p. 15).

15 Beuys is here referring to "Commissioned by James Joyce, Joseph Beuys Extends Ulysses by Six Further Chapters," the six undated notebooks of drawings and other notations Beuys created between 1958-1961. The notebooks, two of them disassembled, are now in the Hessisches Landesmuseum, Darmstadt (HZ 10437-10442). For information on the dating, varying titles, exhibition history and content, see the exhibition brochure: Hessisches Landesmuseum, Graphische Sammlung, *Joseph Beuys. "Joseph Beuys verlängert im Auftrag von James Joyce den Ulysses um sechs weitere Kapitel"* (Darmstadt, 1997). A discussion of the figure of Penninus, a kind of Celtic mountain god, and reference to a number of drawings with this theme, can be found in Dieter Koepplin, 'The Secret Block for a Secret Person in Ireland' in Heiner Bastian, ed. *Joseph Beuys. The Secret Block for a Secret Person in Ireland* (Munich, 1988) pp. 26 and 50, ill. 284 and 390.

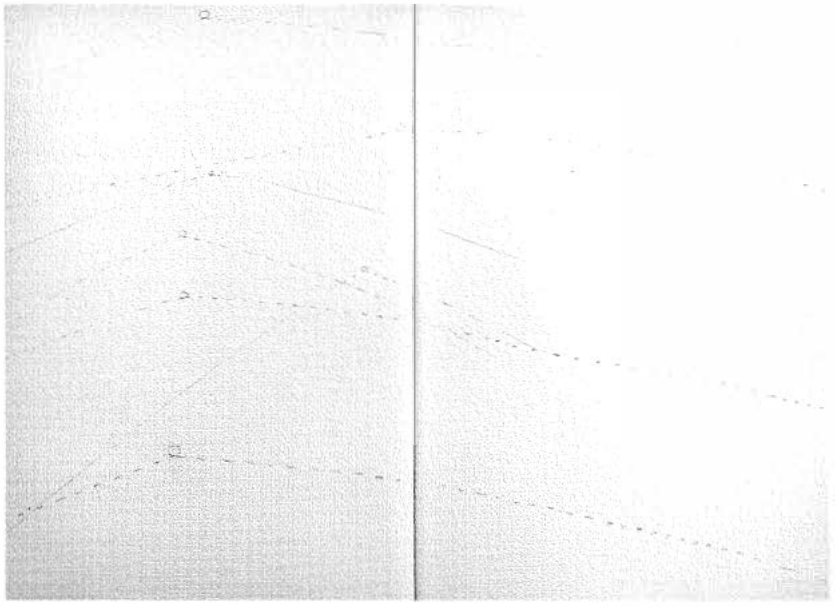


FIGURE 10.3
Untitled (Penninus)
Graphite on paper
20.8 x 29.6 cm
Unnumbered page opening from *Joseph Beuys verlängert im Auftrag von James Joyce den Ulysses um sechs weitere Kapitel*, notebook 5
Hessisches Landesmuseum, Darmstadt (HZ10441) ©1999 Artists Rights Society (ARS), NY/VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn.

roof form upon which there lies a stone which is just on the point of crossing the crowning point to roll back down the other side, and it's right there up at the top (FIG. 10.3).[16] So there's this immersion into this kind of mythological depth of concepts. Because this Penninus too is decidedly a mountain god, and has connections to, let's say, forces in the head. Knowledge forces, thinking forces, and so on, that then enters into this context with the concept of "mainstream."[16] In which stress in laid on the necessity of working things through in thought, and not just, as I said, making art, doing science . . . I believe that that's where to find the core of key experience connected to the necessity of putting things into a theoretical relationship, which, in turns, looks like a world structure, since in our day it can no longer be mythology, but it must be a world structure which incorporates the invisible ends of being human. That is, everything one calls the transcendental, or can call the metaphysical, the suprasensual, that is whatever completes on a higher plane that, which, in the course of evolution and of western scientific development, had to be catapulted out of the concept of science in order, for example, to learn rational thinking or develop a concept of science which enables human

16 The "Ulysses" notebooks, especially numbers 4, 5 and 6, contain a very large number of pages with drawings of this motif, a point or circle at the apex of a very broad inverted "v", with either dotted or solid straight lines. Occasionally the motif is explored as a possibility for a book or sculpture project. I would like to thank Dr. Peter Märker of the Hessisches Landesmuseum for the opportunity to study these recently acquired notebooks in July 1998.

17 Beuys here refers to *Hauptstrom*, the literal translation of which, Head Stream, makes the connection to Beuys's exposition on "thinking forms" clearer. "Hauptstrom" was part of the title of an action of 1967 (see Uwe M. Schneede, *Joseph Beuys. Die Aktionen* [Hamburg, 1994], pp. 166–185), and the word was incorporated into a rubber-stamp that Beuys used from 1968 on, especially to mark drawings which related in a key way to his central concepts (see Johannes Stüttgen, 'Die Stempel von Joseph Beuys' in Wilfried Dickhoff and Charlotte Werhahn, eds., *Joseph Beuys. Zeichnungen, Skulpturen, Objekte* [Düsseldorf, 1988], pp. 155–208.)

beings to develop technology. (*Pause.*) This key experience came up again and again, for at least three years, until it became clear to me, as I said, not through explanation by this shadowy, impenetrable, or ghost-like being which, as I also said, came flying in, but rather I had to deduce it myself from the situation, like a resultant in physics. It was as if it was inherent in the problem: I will go on saying this, until you understand, until you grasp the inner meaning of the text, what it means to a Prince of the Roof. Let's put it that way.

JAPPE

And being a Prince of the Roof means to find a theoretical relationship . . .

BEUYS

Yes, but not so baldly, I'd say. It means, let's say, to think of the head's forces. After all, one must consider, that this was present as an experience at an age when one is not normally allowed to be concerned with the head, if one wants to develop in a healthy manner. (*Laughs.*) I was five then, or four, [or six], a time when one lives from quite simple vital forces, especially me.

JAPPE

Were you actually an only child?

BEUYS

Yes. Only child. That is, there was a previous birth, but he died. (*Pause.*) And there is a profusion of such key experiences, which exist as...either day or night dreams, and which are very important to me. Above all, the day dreams and the phenomena which have guided me to this inner relationship, which I consider important. I must be quite clear: an inner relationship, which I myself, in the first instance, consider to be important; so I'm not turning up and saying it is important in a wholly objective way. But I am one hundred percent sure that it is possible to build something up out of this which is also objectively important. I want to be very cautious about saying whether I can do that or contribute to that building up. I do believe that I can contribute something. That this circle of a representation of world, life, political organization— right down to the nitty gritty details of culture, law, and economy should come into a closed system. When I say closed, I do not mean something shut off from everything outside, but something that is as resolved and coherent as a natural law, a natural relationship. That's an intention that is absolutely contrary to the concept of pluralism, which says the world is rich, the world is so diverse, everyone is

different, so just be liberalistic, just be pluralistic, just go and run away from each other so that there is no chance of a unified movement amongst humans which can resolutely—here's the concept of the closed system again—and with a unified idea defend against oppression. In my opinion, all this is implied in these basic experiences.

JAPPE

Do you think that you were born with this structure, and did it become clear to you through certain experiences? Or did the experiences structure you? Do you know what I mean?

BEUYS

It would still be useful if you formulate it again, then maybe I can say something in response.

JAPPE

An experience like the Prince of the Roof...is that a message to someone already formed in such a way to receive this message? The old question—to what extent is an artist made by nature, to what extent by nurture; of course there are elements of both, but where is the emphasis?

(*Pause. Interrupted attempts at formulations.*)

BEUYS

...or let's say the following: I believe it is very dependent on a person being born in a certain condition, for that person to recognize such things, which another person cannot assimilate because part of it doesn't reach him. When receptivity is not there because of hereditary disposition,[18] then it is probably very difficult to get it in later years. In principle all human beings can be worked on in this way. I'll describe this process of being worked on as what happens when something spiritual comes to a human being, so that he is no longer just a natural being, like an animal—the postulate of not-being-divided can be fulfilled in the poorest hovel, and I mean this social reference not in the sense of class struggle [the concept of class] but in the sense of using... (*Interruption, a snack is brought in.*) **...as always in a stereotypical form, repeated over the course of an entire period. I am running across a meadow, in Cleves, an image, and there the train passes, travelling to Holland, to Cologne, Cologne-Neuss-Krefeld, then through the lower Rhine, Kevelaar, Geldern, then comes through Cleves and goes on to Nijmegen. A completely empty**

18 On tape, Beuys speaks of the absence of "receptivity to things spiritual" because of "hereditary disposition of the blood line." Indeed, he discusses place, ancestors, and behavior, as related to the entirety of hereditary factors.

meadow, with only the train on the horizon, actually not so far away, but at that moment forming the horizon, as a line. The train stops, a man gets out, dressed completely in black, with a top hat on, approaches me— and says, "I tried with my means, now you try with your means—alone!" (*Laughs.*) That was all.

JAPPE

How old were you?

BEUYS

Oh, about seven or so, perhaps a little older.

JAPPE

What's meant by the word "means"?

BEUYS

I can't be certain of that. He might have said, "in your way." I think he said: "means." That's how it often is with this kind of experience, whenever the man speaks, or anyone speaks, then he's not really speaking, one shouldn't interpret that only in the acoustic sense. It comes across as information; that is, the image makes no noise. But one understands what the man is saying; it comes across directly as a thought. Everything takes place without sound. But he moves his mouth and one understands what he is saying.

After my time as a prisoner of war, when I was 28, when others had already fully dealt with their development, I began to study.[19] No power in the world forced me into science. Or into art. Not my teachers. Or my parents. My parents would have preferred to see me—and here's something purely superficial—going to the lard factory in Cleves. Because we have in Cleves one of the largest factories for butter, margarine, and lard.

JAPPE

What did your parents do?

BEUYS

My father dealt in agricultural products.[20] Whatever one needs on a farm: artificial fertilizer, corn, milling flour too, at home we rough-ground it, when it was flour for baking purposes, then it was transported to Neuss, Wehrhahn or to . . . Gottschalk, Düsseldorf, or what's he called, the other one . . . Plange, August Plange. I know them all, these mills in Düsseldorf, as a child I always came along. When there were big transports, mostly after the harvest, once or twice a year, there was always a trip to the big mills.

19 Beuys is responding to a question, omitted from the transcripts, about his late development. He was held by the British as a prisoner of war for about three months after the German capitulation on 9 May 1945. Beuys errs in giving his age as 28. He would have been 24 in 1945.

20 Beuys' father, Josef Jakob Beuys (1888–1958), opened a flour and animal feed store in 1930.

JAPPE

And why should you have worked in a lard factory?

BEUYS

Because it was the most comfortable way to get a good job. (*Laughs.*) [21]

JAPPE

Did you gain time for your development because of the war—or was it a postponement for you?

BEUYS

I certainly don't regard it as lost time. I could have had those experiences nowhere else, that's for sure. For a concept of work that is after all oriented towards experiences, it was more a benefit.[22] (*Pause.*) And the categories of experience were so densely packed, that one could never speak of boredom. From the training period, when one is not left in peace for a second, when there was always something happening, always something happening, right up to the whole situation on the front, ... during operations, or afterwards in a prisoner-of-war camp ...

JAPPE

Yes, but after your studies you spent another ten years in seclusion, in the countryside, unlike artists today, who start exhibiting at that point.

BEUYS

I had no need to take part in the modern art world.[23] (*Beuys notes that even during his studies, he had earned money through commissions and competitions.*) And therefore I always had enough money, I had no reason to complain, I could rent the studio in Heerdt and worked there independently. When I graduated from the Academy, I had more of a need to move to Cleves. And I did my most important work in Cleves. Not at the Academy. Everything that's interesting about my drawings, for example, didn't arise at the Academy, but in Cleves. I destroyed 99% of everything I did at the Academy, because it had only training value for me. That was true with my work for Mataré, too; I saved nothing, with only a very few exceptions, where there are still a few samples of works. Nothing of the study drawings either, at most there are 10 or 20 nudes, portraits.

JAPPE

Why did you then decide to undertake the actions?

21 On tape, Beuys goes into more detail about lard factories.

22 On tape, Beuys prefaces this assessment with the remark that, from a purely professional perspective, the war could be considered lost time.

23 On tape, Beuys also says that he had not the slightest intention of doing so. He also talks about having worked "an enormous amount for Mataré."

BEUYS

(*Pause.*) I don't believe that I decided to undertake the actions. Rather I believe that the actions developed quite organically from the intention that this thing with art must be expanded. The first possibility of course, was to approach it interdisciplinarily. Even before the actions I had repeatedly given thought to the fact that one unthinkingly used the terms sculpture-as-carving and sculpture-as-forming interchangeably.[24] With this intention I was also interested in incorporating sound, and the opportunity presented itself through this contact with musicians, like Paik and others, with whom I had good contacts from the beginning.[25] But at a certain point actions stopped being extended, and that's surely the reason why today actions, happenings, fluxus are nothing more than a certain style within the modern art scene. I think that the theory inherent in the topic wasn't grasped. That the concept of action should not be restricted to a physical action within the art world. But rather that one must see it as political action, and also must generalize the concept of action.

JAPPE

Yes, but that's what you did.

BEUYS

Yes, I did, but those in the movement . . . most of them didn't do it. Most of them didn't move beyond neo-dada. I always had disagreements with those who wanted to apply the term "neo-dada" to these activities. Then it did in fact not go beyond that. (*Pause.*) Meanwhile, I do not differentiate between an action with classic objects or an action without or a lecture or a pure theory. No difference applies. Because the action characteristic really does now, one could almost say, occupy one point in the full information system; in terms of information theory, it should be considered no different from a general truth, i.e from a fact where no artist has the right to extract anything for him- or herself, as if it was something special.

It is simply impossible for human beings to bring their creative intention into the world any way other than through action. And only this perspective justifies the thesis that everyone is an artist, which, put like that, is a provocation, because in reality and qualitatively, not everyone is. But potentially they are; so we could say that from a purely anthropological point of view, the concept is correct. I believe. And this is precisely where the question of freedom comes in—and that is definitely now an explosive political arena—to what extent can a human being today be a freely creative?

(*End of tape*).[26]

24 Beuys contrasts here the two words "Bildhauerei" and "Plastik," where the latter, with its broad resonance of molding and forming (in contrast to the more traditional, "image-carving" overtones of the former), clearly appealed to him more. On tape, Beuys stresses that the two forms of sculpture represent "fundamentally different intentions."

25 Nam June Paik (b. 1932), trained in non-traditional and electronic music, was an early member of the so-called Fluxus movement in Germany at the beginning of the 1960s, when he and Beuys first met. They went on to perform a number of collaborative concerts and actions in later years. For Beuys's complicated and ultimately disenchanted relationship to the Fluxus movement, see Joan Rothfuss's essay in this volume.

26 The published versions of the interview end with a summary of the topics covered after the tape ends: "He never had stage-fright before actions, an hour beforehand everything was clear, but in the previous weeks he was very burdened by whether everything would go wrong. He never arranged for photographers or cameramen, no film, not even "Eurasian Staff," could reproduce the time in that space. Did it disturb him that only legends would survive? After all, Vostell always took great care over documentation. Vostell was always "correct" in always executing an action at the announced time. Above all in Scandinavia, they, Beuys and Henning Christiansen had to perform without any public or any photographers, but the action had been advertised, announced, and had to be done. There were never rehearsels for an action, at most an approximate scenario was discussed. Only rarely was an action repeated: for example, after the disruption in Berlin, as a second presentation or performance with variations. There is no rehearsal stage, just as there is no studio. Planning happens at the dining table, casting at the foundry, storing at the Academy; execution happens once and never again at the exhibition place, at the site of the action."

Benjamin H.D. Buchloh

Appendix

BEUYS: THE TWILIGHT OF THE IDOL

Preliminary Notes for a Critique

EDITOR'S NOTE

Benjamin H.D. Buchloh's "Beuys: The Twilight of the Idol, Preliminary Notes for a Critique" first appeared in Artforum *in 1980, as a response to Beuys' 1979/80 retrospective at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum. Written at a crucial moment in Beuys' American reception and dominating the critical reviews of the Guggenheim exhibition, Buchloh's text forcefully denounced the mythical foundations of the German artist's public persona while dismissively treating his artistic production. While Buchloh's debunking was perhaps a needed corrective to the uncritical adoration with which the artist was celebrated by some, the essay's impact on this side of the Atlantic was immediate and long-lasting. As recently as 1993, Christopher Phillips, writing in* Art in America, *could credit the essay for lingering American curatorial unease with Beuys and the resulting relative scarcity of Beuys' works in American museums. The impression persists to this day that Buchloh's critique has never been successfully answered. It is reprinted here for context, in order to clarify both Buchloh's own reconsiderations and the extent to which the other authors in this volume are still replying to its arguments.—G.R.*

The fact that people in Germany deceive themselves concerning Wagner does not surprise me. The reverse would surprise me. The Germans have modeled a Wagner for themselves, whom they can honor: never yet have they been psychologists; they are thankful that they misunderstand. But that people should also deceive themselves concerning Wagner in Paris? Where people are scarcely anything else than psychologists. . . . How intimately related must Wagner be to the entire decadence of Europe for her not to have felt that he was a decadent. He belongs to it: he is its protagonist, its greatest name. . . . All that the world needs most today, is combined in the most seductive manner in his art—the three great stimulants of exhausted people: brutality, artificiality and innocence (idiocy). . . . Wagner est une névrose.

—Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Case of Wagner*[1]

DURING THESE DAYS OF THE Guggenheim Museum's Beuys exhibition one wonders why that most beautiful building, normally beaming with clarity, warmth and light, is dimly lit in a gray and moody twilight. Is this a theatrical trick, to create a setting of "Northern Romantic" light, meant to obscure? What mental semitrance are we supposed to enter before we are allowed to embark on wandering down the spiral of 24 *Stations* (whose martyrium, whose mysterium)? Perhaps we are prevented from seeing belated automatist drawings on the walls, pompously framed in chthonic iron, and weathered, withering relics

1 Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Case of Wagner*, in *The Complete Works of Friedrich Nietzsche*, ed. Oscar Levy, New York, 1909, pp. 12–14. The idea of seeing Joseph Beuys in the tradition of Richard Wagner was proposed by the late Marcel Broodthaers in his public letter to Joseph Beuys, Düsseldorf, October 3, 1972. Published in book form later as: *Magie-Art et Politique*, by Marcel Broodthaers, Paris, 1973.

and vestiges of past activities, which might be "souvenirs of a life of spectacle, poor deadthings. Bereft of the confectioner, the life of his art has vanished."[2]

The presentation of the souvenirs, however, is most elaborate. Enshrined in specifically designed glass and wood cases that look like a cross between vitrines in Victorian museums of ethnography and display cases in turn-of-the-century boarding schools, the objects, or rather their containers, signal to the viewer: you are entering interior spaces, the realm of archetypal memories, an historic communion. Ahistoricity, that unconscious or deliberate obliviousness toward the specific conditions that determine the reality of an individual's being and work in historical time, is the functional basis on which public and private mythologies can be erected, presuming that a public exists that craves myths in proportion to its lack of comprehension of historic actuality. The ahistoric mythology of fascism, to give an example from *political* history, could only develop and gain credibility as a response to the chiliastic and debauched hopes of the starving and uneducated masses of the German Weimar Republic and postmonarchic Italy. Veneration for leaders grows out of the experiences of severe deficiency.

The private and public mythology of Joseph Beuys, to give an example from *art* history, could only be developed and maintained on the ahistoricity of esthetic production and consumption in postwar Europe. The substantially retarded comprehension of European Dada and Russian Constructivism, and their political as well as their epistemological implications, determined both European and American art up until the late 1950s and served for both producers and recipients as a basis for mythifying subsequent esthetic work. Once put into their proper historic context, these works would lose their mystery and seemingly metaphysical origin and could be judged more appropriately for their actual formal and material, that is, historical, achievements within the situation and the specific point of development of the discourse into which they insert themselves. The public myth of Beuys' life and work, by now having achieved proportions that make any attempt to question it or to put it into historic perspective an almost impossible critical task, is a result of these conditions, just as it tries to perpetuate them by obscuring historical facticity. This very attitude, however, of making the artist a cult figure, historicizes Beuys and aligns him with representatives of his own generation in Europe during the 1950s who were equally grand masters of the public spectacle: figures like Yves Klein and Georges Mathieu. No other artist (with the possible exception of Andy Warhol, who certainly generated a totally different kind of myth) managed—and probably never intended—to puzzle and scandalize his primarily bourgeois art audience to the

2 This is the way Dore Ashton described her impressions of Yves Klein's work on the occasion of his first retrospective show in New York, 1967, in "Art as Spectacle," *Arts Magazine*, March 1967, p. 44.

extent that he would become a figure of worship. No other artist also tried and succeeded so systematically in aligning himself at a given time with esthetic and political currents, absorbing them into his myth and work and thereby neutralizing and estheticizing them. Everybody who was seriously involved in radical student politics during 1960s in Germany, for example, and who worked on the development of a new and adequate political theory and practice, laughed at or derided Beuys' public-relations move to found the Grand Student Party, which was supposed to return an air of radicality to the master who was coming of esthetic age. Nobody who understands any contemporary science, politics or esthetics, for that matter, could want to see in Beuys' proposal for an integration of art, science and politics—as his program for the Free International University demands—anything more than simple-minded utopian drivel lacking elementary political and educational practicality. Beuys' existential and ideological followers and admirers, as opposed to his bourgeois collectors and speculators, are blindfolded like cultists by their leader's charisma. As usual with charisma, this seems to be nothing but a psychic interaction between hyperactive unconscious processes at the edge of sanity and the zombielike existence of supposed normality in which individuation has been totally extinguished, so it seems perfectly necessary to become a "follower" of whomever seems to be alive. Ernst Bloch, the German philosopher, when talking about Beuys' philosophical master Rudolf Steiner, gives an exact description of those processes that constitute the mythical figure and the cult, and this portrayal seems to describe Beuys word-for-word:

> It is not surprising to meet peculiar dreamers. They are sufficiently disrupted to be open for unconditioned experiences. [The dreamer] tends to remove frontiers of everyday life so that it can cover the unusual with the ordinary, and vice versa. The divided self accumulates a feeling of sin whose power seems almost forgotten and unfathomable. The internalized super-ego, the pride and certainty of mimic messiah that those characters develop, would never be attained by any normal being, even in states of highest mental exaltation. No false Demetrius would maintain himself for long, but a false Jesus among madmen will do well. . . . The occult journalist Rudolf Steiner established himself at the top of the "Cognition of Higher Worlds," a particularly odd case. A mediocre, but unsupportable oddity, yet efficient . . . as though some rotten druids were chatting on newsprint-paper.[3]

As to Beuys, the cult and the myth seem to have become inseparable from the work, and as his confusion of art and life is a deliberate programmatic position, an "integration" to be achieved by everybody, it seems appropriate to take a critical look at some aspects of Beuys' private "myth of origin" before looking at the actual work.

3 Ernst Bloch, *Das Prinzip Hoffnung*, chapter 53, in his *Collected Work*, Frankfurt, 1959, pp. 1393 ff. (my translation).

Beuys' most spectacular biographic fable convenue, the plane crash in the Crimea, which supposedly brought him into contact with Tartars, has never been questioned, even though it seems as contrived as it is dramatic. The photographic evidence, produced by Beuys, to give credibility to his "myth of origin," turns against itself: in Adriani's Beuys monograph[4] (until the Guggenheim catalogue the most comprehensive documentation of Beuys' life and work, and published in cooperation with the artist) we see Beuys standing beside a JU 87 that is in fairly good shape and flat on the ground. The caption reads: "Joseph Beuys after a forced landing in the Crimea in 1943."[5] The accompanying text reads as follows:

> During the capture of the plane over an enemy anti-aircraft site, Beuys was hit by Russian gunfire. He succeeded in bringing his plane behind German lines, only to have the altimeter fail during a sudden snowstorm, consequently the plane could no longer function properly. Tartars discovered Beuys in total wilderness in the bottleneck area of the Crimea, in the wreckage of the JU 87, and they cared for Beuys, who was unconscious, most of the time, for about eight days, until a German search commando effected his transport to a military hospital.[6]

In Caroline Tisdall's Guggenheim catalogue[7] we are presented with three totally different photographs showing a severely damaged and tipped-over plane that under no circumstances can be identical to the one given in Adriani's book. Beuys' own recollection (or updated version of the fable convenue in Tisdall's book) reads as follows:

> Had it not been for the Tartars I would not be alive today. . . . Yet it was they who discovered me in the snow after the crash, when the German search parties had given up. I was still unconscious then and only came round completely after twelve days or so, and by then I was back in a German field hospital. . . . The last thing I remember was that it was too late to jump, too late for the parachute to open. That must have been a couple seconds before hitting the ground. . . . My friend was strapped in and he was atomized by the impact—there was almost nothing to be found of him afterwards. But I must have shot through the windscreen as it flew back at the same speed as the plane hit the ground and that saved me, though I had bad skull and jaw injuries. Then the tail flipped over and I was completely buried in the snow. That's how the Tartars found me days later. I remember voices saying voda (water), then the felt of their tents and the dense pungent smell of cheese, fat and milk. They covered my body in fat to help it regenerate warmth, and wrapped it in felt as an insulator to keep the warmth in.[8]

Who would, or could, pose for photographs after the plane crash, when severely injured? And who took the photographs? The Tartars with their fat-and-felt camera?

Beuys' "myth of origin," like every other individual or collective myth, is an intricate mixture of facts and memory material rearranged according to the

4 Goetz, Adriani, et al., *Joseph Beuys: Life and Works*, New York, 1979.

5 Ibid., p. 15.

6 Ibid., p. 16.

7 Caroline Tisdall, *Joseph Beuys*, New York and London, 1979, p. 17.

8 Ibid., p. 16.

dynamics of the neurotic lie: that myth-creating impulse that cannot accept, for various reasons, the facticity of the individual's autobiographic history as such (a typical example would be the fantasy, more common in the beginning of this century, that a person believes he is the illegitimate child of an alien nobleman, not the simple progeny of a factory worker). As in every retro-projective fantasy, such a narcissistic and slightly pathetic distortion (either dramatization or nobalization) of the factually normal conditions (made either more traumatic or more heroic) of the individual's coming into the world, the story told by the myth's author reveals truths, but they are different from what their author would want them to be. Beuys' story of the messianic bomber pilot, turned plastic artist, rising out of the ashes and shambles of his plane crashed in Siberia, reborn, nurtured and healed by the Tartars with fat and felt, does not necessarily tell us and convince us about the transcendental impact of his artistic work (which is the manifest intention of the fable). What the myth does tell us, however, is how an artist, whose work developed in the middle and late 1950s, and whose intellectual and esthetic formation must have occurred somehow in the preceeding decade, tries to come to terms with the period of history marked by German fascism and the war resulting from it, destroying and annihilating cultural memory and continuity for almost two decades and causing a rupture in history that left mental blocks and blanks and severe psychic scars on everybody living in this period and the generations following it. Beuys' individual myth is an attempt to come to terms with those blocks and scars. When he quotes the Tartars as saying "*Du nix njemcky* [you are not German]," they would say, "'*du Tartar*,' and try to persuade me to join their clan . . .,"[9] it is fairly evident that the myth is trying to deny his participation in the German war and his citizenship. But of course, the repressed returns with ever-increasing strength, and the very negation of Beuys' origin in a historic period of German fascism affirms every aspect of his work as being totally dependent on, and deriving from, that period. Here lies, one has also to admit, certainly one of the strongest features of the work, its historic *authenticity* (formally, materially, morphologically). Hardly ever have the characteristic and peculiar traits of the anal-retentive character, which forms the characterological basis of authoritarian fascism (inasmuch as these features once specific to the German petit bourgeois, have by now become dangerously universal), been more acutely and accurately concretized and incorporated into an act of the postwar period.

In the work and public myth of Beuys the new German spirit of the postwar period finds its new identity by pardoning and reconciling itself prematurely with its own reminiscences of a responsibility for one of the most cruel and devastating forms of collective political madness that history has known. As much

9 Ibid., p. 16.

as Richard Wagner's work anticipated and celebrated these collective regressions into Germanic mythology and Teutonic stupor in the realm of music, before they became the actual reality and the nightmare that set out to destroy Europe (what Karl Kraus had anticipated more accurately as the *Last Days of Mankind*), it would be possible to see in Beuys' work the absurd aftermath of that nightmare, a grotesque coda acted out by a perfidious trickster. Speculators in Beuys' work did well: he was bound to become a national hero of the first order, having reinstalled and restored that sense of a—however deranged—national self and historic identity.

Beuys' obsession with fat, wax, felt and a particularly obvious kind of brown paint that at times covers objects totally and at others is used as a liquid for painting and drawing on paper and other materials, and his compulsive interest in accumulating and combining quantities of rejected, dusty old objects of the kind that one finds in rural cellars and stables, are imbued with metaphysical meaning by the artist and his eager exegetes: they could just as easily be read in psychoanalytic terms, and perhaps more convincingly so (which, again, would by no means disqualify the work). Obviously Beuys himself consciously implements materials and forms that have a strong suggestive and associative quality of anality as a particular aspect of the infantile stages of instinct development: "I placed it [the fat] on a chair to emphasize this, since here the chair represents a kind of human anatomy, the area of digestive and excretive warmth processes, sexual organs and interesting chemical change, relating psychologically to will power. In German, the joke compounded as a pun since '*Stuhl*' (chair) is also the polite way of saying 'shit' (stool), and that too is a used and mineralized material with chaotic character, reflected in the cross section of fat."[10] But an outspoken affirmation of one's compulsive inclinations does not necessarily transform or dissolve them, either in one's behavior or in work and object production. Let us quote from a popularized comprehensive study of psychoanalytic theory, published in 1945, when Beuys, aged twenty-four, could easily have started to familiarize himself with recent psychological theories:

> If an adult person still has sexual excitability connected with the excretory functions (either with those of his object or autoerotically with his own) he clearly shows that his sexuality is on an infantile level. But in these uses too, the regression serves as a defense against genital wishes, not only in a general way as in any compulsion neurotic but also in a more specific way, the coprophilic fantasies regularly representing attempts to deny the danger of castration. . . . The stressed anality expresses the wish to have sexual pleasure without being reminded of the difference of the sexes, which would mobilize castration fear."[11]

10 Ibid., p. 72.

11 Otto Fenichel, *The Psychoanalytic Theory of Neurosis*, New York, 1945, p. 349.

But Beuys, in his general contempt for the specific knowledge of contemporary sciences and in his ridiculous presumptuousness about the idea of a universal synthesis of sciences and art, as late as 1966 phrased his disdain for psychoanalysis in a polemic against the German psychoanalyst Alexander Mitscherion by calling the discipline "bad shit" (*schlechter Mist*).[12] Apparently he follows the archaic and infantile principle that as long as you do not acknowledge the existence of things in reality that seem to threaten your ideas, they will not concern or affect you.

Functional structures of meaning in art, as in other sign systems, are intricately bound into their historical context. Only inasmuch as they are dynamic and permanently changing their field and form of meaning do they remain functional, initiating cognitive processes. Otherwise they simply become conventions of meaning or clichés. As such, they do, of course, follow different purposes, becoming the object of historically and socially latent interests contradictory to the author's original aims when trying to develop a meaningful sign. Obviously it is possible to ignore or reject the basic scientific steps that have been taken in twentieth-century science, such as Freudian psychoanalysis or de Saussure's linguistic and semiotic concepts (to give only the two most prominent examples that Beuys rejects). Obviously it is also possible to ignore or reject the crucial epistemological changes that have occurred in one's own field of discourse, for example the consequences of Duchamp's work for art in the second half of the twentieth century. But again, such infantile behavior, hiding one's eyes and ignoring and negating phenomena that seems to threaten one's existence in order to make them disappear, is of very limited success; it successfully limits the comprehension of an adult person. By simply making a hypothetical (and obscure) statement like: "The silence of Marcel Duchamp is overrated" (1964),[13] the theoretical position of Duchamp and the lasting impact of his work are simply not even understood and, therefore, are not at all rebutted. This misconception and ignorance is evident in Beuys' own comment on the statement: "This statement on Duchamp is highly ambivalent. It contains a criticism of Duchamp's Anti-art concept and equally of the cult of his later behavior. . . . Apart from that Duchamp had expressed a very negative opinion of the Fluxus artists claiming that they had no new ideas since he had anticipated it all. . . . Most prominent, though, is the disapproval of Duchamp's Anti-art concept."[14]

Just as structures of meaning are permanently altered, so also the forms, objects and materials of meaning change within that dynamic process. The designation of a given, industrially produced, readymade object and its intro-

12 Joseph Beuys, *Catalogue Sigmar Polke*, Berlin, 1966, p. 2.

13 Tisdall, p. 92.

14 Ibid., p. 92.

duction and integration into artistic context were viable and relevant primarily as epistemological reflections and decisions within the formal discourse of post-Cubist painting and sculpture. Within this context the "meaning" of these objects is established, and here they fulfill their "function": they change the state of a formal language according to given historical conditions. Only later, when the original steps become conventionalized, imitated, interpreted, received, misunderstood—as in most Surrealist and Neo-Dada object art, do they enter that field of projective crisscrosses of individual meaning. Only then do they acquire psychological, emotional, metaphysical meaning, and finally they are imbued with myth and magic. Unlike his European peers from the late 1950s—Piero Manzoni, Arman or even Yves Klein—Beuys does not change the state of the object within the discourse itself. Quite to the contrary, he dilutes and dissolves the conceptual precision of Duchamp's readymade by reintegrating the object into the most traditional and naive context of representation of meaning, the idealist metaphor: this object stands for that idea, and that idea is represented in this object. Beuys has often affirmed this himself, obviously intrigued by Duchamp but not understanding him, and therefore, not coming to historical terms with him either; as, for example, when talking about his *Bathtub*, 1960: "But it would be wrong to interpret the *Bathtub* as a kind of self-reflection. Nor does it have anything to do with the concept of the readymade: quite the opposite, *since here the stress is on the meaning of the object* [my italics]. It relates to the reality of being born in such an area and in such circumstances";[15] or, when talking about his *Fat Chair*, 1964: "The presence of the chair has nothing to do with Duchamp's Readymades, or his combination of a stool with a bicycle wheel, although they share the same initial impact as humorous objects."[16]

The more an esthetic decision, a formal or material procedure, is removed from its functional historical context—which, in the system of art is first of all the esthetic discourse itself—the more the work will be in demand for meaning; it will depend on its generation of projective meaning and will be susceptible to it. The very suggestiveness, the highly associative potential and quasi magic attraction that Beuys' work seems to exert on many followers and his public, paradoxically enough, results precisely from that state of obsolescence that his works maintain within the discourse of art itself. It seems that the more removed the esthetic discourse is from the cognitive process, the more the necessity and claim for "meaning" develop. Visual ideology (commercial movies and television, advertising and product propaganda) immerses its viewers in "meaning" as much as the discourses of religion and neurosis do: to the extent

15 Ibid., p. 10.
16 Ibid., p. 72.

that literally everything within these belief systems is "meaningful," reaffirming the individual's ties to such systems, the actual capacities of individual development are repressed. Beuys keeps insisting on the fact that his art-object and dramatic performance activities have "metaphysical" meaning, transcending their actual visual concretion and material appearance within their proper discourse. He quite outspokenly refers to the antihistoric, religious experience as a major source and focus for his art production: "This is the concept of art that carries within itself the revolutionizing not only of the historic bourgeois concept of knowledge (materialism, positivism) but also of religious activity." Notably, he does not even attempt to qualify his understanding of "religious activity" in historical terms, which would seem obvious, since Feuerbach, Marx and Freud have differentiated it in a fairly relevant manner that hardly allows for a simplistic concept of "religious activity." Again it seems inevitable to quote from Nietzsche's poignant analysis of Wagner's esthetic position, discovering an amazing congruence with that of Beuys':

> As a matter of fact, his whole life long he [Wagner] did nothing but repeat one proposition: that his music did not mean music alone. But something more! Something immeasurably more! . . . "Music can never be anything else than a 'means'": this was his theory; but above all it was the only practice that lay open to him. No musician however thinks in this way. Wagner was in need of literature, in order to persuade the whole world to take his music seriously, profoundly, because it meant an infinity of things.[17]

Precisely because of Beuys' attitudes toward the functions and constructions of meaning in linguistic and visual signs, and his seemingly radical ahistoricity (which is a maneuver to disguise his eclecticism), his work is different from that of some of his European colleagues as well as his American contemporaries. This becomes particularly evident in a comparison of works that seem to be connected by striking morphological similarities: Beuys' *Fat Corner*, 1960–63(?), and *Felt Corner*, 1963–64(?), with Robert Morris's *Corner Piece*, 1964, and Richard Serra's *Lead Antimony*, 1969; Beuys' *Fat up to this Level*, 1971, with Bruce Nauman's *Concrete Tape Recorder*, 1968, and Beuys' *Iron Chest*, 1968; Beuys' *Site*, 1967, with Carl Andre's *12 Pieces of Steel* (exhibited in Düsseldorf in 1967).[18] In many instances it seems adequate to speculate about priorities of formal "invention" in these works that seem structurally comparable, as Beuys certainly commands an amazing integration and absorbtion of principles of formal organization that have been developed in a totally different context, changing them with his private meaning system so that, in fact, they no longer seem comparable in any way. In other cases, such as Beuys' *Rubberized Box*, 1957, and *Fat Chair*, 1964, there simply

17 Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Case of Wagner*, p. 30.

18 As in the fable convenue, the dates of Beuys' crucial works at times seem a little dubious and again the information, given by Beuys himself, is contradictory. In Adriani's book Beuys is quoted as follows: "The titles are not original; many of them were given later, because exhibitors and buyers felt the need to name these works." On the evening at the Zwirner Gallery (on the occasion of a lecture by Allan Kaprow, Cologne, 1963) fat actually made its first appearance in the form of a carton of lard (see Adriani, p. 96). Caroline Tisdall mentions in regard to *Fat Chair*, 1964: "*Fat Chair* appeared at the same time as the first *Fat Corners*." On the following pages of the same catalogue, however, these works, *Fat Corner* and *Filter Fat Corner* are dated 1960 and 1962 (see Tisdall, pp. 72–75). The very same *Filter Fat Corner* is dated 1963 in Adriani's monograph (see p. 102).

The Felt Corner is dated 1953 on p. 75 of the Guggenheim catalogue and dated 1964 on p. 125 of the same catalogue, in a slightly different photograph of the same installation.

Caroline Tisdall's information on Beuys' work seems unreliable in other regards as well. For example, on p. 271 we are made to believe that Beuys swept up Karl Marx Platz in East Berlin, May Day 1972. Obviously it would be quite spectacular and courageous to perform such an activity under the conditions of the rigid police control of the regime in East Berlin, particularly during the official May Day celebrations of the Communist Party. Unfortunately (or fortunately), however, Beuys did perform his little act in West Berlin, where nobody cares about harmless artistic jokes and where you can express "solidarity with the revolutionary principles through the bright red broom. . . ." (Tisdall p. 271) at any given time.

can be no doubt about Beuys' original vision in introducing into a sculptural discourse issues that became crucial years later in Minimal and post-Minimal art. If we compare Beuys' *Fat Corner*, 1960(?), with Richard Serra's *Splash Piece*, 1968, we discover a comparable concern for the dissolution of a traditional object/construct-oriented conception of sculpture in favor of a more process-bound and architectural understanding of sculptural production and perception. On the other hand, one tends to overestimate Beuys' originality and inventiveness if one forgets about his eclectic selection of historic information and influences absorbed from Futurism, Russian Constructivism, Dada and Surrealism, as well as their American and European successors in Happening and Fluxus activities, plus the Nouveaux Réalistes.

The very beginning of modernist sculpture is marked by a mixture of heterogenous materials within the sculptural unit: Degas' *Little Dancer of Fourteen*, 1876, assembles wax, cloth and wood. And Medardo Rosso's wax-over-plaster sculptures, which were supposed to "blend with the unity of the world that surrounded them,"[19] should be remembered when Beuys talks about the universally process-oriented nature of sculpture. Rosso's use of beeswax as a sculptural material that can maintain two aggregate states, liquid and solid, has a particularly strong process quality, thanks also to the precision with which it records modelling processes. Further, Beuys' sense for the specific nature of sculptural materials and the wide variety of materials that can be introduced into sculpture, was most obviously informed by the Italian Futurists, who did acknowledge Rosso as one of their precursors. We should recall Boccioni's *Manifesto of Futurist Sculpture* (1912): "We claim that even twenty different materials can be used in a single work to achieve sculptural emotion. Let us mention only a few: glass, wood, cardboard, horsehair, leather, cloth, mirrors, electric light, etc., etc. . . ."[20] Moreover, the sculptural discovery of that crucial point in space, where two planes meet at an angle of ninety degrees, thus constituting a most elementary evidence of spatial volume and, one could argue, a point of transition between sculptural space and architectural space, finds its first clear demarcation in twentieth-century art in Tatlin's *Cubo-Futurist Corner Counter-Reliefs*, 1915, and the explicit use of an inserted triangle shape in Tatlin's and Yakulov's decoration of the Café Pittoresque in Moscow in 1917. Beuys, whenever he might have placed his first triangle into a corner—whether fat or felt—has to be seen as much in that perspective as with respect to Morris's *Corner Piece* and Serra's *Splash Piece*.

That other great German artist who was an eclectic of the first order, and equally knew how to conceal and to transform his sources to the point of almost total unrecognizability, Kurt Schwitters—and who is certainly, within German

19 Margaret Scolari-Barr, *Medardo Rosso*, New York, 1963, p. 21.

20 Umberto Boccioni, *Manifesto of Futurist Sculpture* (1912), in Umbro Appollonio, ed., *Futuristische Manifeste*, Cologne, 1965, p. 72.

art history of the twentieth century, the focal point of Beuys' references[21]—was equally aware of Italian Futurist notions in sculpture, as well as Russian Cubo-Futurist works. By joining the innovative sense of sculptural materiality of the former with the idea of sculptural expansion into architectural dimensions of the latter, and by merging them with his peculiar brand of German Dadaism, he conceived the *Merzbau* environment. This *Gesamtkunstwerk* that included live guinea pigs as well as collected bottles of urine by his friends, was obviously a structure that attempted to define sculpture as an all-encompassing activity, including even everyday life in the esthetic creation. Beuys' definition of "sculpture as an evolutionary process, everyone as an artist,"[22] has its visual/plastic roots here as much as it paraphrases Lautréamont's proto-Surrealist dictum "Poetry must be made by all."

Beuys' problematic attempt to revitalize Dada and Surrealist positions becomes apparent within the concrete materiality and the formal organization of the sculptural work itself. Precisely because of its claims for universal solutions and global validity, the work does not achieve the acuity and impact of some of the seemingly comparable sculptures mentioned above. The historic precision and function within (as it seems) the limits of a formalist tradition and of work growing out of it, such as Serra's, Nauman's or Andre's, is lacking in Beuys' works altogether. Their opulent nebulousness of meaning and their adherence to a conventional understanding of meaning, makes the visual experience of Beuys' work profoundly dissatisfying. His work does not initiate cognitive changes, but reaffirms a conservative position of literary belief systems. The same would become evident in a comparison of Beuys' work with sculptural works done in the late 1950s and early 1960s in Europe. Arman's *Le Plein*, 1960, which filled a gallery space with two truckloads of garbage (expanding Arman's sculptural procedure of "poubelles"—garbage accumulations), still strikes us today as a vital and consequential work (and more complex in its ramifications) exactly because of its self-imposed restriction to function within the discourse of art, first of all. The same is true of Stanley Brouwn's proposal to declare all shoe shops of Amsterdam as his exhibition (in 1960), or for every single work of Piero Manzoni's since 1958. Too bad for Beuys, but it seems that after all Gustave Flaubert was correct when predicting: "The more that art develops, the more scientific it must be, just as science will become esthetic."

Esthetic as well as political truths are concrete phenomena. They manifest themselves in specific reflections and acts, hardly in grandiose gesticulations and global speculations. Beuys' supposedly radical position, as in so many

21 Again in Germany the drawings of Kurt Schwitters would be the key reference for Beuys' drawings. In the drawings around 1919 Schwitters combined the expressionistic drawing with the mechanomorphic "drawing" elements: his rubber stamp impressions that enter abruptly into the seemingly lyrical lines of the drawings. The rubber stamp image as a counterbalance to the scriptural expressionist line figures frequently and prominently in Beuys' drawings.

22 Tisdall, loc. cit., p.7.

aspects of his activities, is primarily marked by his compulsive self-exposure as the messianic artist (think, for example, of his preposterous offer at a women's liberation gathering in New York: "What can I do for You?"). When called upon in particular commitments within the art world, which is, after all, the prime and final sphere of his operations, he shows an astonishing reluctance to commit himself to anything that might harm his good standing with the existing power structure of cultural institutions.

When, for instance, in 1971, the Guggenheim Museum censored and closed down the show of Hans Haacke, firing its curator Edward Fry, an impressive list of signatures by artists and critics was circulated afterward to support Haacke, a proof of international solidarity and a public condemnation of the oppressive politics of the Guggenheim's director, Thomas Messer. Beuys never signed. Shortly afterward, an international group show, *Amsterdam-Paris-Düsseldorf*, was installed at the Guggenheim. A Belgian artist, the late Marcel Broodthaers, then living and working in Düsseldorf, withdrew his contribution from the show (his work had been originally dedicated to Daniel Buren, whose work had been equally censored at the Guggenheim's international exhibition in the preceding year) to protest the treatment of Haacke's and Fry's work, and published an open letter to Joseph Beuys in a Düsseldorf newspaper. The letter, disguised as a found letter by the German-French composer Jacques Offenbach addressing Richard Wagner, reads as follows:

> Your essay "Art and Revolution" discusses magic . . . politics . . . the politics of magic? Of beauty or of ugliness? . . . Messiah . . . I can hardly go along with that contention of yours, and at my rate I wish to register my disagreement if you allow a definition of art to include one of politics . . . and magic. . . . But is not the enthusiasm that His Majesty displays for you motivated by a political choice as well? What ends do you serve, Wagner? Why? How? Miserable artists that we are."[23]

The esthetic conservatism of Beuys is logically complemented by his politically retrograde, not to say reactionary, attitudes. Both are inscribed into a seemingly progressive and radical humanitarian program of esthetic and social evolution. The abstract universality of Beuys' vision has its equivalent in the privatistic and deeply subjectivist nature of his actual work. Any attempt on his side to join the two aspects results in curious sectarianism. The roots of Beuys' dilemma lie in the misconception that politics could become a matter of esthetics, as he repeats frequently: "real future political intentions must be artistic. . . ."; or, more outrageously:

23 Marcel Broodthaers, p. u f.

> How I actually bring it as theory to the totalized concept of art, which means everything. The totalized concept of art, that is the principle that I wanted to express with this material, which in the end refers to everything, to all forms in the world. And not only to artistic forms, but also to social forms or legal forms or economic forms. . . . All questions of man can be only a question of form, and that is the totalized concept of art.

---or, finally, in explicit terms of crypto-fascist Futurism:

> I would say that the concept of politics must be eliminated as quickly as possible and must be replaced by the capability of form of human art. *I do not want to carry art into politics, but make politics into art.*[24]

The Futurist heritage has not only shaped Beuys' sculptural thoughts, but even more so, it seems, his political ideas fulfill the criteria of the totalitarian in art just as they were propounded by Italian Futurism on the eve of European Fascism. It seems that Walter Benjamin's most overquoted essay has still not been understood by all. It ends as follows: "*Fiat ars-pereat mundus*, says Fascism, and, as Marinetti admits, expects war to supply the artistic gratification of a sense perception that has been changed by technology. . . . Mankind has reached such a degree of self-alienation that it can experience its own destruction as an esthetic pleasure of the first order. This is the situation of politics which fascism is rendering esthetic. Communism responds by politicizing art."

24 Adriani, pp. 227 and 283.

Notes on the Contributors

PETER NISBET is the Daimler-Benz Curator of the Busch-Reisinger Museum and senior lecturer in history of art and architecture at Harvard University. In 1984, he organized the first American exhibition of Beuys' drawings, and he was a contributor to the definitive English language edition of the catalogue raisonné *Joseph Beuys: The Multiples.*

JOAN ROTHFUSS is associate curator at the Walker Art Center and the curator of the Walker's traveling exhibition *Joseph Beuys Multiples.* She was the co-curator of the 1993 exhibition *In the Spirit of Fluxus* and is currently working on the first major survey of the work of Bruce Connor.

PAMELA KORT is an art historian and curator specializing in twentieth-century art of German-speaking Europe. She recently curated and edited the catalogue for the exhibition *Paul Klee—In the Mask of Myth* that opened in October 1999 at the Haus der Kunst in Munich and traveled in February 2000 to the Museum Boijman Van Beuingen in Rotterdam. Her upcoming projects include *The Ugly Face of Beauty*, a study of Klee to be published in 2002 and an exhibition *Klee in 1933* that she is curating for the Neue Galerie New York: Museum of German and Austrian Art, to open in fall of 2002.

GENE RAY organized the symposium *Joseph Beuys: Mapping the Legacy*. A 1996–97 Alexander von Humboldt Foundation Chancellor's Scholar, he was Curator of Exhibitions at the Ringling Museum of Art from 1997 to 1999.

BENJAMIN H.D. BUCHLOH is Professor of Twentieth-Century and Contemporary Art at Barnard College and Columbia University and a member of the editorial board of *October*. His latest book, *Neo-Avant-Garde and Culture Industry: Essays on European and American Art, 1955–75*, will be published this year.

LUKAS BECKMANN has been the managing director of the German parliamentary group Bündnis 90/Die Grünen since 1993. He was a cofounder and, from 1979 to 1984, general manager of the German Green Party and, from 1984 to 1987, one of three speakers of the Green Party national executive committee. He also participated in the founding of the Heinrich Böll Foundation and was its chairman until 1991.

MEL CHIN's art, conjoining cross-cultural aesthetics with complex ideas, is known for its broad range of approaches, processes, and media. Since the 1970s, he has produced sculptures bearing witness to political and ecological tragedies. From 1995 to 1998, he organized *In the Name of the Place*, a conceptual public art project conducted on prime-time television. He continues to develop ongoing works such as *Revival Field*, a pioneering project in the field of "green remediation."

MAX REITHMANN is a Paris-based artist and independent scholar. He has authored three Beuys studies (*Par la présente, je n'appartiens plus à l'art; Joseph Beuys: Si nécessaire, nous vivrons aussi privés de coeur*; and *Joseph Beuys: La Mort me tient en eveil*). He also contributed essays to the 1994 Centre Georges Pompidou Beuys retrospective and to the 1995 *Beuys Symposium* in Kranenburg.

KIM LEVIN is an independent curator and art critic and the president of the International Association of Art Critics. She writes about art for *The Village Voice* and is the author of *Beyond Modernism: Essays on Art from the '70s and '80s*. In 1997, she curated *The Scream*, the Nordic Bienniel.

PLATES

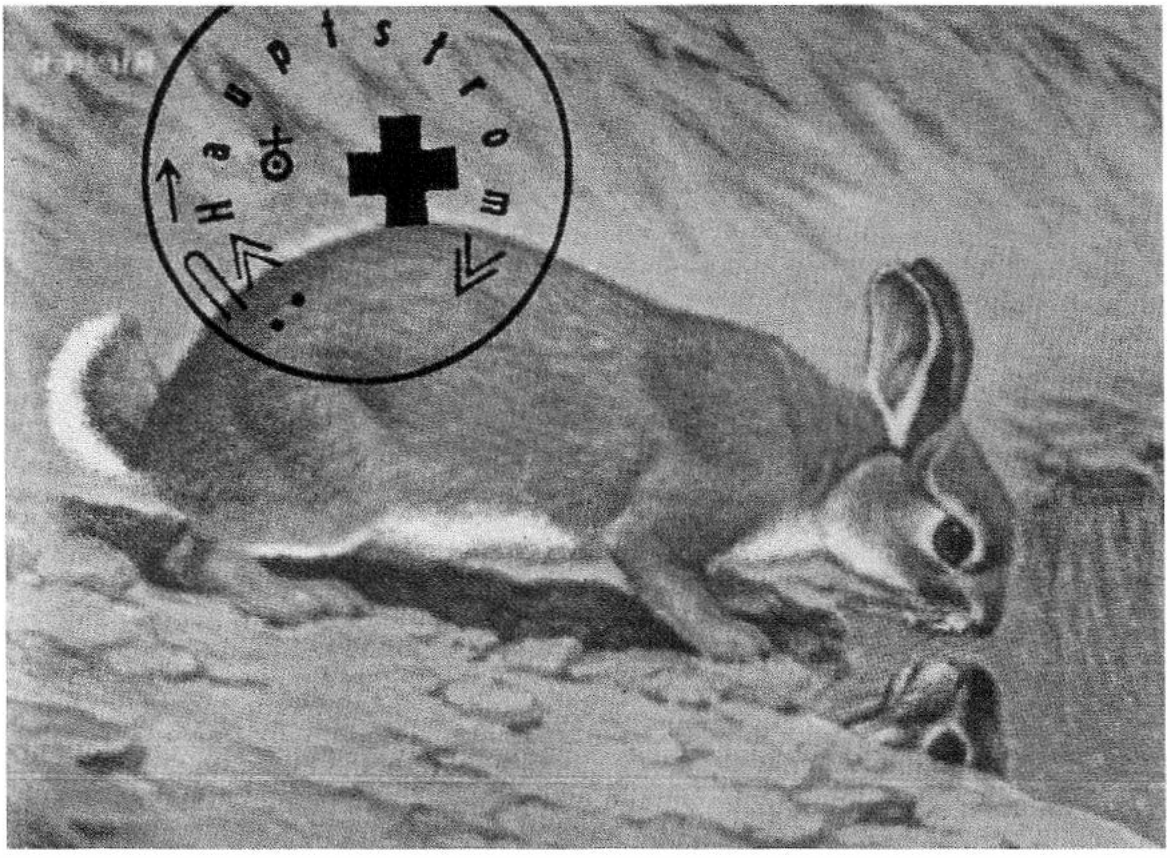


PLATE 3.1
Joseph Beuys
American Hare Sugar, 1974
Offset lithograph on paper, ink stamp, 24.625 x 35.375 in. Edition of 40. ©1999 Artists Rights Society (ARS), NY/VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn.
Alfred and Maire Greisinger Collection, Walker Art Center, T. B. Walker Acquisition Fund, 1992

PLATE 3.2

Joseph Beuys

Szene aus der Hirschjagd (Scene from the Stag Hunt) 1961, detail showing the musical toy used in Beuys' action *Composition for Two Musicians* (1963), performed at the Festum Fluxorum, Kunstakademie, Düsseldorf.

Beuys Block, Room 2, Hessisches Landesmuseum, Darmstadt. Photograph: Claudio Abate by courtesy of Schirmer/Mosel Verlag, Munich. ©1999 Artists Rights Society (ARS), NY/VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn.

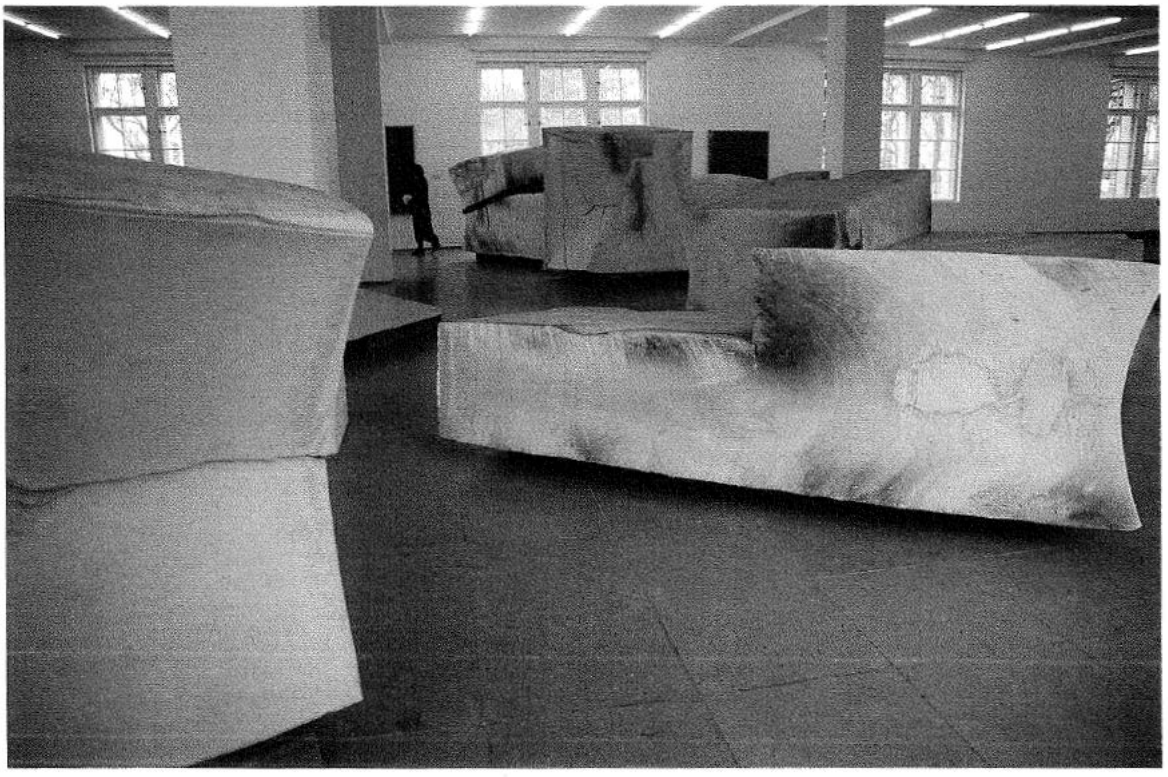


PLATE 4.1
Joseph Beuys
Tallow, 1977 (detail, 1998 installation view)
Six forms cast from soot and stearin mixture, installation dimensions variable
Dr. Erich Marx Collection, Hamburger Bahnhof Museum für Gegenwart, Berlin
Photo: Gaby Ray

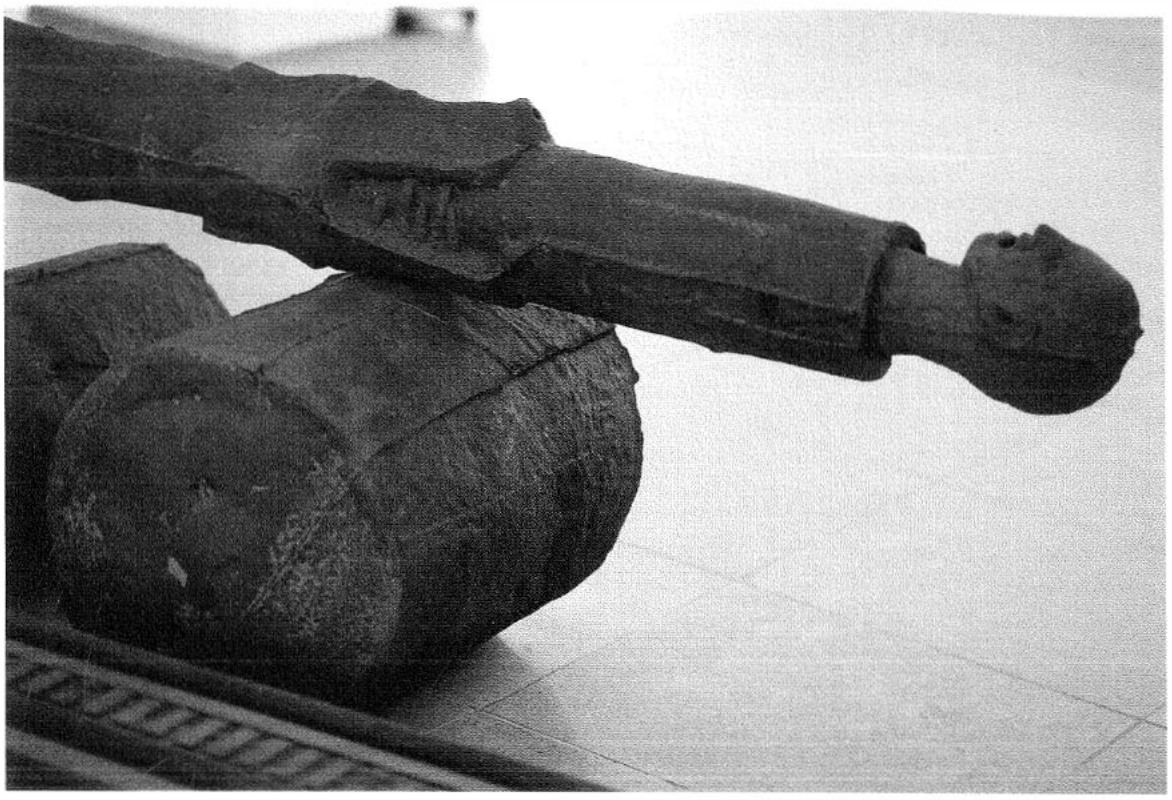


PLATE 4.2
Joseph Beuys
Straßenbahnhaltestelle (*Tram Stop*), 1976 (detail, installation view)
Cast iron column and four cylinders, railway segment, 22 jointed steel rods, overall dimensions c. 74 x 837 x 246 cm
Dr. Erich Marx Collection, Hamburger Bahnhof Museum für Gegenwart, Berlin
Photo: Gaby Ray

PLATE 4.3
Joseph Beuys
Das Ende des 20. Jahrhunderts (*The End of the Twentieth Century*), 1983 (detail, 1998 installation view)
Twenty-one basalt blocks, felt, clay, portable elevator, overall dimensions c. 470 c 120 x 900 cm
Dr. Erich Marx Collection, Hamburger Bahnhof Museum für Gegenwart, Berlin
Photo: Gaby Ray


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PLATE 6.1
Joseph Beuys and other candidates for the European Parliament at a press conference in Brussels, May, 1979. Petra Kelly Archive.

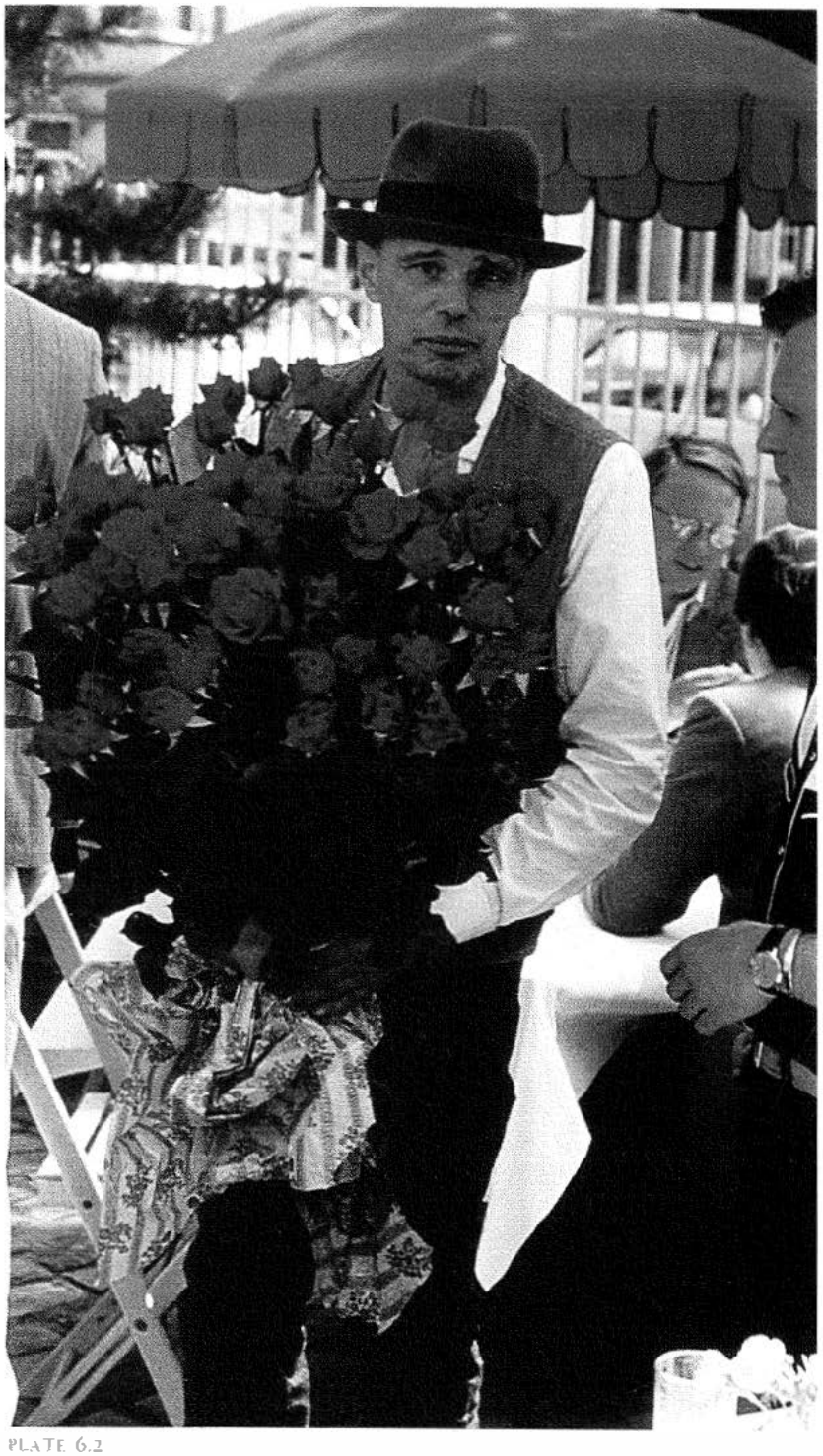


PLATE 6.2
Joseph Beuys at his 60th birthday party, Drakeplatz 4, Düsseldorf
Photo: Lukas Beckmann

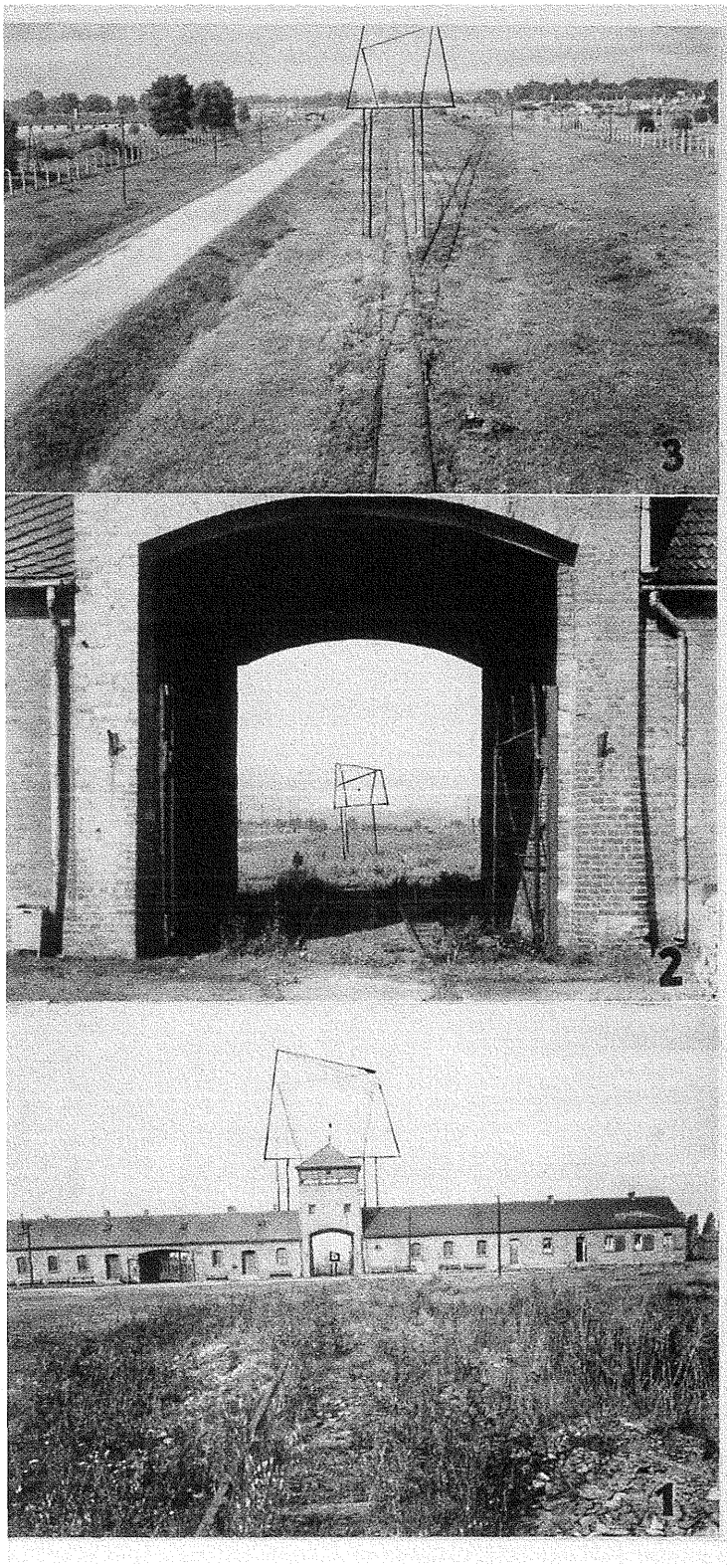
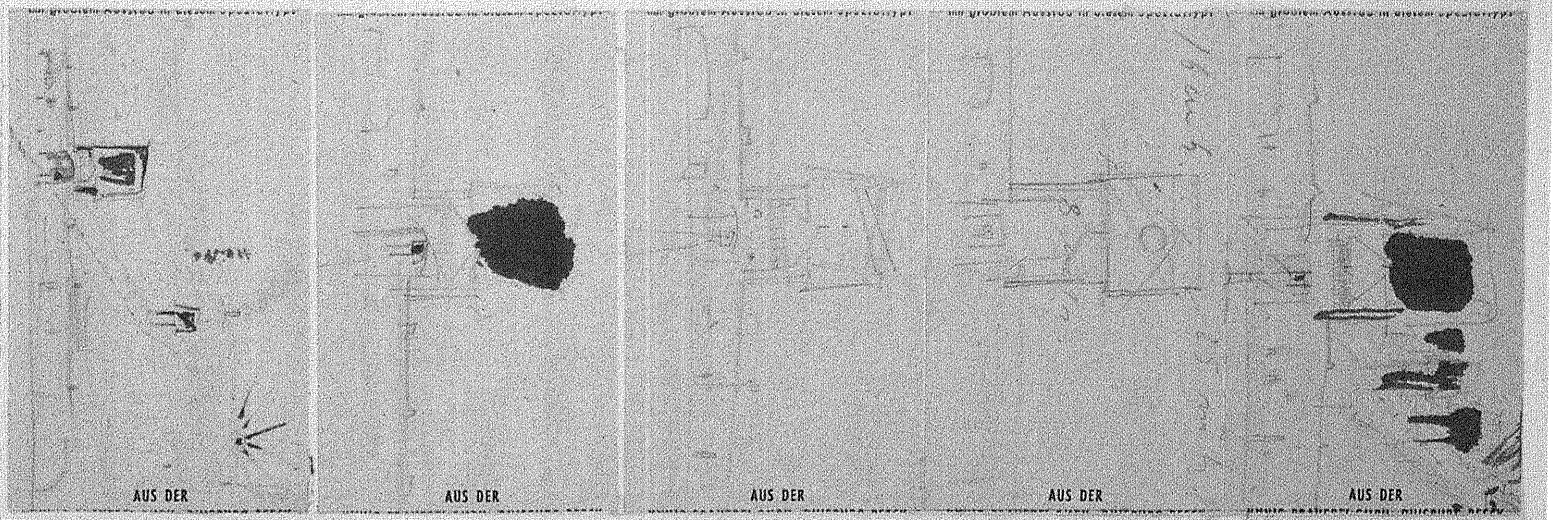


PLATE 8.1
Joseph Beuys
Entwürfe für Mahnmal Auschwitz (*Design for Auschwitz Memorial*), 1957.
Collage, 33.1 x 49.5 cm
Collection van der Grinten, Stiftung Museum Schloß Moyland, Bedburg-Hau
Photo: Maurice Dorren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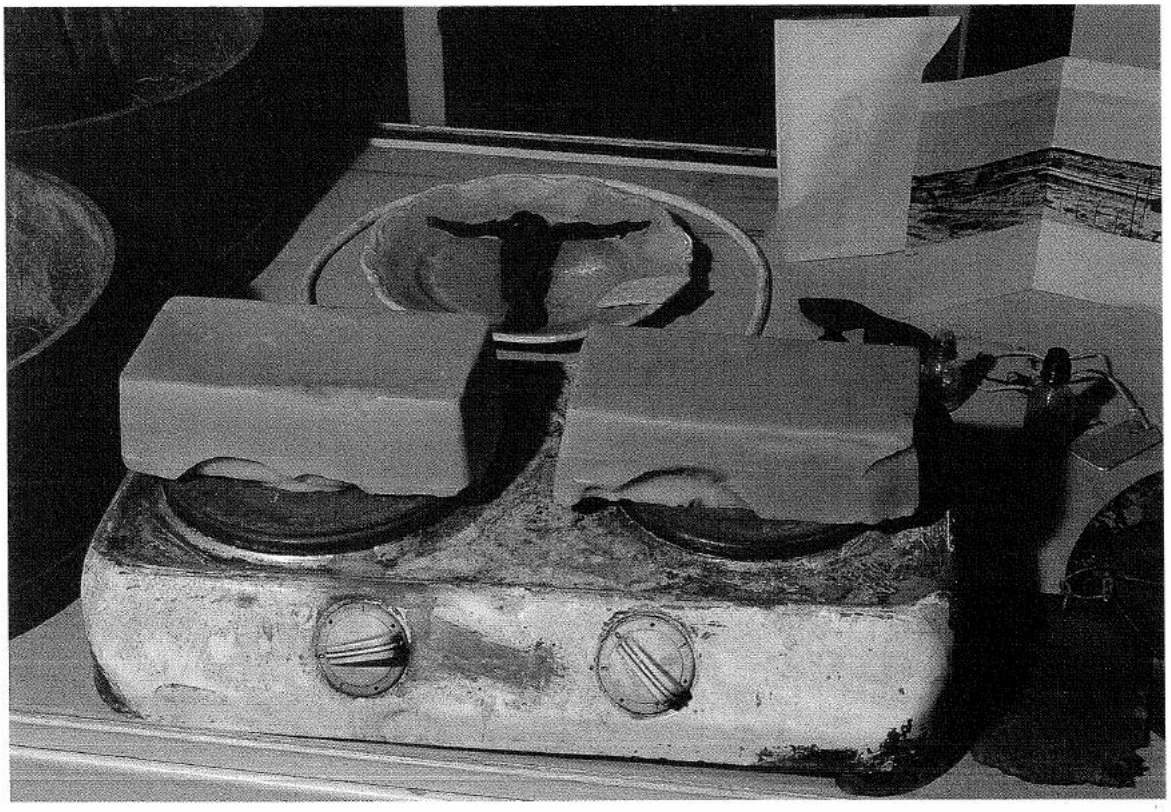


PLATE 8.2
Joseph Beuys
Auschwitz Demonstration, 1956–1964 (detail showing *Wärmeplastik* [*Warmth Sculpture*], 1965, *Kreuz* [*Cross*], 1957)
Beuys Block, Room 5, Vitrine 4, Hessisches Landesmuseum, Darmstadt
Photo: Günter Schott

PLATE 3
Joseph Beuys
Szene aus der Hirschjagd (*Scene from the Stag Hunt*), 1961 (detail showing untitled wooden model for the Auschwitz memorial proposal with Beuys' birth date added)
Beuys Block, Room 2, Hessisches Landesmuseum, Darmstadt
Photo: Günter Schott

PLATE 8.4
Anselm Kiefer
Mohn und Gedächtnis (*Poppy and Memory*), 1989
Lead, glass, poppy stalks and seeds
Dr. Erich Marx Collection, Hamburger Bahnhof Museum für Gegenwart, Berlin
Photo: Gaby Ray. Courtesy of the Artist.

PLATE 8.5
Anselm Kiefer
Dein Goldenes Haar, Margarethe (*Your Golden Hair, Margarethe*), 1981
Oil, emulsion, and straw on canvas, 51 3/16 x 67 inches
Sanders Collection, Amsterdam. Courtesy of the Artist.

PLATE 9.1
Joseph Beuys
PAN XXX III, 1965
Beuys Block, Room 5, Vitrine 7, Hessisches Landesmuseum, Darmstadt

Photo: Kim Levin

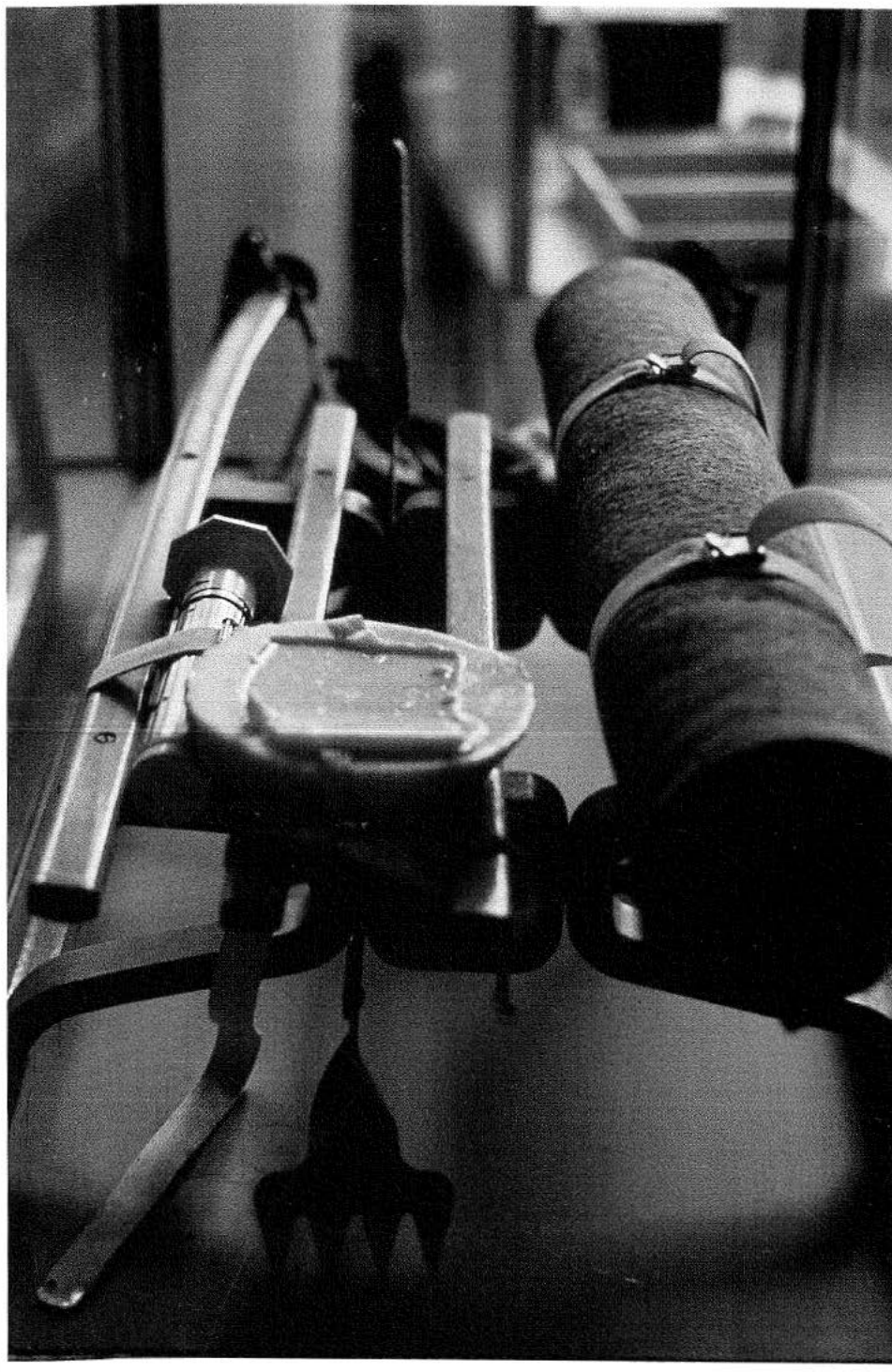
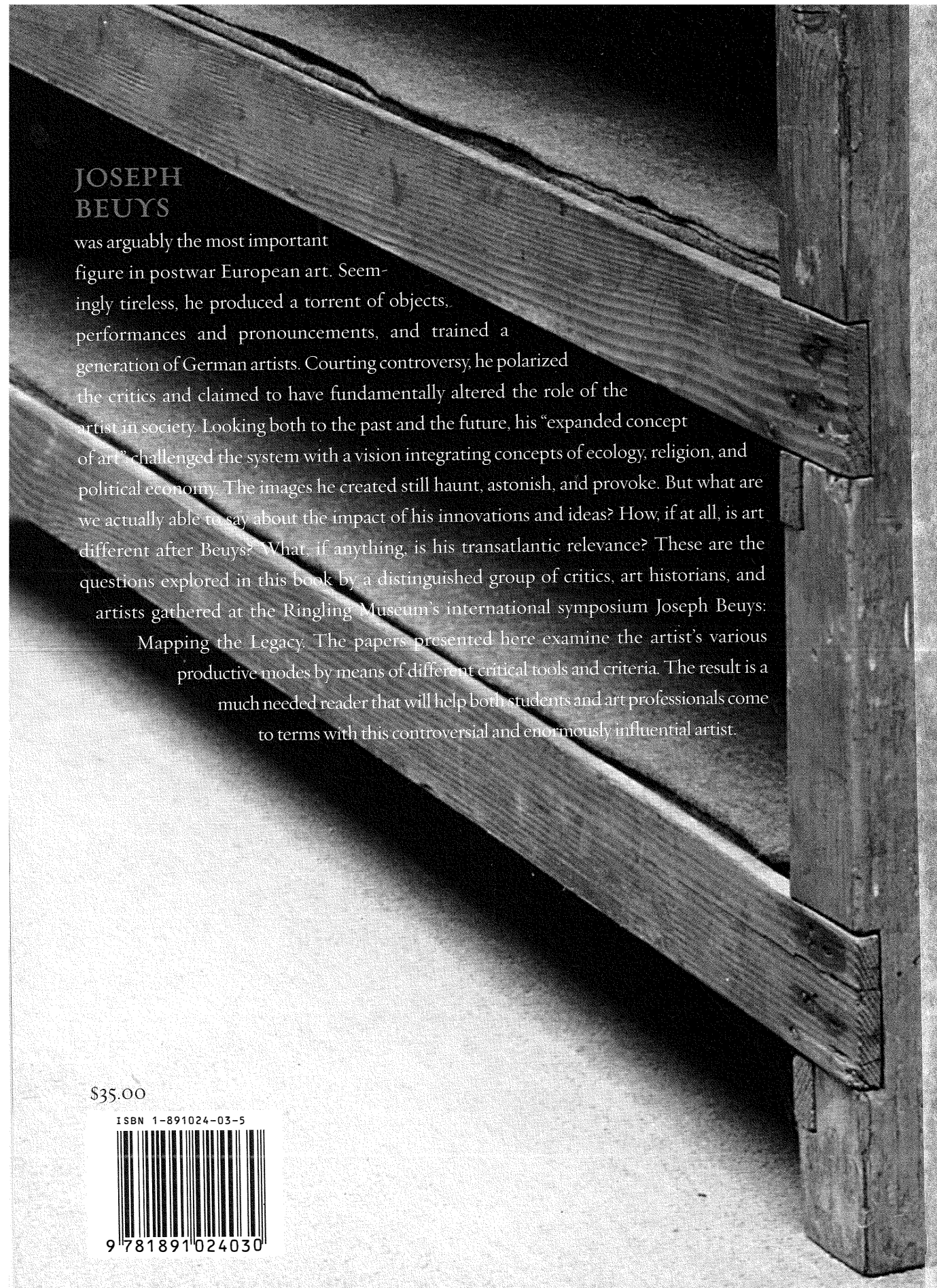


PLATE 9.2
Joseph Beuys
Ake-pack, 1969
Beuys Block, Room 7, Vitrine 8, Hessisches Landesmuseum, Darmstadt

Photo: Kim Levin



JOSEPH BEUYS was arguably the most important figure in postwar European art. Seemingly tireless, he produced a torrent of objects, performances and pronouncements, and trained a generation of German artists. Courting controversy, he polarized the critics and claimed to have fundamentally altered the role of the artist in society. Looking both to the past and the future, his "expanded concept of art" challenged the system with a vision integrating concepts of ecology, religion, and political economy. The images he created still haunt, astonish, and provoke. But what are we actually able to say about the impact of his innovations and ideas? How, if at all, is art different after Beuys? What, if anything, is his transatlantic relevance? These are the questions explored in this book by a distinguished group of critics, art historians, and artists gathered at the Ringling Museum's international symposium Joseph Beuys: Mapping the Legacy. The papers presented here examine the artist's various productive modes by means of different critical tools and criteria. The result is a much needed reader that will help both students and art professionals come to terms with this controversial and enormously influential artist.

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