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JOSEPH BEUYS : "EVERYTHING UNDER THE SUN"

by

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## INTRODUCTION

Joseph Beuys was one of the foremost figures in post-war European art, and a sculptor in no ordinary sense of the word. A producer of objects made from felt, fat, and the everyday detritus of living, he was also shaman, showman, teacher, politician. A frustrated questioner once shouted at him:

"You talk about everything under the sun except art!"

to which Beuys replied

"Everything under the sun is art!" (Serota, 1990, P.5).

"Everything under the sun is art" is a very apt summarization of Joseph Beuys' intent. He had a variety of strategies, which he employed to communicate his "expanded theory of sculpture" which transgressed the accepted boundaries within which the sculptor was held to operate. He wanted not merely to reinvent the role of the artist in society, but for society to reinvent itself. In declaring that "everyone is an artist", Beuys challenged each human being to use the individual creative energies of their head, feelings and free will, to transform society.

Joseph Beuys was obviously radical not only in post-war Germany, as well as in Europe. His intensity about his works, namely art, social reform, ecological projects, were just to name a few. Intriguing is one work which springs to mind, when the name 'Joseph Beuys' is mentioned. He was a whirlwind of activity, throughout his entire life, even up until the end. A few months before he died he was still working and was awarded the 'Wilhelm Lehmbruck Prize' in Drusburg, just a few days before his death.

INTRODUCTION

The first part of the book is devoted to a general survey of the subject.

The second part is devoted to a detailed study of the various aspects of the subject.

The third part is devoted to a study of the various methods of the subject.

The fourth part is devoted to a study of the various results of the subject.

The fifth part is devoted to a study of the various applications of the subject.

The sixth part is devoted to a study of the various conclusions of the subject.

The seventh part is devoted to a study of the various prospects of the subject.

The eighth part is devoted to a study of the various problems of the subject.

The ninth part is devoted to a study of the various questions of the subject.

The tenth part is devoted to a study of the various issues of the subject.

The eleventh part is devoted to a study of the various topics of the subject.

The twelfth part is devoted to a study of the various subjects of the subject.

The thirteenth part is devoted to a study of the various fields of the subject.

The fourteenth part is devoted to a study of the various branches of the subject.

The fifteenth part is devoted to a study of the various divisions of the subject.

The sixteenth part is devoted to a study of the various sections of the subject.

The seventeenth part is devoted to a study of the various parts of the subject.

The eighteenth part is devoted to a study of the various components of the subject.

The nineteenth part is devoted to a study of the various elements of the subject.

The twentieth part is devoted to a study of the various factors of the subject.

The twenty-first part is devoted to a study of the various influences of the subject.

The twenty-second part is devoted to a study of the various forces of the subject.

The twenty-third part is devoted to a study of the various powers of the subject.

The twenty-fourth part is devoted to a study of the various abilities of the subject.

The twenty-fifth part is devoted to a study of the various qualities of the subject.

The twenty-sixth part is devoted to a study of the various quantities of the subject.

The twenty-seventh part is devoted to a study of the various measures of the subject.

The twenty-eighth part is devoted to a study of the various degrees of the subject.

The twenty-ninth part is devoted to a study of the various ranks of the subject.

All that remains of Beuys, which undoubtedly is a multitude, are philosophies, numerous books, also documentation of installations and actions, drawings, his sculptural works but lastly and perhaps the most important of all, the memory of the "legend" and that is definitely a word I would use with reference to Joseph Beuys. For within the course of this life he rose to stardom status, however it is quite hard to believe when confronted by the detritus of everyday living exhibited in a gallery or museum environment. In association, there is the name Beuys, this transforms the work to possessing a transcendental evaluation, for you know then there is a meaning linked with these ordinary objects. Once you have recovered from the sense of immediate intoxicification, you have learnt from your first lesson of dealing with Beuys, then you appreciate and inquire about his works. This leads to more vigorous exploration, confidence comes with familiarity of Beuys' imagery and then you begin to read his language of objects. With a stronger knowledge of any subject, you become inquisitive with the information laid out before you. This is a period of doubt. It is necessary for the observer to experience this period of doubt which transforms into a major scrutinisation of the work and art of Beuys, at length. The following Chapters will give a brief examination of the essential areas within the life works of Joseph Beuys. It is crucial that every deity turned legend must be observed in order to see if they sincerely deserve the status which they have acquired. Beuys genuinely is an artist of great stature, I respect his work without doubt. However, I am intensely curious to know whether his work carries all that is acclaimed, and if it will vigorously stand the test of time, will it lose its meaning as politics change, art progresses and therefore become dated.





These are some of the questions connected with Beuys which I hope to find answers to. These queries shall be dealt with in the following chapters of this thesis. Each chapter deals with a different area tackling his art and life works: the controversies of his life as an artist, the philosophies he based his life on, which are directly founded from those of the anthroposophist Rudolf Steiner, his shamanistic approach to art and lastly, Beuys' inheritance as a German - the so-called exorcism of the "national guilt" that was and still is, a search for respectability in Europe as a new Germany.



## CHAPTER ONE

### A CONTROVERSIAL ARTIST

When Joseph Beuys died on January 23rd 1986, he was still a controversial figure. Despite his widely acknowledged position as the leading artist in Europe, his work continued to provoke, also to confound expectations, as it had for thirty years. Its consistency however came in part through his use of certain significant materials - fat, felt, copper, honey, blood plus certain woods and stones. Moreover, in part, through his determination to unite his works of art with a wider philosophy and ambition. Beuys as an artist was not only a sculptor, but also a draughtsman, performer, politician, environmentalist, along with being a teacher. He was determined to redefine radically the role of the artist and was uninterested in carrying out didactic commissions, decorating interiors or making works for collectors. Beuys' sculptures, drawings and certainly his performances, were in themselves a provocation to debate in both art and politics.

"I do not want to carry art into politics"

he said

"but make politics into art". (Narne, 1990, P.100)

Beuys worked with the attitude that art does not grow naturally, it emerges from a stock of concepts. And so, in three-dimensional work as in elsewhere, the most varied traditions within twentieth century art persist





and coexist, ranging from autonomous sculpture to the integration of everyday objects into art. Both in the making and showing of these works there is a strong emphasis on their quality as 'objects'. the aesthetic experience that clings to these objects is one of silence, and visual concentration. Hence, Beuys specialistic in a particular vocabulary of materials, objects he used in his sculptures, installations and actions, due to the meaning he had brought to them, were supposed to captivate the viewers associative capacity and stimulate, and provoke a 'reading' of the connections. Approaching art in this way gave way to obvious controversy, as many people found it hard to accept the aesthetic meaning (or the energy force as Beuys would have called it) reinforcing the work.

In his piece "Fat Chair" (Fig. 1) from 1964, he was stating his theories on "social sculpture", the principles of which are embodied in its form and material. The fat moves from a liquid, chaotic state when it is cold, relating to the moulding of society, representing his "Social Sculpture" theories. Thus the relevance of the material fat and the chair to make his object. However, the object can be read in another manner, in psychoanalytic terms, and perhaps more convincingly so. Obviously Beuys himself consciously implemented materials and forms that have a suggestive also associative quality of anality as a particular aspect of the infantile stages of instinct development.

"I placed it (fat) on a chair to emphasise 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 is compounded as a pun since "Sthul" (Chair) is also the polite way of saying "shit" (Stool), and that too is a used and mineralised material with chaotic character, reflected in the cross section of fat". (Bachloch, 1980, P. 30).





Figure 1

"Fat Chair" - (Fettstuhl)

Wooden Chair with Fat. 1960





Wooden Chair with Fac. 1900  
"Fac Chair" (Feltstahl)  
Figure 1

In response to this, critics accused him of being sexually neurotic, stressing the diagnosis of his wish to have sexual pleasure without being reminded of the difference of the sexes, perhaps a fear of castration. This is just one example among many illustrating Beuys' controversial background as an artist.

Beuys was obsessed by the consumer society, which is the basis for most cultures today. He felt uncomfortable about making art elite; art that is just for gallery goers and collectors. But he was caught in a situation where he had to exhibit in order to expand the ideas he had on society, politics, also life. In one way he overcame the problem by performances (actions) along with his constant installations. Nevertheless, objects he used in his actions became of value since he had made them. Beuys was said to have felt uneasy about the price put on his cut pieces; this is also one of the reasons for his use of everyday objects as a reaction against art as a commodity.

His blackboard pieces (Fig. 2) were valued within the region of thousands of pounds. These would have been the most fragile, for obvious reasons. He made "multiples" of works to try and break down the barrier permitting collectors to having access to his work only. This to a certain extent was a success, after all it was still a work by Joseph Beuys so it was bound within economic ties as a valuable art work. Therefore, before it was made, it would have had a price on its' head, so to speak. No matter how artists try to break the tie with the world of dealers, as well as collectors, they cannot, for they determine an artists' daily existence.







Page 1

Blackboard

Keep your feet on the ground and your hands on the blackboard.

It is not a good idea to stand on the blackboard.

Remember to keep your feet on the ground and your hands on the blackboard.

These are the rules for using the blackboard. Please follow them.



The museum is the final destination, both as a sign of cultural sanctioning, also as the final repository of their works. As time went by for Beuys he must have finally resigned himself to his fate as an artist. Despite all his political involvement, lecturing, use of unorthodox material, he may as well have used gold to cast, the finest quality paint to paint with, for he had become a commodity, the goose that laid the golden egg.

There have been court cases over accidents with his works. "Bathtub" (Fig. 3) was in the possession of the Munich art collector and publisher Futz Schimer. It was stored away after a touring exhibition in a gallery, then some women cleaned it out for the use of washing glasses at a conference. These poor women were completely oblivious to the damage they had caused by removing the gauze bandages, band-aids, lump of fat and Vaseline ointment. Schimer lodged a complaint with the State Court and received \$30,400 in damages. The same sort of event took place after Beuys had died. His piece "Fettecke" (Translated as "Greasy Corner") [Fig. 4] was an installation of fat in one corner in the studio Beuys had had while he was in the Dusseldorf Academy. The studio had been cleaned when his lease had expired. The plaintiff Stuttgart wanted damages of \$31,250. However, he lost the case, as it had been installed in Government buildings, hence there was no compensation from the Government.

Due to the intense hermeticism of many of his objects, and the jailed logic applied in his discussions, some theorists have chosen to reject the ideal that Beuys had a viable conceptual point of view.



Given his German nationality, and his apparent interest in reconstructing mythological references relative to his objects and installations, there was initially a deep suspicion about Beuys, especially in the early seventies when his work was being introduced to an American audience. It was difficult to make a case for Beuys at the time. The works looked weird and out of sync with other post minimal developments which were then being discussed in New York. Still, there was curiosity.

Beuys always stirred a certain amount of curiosity, wherever he went. It was centered around his work, his actions and his past. His performances with their avant-garde nature provoked comment. His use of scientific knowledge, given new meanings with spiritual overtones transformed batteries, animals and felt into other dimensions. In one of Beuys actions he provoked a student of his to punch him in the nose (Fig. 5). This, to Beuys, added an enthusiasm to the piece, so he had to take into account the unexpected as he never really knew if what he had planned would work out at all, or have repercussions of an unexpected nature.

Beuys was a Professor at the Dusseldorf Academy, where he himself had studied. He had a demonstration also with rejected applicant students in protest of the injustice of their rejections. They occupied the offices of the Academy. He was dismissed for his anarchy, he had been appointed in 1961 as a Professor and from that date until he was dismissed there was no peace until 10th October 1972 when the sit-in occurred. Beuys took the episode as a positive action, this truly meant the justification of his "Life Course/Work Course".

1. The first part of the document is a letter from the President of the United States to the Congress.

2. The second part is a report from the Secretary of the Treasury on the state of the Union.

3. The third part is a report from the Secretary of the Navy on the state of the Navy.

4. The fourth part is a report from the Secretary of the War on the state of the War.

5. The fifth part is a report from the Secretary of the Interior on the state of the Interior.

6. The sixth part is a report from the Secretary of the Agriculture on the state of the Agriculture.

7. The seventh part is a report from the Secretary of the Commerce on the state of the Commerce.

8. The eighth part is a report from the Secretary of the Education on the state of the Education.

9. The ninth part is a report from the Secretary of the Health on the state of the Health.

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15. The fifteenth part is a report from the Secretary of the Navy on the state of the Navy.

16. The sixteenth part is a report from the Secretary of the Interior on the state of the Interior.

17. The seventeenth part is a report from the Secretary of the Agriculture on the state of the Agriculture.

18. The eighteenth part is a report from the Secretary of the Commerce on the state of the Commerce.

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20. The twentieth part is a report from the Secretary of the Health on the state of the Health.

21. The twenty-first part is a report from the Secretary of the Labor on the state of the Labor.

22. The twenty-second part is a report from the Secretary of the Finance on the state of the Finance.

23. The twenty-third part is a report from the Secretary of the Justice on the state of the Justice.

24. The twenty-fourth part is a report from the Secretary of the State on the state of the State.

25. The twenty-fifth part is a report from the Secretary of the War on the state of the War.

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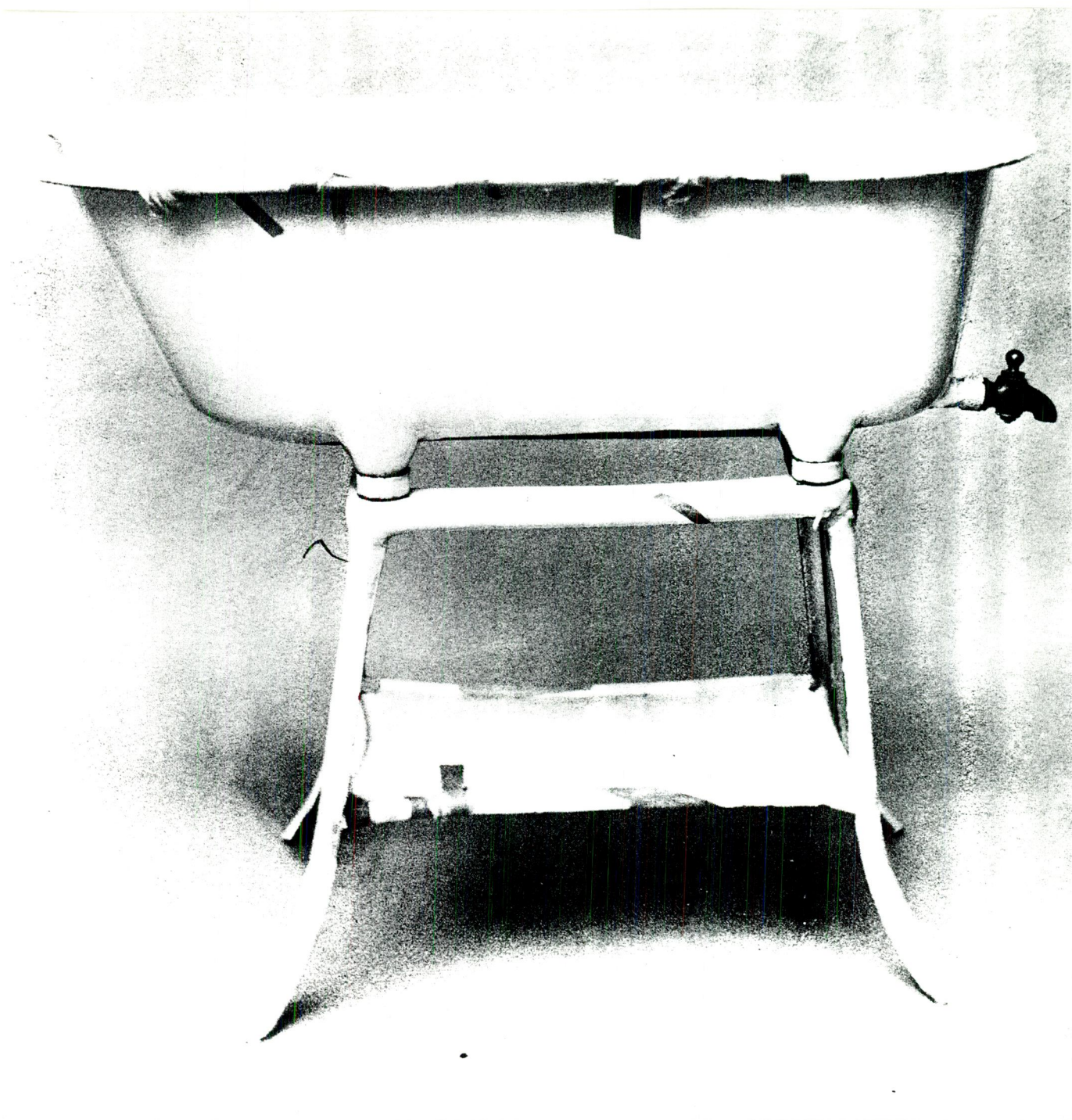


Figure 3

"Bathtub" 1960

Bathtub, Vaseline, gauze, band-aids

Bathcup, Vaseline, gauze, band-aids

"Bathcup" 1960

Figure 3



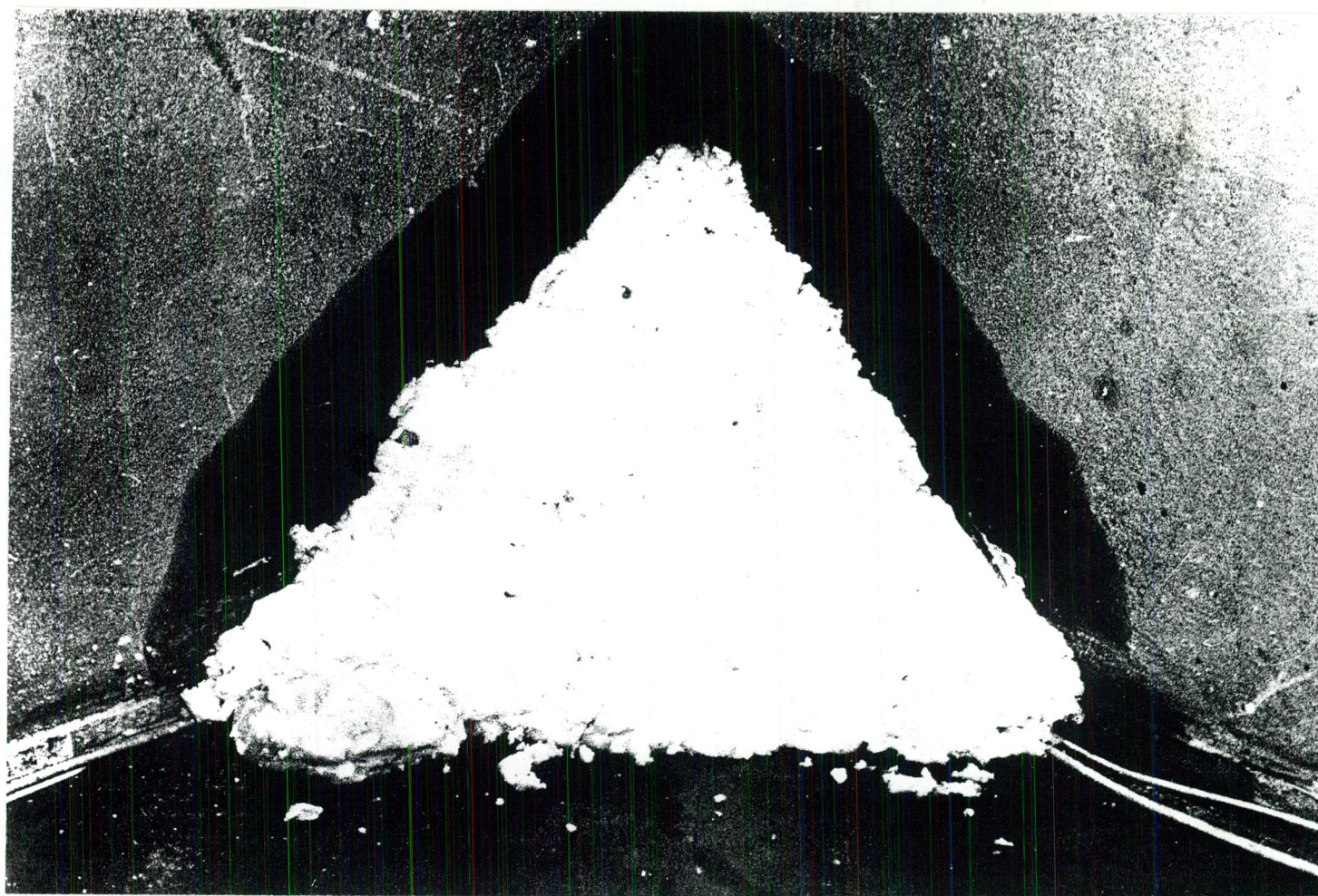


Figure 4

"Fettecke"

Fat Corner, similar to Greasy Corner, 1960.

Not only was in controversial to install fat in a corner, but with some of these installations he urinated on them.

Figure 4

"Fettecke"

Pat Corner, similar to Greasy Corner, 1960.

Not only was it controversial to install it in a corner, but with some of

these installations he installed on them.





Figure 5

Beuys action provoked a student to punch him in the nose



Figure 2

Ben's action provoked a student to punch him in the nose

This made the statement that he stood for his beliefs and was prepared to suffer the consequences, no matter what the cost was. He was radically transformed from avant-garde artist into a rebel with a cause. Quite paradoxically, in 1971, he didn't sign a list of protestation over the censorship and closing down of the show of Hans Haacke in the Guggenheim Museum, where a curator, Edward Fry, was fired. This list of signatures by artists and critics was a proof of international solidarity. It was astonishing the reluctance Beuys' showed in not committing himself. This was put down by artists to his reluctance to harm his good standing with the existing power structure of cultural institutions. This was a complete contradiction on his part, because he had always been outspoken about exactly the negative aspects of these very cultural institutions and his opposition towards them. The last Belgian artist, Marcel Broekmans, withdrew his contribution from a show which was shortly installed after the incident in the Guggenheim, in protest of the treatment of Haacke's and Fry's work, and published an open letter to Joseph Beuys in a Dusseldorf 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". (Buchloh, 1980, P.43).

The article goes on to comment about Beuys contradictions as an artist for acting as an activist, however subtly, he nevertheless seemed to have worked within the structure of the gallery system that is.





The esthetic conservation 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 aesthetic 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 aesthetics, as he repeats frequently, it is said that he thought real future political intentions must be artistic, or more outrageously:-

"How I actually bring it as theory to the totalised concept of art, which means everything. The totalised 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 legal forms on economic forms..... All questions of man can be only a question of form, and that is the totalised concept of art". (Buchloh, 1980, P.43).

If this is all he believes, then why did he not stand by his fellow artists and critics, and sign the protest letter for Brookthaers and Fry, as a sign of respect. The only reason to not have participated in that protest was for obvious political motivation, as Beuys **never** was attached to any one gallery but the Guggenheim played a large role in his life. For he had a lot of exhibitions there, so his non-involvement with the protest was a politically correct move for Beuys career.

There is still one more major controversy in the life of Beuys which will always remain a secret, that his crash in the Crimea. It is important to explain why there is such mystery enshrouding the entire episode or as



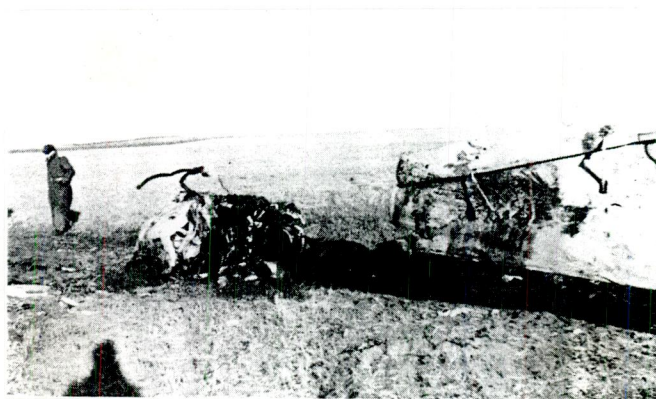


Figure 6  
Crash in the Crimea, 1943.

March 10, 1941



some people (critics) would refer to it as a myth. He was the only survivor when his plane was shot down in 1943 when he was a Stuka pilot in the Luftwaffe. The Tartars discovered Beuys in the total wilderness in the bottleneck area of the Crimea, in the wreckage of the JU87 (Fig. 6) 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 military hospital. Beuys own account of the crash is that he claims had it not been for the Tartars he would not be alive today. Yet it was they who discovered him in the snow after the crash, when the German search parties had given up. He was still unconscious then and only came round completely after twelve days or so, and by then Beuys was back in a German field hospital. The last thing he remembered was it was too late to jump, too late for the parachute to open. That must have been a couple of seconds before hitting the ground. Beuys' friend was strapped in and he was atomized by the impact - there was almost nothing to be found of him afterwards. But Beuys must have shot through the windscreen as it flew back at the same speed as the plane hit the ground and that saved him, though Beuys had bad skull and jaw injuries. Then the tail flipped over and Beuys was completely buried in the snow. That's how the Tartars found him some days later. Beuys remembered a voice saying "Voda" (water), then the felt of their tents and dense pungent smell of cheese, fat and milk. They covered his body in fat to help it regenerate warmth, and wrapped it in felt as an insulator to keep the warmth in.

(Buchloh, 1980, P.37).



His account sounds very reasonable until you see photographs of Beuys posing beside a crashed plane, with the inscription Beuys plane crash in the Crimea, there is no possibility that Beuys could have posed for a photograph straight after his plane had crashed. One more point, who took the photograph, the Tartars? Whether it is fact or fiction, it is very conceivable in war for occurrences of this nature to happen. I do not doubt it, but I feel that the origin of the story has possibly with time been glamorised by writers to convince us about the transcendental impact of Beuys artistic ability, but it may have marred the career of Beuys by exaggerating. People couldn't convince themselves of the truth behind the past. They may have found it hard to take his life works seriously. This incident of the myth or fact associated with Beuys illustrates the extent of controversy that followed his career. His philosophies were naturally very important to his life works for they were the foundation of all his actions. There too were very avant garde in post war Europe. The next chapter deals with this subject.





## CHAPTER TWO

### BEUYS' PHILOSOPHIES - THEIR IMPORTANCE

Beuys, artist, shaman, quasi-scientist, politician or sham? One definite truth, he was one of the most significant figures of contemporary art in post war Germany (and in Europe). He was a hero of the avant garde and the mass media simultaneously. Without Beuys young artists would not have the enormous range of options now so easily open to them. Beuys once said in an interview in 1978:-

"My objects are to be seen as stimulants for transformation of the idea of sculpture or of art in general. They should provoke thought about what sculpture can be extended to the invisible materials used by everyone".  
(Honsiar & Fleming, 1990, P.719).

How did he create this and why was this attitude beneficial to contemporary art? The above quotation refers to Beuys "Social Art" or "Social Sculpture". He believed that arts sets out to encompass more than just the physical material. Even for architecture, for sculpture in bronze or stone, for theatre performance, for our own speech, we need a spiritual foundation for social art, which every individual experiences and recognises himself or herself as a creative being in shaping and defining the world. Beuys statement "everyone is an artist" aroused so much attention and is still widely misunderstood. It refers to the shaping of the social body in which everyone not only can but must participate, so that we can carry out the transformation as quickly as possible.

CHINESE

REMARKS: THE IMPORTANCE

The importance of the Chinese language is often underestimated. It is the most spoken language in the world, with over 1 billion speakers. It is also one of the most ancient, with a history of over 3,000 years. The Chinese language is a member of the Sino-Tibetan language family, which is one of the largest language families in the world. It is a tonal language, meaning that the pitch of the voice is used to distinguish between different words. This makes it difficult for non-native speakers to learn, but it also gives it a unique beauty and richness.

The Chinese language is also a very important part of Chinese culture. It is the language of the Chinese people, and it is the language of the Chinese government. It is the language of the Chinese economy, and it is the language of the Chinese society. It is the language of the Chinese people, and it is the language of the Chinese government. It is the language of the Chinese economy, and it is the language of the Chinese society.

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Beuys was involved with avant-garde actions when he was a member of the Fluxus movement. This was a successor to Dada, it had abolished the traditional boundaries between art forms. The name Fluxus meant everything flowed into a single stream, visual art, music, theatre, words, sound, gesture, it was all one big show and the spectators were welcome. The performers, with Beuys at the fore, promised exciting entertainment with wrecked pianos, fat flickering televisions, head stands, dead animals, primal sounds, pandemonium, and all varieties of tomfoolery. He carried a wide choice of the unorthodox materials he used for his work throughout his life. In many works he used fat, felt, dead animals as previously mentioned and he also did performances with live animals. Fat was a major medium for Beuys, due to its liquid and solid states, and the theories he adapted from it.

"Fat was a great discovery for me... I was able to influence it with both heat and cold.... in this way I could transform the character of the fat from chaotic and unsettled state to a very solid condition of form. In this way the fat underwent a movement from a chaotic condition to a geometric context as its end. I thus had three fields of power over a condition of form. In these three elements - form, movement and chaos, was the indeterminate energy from which I derived my complete theory of sculpture, of psychology of humanity as power of will, the power of thought and the power of feeling and there I found it - the schema adequate to understanding all the problems of society". (Tisdal, 1979, P.20).

And in that sense is always a diagram, sometimes it is only a drawing which enables the transformation to take place. Works of art are fundamental "Richtkrafte" (directive forces), serving as models for the mind, indicators that offer the hope for life on this planet to continue through the medium of art.





The reality of art for Beuys was the charge that he brought to the materials he used, whether organic or inorganic, whether fat, wax, food, or plants, metal, felt, batteries or the tools of the sculptural studio brought together to make sculpture. He thought these changes that are within, they have the inner symbolic strength to change, or at least the possibility of changing the current order of life for the better. Beuys undertook searching explorations of how artistic creation can directly convey the existential attitudes of a more profound understanding of natural ecological relationships, and how an expanded concept of art can tackle even the social economic and political reorganisation of Western society. He saw this as necessary to replace the current ecology - destroying tendencies embodied in consumerism, patriarchy, statism, and capitalistic growth. He summarised the external societal problem as "complicity between the power of money and the power of the state". His solution for this was drawn from the anthroposophist Rudolf Steiner's "Three Fold Social Order". That is he proposed to separate the workings of the economy, legislative, politics and culture, so that they operate as three separate spheres. These are the theories of social sculpture which then went on to be the foundations for the "Energy Plan".

Beuys thought that only on condition of a radical widening of definitions would it be possible for art and activities related to art, provide evidence that art is now the only evolutionary-revolutionary power. Only art is capable of dismantling the repressive effects of a senile social system that continues to totter along the deathlines: to dismantle in order, to build "A Social Organism as a Work of Art".



Each person must point the way towards anthroposophical understanding through this field of work. That's why life is involved with politics too. If one of Beuys students should have one day reared their children in a better way, then for Beuys that would have been more important than just having taught a great artist. He thought that it was no longer possible to go by the old academic concepts of training great artists. But to him, it would always be a happy coincidence. Though the idea that art and the perceptions gained through art could create an element of backflow into life may be assumed. This is why Beuys had spurred on to try and change society through creative forces, all the time with Rudolf Steiner's theories as the basis for his own theories.

The "Energy Plan" was part of the thinking behind the Free International University for Creativity and Interdisciplinary Research, which Beuys and Nobel prize-winning novelist Heinrich Boll amongst others, had founded in Dusseldorf. Their conviction was that creativity is the key to change and evolution, and that it cannot be restricted to a narrow group of specialists called artists. Beuys said about these theories:-

"I'm not here to speak about the particular problems of artists, but about the whole question of potential, the possibility that everyone can do his own particular kind of art and work for new social organisation. Creativity is the national income". (Kuoni, 1990, P.7)

Beuys was convinced that creativity unattended would go to destructive ends. If someone didn't utilize their creative potential, their powers became negative, this was meant to be the case with criminals. Thus, with combined effort from the individual within society as a whole change would





be possible for co-existence in a healthier environment. With these philosophies he founded many more "Free Universities" in Europe, trying to create a society not based on consumerism as it is today. He also thought we should live in the present, not dwell in the past, and accept all responsibility for the wrongs with our environment and to take the initiative to try to change it for now and for future generations.

In 1974, Beuys accepted an invitation to visit the United States of America. His travels took him to New York, Chicago, and Minneapolis. He called the trip, in fact an extended performance piece - "Energy Plan for the Western Man". He aimed at recreating an all encompassing unity between material and spiritual, human, animal and vegative realms. This wholeness along - and not its extreme and singular coordinates would, in his opinion, carry on the survival for mankind in the fullest and most creative freedom. As much as his work suggests this unity, it also deals with the absence of oneness. From this approach came such works as the dialogue with coyote, in New York in 1974, and his concentration on an "Energy Plan for Western Man" so clearly evoking the notion of Eastern Man.

This was necessary because he felt that modern materialist, scientific through, was having a corrosive effect on our relationships to each other and the environment in general. He predicted that Western civilization would lend an increasingly imbalanced life due to a one-sided 'cult of the intellect', that the spiritual counterparts of feeling and willing were not adequately being taken into account, and that this would lead to a great increase in mental instability.

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These were the philosophies of Rudolf Steiner and his followers (Beuys), anthroposophists viewed the importance of the human spiritual development as a whole, developing the powers of thinking, feeling and willing (will power). These basic components here are also used by Beuys as the foundation of his "Theory of Sculpture", and from which he went on to formulate the "Energy Plan for Western Man". Steiner's basic premise was that these three elements are active elements in our souls or ethnic bodies and that these correspond to the head, limbs and chest in that order, that thinking always contains a small amount of feeling and willing, that feeling contains a small amount of thinking and willing, that willing contains a small amount of feeling and thinking. Feeling in thought contains the karmic outcome of the last lives on earth, the thinking and willing of the life of feeling, karmically determine our character, and the thinking and feeling if our will is what disconnects us in our present earthly lives, from karmic connections. Most of these theories came from Eastern mysticism. Steiner stresses the need to understand and exercise conscious control of will, that would lift mans thinking to a higher level, which would enable him to co-operate more consciously between the powers of thinking, feeling and willing. This quasi scientific approach to metaphysical concerns demonstrates, to a degree, the attempt by Steiner to bridge the gap between occult and materialistic attitudes. The notions of a higher level of thought are derived from Eastern and romantic notions.

Some aspects of Beuys were based on these philosophies which he wanted everyone's lives to be founded on. He was an avant-garde artist without a doubt, influenced by Rudolf Steiner and romantic ideals.





He wanted to derive from these some kind of Utopian society. He used unusual objects in his art, claiming he had charged them with energy from thought. This gave way to a transformation, from the ordinary into art (to have a concept brought to a higher level) but paradoxically he wanted us to perceive the ordinary as art, therefore it became accessible to everyone, hence "everyone is an artist". They have the ability for artistic creativity and we are all "living art". The use of the 'anti-art' objects also had a subliminal message against the consumer society upon which our whole society is based. This to Beuys was the "root of all evil". Beuys was ecologically active. He was involved with many environmental works, the planting of "7,000 Oaks" (Fig. 7). He helped to make documentaries about wild life. He constantly gave lectures, performances about his theories on culture, art, politics. While he spoke he demonstrated his ideas with diagrams on blackboards (this was inspired by Rudolf Steiner). The galleries and museums took these and exhibited these off-shots of his lectures. He performed with animals, mimicked animal sounds, talked to dead animals. In these actions he went further than Marcel Du Champ with his "anti-art" notions. Beuys became politically active, for him it was a natural progression to spread his ideals. He was a co-founder of the German Green Party and founded the Student Party. He stood as a candidate in the German political elections.

However, his political aspirations were obviously not very successful as he was beaten in the general elections in Germany. Beuys was a revolutionary activist, he helped with women's problems, wanting wages for housewives.







Figure 7

"7,000 Oaks" 1974.

The ecological action, the planting of 7,000 oaks, which Beuys' son Wenzel completed for him after his death.

Figure 1  
"7,000 Oaks" 1934  
The following action, the planting of 7,000 oaks, was a project and goal  
completed by his wife his death.



He had slogans like "Now what can I do for you?". His involvement with the tightly structured organisations (Government and political parties) and institutions (Galleries and academic) was not very successful, which was illustrated by his dismissal when he was a Professor at the Dusseldorf Academy in 1972, also his failure in the German political elections.

Joseph Beuys truly incorporated his philosophies of art becoming a part of life, that it should not be abstracted from everyday living in "living sculpture", and made artists aware that to be an artist didn't mean you had to stop producing art you liked and just produce it for a gallery. Art is not a specialised product, where an elite group in society have the only access to viewing it and possessing it. So it wasn't about being hung on walls or viewed in a gallery space, or a commodity for collectors to invest in, but a medium which anyone could use to express their notions about life, as they saw it in their time and place. The art piece didn't have to be of any specific medium, the only important tool that is required is the charge that you put into it (the concept), using a concept validated the motive.

This attitude of Beuys is important for the appreciation of his life works and his art. It is all too clear that Beuys wanted to reorganise the integration of art into politics and life. But he was unsuccessful with the normal avenues available, perhaps he should have invented new ones, or just alternatively just concentrated on one area to a greater extent.



## CHAPTER THREE

### THE SHAMAN

Contemporary artists have become increasingly aware of their role as shamans in part because of the proliferation of the anthropological knowledge about this subject following the Second World War. Beuys was obviously well acquainted with this knowledge, so it is important to discuss what values shamans are supposed to have and where they are suited to fit into society and why. In the article "The Shaman is a Gifted Artist" by Mark Levy in *High Performance*, 1988, he discusses the role of the shaman in contemporary society with relation to Joseph Beuys. He says the shaman does not feel alienated from the rest of the society, his or her differences are utilized in an accepted role. Like the shaman, the modern artist is different in character from the rest of society. Yet in materialistic cultures the unusual individual, notwithstanding an extraordinary ability to have a vision and express it, is suspect, and the modern artist frequently feels alienated from the rest of society regardless of the degree of monetary reward. It is important to recognise that the modern artist/shaman functions in this role for only a very limited audience, those who are willing and able to appreciate avant-garde aesthetic languages and are open to spiritual gratifications in the work of art.

Often the individual selected for the shamanic initiation in a tribal society is marked by some physical or psychological trait that

# CHAPTER THREE

## THE ALPINE

The first thing we saw when we reached the top of the mountain was a vast, open landscape. The air was clear and the sun was shining brightly. We had reached the summit of the mountain, and it was a wonderful feeling. The view was amazing, and we were all in good luck. The weather was perfect, and we were all happy. The trip was a success, and we were all proud of what we had achieved.

We had been climbing for hours, and it was a long and difficult journey. But we had made it to the top, and it was all worth it. The view was incredible, and we were all in good luck. The weather was perfect, and we were all happy. The trip was a success, and we were all proud of what we had achieved.

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distinguishes him or her from the rest of society. This is usually the result of an illness or trauma that makes it difficult for the individual to take on a normal role in tribal society. Andreas Lommel argues in his monograph 'Shamanism : The Beginnings of Art', that

"certain shamanistic phenomenon corresponds to the modern definition of mental disorders"

but goes on to say

"that it is precisely the ability to cure himself, and progress from let us say, a negative psychological state, to a positive and productive one, that constitutes the difference between him and the modern psychotic".  
(Lommel, 1986, P.20)

For Lommel, the shaman gets relief from his neurotic condition in artistic expression. Yet Lommel's view of shamanism as a kind of neurosis, is not shared by most other anthropologists writings today. A.P. Elkin, for example, in 'Aboriginal Men of High Degree' maintains that the aboriginal shamans

"have taken a degree in the secret of life beyond that taken by most adult males, a step which implies discipline, mental training, courage and perseverance".  
(Elkin, 1977, P.66)

In any event shamans require an abnormal level of sensitivity to maintain contact with the spirit world and this may lead to nervous disorders if the shaman is not properly grounded.

Joseph Beuys fits into all the categories of the above. He bore war wounds, which were both mental and physical, as he was wounded on numerous occasions, and was held captive in an English Prisoner of War Camp at the

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end of the Second World War. After the war he had a depression caused by a failed relationship with his fiancée. He did several drawings with women as the dominating feature (fig. 8). He worked as a farm labourer on the Van Der Gunten's farm for a year. He must have felt alienated by being rejected both emotionally as well as mentally, due to the obvious hostility which would naturally have been a reaction to his involvement in the war. Afterwards when he needed the most amount of support he was rejected in love, resulting in a mental breakdown.

As always Beuys was determined to find a positive aspect from a negative situation, when he recalled his war years he termed them as a "learning process", since after all he did attend the Reich University where he had learned a lot. Beuys had turned to practice art after being seriously wounded as a German Stuka pilot on the Russian Front.

It is said that Beuys has said about his war time experiences the positive aspect of this was the start of a new life. The whole thing was a therapeutic process. For Beuys it was a time when he realised the important role the artist can play indicating the traumas of the time, and initiating a healing process. That relates to medicine, or what people call alchemy or shamanism. Beuys has taken this form of ancient behaviour as the idea of transformation through a concrete process of life, nature and history. His intention is obviously not to return to such earlier cultures but to stress the idea of transformation and substance. That is precisely how the shaman can operate genuinely, only in a society that is still intact because it lies in an earlier stage of development. Our society is far







Figure 8

"Nudes" 1954 - 1955

Women, dominant feature in his work during his depression.

Figure 1

Figure 2

Figure 3

from intact, but this too is a necessary stage. It's the point of crisis that sets in at every stage of history and which we can observe in the past. Once completeness has gone, a kind of metamorphosis begins according to Beuys. While shamanism makes a point in the past it also indicates a possibility for historical development. When people say that shamanistic practice is activist and irrational, one might answer that the attitude of contemporary scientists is equally old fashioned and activist, because we should be now be at another state of development in relationships to the material. When Beuys appears as a kind of shamanistic figure or alludes to it he did it to stress his beliefs in other priorities and the need to come up with a completely different plan for working with substances. For instance:

"in places like universities, where everyone talks too rationally, it is necessary for a kind of enchanter to appear". (Tisdal, 1979, P. 28).

It could be said that Joseph Beuys presented himself as a shaman through his attire, he usually appeared in his performances wearing a businessman's hat. According to Beuys

"this hat represents another kind of head and functions like another personality. Many people are strangely involved with it and it works like a permanent theatre, there in front of people's eyes but not immediately decipherable. When they describe it flatly as a trade mark this is because the meaning is not really clear to them. That's exactly what I meant when I talked of the shaman. It is impossible to decipher precisely the way it functions. A simple meaning would be that the hat can do the work and acts a vehicle - and I personally am not so important".  
(Tisdal, 1979, P.13)





Beuys was interested in German mythology and especially influenced by the German composer, Richard Wagner 1813 - 1883. Wagner revived primitive native heroes and gods, they sang of doom, who then rushed towards their own annihilation, this reflected a web of crime and deceit... The word Mythos began at this time and it began to occupy a central position in German thought. Wagner provoked the belief that myth not only opened the way to a deeper understanding of reality and its fundamental values - the concrete folk and a rather vague God - but myth was also acclaimed as a life-enhancing and life-renewing force. Wagner's ideals Beuys had adjusted to suit him, in the twentieth century, along with the Romantics, Goethe and expressionists. With these philosophers and movements they do not denote a systematic philosophy, nor interims of art, a unified style, but rather an attitude - to life and the universe. With this way of thinking Beuys strongly connected to all who seemed to see the hypocrisy of the middle class materialism. Thus, as a reaction to this, he continued the romantic preoccupations, with universal ultimates, through a variety of means, most strongly evoked in his performances.

Beuys shamanistic attitude was inspired by a holistic approach to life, obviously founded from anthroposophical theories, one anthroposophist in particular, Rudolf Steiner. The anthroposophical theories evoked a holistic (whole) reaction to living. This meant simply the spiritual could not be detached from the physical. In order to have this attitude, or enlightenment, you have to die to be reborn. A depression or illness will bring this about, both of which happened to Beuys. His crash in the Crimea could be translated as a death, also his depression, then the acceptance of



a new life as an artist, to express his new being and beliefs. This also is the shaman tradition of initiation. Not only had Beuys been influenced by the Dadaists, Marcel Du Champ, and his involvement with the Fluxons Movement, these all gave way to his avant-garde, unorthodox approach, if you like. It was all a natural descent from Rudolf Steiner (his shamanistic technique).

Rudolf Steiner 1861 - 1925, was the most highly regarded figure of the post World War Two avant-garde art scene in Europe. He was the acknowledged mentor of Beuys "spiritual evolution", a once highly influential figure in German cultural life, but one of which today still remains largely unknown to art historians. Amongst schools founded by Steiner there are other projects that have grown out of Steiner's work, they include schools for defective children, therapeutic clinics, scientific and mathematical research centres, schools of drama, speech, painting and sculpture. Also eurythmy, an art of movement to speech and music, it means in fact performance art. Steiner, Austrian born, through the course of his life was a practicing scientist, artist, editor, as well as being the founder of anthroposophy, a spiritual movement still active in Europe, also in the U.S. It is based on the notion that there is a spiritual world, comprehensible to the pure thought, but accessible only to the highest faculties of mental knowledge. Steiner believed that man once participated more fully in spiritual process of the world through a dreamlike consciousness but had since become restricted by his attachment to material things. The renewed training the human consciousness to rise above





attention to matter. The ability to achieve this goal by an exercise of the intellect is theoretically innate in everyone.

Steiner concerned himself with questions about art. He provided the concrete means by which simultaneously to decipher, and thus to elevate to comprehensive philosophical level. This was the starting point for Beuys' incursion into such diverse fields as education, performance art, pseudo-science, religion, economics, sociology and the whole pressing question of contemporary social order. (Illustration - Fig. 9).

So Beuys involvement of spirituality was a counter reaction, or a reflection to the atmosphere in which he lived. Hence, the more eccentric his performances became, they were counter-balancing his emotions corresponding to the time. Inevitably the work became more informed, therefore it became more shamanistic, more unfathomable to those who didn't understand his language, and ignorant to their environment.

Often Beuys' performances (actions) involved lengthy rituals, with some kind of acoustic accompaniment, putting both him and his audience in a trance state. In "How to Explain Pictures to a Dead Hare" (November 1975) [Fig. 10] he would rhythmically tap the non sole attached to his shoe on the hard stone floor. This was especially effective as a sonic trance instrument, since his explanations to the hare, lasting some three hours, were mute. Beuys' "How to Explain Pictures to a Dead Hare" was a complex tableau about the problem of language, and about the problems of thought, of human consciousness and of course the consciousness of animals. This is

The first part of the paper is devoted to a discussion of the general principles of the theory of the structure of the human mind. It is shown that the mind is a complex system of interacting elements, and that the structure of the mind is determined by the nature of these elements and the way in which they are connected. The second part of the paper is devoted to a discussion of the specific principles of the theory of the structure of the human mind. It is shown that the mind is a complex system of interacting elements, and that the structure of the mind is determined by the nature of these elements and the way in which they are connected.

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Figure 9

Joseph Beuys, "How to Explain Pictures to a Dead Hare", 1965.

This action lasted for a few hours. He made noises with foot, his head was covered with honey and gold.



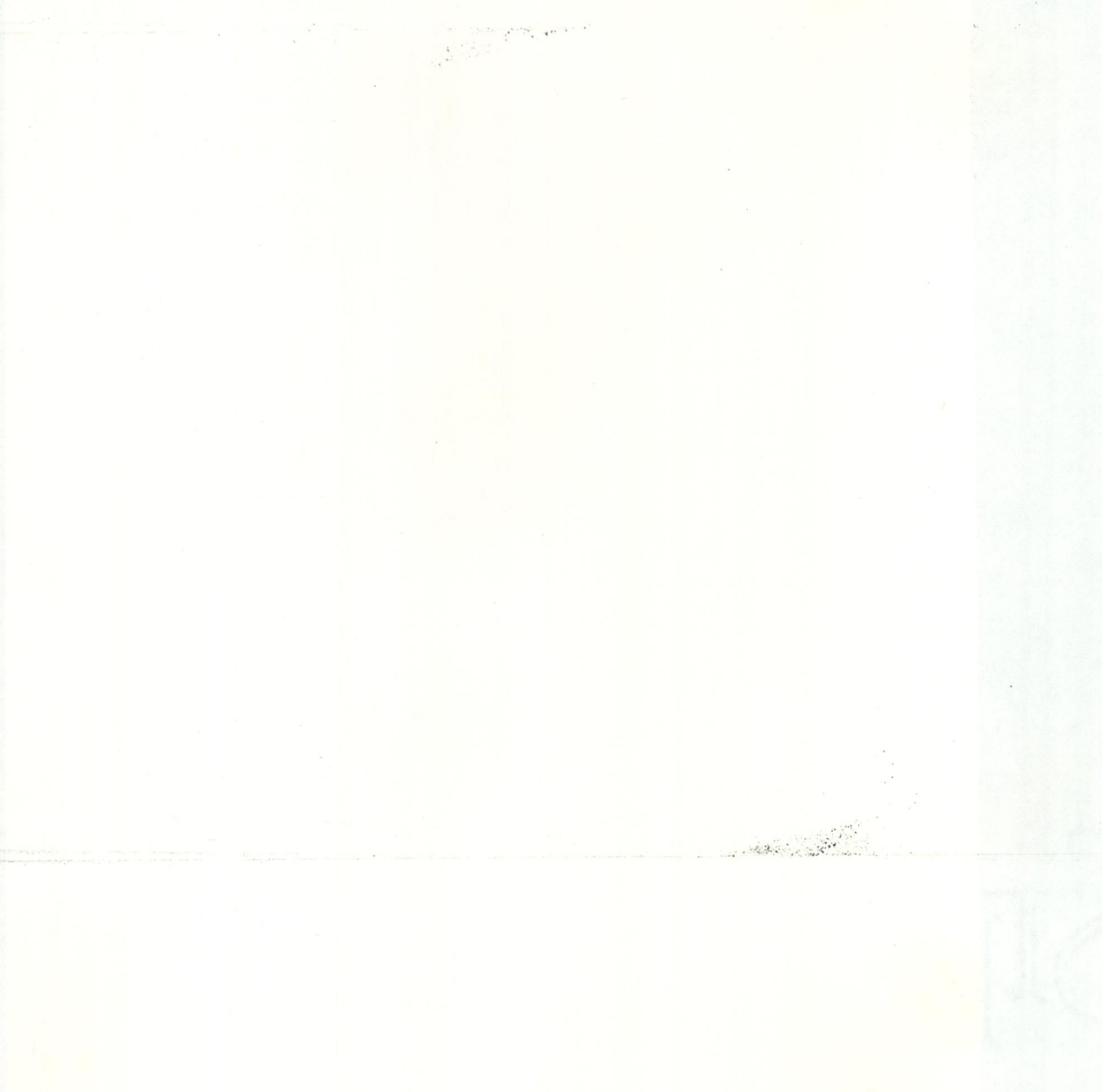


Figure 2

Joseph Benys, "How to Explain Pictures to a Dead Hare", 1955.

This action lasted for a few hours. He made noises with foot, his head was

covered with honey and gold.



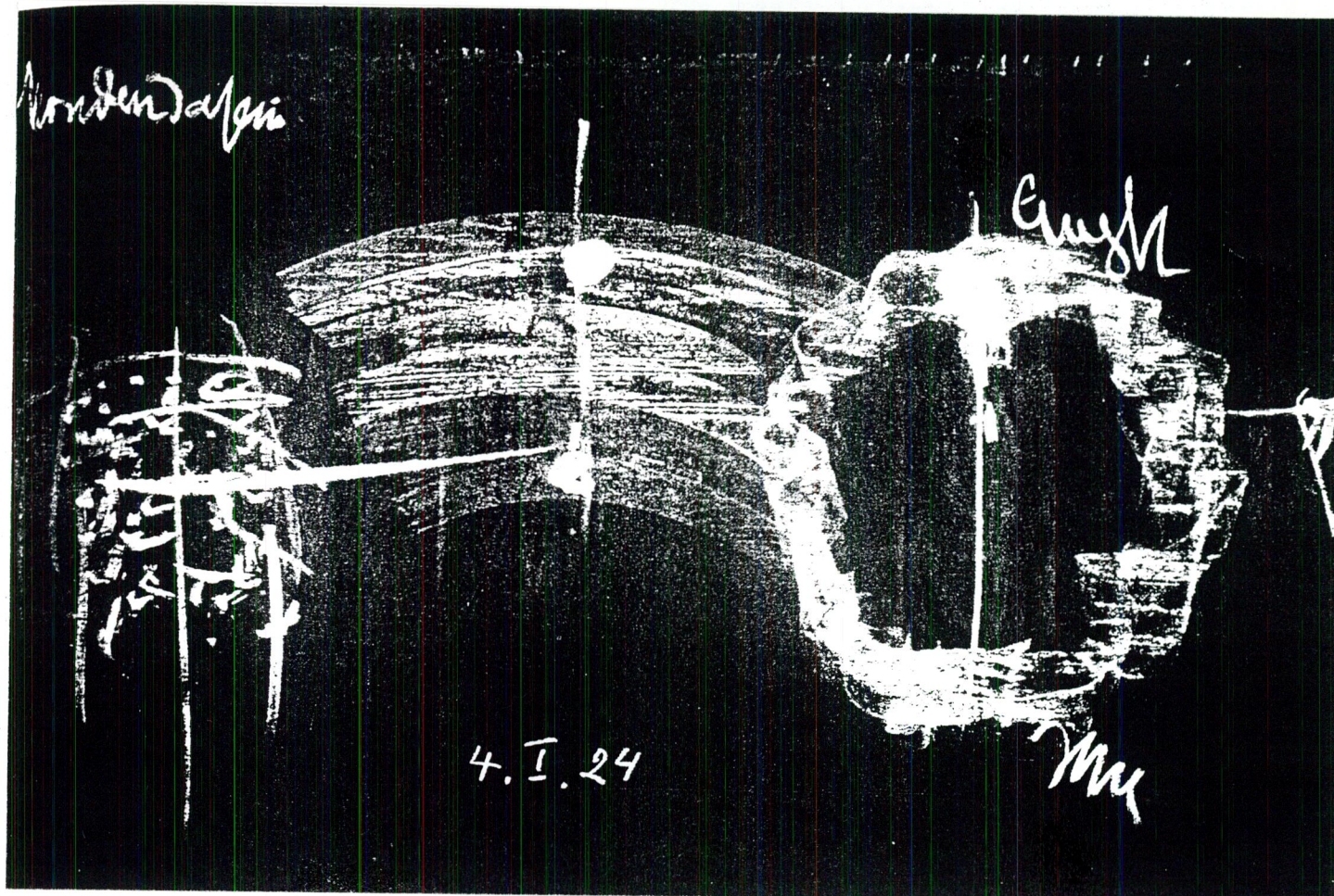


Figure 10

Steiner, 1924.

Theories on Society



Theories on Society  
Steiner, 1924.  
Figure 10

placed in an extreme position, because this is not just an animal, but a deal animal. Even the dead animal preserves more powers of intuition than some human beings with their stubborn rationality. (Tisdal, 1979, P.10). Beuys applied a mask of honey and gold to his head, symbolizing his transformation out of the realm of reason - a necessary requirement to understanding the hare's language. To be sure, shamans often converse with their power animals in a trance state, the animal responding through elliptical body language, ambiguous images or even irrational human speech. Consequently Beuys' dominant use of animals within his actions, installations and his sculptures. The animals could be dead or alive. The elusive power their presence gave to the piece was unquestionable, whether the viewers response was that of shock, or adoration first. However, a deeper knowledge of his work is needed to accept his shamanistic application of concepts and use of foils (i.e. animals, felt, fat, etc.). Otherwise it will seem at first glance very avant-garde. Even a reflection on Dada methods will give the viewer a brief understanding, or else one might find the whole action austere, or just simply ridiculous. One aspect of his shamanistic methods which quite simply involve the use of live animals, I cannot help but think whether the animal had any choice to participate with the whole charade, obviously it had no say. In another performance "I Like America and America Likes Me" (May 1974) [Fig. 11] at the Rene Block Gallery in New York, Beuys communicated for seven days with a coyote that had just been taken from the wilderness. Beuys said about this work:

"I believe I made contact with the psychological trauma point of the United States' energy constellation : the whole American trauma with the Indian, the Red Man. You could say that a reckoning has to be made with the coyote, and only then can the trauma be lifted".  
(Tisdal, 1979, P.228)

For the purpose of this study, the following data were collected from the various sources mentioned above. The results of the study are presented in the following table.

The first part of the study was devoted to a general survey of the various sources of information available. This was done in order to determine the scope and extent of the problem. The second part of the study was devoted to a detailed examination of the various sources of information. This was done in order to determine the reliability and validity of the information. The third part of the study was devoted to a comparison of the various sources of information. This was done in order to determine the relative importance of each source. The fourth part of the study was devoted to a summary of the results of the study. This was done in order to provide a clear and concise statement of the findings.

The results of the study are as follows: The first part of the study showed that there are a number of sources of information available. The second part of the study showed that the reliability and validity of the information varies from source to source. The third part of the study showed that the relative importance of each source varies from source to source. The fourth part of the study showed that the results of the study are as follows:



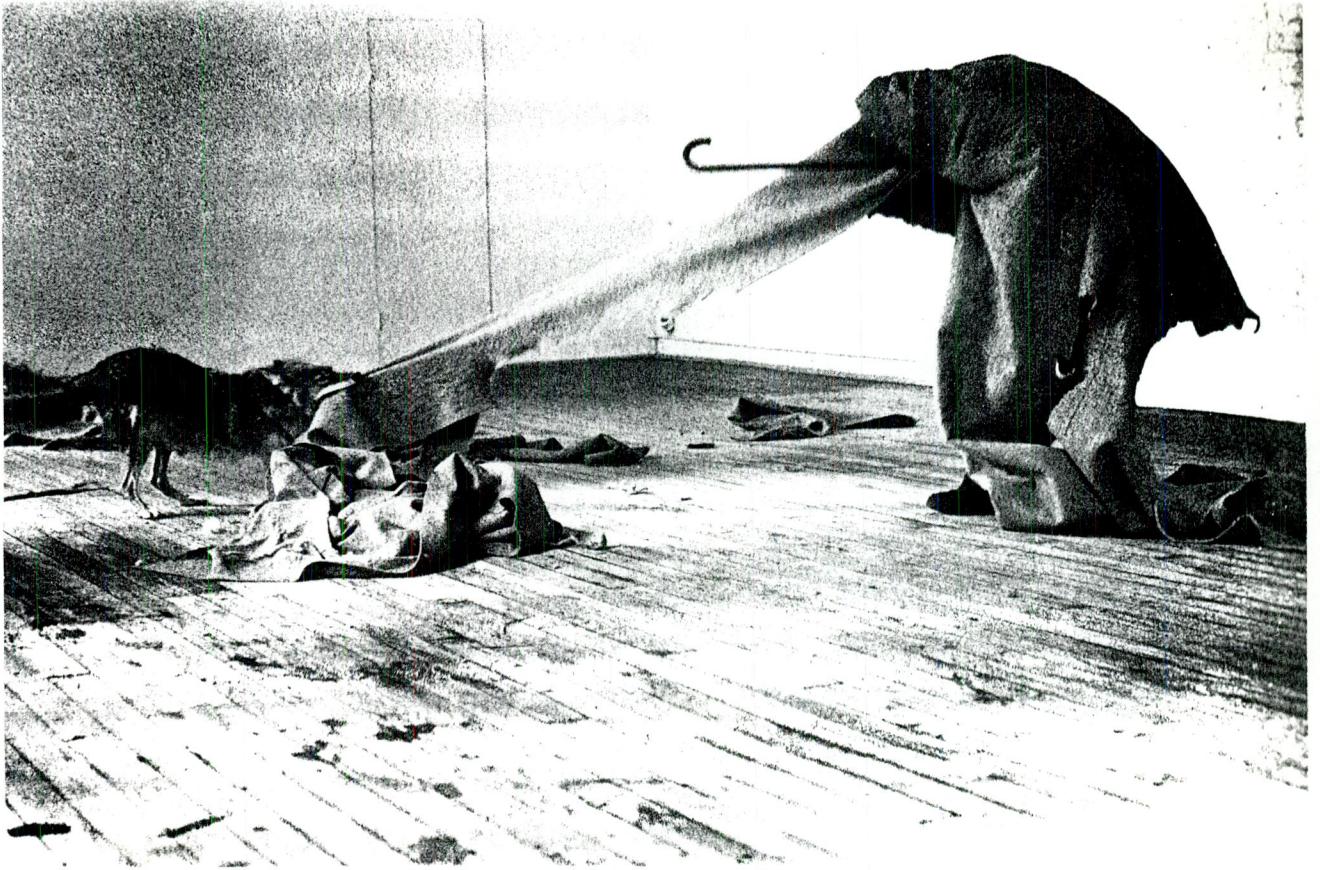


Figure 11

I like America, America Likes Me

Dialogue with Coyote

Dialogue with Coyote  
I Like America, America Likes Me  
Episode II



Beuys knew that for the American Indian, especially Pueblos, the coyote is one of the most powerful of animals, a trickster figure that symbolises their own marginal status in American society. To emphasise the American trauma with the Indians, Beuys, completely wrapped in felt, was taken directly from the airport to the Gallery in an ambulance. During the day Beuys maintained steady eye contact with the coyote and mimicked its actions. he also presented several man made objects to the coyote, its apparent favourite being the Wall Street Journal, which it urinated on. Witnesses claim that Beuys reached an uncanny level of rapport with the coyote, which was deeply moving.

I'm sure the entire incident was deeply moving, and obviously if you are in a room with a wild animal for a whole day, it is going to focus its attention on you solely. However, this was one of the points Beuys was trying to carry across, but I still find myself without a doubt feeling uneasy about his methods of capturing a wild animal. Holding it a prisoner for a few days, and perhaps then letting it back into the wild, of course the animal will be completely traumatized along with the Red Indians and the entire United States of America. It certainly made his intention apparent, though it still didn't eliminate the fact that, after his performance, there was a disorientated coyote walking around not exactly knowing what had happened to it.

Beuys' shamanism was a rejection to a consumerism society, based in a technological age. His ritualistic performances, echoing Steiner's





eurythmy, caused controversy. However, Beuys didn't reject the gallery as the venue for these performances, he still worked within the institutional framework. His German heritage played an important role in his life works as well as with his actions. This is quite unavoidable, Beuys emphasized it and made it a major part in his life works. The final chapter explores the importance of his past as a German.

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## CHAPTER FOUR

### THE GERMAN LEGACY

The most representative element of German art after 1945 is painting and its protagonists (that is activist artists), the painters on the one hand and their counter-model, Joseph Beuys, on the other. What they have in common is their production of energy, and the representation of this energy with the pride of a loser. Pride as a technique of survival and of surmounting. But one with which they tie themselves to their own history, to the basis of disturbance. German art cannot be free from contentment. It remains under the influence of its own history.

Despite the necessity of a radical new start after the War. History obviously cannot be obliterated. German art since 1945 is an evasion of this history, but it is also a processing of the same.

In the aftermath of Nazi dictatorship, Beuys assumed the role of the "good" leader, contrary to Adolf Hitler, the "dark" leader of Germany. The failed artist (Hitler) his creativity without artistic expression, was then channelled to negative projects, this corresponds to Steiner's theories about creativity, not used properly, will become destructive. These projects included ethnic cleansing, the censorship of works, the advocating of 'book burning', the imprisonment, as well as the extermination of radical thinkers of the time, of whom he may have considered dangerous to his policies. Beuys advocacy of a Nietzschean concept of the sculptural practice.

CHAPTER FOUR  
THE CHINESE WAY

The Chinese government has been successful in its efforts to bring about a rapid increase in the country's economic growth. This has been achieved through a combination of factors, including the implementation of a series of reforms and the adoption of a development strategy that has been tailored to the country's specific needs. The government has also been successful in maintaining a high level of political stability, which has been a key factor in its economic success. The Chinese government has also been successful in maintaining a high level of social stability, which has been a key factor in its economic success. The Chinese government has also been successful in maintaining a high level of political stability, which has been a key factor in its economic success. The Chinese government has also been successful in maintaining a high level of social stability, which has been a key factor in its economic success.



The nineteenth century German philosopher and writer, Friedrich Nietzsche, was one of the most influential modern thinkers. His attempts to unmask the root motives that underline traditional Western religion, morality and philosophy, deeply affected generations of intellectuals. He thought through the consequences of the triumph of the enlightenment's secularism, expressed in his observation that "God is dead", in a way that determined the agenda for all of Europe's most celebrated intellectuals after his death in 1900. Although he was an ardent foe of nationalism, anti-semitism, and power politics, his name later became involved by Fascists to advance the very things he loathed. With "God is dead" Nietzsche thought that most men could not accept the eclipse of the ascetic ideal, and the intrinsic meaninglessness of existence, but would seek supplanting absolutes to invest life with meaning.

The Nietzschean sculptural concept enabling us

"to overcome the past - to grow, to transform and digest  
the past and that which is unfamiliar; to heal wounds,  
to replace that which is lost, to repair broken forms"  
(Lloyd, 1990, P.26)

For Beuys this could have been said to have been his personal motto. For he overcame the past, his war involvement, as well as his depression. He truly grew from those experiences, learning from them, also he changed, metamorphosis occurred, transforming him from scientific to artistic thinking. He moved from the field of science into the unexplained spiritual area, and associated it with his art. Beuys also wanted this to be the ease for observers with his works, his use of avant-garde actions,



and unorthodox materials in sculpture. He came to terms with all his open wounds and took on the project, to try to heal the wounds of the nation.

This, the very subject, which is not discussed at any great length by critics, however, it is of the greatest importance. For not only was Beuys a controversial figure, avant-garde, shamanistic, political, he also was intensely influenced by his country, as well as its past. So Beuys, in his own way, took it upon itself to a certain extent, to heal his country as well as himself. Through the process of art and politics, as well as their integration, Beuys personal charisma, which was felt by all who met him, attracted a strong following. But it also hindered serious critical discussion about his art. For all his talks about dialogue and cooperation, Beuys public persona in later years was characterised by dogmatic egomania. This was perhaps Beuys most apparent stigma. If he had been taken seriously, who knows, he could have been the next biggest leader in Germany. But a healing force opposing that of the carnage which was the inheritance of the divided post war Germany.

Beuys use of the anthroposophical approach to life works, based on Rudolf Steiner's views of an eclectic mixture of Eastern and Western mysticism, was a logical move, as then his theories were seen as a force representing a kind of benign mysticism within the mystical/magical tradition in Germany, opposing that of the malign occultism of the Nazis. Beuys revival in the German philosophic traditions, with Nietzsche, transforming his theories to their original state, the reintegration of Wagner, but using





his positive aspects of the Mythos, not the carnage of battles but the spiritual, the revival in Steiner's pure spirituality which has already been discussed to some extent in the previous chapter.

In the Second World War, Hitler saw a rival in Steiner, so he declared him the greatest enemy of the Nazi Party. However, this didn't stop the patronage of the Nazi minister Darre practice the anthroposophical methods and theories of farming which thrived in Nazi Germany. Both Hess and Darre, were enthusiastic about what we call today "Green Issues", very ironically funded the progression of their greatest enemy, Steiner's theories. Nazi Germany was also the first country in Europe to establish nature reserves; paradoxically they had the mass phenomena of merchandised warfare and organised extermination, which arguably represents an extreme degree of the imposition of "Enlightenment", instrumental rationality in the service of destruction. About as far from the ecological perspective as one could possible get. This presents Beuys' use of Rudolf Steiner, as a "guru" type figure, being a very positive move to rebuild a nation through art. In a certain respect, Beuys could be compared to Hitler, as he had an utopian ideal of this world, which he wanted future generations to grow up in.

Beuys went on a mission, to rebuild society as a whole new environment in which people could develop artistically, through creativity. Beuys was attempting to restore the "soul faculties" of his audience. The real purpose behind this is a healing ritual, or homeopathic magic, which attempts to restore the lost unity of man, with the spiritual and with



nature. Beuys' work developed in the middle and late 1950's, his intellectual and esthetic formation must have occurred somehow in the preceding decade. He was trying to overcome 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. Causing a rupture in history that left mental blocks and blanks as well as severe psychic scars on everybody living in this period, and the generations to follow it.

Beuys' individual myth, that of his crash in the Crimea, can be said to be that of an attempt to come to terms with those blocks and scars. When he quotes the Tartars as saying:

"'Du nix njenacky' (you are not German), they would say,  
'Du Tartar' and try to persuade me to join their clan..."  
(Tisdal, 1979, p.72)

it can be translated as Beuys trying to deny his participation in the German War, thus his renouncement of his German citizenship. This could be looked at as an act of cleansing, washing his hands of the world affair of the war, that is metaphorically speaking. In this action of renouncement he then had nothing to do with the carnage of war. Then he could assume with a clear conscience, the new role of leader, to bring the victims of war into a new society through the passive expression of art. This too was made more apparent through his shamanistic approach, that is the rejection of science, the association with technology for the production of arms. Hence his alchemistic approach (the integration of spiritual with science) to art and his adoption of the shaman. The healer, the sage who has knowledge of the mystical, of things supernatural.





It could be said that Beuys' dislike of hoarding art, as well the elitism associated with it, may have reminded him of the greed of the Nazi reign. That is their large collections of art works, which were private as well as their interest in it as an investment. His disregard of art as a commodity could be put down to this. Hence his act of making art something non-precious (illustrated by his use of unorthodox materials, and non-permanent art). Nevertheless, his work was still hoarded by collectors and galleries despite his 'actions'. Even these became of value on the monetary scale as his 'props' were then collected up afterwards, to be sold and exhibited.

In "The Twilight of an Idol" by Buchloh, Art Forum 1980, he discussed Beuys as a national hero through his art works and life works. He says that in the work and public myth of Joseph Beuys the German spirit of the post war period finds its new identity. this occurs by pardoning and reconciling itself prematurely with its own reminiscences of a responsibility for one of the most cruel as well as devastating forms of collective political madness that history has known. This collective political madness Beuys tried to transform some twenty years later, into a peaceful reorganisation of society. That is, he tried to use the mass to change politics, but it didn't work for Beuys.

Richard Wagner's work had anticipated and celebrated these collective regressions into Germanic mythology and Teutonic stupor within the realms 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 Beuys' work the



absurd aftermath of that nightmare, a grotesque coda acted out by a perfidious trickster. Speculators in Beuys' work did well, as he was bound to become a national hero of the first order, however deranged - national self and historic identity.

However, Beuys had not anticipated, as no one had, the destruction of the Berlin Wall, or the regeneration of the neo-Nazis, the new contention in Germany as a united whole. These new advances in history have made the "national guilt" of the past horror, lie deeply with the prospect of a rebirth, Germany is a country on tenterhooks, about the very guilt they have exorcised, will they have to do it again, another exorcism? Is it necessary? It is a shame, but ironical, the national hero is needed most now, but he is dead. A paradox of the time, perhaps he came too soon for Germany or maybe the collective nation has learned from this ascetic artist.

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## CONCLUSION

When Joseph Beuys died he was still a controversial figure. Despite his widely acknowledged position as the leading artist in Europe, his work continued to provoke and confound expectations, as it always had. For this reason Beuys is an extremely complex subject. So any sort of judgement becomes difficult, and criticising this artist who has such a reputation is even harder. Very simply, there are two trains of thought with regard to Beuys: those who admire and those who find him as an unorthodox radical. Beuys consists of a diverse series of contradictions, however his life works, actions, sculptures, installations and theories all overwhelm these. One of the most striking fundamental contradictions was the fight between the free messianic spirit, and the institutions that received such a man into their rigidly structured framework (that is galleries and museums). this is, in itself, quite a paradox! Nevertheless, these were the only channels available as outlets for his actions and works to be observed in, with the exception of political involvement.

Beuys tackled the restructuring of society with his political activities. However, he wasn't as successful in this area as his production of art! Perhaps his aspirations were just a little too radical for the political system, since his aims included the rebuilding of society as we know it now. Through his numerous actions he explained his theories on the reconstruction of society. Beuys' acted the showman-shaman in these; his imagery, as well as his language, was specialised, thus his audience



possibly became more specialised. This caused a large amount of attention, however, it was probably more negative in effect for his motives as he was regarded as a controversial figure, firstly. With no immediate knowledge of his theories, it is easy to dismiss Beuys as an eccentric with no serious value to his work, but just trying to evoke a quick response.

In later years, Beuys grew more pessimistic about the possibility of social change through the use of conventional methods (that is the Green Party). He placed more emphasis on the self-determination of the individual ego, as the only true social reshaping force. This reflected strongly on his work, it progressed into more monumental pieces. these examples were all in his final, 1985: "The End of the Twentieth Century" (Fig. 12), "Plight" (Fig. 13), and his final installation "Regale" (Fig. 14). His final installation may be regarded as a personal tribute to himself, the conclusion of his works with pending death. Consequently he died exactly one month later, on the 23rd of January 1986, after it had opened. This was the ultimate transformation of his life into art. This epilogue of Beuys' proves his devotion for his ideals to the very end.

The work of Beuys is now detached from the ultimate creative force, its creator. this is more evident with the objects presented in showcases. One finds oneself confronted with the most important contradiction with Beuys' work as an artist: remnants and relics of actions cannot replace the actions themselves. In fact, this can be considered as a fundamental flaw in the life course works of Beuys, he cannot continue after he is dead.







Figure 12

"The End of the Twentieth Century". 1983 - 1985.

Basalt blocks, each has been rebedded in a different manner. The 'eye' on the blocks anticipates death.





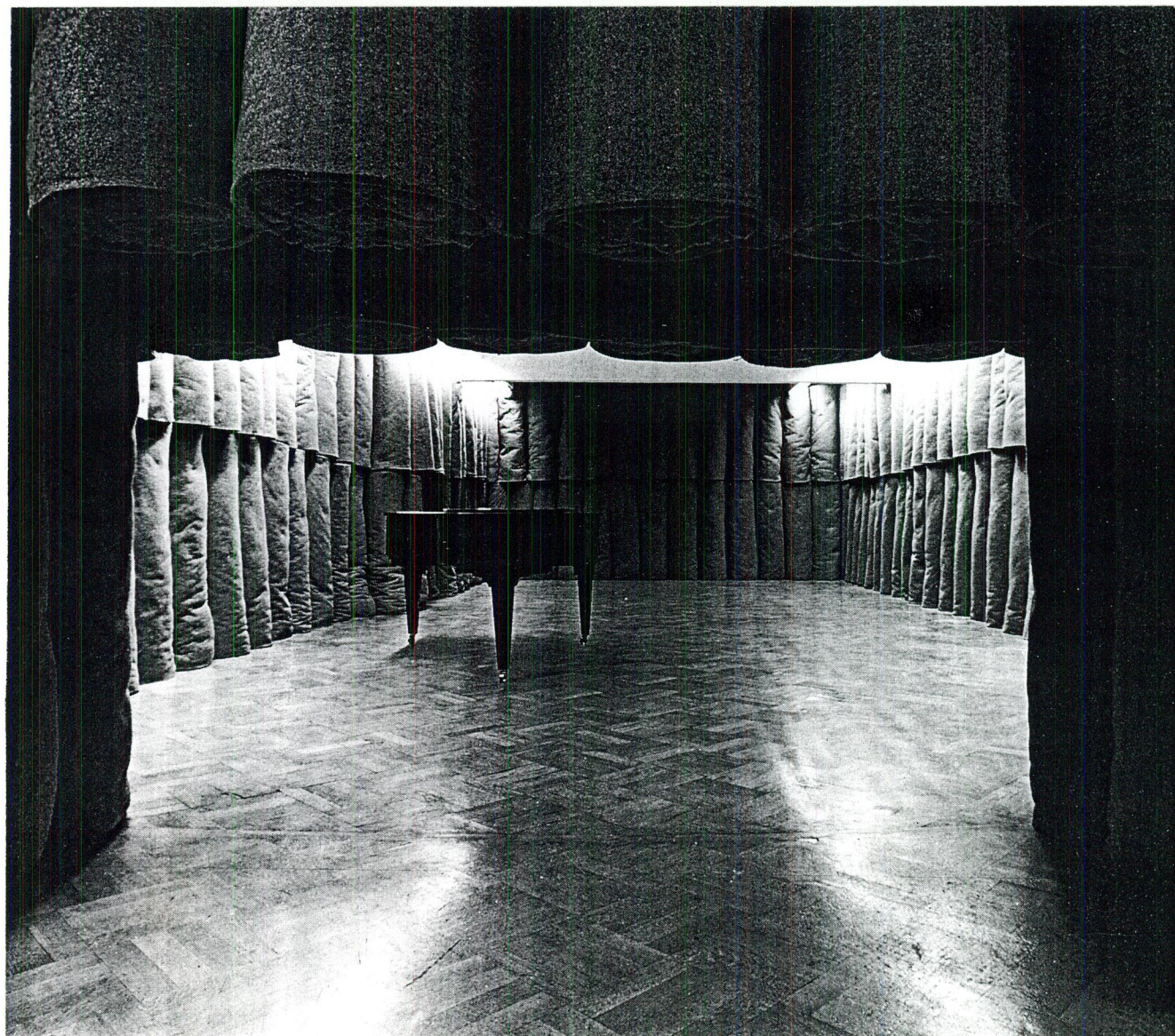


Figure 13  
"Flight"  
Detail 1985

Figure 13  
"Right"  
April 1985



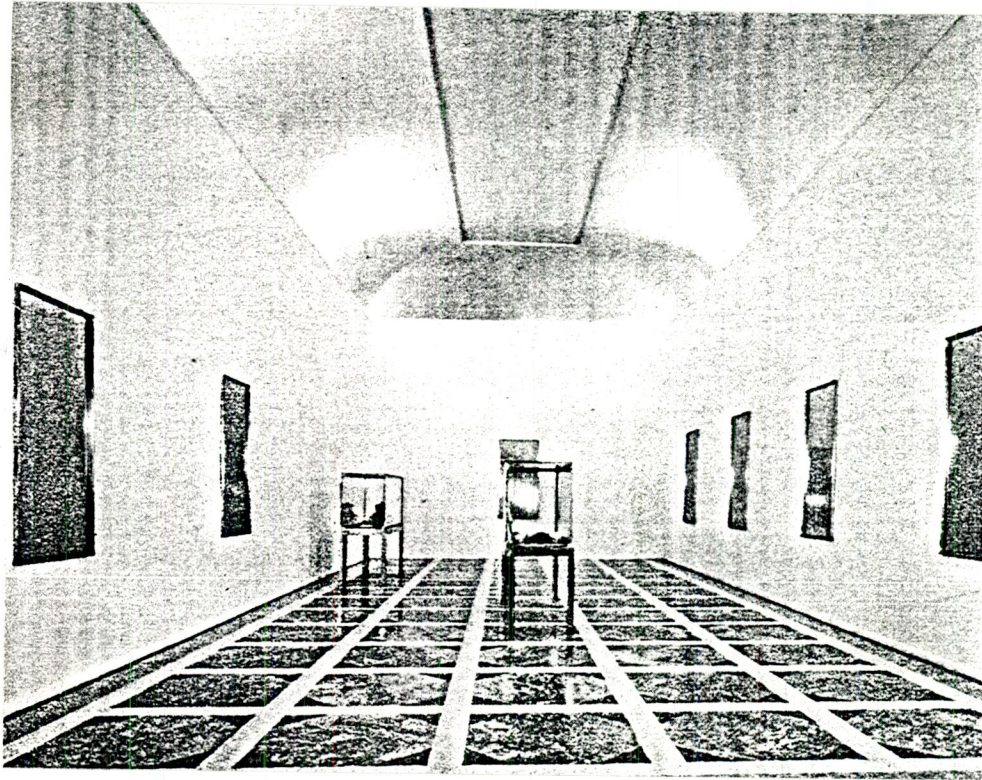


Figure 14

"Palazzo Royale"

His own personal tribute. Beuys very last piece of art.

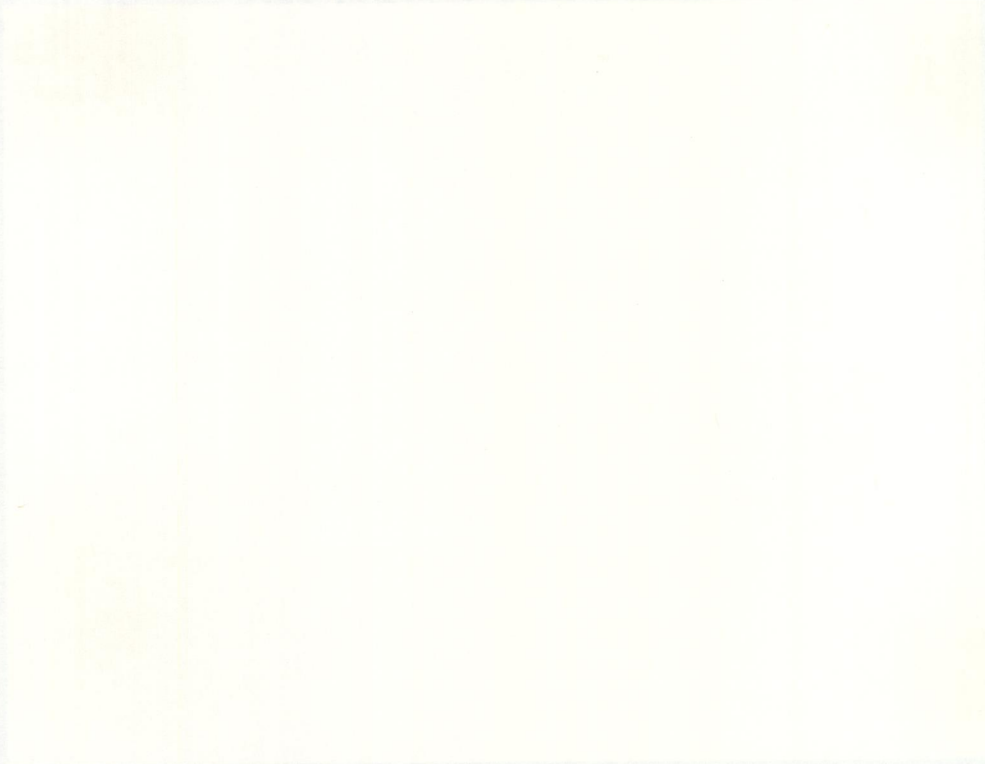


Figure 14

"Palazzo Royale"

His own personal tribute. Beys very last piece of art.



Alternatively, this doesn't expel the objects as art, but as actual documentation, proof of the 'tools' the shaman used. Beuys' use of certain significant materials gave his work a consistency, this consistency comes from the need to perpetually examine his past; the use of fat, felt, blood, just to name a few, all are references to his wartime experiences. Without his permanent exorcism of the past, I doubt whether his work would have been regarded to any great esteem.

Beuys' many art works, and his determination to integrate the role of art into society, but through his failed applied logic in his discussions, and perhaps too much emphasis on the spiritual romantic notions in an age of technology is another flaw. Some theorists have chosen to reject the idea that Beuys had a viable conceptual point of view as a result. Yet, they cannot deny he was an unquestionably great artist.

No matter whatever way you choose to view Beuys, there was controversy and minor contradictions; a shaman existing only within the situation of galleries and it goes on, nevertheless he will always be a landmark of an artist. His death has terminated his productivity of life works naturally, but his career will live on through the controversy, which is still assimilated by his works. Beuys' will live on as a legend, unequalled in his period - regardless of contradictions; he is a truly unforgettable artist; he redefined art as everything under the sun.

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