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Christian Boltanski Influenced By Joseph Beuys.

By Brian Walsh

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I

Within European art perhaps the two most prolific artists of the later half of the twentieth Century have been Joseph Beuys and Christian Boltanski. Both can be described as belonging to a post World War II generation of artists. Beuys, after fighting for the German army he made the decision in 1943 to become an artist, at the aged of 22. It was after the riots of 1968 in Paris that Christian Boltanski emerged as a young artist, almost a generation removed from that of Beuys.

On examining the earlier works of Christian Boltanski from the late sixties to early seventies, it is notable that they shared some similarities with the work of Joseph Beuys. Such works as *Reference Vitrine* (1970 see figure 1) bears a stylistic resemblance to Beuys' treatment of his Action Objects (see figure 2). There are also similarities in how Boltanski treats his objects; it would appear as if Boltanski had adapted Beuys method of displaying works. (Beuys had been using the Vitrine to display his work since the mid-fifties). Boltanski's work not only resembled Beuys' production and presentation but also resembled it in subject matter, in its autobiography concerns. Beuys' work can be interpreted and understood through his biographical stories, some of which are based on his childhood. Many of Boltanski's earlier works from 1968 to 1972 deal with the presentation and documentation of objects that relate to his childhood.

1974 marked what would seem to be a dramatic change in the art practice of Boltanski; it marked his creation of a clown identity and archive. On closer inspection of the archive, it becomes clear that it formed a dialogue with his own earlier works while maintaining a dialogue with the work and practice of Beuys.

The question arises how much of an influence did the work of Joseph Beuys have on that of Christian Boltanski? The main areas of this thesis will be to investigate what influence Joseph Beuys exerted upon the early art practice of Christian Boltanski and how significant was that influence.

On close examination of Boltanski's works and statements, it becomes clear that the dialogue that Boltanski sets up between his work and that of Beuys is one of antithetical opposition. Boltanski's concerns would seem not only to differ but also to contradict those of Beuys. This suggests that Boltanski was not merely influenced by the work but the differences that arise were fundamental. This opposition is most

the twentieth century have been Joseph Beuys and Christian Boltanski. Boltanski can be described as belonging to a post-war generation of artists. Beuys, after returning for the German army he made the decision in 1943 to become an artist, at the age of 22. It was after the loss of 1944 at Paris that Christian Boltanski emerged as a young artist, almost a generation removed from that of Beuys.

On examining the earlier works of Christian Boltanski from the late sixties to early seventies it is notable that they share some similarities with the work of Joseph Beuys. Such works as *Reliquance* (1970 see figure 1) bears a stylistic resemblance to Beuys' treatment of his *Action Objects* (see figure 2). There are also similarities in how Boltanski treats his objects. It would appear as if Boltanski had adopted Beuys' method of displaying works. (Beuys had been using the Vitre to display his work since the mid-fifties). Boltanski's work not only resonates Beuys' production and presentation but also resembles it in subject matter. In its autobiographical concept Beuys' work can be interpreted and understood through his biographical stories, some of which are based on his childhood. Many of Boltanski's earlier works from 1968 to 1975 deal with the presentation and documentation of objects that relate to his childhood.

1974 marked what would seem to be a dramatic change in the art practice of Boltanski. It marked the creation of a clean identity and archive. On closer inspection of the archive it becomes clear that it formed a dialogue with his own earlier work while maintaining a dialogue with the work and practice of Beuys.

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apparent in the *Clown archive*, which could possibly be described as being a parody of Joseph Beuys.

II

From March of 1970 when Beuys founded *The Organisation for no-voters and Referendum*, his art practice had moved into a public and political realm thus increasing his exposure and profile. In 1972 Joseph Beuys was dismissed from his position as professor of monumental sculpture at the Dusseldorf Kunstakademie and that same year he set up *The Organisation for Direct Democracy* in an office located at 25 Andreas Street in Dusseldorf. He participated in Documenta 5 in the same year. As part of his Activities at Documenta he set up an office at the exhibition and distributed plastic bags. Printed on the sides of these bags were The principles of *The Organisation for Direct Democracy*. Having previously exhibited at Documenta 3 and 4 he had established a high profile in the German art scene. In 1972 Christian Boltanski had also exhibited at Documenta 5. Boltanski was part of a group showing at the *Museum Feedericianum* in Kassel. Beuys' profile would have been quite high at Documenta 5 and it is likely that Boltanski would have been aware of the work and actions that Beuys had carried out during that period. Between December of 1974 and May of 1975 Christian Boltanski held four solo exhibitions in Germany. The first was held at the Westfallsche Kunstuerenen in Muter where he exhibited *The Clown archives; props- posters- sets, photographic documentation* (see figure 3). Also on the occasion of the exhibition a book was published. It featured a collection of comical one-act plays performed by Boltanski. That same show then travelled to Kunsthaile Zuklel and then on to the Wurttembergischer Kunstuein in Stuttgart. In May of the following year Boltanski performed and exhibited the *Christian the clown with little Christian* at the Stadtische Kunsthalle in Dusseldorf.

Dusseldorf was the home and work place of Beuys where he had been professor of monumental sculpture. It is probable that much of the audience attending Boltanski's exhibition in Dusseldorf were aware of Joseph Beuys' work and some of them may have even been students of his at one point.

In an interview with Gloria Moure (Moure p.115 Advent 1996) Boltanski was asked the following question:

How do you feel about the museum and your role as an artist?" He replied "My work is more like that of a preacher. I arrive in a town, I pose questions, and I talk

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11

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In an interview with Günter Mohr (October 12-15 April 1976) Boltanski was

asked the following question:

How do you feel about the museum and your role as an artist? He replied: My
work is more like that of a teacher. I work in a room. I pose questions, and I talk.

to the people and then leave to go somewhere else and to do the same thing over again. It is never exactly the same question, the same situation, the same visual object that I show, but there is always the same desire to provoke an encounter.

Considering Boltanski's answer to Gloria Movre's question we can assume that Boltanski approached each German town and city that he showed in as an opportunity to pose questions. What sort of an encounter did Boltanski want to provoke in Dusseldorf?

The Clown Archives installation and related works had its first three showings in Germany. It would be safe to assume that it was a German audience that Boltanski had in mind when creating this work. The installation was supposedly a tribute, loosely based on a museum devoted to the German comedian Karl Valentin (Gumbert p.48 Boltanski 1992). *The Clown Archives* props-posters-set; photographic documentation consisted of several backdrops that were subsequently used as scenery in several of the comic sketches. They include *Grandfathers Death*, *The Horrible Discovery* and *An Overheard Conversation*, (see figure 4). On the floor of the Gallery several glass cases displayed the various props and items that make up part of the archive of a fictitious clown.

Many if not all of the items displayed bore some relationship to Boltanski's earlier works. There are several instances where Boltanski parodies himself, hence the naming of the ventriloquist dummy as *Little Christian*. This relates to work that Boltanski based on his early childhood including *All that I Remember* (1969) and *Research and Presentation of All that remains of my childhood 1944-1950* (1969). Also exhibited was the *Drowning*, (see figure 5) a series of comical photographs of Boltanski faking a suicide. This piece parodies work Boltanski had previously made concerning a hand written suicide note which he posted to various people in the art world asking them for help.

The most intriguing aspect to the work in this installation is not how Boltanski makes a parody of himself but how he parodies the work of Joseph Beuys. Boltanski sets up a dialogue between his work and that of Beuys'. This type of discourse was not new to art of the twentieth century, it occurred when Duchamp disfigured a printed reproduction of Leonardo De Vinci's *Mona Lisa* by painting a moustache onto the face of a reproduction. Joseph Beuys himself was no stranger to

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Many if not all of the items displayed bore some relationship to Boltanski's earlier
work. There are several instances where Boltanski painted himself, hence the naming
of the videotaped dummy as Little Christian. This refers to work that Boltanski created
on his early childhood including *Alte Zeit* (1969) and *Kesseltanz* and
Preservation of All that remains of my childhood (1944-1950) (1989). Also exhibited
was the drawing (see figure 2) a series of comical photographs of Boltanski taking a
bath. The piece painter work Boltanski had previously made concerning a band
within sketches that he depicted in various books in the art world asking them for
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The most intriguing aspect of the work in this installation is not new.
Boltanski makes a parody of himself but now he parodies the work of Joseph Beuys.
Boltanski sets up a dialogue between his work and that of Beuys. This type of
dialogue was not new in art of the twentieth century; it occurred when Duchamp
recreated a printed reproduction of Leonardo da Vinci's Mona Lisa by painting a
moustache onto the face of a reproduction. Joseph Beuys himself was no stranger to

this type of dialogue. In 1960 he exhibited his *Bathtub*. (Tisdall P. 10. 1979) In doing so it automatically established a dialogue with Marcel Duchamp's piece '*The fountain*' (or the urinal), even though at that time he denied it had anything to do with Duchamp's concept of the readymade. Within a utilitarian context both Duchamp's and Beuys' objects are not all that far removed from one another. However in the context of the gallery they are ideologically and conceptually poles apart. Beuys, in presenting his object as art, had crossed a supposedly impassable line. (Borer p.11). *The silence of Marcel Duchamp is over rated*, this statement was made by Beuys in 1964 and on this occasion he directly entered into a dialogue about art, in which he challenged the concepts of Marcel Duchamp.

Boltanski does not enter into the same direct dialogue concerning the issue of the readymade. Instead he focuses on the issue of religion as an artistic activity and issues surrounding individual mythologies in art. Boltanski set up the dialogue in a subtle manner, by simply borrowing a number of symbols and objects that Beuys frequently used in his art-making and performances. Most notably he used the red cross that appears on many of Beuys' pieces as in *Nordlicht* (see figure 6 and 7). A similar type of a cross makes an appearance on the backdrop in two of Boltanski's comic sketches, *Grandfather's death* (see figure) and in the *First Communion* (see figure 8). In the poster *Christian Boltanski le Blagueur*, Boltanski is depicted shaking a walking stick. The walking stick depicted in these images is notably similar to the sticks that appears in *Hearth 1* (1965), *Stage Hunt* (1961) *Coyote* (1974) and Beuys' *Eurasian Staff* (1966). (see figure 9) The *Eurasian Staff* is the name Beuys gave to the walking stick and concept that appeared in so many of his actions and installation. There are many other instances throughout the installation where Boltanski mimics the style of photographic documentation that Beuys used throughout his career. In absorbing these elements into this installation he subtly introduces Beuys into his own parody.

Perhaps the most overt parody Boltanski makes of Beuys is in the photograph and posters initialled Christian *the clown with little Christian*. This work is similar in composition to the photographs taken of Beuys in the performance *How to explain pictures to a dead hare*. (see figure 10) The similarities lay also in the relationship between the performers and their chosen object or prop. Beuys is seated cradling a dead hare as if it was a baby while Boltanski sits whispering to a ventriloquist dummy on

the type of dialogue in 1980 he exhibited his *Bartholomew* (1980, 1981) in doing so
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Marcel Duchamp is never raised, this statement was made by Bey in 1984 and on this
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a cross makes its appearance on the back of one of Boltanski's comic sketches,
Godfather's death (see figure) and in the first *Companion* (see figure 2). In the
poetic Christian Boltanski is depicted Boltanski is depicted showing a walking stick. The
walking stick depicted in these images is notably similar to the stick that appears in
Heaton's (1982) *Stage Hand* (1981) (figure 1984) and Bey's *Companion* (1984).
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references throughout the installation where Boltanski makes the style of photographic
documentation that Bey's used throughout his career. In absorbing these elements into
the installation he subtly introduces Bey's into his own history.

Perhaps the most overt method Boltanski makes of Bey's is in the photograph
and poster *Imagined Christ*. The image with the Christ. The words *Imagined*
refer to the photographic image of Bey's in the performance *How to explain*
figures in a good practice figure 1 of the installation. Not only in the relationship
between the performer and the chosen object of work. Bey's is stated in doing a
good / one and it was a body while Boltanski's whispering to a voice / one / down on

his lap. We can assume that *Little Christian...* (the ventriloquist dummy) is Boltanski's representation of himself as a child, while on the other hand it mimics Beuys's process of referencing one work with another.

III

Over a period of three years from 1969 to 1971 Boltanski produced work related to his childhood. It consisted of work based on research and preservation of his past. The work was made using a documentary style of photography along with photocopies and text. Most of Boltanski's early work based on childhood tells us less about Boltanski's childhood and more about the process of an adult reconstructing their own past.

If we examine the series of Boltanski's works from 1970 to 1972, the word 'reconstruction' appears in all of the titles from this series of works. Two examples are *Reconstruction's of gestures made by Christian Boltanski between 1948 and 1954'* (1970) and *Attempts to reconstruct objects that belonged to Christian Boltanski between 1948 and 1954*. The titles are quite literal in their meaning for they bring the viewer's attention to the process of an adult reconstructing a past.

On close inspection of the work *Attempts to reconstruct objects that belonged to Christian Boltanski between 1948 and 1954*, it is not clear what these objects are supposed to be a reconstruction of. The obscurity of the objects deliberately brings attention back to the title itself. It is therefore the title that determines the meaning of the work and objects.

While our attention is drawn to the repeated failure of Boltanski in reconstructing the objects from his past, the desired object deliberately remains obscure and nameless. Whether the object was of any significance is not known, but what is of significance is Boltanski's deliberate attempt to illustrate that failure. The task to reconstruct the object from his past proved to be an impossible one.

'Reconstruction of gestures made by Christian Boltanski between 1946 and 1954' (1970), consists of photographs of Boltanski reconstructing games and activities from his childhood. The work shows an adult recreating daily episodes from childhood, the significance of which is not known, nor is it of any consequence other than it being quite an ordinary account of childhood.

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III

Over a period of three years from 1969 to 1971 Boltanski produced work related to his childhood. It consisted of work based on research and the revision of his past. The work was made using a documentary style of photography, along with photographs and text. Most of Boltanski's early work based on childhood tells us less about Boltanski's childhood and more about the process of an adult reconstructing their own past.

It is within the series of Boltanski's work from 1969 to 1971, the word reconstruction appears in all of the titles from this series of works. Two examples are Reconstructions of gestures made by Christian Boltanski between 1946 and 1954 (1970) and Attempts to reconstruct objects that belonged to Christian Boltanski between 1946 and 1954. The titles are quite specific in their meaning for they bring the viewer's attention to the process of an adult reconstructing a past. On close inspection of the work Attempts to reconstruct objects that belonged to Christian Boltanski between 1946 and 1954 it is not clear what these objects are supposed to be a reconstruction of. The specificity of the objects deliberately brings attention back to the past. It is therefore the first statement the means of the work and objects.

While our attention is drawn to the repeated title of Boltanski in reconstructing the objects from his past, the object itself deliberately remains obscure and nameless. Whether the object was of any significance is not known, but what is of significance is Boltanski's deliberate attempt to illustrate that failure. The task to reconstruct the object from his past proved to be an impossible one. Reconstructions of gestures made by Christian Boltanski between 1946 and 1954 (1970) consists of photographs of Boltanski reconstructing gestures and activities from his childhood. The work shows an adult revisiting daily episodes from childhood, the significance of which is not known, nor is it of any consequence other than it being quite an ordinary account of childhood.

This is in contrast to how Beuys presented his activities from childhood. As part of his *Expanded concept of art*, he incorporated many of his own adult memories of his childhood into his performance and installation works. In *Joseph Beuys life course life work* he included his birth and childhood activities as being an integral part of his artistic life. From these childhood activities he developed such performances as *Joseph Anachasis colts Beuys* and *Tram stop*, which were based on the vivid memory of childhood. Also the sculptural object and concept known as the *Eurasian Staff* (see figure 9) was repeatedly used in performance and installation works.

The *Eurasian Staff* was a concept that Beuys had developed around the object of a walking stick. The significance of this walking stick or staff had its origins in a childhood game, where Beuys as a young boy pretended to be a shepherd with his imaginary flock. Beuys believed the transformation of walking stick into *Eurasian staff* to be a creative and innovative act. Placing great significance upon these games and activities, he viewed himself as fulfilling the role and destiny as *shepherd* in his adult life.

Boltanski's documentation of his childhood is in contrast to the seriousness and significance that Beuys' placed on to his early childhood. This is evident perhaps in all of Boltanski's work relating to his own childhood. For example in *Reconstruction of gestures made by Christian Boltanski between 1948 and 1954*, he is photographed carrying out childish games such as pillow fights and sliding down the handrail of a stairs. Boltanski deliberately makes himself look absurd in these images. Similarly in the clown archives *Little Christian* the ventriloquist dummy is dressed the same as Boltanski's adult self. In doing so Boltanski manufactures his childhood self in a comical fashion.

In doing so he illustrates how the memory of childhood can be appropriated. By contrast Beuys creates a pretext to his mythical adult life by means of placing its origins in his childhood. Beuys once said, *by biography I understand the development of everything. I have attempted to use my life and person as a tool and I think this was so from an early age.* (Tisdall , page 10 1979). The significance of the *Eurasian staff* is in the identity or role Beuys assumed as a child. That role is one of a shepherd. That particular identity has very strong Biblical over tones and is an example of how Beuys appropriated a memory from his childhood.

This is in contrast to how Belys presented his activities from childhood. As part of his expanded concept of what he incorporated many of his own adult memories of his childhood into his performance and installation works. In Joseph Belys the course his work included his own and childhood activities as being an integral part of his adult life. From these childhood activities he developed such as his memories as Joseph. Annette's course Belys and from which which is based on the very memory of childhood. Also the sculptural object and concept known as the Russian Star (see figure 3) was repeatedly used in performance and installation works.

The Russian Star was a concept that Belys had developed around the object of a walking stick. The significance of the walking stick or staff had its origins in a childhood game, where Belys as a young boy pretended to be a shepherd with his imaginary flock. Belys believed the transformation of walking stick into Russian star to be a creative and innovative act. Finding great significance from these games and activities he viewed himself as following the life and history as shepherd to his adult life.

Belys's documentation of his childhood is in contrast to the suburban and significance that Belys placed on to his adult childhood. It is evident through the work of Belys's work relating to his own childhood. An example in his installation of gestures made by Christian Belys between 1948 and 1954, he is photographed carrying out childish games such as how, fight and sliding down the stairs of a stair. Belys's childhood games were played out around these images, similarly in the clown activities with Christian, the ventriloquist, dummy is dressed the same as Belys's adult self, in doing so Belys's installation his childhood self in a clown's fashion.

In doing so he illustrates how the memory of childhood can be appropriated. By contrast Belys creates a context to his memory about the by means of placing his rights to his childhood. Belys once said, "by doing so, I understand the importance of everything I have attempted to use my life and career as a tool, and I think this was so from an early age (Hedell, page 10, 1979). The significance of the Russian star is in the identity of role Belys assumed as a child. That role is one of a shepherd. That particular identity has very strong Biblical overtones and is an example of how Belys appropriated a memory from his childhood.

Beuys materialised aspects of his own childhood by means of displaying and using objects that embodied the meaning and memory of childhood such as the *Bath Tub*. Memory is treated as if it were a material to be shaped or moulded into something significant. Boltanski materialised his childhood self as if by magic into *Little Christian*. The fact that *Little Christian* is a ventriloquist dummy subtly illustrates an illusion of the past self. By means of using the dummy Boltanski indicates clearly that he is an adult manipulating and appropriating what symbolises his childhood self in a material form.

IV

As a source of real evidence Boltanski has always been suspicious of photographic documentation. Throughout his whole career he has used this aspect of photography to his advantage, most notably in his early work *Ten Photographic Portraits of Christian Boltanski 1946- 1956*, 1972. The manner in which these photographs are presented can be associated with scientific techniques of documentation. The work does not mimic any particular science but the images are presented as facts; one photograph for every two years of Boltanski's life. Notions of truth and fact are deliberately played with. The sequence of photographs is not evidence of Boltanski's existence over a twenty-year period. Only the final photograph out of the ten is of Christian Boltanski. It is most probable that all the photographs were taken on the same steps and on the same day. Boltanski has made a fake document which he claimed to be a measurement of his life. One of the purposes of this document was to cause the viewer to doubt and to question the validity of these facts. This was clear evidence that Boltanski was not so much interested in showing the truth as he was in how the truth is represented.

In an interview with Delphine Renard which was held in conjunction with Boltanski's exhibition at the Pompadour Centre in Paris, 1980 Boltanski made it clear what interested him in photography was:

...the property granted to photography of furnishing the evidence of the real science that has been photographed is experienced as being true, I have utilised this property of the proof one accords to photography to expose it or to try to show that photography lies, that it doesn't speak the truth but rather the cultural code ... (Stephano page 25 1973)

He has maintained aspects of his own childhood by means of displaying and using objects that embodied the meaning and memory of childhood such as the bath tub. Memory is treated as if it were a material to be shaped or moulded into something significant. Boltanski maintained his childhood self as if by magic into Little Christian. The fact that Little Christian is a ventriloquist dummy surely illustrates an illusion of the past self. By means of using the dummy Boltanski indicates clearly that he is not about maintaining and reproducing what he believes his childhood self in a material form.

IV

As a source of real evidence Boltanski has always been suspicious of photographic documentation. Throughout his whole career he has used this aspect of photography to his advantage, most notably in his early work *Ten Photographs for Little Christian* (1965-1966, 1972). The manner in which these photographs are presented can be associated with scientific techniques of documentation. The way does not mimic any particular science but the images are presented in fact as photographs for every two years of Boltanski's life. Pictures of truth and fact are deliberately played with. The series of photographs is not evidence of Boltanski's existence over a twenty-year period. Only the first photograph out of the ten is of Christian Boltanski. It is most probable that all the photographs were taken on the same day and on the same day Boltanski has made a fake document which he claimed to be a measurement of his life. One of the purposes of this document was to cause the viewer to doubt and to question the validity of these facts. This was clear evidence that Boltanski was not so much interested in showing the truth as he was in how the truth is represented.

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Boltanski's documentation of his childhood is an archive to illustrate a collective ritual, or in his own words to illustrate a *cultural code*. *In reconstructing gestures made by Christian Boltanski between 1948 and 1954.*, the gestures made in the work are deliberately common to many children. In that sense they are universal in their depiction of children's games. Boltanski very deliberately avoids presenting his personal identity. What he sets out to achieve is to present what is a collective memory of childhood. According to Boltanski the only identity and memory he has is a collective one:

I believe there's no way to communicate something really personal. The only thing that I can communicate is what you know already, what you've felt. Nothing about me in my work is true. I don't believe one can use oneself as subject matter. One can only describe what is common to everyone.

(Stephano page 25 1973)

What sort of relationship does Beuys have with photography; how has he used himself as a subject matter? To begin with a photograph of Beuys from 1926; he is aged five and with his mother and father in Cleves. Maybe Beuys had encountered this photograph after many years. It may have triggered the memory of his childhood. The photograph may have been testimony to that childhood world that he found so inspirational. Perhaps the photograph embodies the memory of the shepherd game he had once played. Having identified with that boy playing that game, it may have been a lifeline that transformed his life. Who knows?

What is for certain is that Beuys chose to use the photograph in a catalogue titled *Joseph Beuys Life course life works*. Beuys also presents his story of the Eurasian staff, which relates to the walking stick in the photograph. The photograph acts as a kind of document, which reinforces the story of the shepherd identity and enhanced the concept of his personal mythology.

But more importantly the photograph reinforces the story for his audience, although Beuys makes no direct reference to the image. Through simple deduction his audience can make a connection between the image and the story Beuys told about his shepherd games. The importance of this photograph lies in the viewer's ability to piece together the story. That is where its power lay for the photograph acted as evidence for the audience.

In Beuys' use of photography he builds up a complex code between different works. The term that he coined to describe the relationships between them was *implex*. Beuys created and built on his own iconography and symbols of meaning. In a sense this type of documentation tracks the process that he had embarked upon. Many of Beuys' works are in dialogue with one another. In this respect Beuys is successful. For example, the installation, *Arena* (1970-1972) evolved over many years, in a sense it was a work in progress, constantly being added to and changed. Up to four hundred photographs would be exhibited in this installation. The photographs in *Arena* create a visual link to the past work. In this sense the past and present coexist. There are a complex number of references and possible meanings that can be read for many of his photographs. This created some ambiguity concerning the precise meaning of the images that he used. These two very powerful elements that he cultivated in his photography were their ambiguity and the enigmatic nature of his work.

Beuys successfully exploits these two elements not only in photography but also in his performances which were ambiguous and ritualistic. Beuys did not want his performances to be equated with entertainment. Wanting to move away from any association with performance art, *Actions* was the term that he used. It was also the term Dadaists had given to their political demonstrations. Beuys adapted this term because he wanted to be more political than theatrical. Still he maintained a high degree of ritual and theatre in his performance, which enabled him to manufacture an enigma around his life and work.

While the enigma of Joseph Beuys is questioned by Boltanski, he also makes his audience question the medium of photography: *As soon as the click of the shutter has occurred what is photographed no longer exists : subject is transformed into an object and even into a museum object.* (Perloff 1995 page 1). For both Beuys and Boltanski, their interest in photography is one that provides the viewer with the testimony that the thing seen has been. The fact that photography is credited with being evidence is up for questioning.

Exhibited as part of *the Clown Archive* were over one hundred photographs which openly parody Beuys's use of photography. They are a mockery of a self-indulgence. Beuys would allow his photograph to be taken at any given opportunity, thus making Beuys one of the most photographically exposed artists in history. Boltanski had

In Beavis' use of photography he builds up a complex code between himself and the world. The fact that he could describe the relationship between them was a great thing for him. But on his own account, and symbols of meaning, it seems the type of document that makes the process that he had embarked upon, that of Beavis' works are in dialogue with one another. In the respect Beavis is successful for example the installation, Beavis (1991) shows over many years in a series of photographs in progress, constantly being added to and changed up to four hundred photographs would be exhibited in the installation. The photographs in Beavis' series refer to the past work, which serves the past and present context. There are a complex number of references and possible meanings that can be read for many of the photographs. This created some ambiguity concerning the precise meaning of the images that he used. These two very powerful elements that he cultivated in his photography were then ambiguity and the enigmatic nature of his work.

Beavis successfully exploits these two elements not only in photography but also in his performances which were ambiguous and mysterious. Beavis did not want his performance to be equated with entertainment. Wanting to move away from any association with performance art, Beavis was the fact that he used it was also the fact that he was not given to the point of being a performance. Beavis rejected this fact because he wanted to be more postmodern than modern. He was interested in a high degree of ritual and theatre in his performance, which enabled him to maintain an enigma about his life and work.

While the origins of Joseph Beavis is questioned by Cottrell, he also makes his audience the other the medium of the artwork. As soon as the work of the artist has occurred, what is constructed is a complex subject as a performance and an object and even a museum object. Beavis (1991) says: "For both Beavis and Cottrell, their interest in photography is one that involves the viewer with the fact that the thing seen has been. The fact that photography is created with being evidence is up for question."

Exhibited as part of the Green Archive were over one hundred photographs which opened Beavis' use of photography. They are a history of a self. Audience Beavis would show his photography to be taken as any given and without the making Beavis one of the most photographed only exposed a date in history. Cottrell (1991)

never photographed himself in such a manner until the making of the *Clown archives*. Many of the one hundred images are obscure in their meaning. What exactly they are supposed to document is not clear; and that was perhaps Boltanski's intention.

An example of where Boltanski mimics Beuys is in the image *The Entertainer* (See figure 11)The meaning and content of the photograph is not quite clear. What is clear from the title that it is an entertainer in the photograph (so it has something to do with show biz). Also the signature *C Boltanski* is painted across the photograph as if it were the autograph of a famous movie star. The pop star style autograph was a trait that Beuys had adapted, signing his autograph on many of his works in a flamboyant style. The image of *The Entertainer* bears a strong resemblance to Beuys' photographed image in *Isolation unit* 1971 (see figure 12 & 13). There are a number of similarities worth noting between the two images.

Both artists are photographed with the light shining from the ground up .The style of clothing they both were wearing is similar. Beuys is wearing his infamous felt suit and hat while Boltanski wears his black suit and hat. Boltanski is dressed somewhere between one of the Marx brothers and a German SS officer. This in a sense reinforces a theme that runs through the installation; that is somewhere between comedy and a brutal reality. (Boltanski dresses like this for over three years.)

So what is Boltanski saying about Beuys' image in the *isolation Unit*? He has already established the connection between the two images. Perhaps the answer is that the mysteriousness of the image is its selling point; Boltanski in an obvious way introduces a cultural code, that code tells us that what we are now looking at is a photographic still from a movie scene. The sort of lighting used in the images can be most typically found in horror films or film noir. The dress code would also reinforce that reading. One of the three photographs in *Isolation Unit*, looks as if it was taken directly from the Boris Karloff vampire film *Nosferatu*. The precise meaning of Beuys' photograph is not clear . Beuys' message becomes obscured in a mysteriousness .

What exactly is behind the mystery is not made apparent or clear. It is precisely the element of mystery, which Beuys used very well. His use of photography is blurred between pictorial photography and a documentary style.

never intended to be a neutral mirror of the world as it is. Many of the most famous images are those in which the subject is posed to suggest a particular meaning, and this was particularly true of the work of the photographer Robert Doisneau. An example of this is his famous photograph of a young couple kissing on a Parisian street. The image is not a neutral record of a moment in time, but a carefully constructed scene designed to evoke a sense of romantic love. This is evident from the way the couple is posed, the way they are looking at each other, and the way the lighting is used to create a soft, intimate atmosphere. The image is a classic example of the 'documentary' style of photography, which aims to capture a slice of life as it is, but in a way that is designed to be aesthetically pleasing and emotionally resonant. This is a key feature of the work of many of the most famous photographers of the 20th century, including Doisneau, Henri Cartier-Bresson, and others. The work of these photographers is often characterized by a sense of spontaneity and a focus on the everyday, but it is also characterized by a high degree of technical skill and a deep understanding of the art of photography. This is why their work continues to be so influential and so widely admired today.

Boltanski set out to expose or deconstruct the enigma and question the use of ambiguity that Beuys created. Boltanski attempted to expose, through the production of his own work, the codes and devices exploited in Beuys' work.

Boltanski equates Beuys' production of art with theatre. What Boltanski assembles in *The Clown Archives* are the fake leftovers of a movie or a theatrical production. This is in much the same way that Beuys displayed the leftovers or by products of his actions. These items Beuys termed *Action Objects*.

VI

1974 marks anew stage in Boltanski's story- the death of the artist and the birth of the clown. In April in Bordeaux, he installed a shabby museum, alias portrait of a dead artist, what 's left of him and his " false" life. Soon after in Hamburg, there will be an exhibit of 100 of his own "relics". For the catalogue each object will be uniformly described by a history of art professor so that a painting and a pullover will receive the same emphasis, will be accorded equal preciousness. "Until recently I thought of myself as a Southern U.S. preacher-...I was a false preacher. All painting contains some truth but it's always for bread and butter. Now I think of myself as a fantasist, a clown. In August, in Munster, I'm presenting my clown museum". It's Boltanski, the comic' evoking the pit of desperation. I mean all painting is so serious, pompous, pretentious even if some of it is important. A puritan mystique pervaded the art world. Painters are fooling them selves saying 'we aren't painters we're philosophers, theoreticians, technologist.' This is all false. A painter is but a painter, which in it self is a ridiculous occupation. Admittedly an artist can be useful to a theoretician or a sociologist or a politician but he is in capable of acting directly in these areas.

(Stephano page 29 1974)

This part interview was written only a few months before Boltanski was due to travel to Germany with his clown museum. This short excerpt is quite revealing in terms of indicating Boltanski's intentions prior to his German show. The first notable thing is that it marks a new phase in the work of Christian Boltanski; no longer does he want to be an artist so he transforms himself into a clown.

Boltanski makes it clear what his views are on the changing art world and on artists; although he does not directly incriminate anyone it is highly likely that it was directed towards Beuys. *Admittedly an artist can be useful to a theoretician or a sociologist or a politician but he is incapable of acting directly in these areas.* What is Boltanski talking about here? if we consider that this interview was made over a year

after his participation in Documenta 5 where Beuys had turned politics into art by setting up the organisation for direct democracy, the statement is clearly a comment on the particular type of art that Joseph Beuys was engaging in at that time.

Boltanski was not the only person critical of the way in which Beuys engaged with politics and art. Benjamin H.B. Buchloh, a German art critic lecturing in the US, wrote the following about Beuys in an article entitled *Beuys; The Twilight of the idol..*

Everybody who was seriously involved in radical student politics during the 1960s in Germany, for example who worked on the development of a new and adequate political theory and practice laughed at or derided Beuys' political -relations move to found The grand student party, ... Beuys' proposal for an integration of art, science and politics -as a program for the free international university demands -anything more than simple minded utopian drivel lacking elementary political and educational practicality. (Buchloh, 1980, p 36)

Keep in mind the fact that Boltanski is on his way to show in Germany to show his new work.

Boltanski 's Clown Archive is a portrait of a dead artist [or] what's left of him and his fake life, as Effie Stephano put it. Boltanski substantiates the existence of a fake clown simply by exhibiting the objects of his art alongside his non-art object. In a sense what is exhibited acts as a sort of selected biography, spanning from the cradle to the grave. In one of the Little Christian posters the adult Christian was spoon feeding his younger self (see figure 15). Death and near death are themes which appear in the installation Grandfathers Death and Boltanski's own near death is documented as a failed suicide attempt (see The Drowning figure 19). This story shares many similarities to Beuys' near death experiences, which he told through his wartime mythology. Beuys' Myth of Origin as he called it, acts as a selected Biography of Beuys. Boltanski being aware of the central role of biography in Beuys' work parodies it.

Again Benjamin H.D. Buchloh in his article wrote: *The twilight of the idol* says that Beuys' myth of origin, like every other individual or collective myth is an intricate mixture of fact and memory -material rearranged according to the dynamics of the neurotic lie. [Beuys']...wartime myth is an attempt to deny his participation it is fairly evident that the myth is trying to deny his participation in the German war and his citizenship. (Buchloh 1976 page 234)

Donald Kuspit in his essay on Beuys *Between Showman and Shaman*, developed a response to Buchloh's criticism (Kuspit 1996 page 27). Kuspit's view was that the precise facts that surround Beuys' wartime experience are not of any real importance. What is of significance is how Beuys, in creating this personal myth, saved himself from destruction. The myth became *the straw that miraculously became the rope by which he pulled himself to emotional safety*. Kuspit's point is that facts do not necessarily reveal the truth. He states that it was out of sheer creative necessity that the myth of Origins was created.

Although Boltanski's earlier work shares some similarities with that of Beuys', both artists having used poor and recycled materials, there are in fact fundamental differences. In an excerpt from Stephano's article he is ironic, in the way in which he writes about Boltanski's German tour. *Soon after in Hamburg, there will be an exhibition of one hundred of his "Relics". From the catalogue each object will be uniformly described by a history of art professor* (Stephano 1973 page 18). It could be inferred that by emphasising the word "Relics" Stephano is being ironic. Boltanski's relationship with the object is within the Duchampian tradition. The object, to Boltanski is of little importance and this draws attention to the opposing views of the two artists. For Beuys many of the objects and materials were charged with a personal significance. As part of his process they became relics. Boltanski on the other hand used the object as a cultural reference.

A painting [and] pullover will receive the same emphases, will be accorded the equal preciousness. (Stephano 1973 page 18) once again Stephano is being ironic, if an item of clothing can receive the same amount of attention and importance as a work of art. This would be ironic unless he is referring to how Beuys used his clothing. Beuys had a special relationship with clothing, he placed great importance upon its meaning, for instance he wore a hat and a fisherman's vest. The vest for Beuys had deliberate associations with Christ the fisherman of men. Beuys' most famous use of material was with felt; he had several suits made from this material. All of these items of clothing became part of Beuys' myth. The felt material had its origins in Beuys' wartime experience. He used it for the association that it had for him and its properties of warmth. In a sense for Beuys the item of clothing could have the same significance as the object.

Donald Kuspis in the essay on Beuys between Sherman and Shuman developed a response to Duchamp's criticism (Kuspis 1970 page 55). Kuspis's view was that the precise facts that surround Beuys' working experience and not of any real importance. What is of significance is how Beuys in the studio and beyond it, viewed himself from the outside. The myth for him is the same that is essential to the role of which he played himself in the studio. Kuspis's point is that the facts do not necessarily reveal the truth, he states that it was out of this creative necessity that the myth of Beuys was created.

Although Beuys's earlier work shared some similarities with that of Kuspis, both artists having used gold and involved materials, there are in fact fundamental differences. In an essay from 1970, Kuspis is to be found in the way in which he writes about Beuys's 'German' work. He states in his opinion there will be an emphasis on one function of the artist. From the evidence each object will be uniformly described as a history of art. Kuspis (1970 page 18). It could be argued that by emphasizing the word 'history', Beuys is being taken seriously as a relationship with the object is within the Duchampian tradition. The object is not made of gold, it is made of the object and therefore is a historical object. At part of the process they become more historical on the other hand - the object as a cultural retention.

A painting (and) picture will require the same emphasis as the object. The object (Kuspis 1970 page 18) once again Sherman is being taken as a historical object. Kuspis can relate the same amount of attention and importance as a historical object. The work he views as is related to how Beuys used his clothing. Beuys had a special relationship with clothing, he placed great importance upon his historical costume. He wore a hat and a fisherman's coat. The work Beuys did was a relationship with the history of the object, most famous was the historical work that he had several suits made from the material. All of these items of clothing became part of Beuys' myth. The fact remains that the origin of Beuys' work was a relationship with the object. The fact remains that the relationship and its properties of which it is made - for Beuys the object could have the same significance as the object.

Both artists used a similar genre particular to post world two war Europe. Both used what would have been considered in early fine art practise as poor materials or assemblage of materials. In the collection and presentation of material and objects Marcel Broodthaers a Belgian artist was influential on both artists. It was his collection and museum type of installation that was influential on both Beuys and Boltanski. In this sense their treatment of material and object share similarities. But there are fundamental differences, in how they related and used objects.

Christian Boltanski, in conversation with Stuart Morgan in 1988, said

A long time ago in 1972, I organised a public auction of all the important objects and souvenirs I had at home. Some of them were very important to me. I had a friend who was an auctioneer. 'Try to sell them'. I told him. Stuart Morgan: why on earth did you do that, Boltanski: To show what is important to you in life means nothing when you are dead. He would say 'how much am I offered for this love letter?' But nobody wanted to buy. (Morgan 1988 page 46)

The significance of Boltanski's objects would not have been apparent to the buying public, unless it was given a cultural context. If the love letter was written by a famous person, only would it have value to a punter, giving it a cultural reference.

One way of creating a cultural reference was by placing an item in a museum situation. And that is precisely what Boltanski did in 1973, one year after the attempted auction of his personal items. This time he used the contents of someone else's flat. An Oxford student, who had died in tragic circumstances, once owned the contents of the flat. *Inventory of Objects that Belonged to a Resident of Oxford* (see figure 16) Boltanski photographed the objects with a neutral background thus removing them from their original context. The work poses a question, is it possible to know a person from their belongings? On reading the title does the subject fragment into melancholy that might relate to anyone?

Boltanski, making known the tragic circumstances in which this student died allows the audience to relate to the objects in a specific way. If there were no title what would the understanding of the objects be? It is interesting to note that in 1971 two years before Boltanski exhibited the contents of the student's flat. Beuys had exhibited the contents of his home along with a photograph of himself in 1971. For Beuys the object and identity were inextricably linked. How Beuys used objects, such as the

BathTub, the *Eurasians Staff* and his clothing, all came to reinforce his identity. In order for the objects to work in the way that he wanted he had to create the context for the objects. That context was either in historical terms or in the particular way he treated his material (the particular energies he experienced from some materials).

It is clear from both artists' works that it was not just art museums that influenced them but also history and ethnography museums. (Boltanski exhibited the work *Reference Vitrine* 1970 (see figure 1) in the Museum of Ethnography in Paris.)

Both artists can be described as being taxonomical in the particular way they present their respective works.

According to Benjamin H.D Buchloh, Beuys had attempted to immortalise the self through what he described his work being *Like a cross between, vitrines in Victorian museum of ethnography and display case in turn of the century boarding schools*. In this respect, the work of the Belgian artist Marcel Broodthaers would have had influence on both artists museum type exploits. (Nesbitt 1990 page 62). Boltanski had similar concerns involving the devices that he used. For instance Marcel Broodthaers demanded that his audience question the viewing of art objects. Playing with the whole museum system of displaying and curating, Broodthaers assimilated the role of museum director. In one case he even interviewed himself. Broodthaers was the forerunner to the fictionalised Museum installation. Boltanski had adsorbed similar concerns to Broodthaers, in that he questioned the museum's role in art making. Much of Boltanski's work is engaged in questioning the very genre that he is working in, not only absorbing it. On a conceptual level though, Boltanski's work has more similarities with the work of Broodthaers than Beuys' has. All three of these artists have understood and interpreted the museum as a theatrical space on some level. But none more so than Beuys for he was the king and high priest of museum theatre.

From the museum Beuys borrowed the conventional display case for exhibiting objects. This allowed him to take advantage of its particular associations. Its use signified that these objects were of cultural importance. In adapting methods for the curating of contemporary art purposes it enabled Beuys to elevate the status of his objects, into some sort of historical significance. In affect Beuys was his own curator by simply adapting the methods deployed by museum institutions.

Each day the assistants staff and his family, all came to reinforce his identity in order
for the objects to work in the way that he wanted and to create the context for the
objects. That context was either a historical frame or an artistic way he treated
his material (the material was given to him by the artist or the collector).
It is clear from both artists' work that it was not just an historical that
influenced them but also history and only given material. Both artists followed the
work. Reference: *Visual Arts* (June 1990) in the Museum of Ethnography in Paris.
Both artists can be described as being concerned in the particular way they present
their objects and works.
According to the artist H. O. Bouché, Bouché had a strong interest in the
self through which he described his work. He was a French artist, a Victorian
museum of ethnography and a very close to the family of the artist. In the
respect, the work of the Belgian artist, H. O. Bouché would have had influence on
Bouché's museum type exhibits. (Museum, 1990, page 22). Bouché had similar
concerns involving the objects that he used for his museum. Bouché's museum
that the objects played the role of art objects. Playing with the role of museum
system of displaying and curating Bouché's work played the role of museum director.
In one case he even interviewed Bouché. Bouché's work was the focus of the
exhibition and installation. Bouché's work was not accepted as an art work in
the museum. It was the artist's role to be in the museum. Much of Bouché's
work extended to questioning the very nature of the work itself, not only working
in. On a conceptual level, though, Bouché's work has more similarities with the work of
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objects and some sort of historical significance. In effect Bouché was his own curator by
simply adapting the methods developed by museum institutions.

The *clown archive* is a comment on Beuys' actions and objects. Boltanski achieved this not only by means of adsorbing many of the objects, but also by adapting the process of art making and style of displaying art that Beuys had used. Instead of the highly charged objects of Beuys, Boltanski replaced them with impartial props that were once used by a clown. The mysterious performances or actions of Beuys were reduced by Boltanski and equated with theatre or mere entertainment.

Boltanski is concerned on one level with the dramatisation of existence and the way in which artists act out roles. His main aim was to expose the notion of the dramatised self through a biographical fiction of the self. This work is created to ridicule and parody the religious role that Beuys plays as an artist. Boltanski reduces this type of art to the level of entertainment.

In the catalogue *Advent and other times* (1996 page 61) Jean Clair talks about the changing role of the museum in the twentieth century. In the period after World War II with the decline of Church power, it increasingly became the role the artist to take the place of the priest and the museum over the church. Boltanski before he took on the identity of the clown compared himself to a bad preacher somewhat like the character Robert Michim played in the film *Night Hunter*. Boltanski chose to identify the artist not only with the role of a holy man but also that of a movie star.

The comic sketches also included a few references to religious imagery. They are the sequence of images from *Grandfathers Death* and *My First Communion* (see figure 8). This work is a mockery of art posing as a religious activity. As discussed earlier Boltanski adapts or borrows a number of symbolic images from Beuys. The red cross that appeared in *My First Communion* appeared in many of Beuys works and it is clear that Boltanski chose to use that specific style of cross in order to establish a visual link to the work of Beuys.

Boltanski plays all the characters that appears in these paintings. An example can be found in *An Overheard Conversation* and the *Grandfathers Death*. He played the dead grandfather, the mourning grandmother, himself as child and the priest. This is also repeated in the first communion where Boltanski serves what is supposed to be his childhood- self-the host. What is important here is that Boltanski plays both child and priest. It is easy to make a comparison between this image and Beuys' engagement with his childhood. Also because the archive is put into a biographical context, it makes it

easier to see that reference to Beuys is being made. The image of the priest is a play not only on Beuys as a shaman priest but also a reference to his engagement with Christianity.

Since 1947 Christian ideals and symbols had been an integral part of Beuys work. Although Beuys did not have a traditional faith in the Catholic Church, his spirituality was of importance to him. He incorporated many of his own ideas into Christian spiritualism along with a mix of Theosophy. Many of the actions he carried out had very strong Christian associations. At an arts festival in Edinburgh he washed the feet of his audience and received a baptism for his fellow performer Christcansen, like that received by Christ from John the Baptist. One of the essential trademarks of Beuys was the Red Cross; he printed it on to sardine cans on *Coke Cola* bottles. The cross to, Beuys, symbolised the rising above materialism. Christ, he believed, represented a healing principle. The logic of Christianity was that only through suffering that the world could be filled with Christian substance. Beuys was convinced there was a connection between suffering and creation and through that process spirituality could evolve. He even aided one of his students with his own crucifixion. As a result of such actions many people accused Beuys of taking advantage of his role as an "artist holy man". Some labelled him as the chic Jesus or as Benjamin H.d Buchloh implied that he was a "mimic messiah".

Essentially for Boltanski to assume the role of the bad preacher is to identify with the role of the anti heroic priest. The preacher in the film *Night Hunter* was a killer by night and preacher by day. However Boltanski is not asserting that he is not good at giving lessons. The bad preacher is the counterpoint to the good shepherd of Beuys.

V

Why did Boltanski abandon the role of the bad preacher in favour of the Clown? The answer may have its origins at Documenta 5, where Harald Szeemann had included Boltanski in the section on 'individual mythologies'. He exhibited at the Museum Feidericianum during Documenta; the work was entitled *Photo album of the family D 1939-1964*. It specifically attempted to address issues of cultural collectively, rather than those of a personal mythology. Boltanski was engaged in investigating how the

...to see that reference to Baby's is being made. The image of the priest is a boy
not only on Baby's as a shadow but also a reference to his engagement with
Christianity.
Since 1947 Christian took and Baby's had been an integral part of Baby's
work. Although Baby's did not have a spiritual life in the Catholic Church, he
eventually was of importance to him. He responded to many of his own ideas into
Christian spiritualism along with a lot of the society. Many of the others he carried out
had very strong feelings as well. At an art festival in London he wanted the test
of the audience and received a number of his fellow believers. Christian and the test
received by Christian took the belief. One of the essential things that Baby's was
the fact that he wanted it not to be a test but an act. The test was the test for
Baby's. Symbolized the test about materialism. Christian, he personally represented a
healing miracle. The test of Christianity was that only through suffering that the world
could be filled with Christian suffering. Baby's was convinced there was a connection
between suffering and creation and through that process spiritually could evolve the
even more one of the students with his own suffering. As a result of such actions
many people accused Baby's of taking advantage of his own suffering and his own
Some accusation as the test of his suffering. A Baptist minister said he was a
"moral mission".

Eventually the test was to restore the role of the test because it is mainly
with the role of the test. The test in the test. The test was a test
by right and tested by test. However, the test was not a test that he is not good at
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Why did Baby's do what the test of the test? The test was the test of the test.
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The test was the test of the test. The test was the test of the test.

personal can only be interrupted through the collective. Through interpreting and displaying a family album he was able to identify family members and certain events, such as birthdays and picnics. In a sense the *Photo album of the Family -D...* represents a conflict with the collective versus the personal. *Family D* was viewed as being part of Boltanski's creation of a personal mythology; some critics had interpreted his work as having similar concerns to those of Beuys.

This may have been the reason why Boltanski dropped the preacher identity in 1973 and took on that of the clown. It enabled him to bring a totally new approach to his work. Perhaps Boltanski felt that his concerns were being confused with those of Beuys. One central theme to the *Clown Archive* was the issue concerning the identity of artist. Boltanski, not wanting to be a progeny of Beuys, had to distance himself by means of creating a counterpoint identity of the clown.

Part of Beuys' identity can in a sense be described as being that of a tragic hero, he was the victim of a war time experience. Overcoming this he evolved as a heroic healer and preacher. His ideal as hero was to serve others through his art making, a task which he took very seriously. Beuys lived his life in a mythical context; every available opportunity was taken advantage of and absorbed into his myth.

There are a number of important things to take in to consideration when judging Beuys' adaptation of a hero identity. When Beuys started to develop his art practice in the 1950s, the heroic ideal was considered a positive thing. It was not until the late 1960s that the notion of the heroic was brought into some sort of discourse, in fact almost everything was up for questioning during that time. To have been part of the mass delusion of Hitler's Germany perhaps led Beuys to mistrust a collective identity. The war in Germany had annihilated its culture and it is from this backdrop that Beuys begin to evolve a new heroic identity (Buchloh 1980 p. 37)

In order to understand Beuys' development as a hero it is essential to examine the impression that the writer James Joyce (1882-1941) made upon him and his work. There are a number of similarities that can be drawn between Beuys and Joyce's works. If we consider Joyce's book *Ulysses* there are two things that can be said about it, that maybe of relevance to Beuys' development of his heroic identity. Firstly, in *Ulysses* Joyce had placed himself within the heroic and mythical context of Homer's *Odyssey*. There are two things to take into consideration.

personal and only by identifying through the reflective, though often
involving family drama he was able to identify family members and certain events
such as birthdays and deaths in a sense the family drama of the family
represents a contrast to the contrast, since the personal family drama was
being part of his own's creation of a personal psychology which had to do with
his work as a writer and not with the work of a writer.

This may have been the last of his family drama, though the greater identity in
1972 and took on that of the whole. It included many other's family drama and
his work. Perhaps because the family drama was being contrasted with those of
his own's family drama, the contrast was the same, though the meaning of
contrast was not the same to be a family of his own, but to be a family of his own.

Part of his family drama was a sense of being that he was
helping to create a family of his own. Overcoming this he involved as a writer
and not as a writer. The work of his own's family drama was a sense of being
which he took very seriously. He was a writer of his own's family drama, every
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It was divisive of Joyce to name his book after a classical Greek story it drew a lot of attention to him and the book, it also created a heroic and mythical context. These are just two procedures that Beuys adapted from the work of Joyce. By aligning himself with a famous writer, Beuys elevated his status so that a parallel could be drawn between the two artists. He achieved this by adding two chapters to *Ulysses*. This he claimed was carried out at the request of Joyce.

The context in which Joyce placed himself: effect enabled Beuys to do the same; to unfold and create his own epic existence. *O life! I go to in counter for the millionth time the reality of experience and to forge into the smithy of my soul the uncreated conscience of my race.* (Joyce 1916 Page 228) The question arises whether Beuys had a similar desire to Joyce and had attempted to redefine the conscience of his race after the devastation of the war. If so it could be considered as being quite a heroic and modernist expectation.

In an interview with Giancarlo Politi which took place in July of 1972 at Documenta 5 Politi asked Beuys a question that related to how some people viewed his statements concerning Duchamp. Beuys vehemently denied setting himself up as a hero: *I'm not a hero I'm a normal person .If other people are interested in making me a hero that is their affair.* (Page 57).

Beuys' slogan at Documenta 5 was *We Are The Revolution*, When asked by Politi what this meant he described it as an attempt to empower people, to make them realise their own creative potential. He said also: *Another point is to develop the will, the uprising will and these abilities you will find every where.* (Giancarlo Politi Page 58), Marcel Broodthaers was also showing at Documenta that same year. In the catalogue he made several statements concerning the role and motivation of the artist. What is interesting is that he should also talk about the power of will. *The real motivation of every artist is narcissism maybe even "the will of power" (Nietzsche)* (Johannes Cladders 1972 page 16.2). *Private Property* was the title of his piece for Documenta 5. The work questioned the motivation, themes and the reality of art. Not long after Broodthaers published an open letter to Joseph Beuys, it referred to Beuys' essay *Art and Revolution*. In it he was critical of Beuys definition of art as being somehow a mix of magic and Politics. (Page 43)

The artist as a definer of experience was brought into question by Boltanski. Nearly all the work that Boltanski produced between 1968 to 1972 can be described as being existential by deliberately setting impossible tasks for himself, in works such as *'Attempts to reconstruct objects that belonged to Christian Boltanski between 1948 and 1954'* (1970). Unable to complete the desired object he exhibited all of the failed attempts. Boltanski failed to live up to the heroic expectation that was perhaps expected of the artist. In a sense his creation was anti heroic.

Many of Boltanski's audiences perceived him as an artist constructing a personal mythology similar to Beuys and addressing the vexed question of identity. It was Harald Szeemann that included Boltanski in the section on 'individual mythologies' at Documenta 5. For many during this time an individual mythology was considered heroic. In his earlier work from the 60s and 70s being cast into role of the hero was something that Boltanski would have wanted to avoid.

Beuys then represented the artistic holy man. For critics and curators to identify Boltanski's work with of Beuys' may have caused him some concern, considering his views on the role of the artist. The clown identity is Boltanski's refusal to be type cast.

The creation of the clown archive and identity is something that comes shortly after Documenta 5. It marks a big change in his work. The question is why this complete change in tactics? By posing as clown there was less risk that he would be taken seriously as a heroic artist or of him being treated in a similar context as Beuys. Boltanski's objective was to explore the collective throughout the personal and in doing so he rejected the status of the hero.

VII

Perhaps the most notable features about the clown archive are that it is a deliberately comical piece of work. Having established that the clown archive was specifically meant for a German audience, it became a crucial counterpoint to the seriousness of the artistic political activity that was being cultivated in the German art scene.

The first as a defect of sentence was brought into question by Bolander. He pointed out that the work of Bolander between 1953 and 1955 can be regarded as being essentially a study of the individual in the social context. In works such as *Attempts to reconstruct objects that are being to change* (Bolander, 1955) and *1954-1955: an attempt to reconstruct the context of the individual in the social* (Bolander, 1955) Bolander tried to find a way to the social context that was perhaps expected of the artist in a sense that was not entirely correct. Bolander's approach, however, was not as an artist constructing a personal mythology in order to have and observing the social context of identity. It was rather a concern that Bolander had in the social and individual psychology. Documents 1-4 for many during this time an individual psychology was not found. In his earlier work from the 50s and 60s Bolander had a role of the hero was something that Bolander would have wanted to avoid. Bolander then represented the artist only meant to create and to create. To Bolander Bolander - work with the hero, he had a sense of some context. Concerning the question of the role of the artist. The artist's identity is Bolander's relation to the type cast. The question of the close relation and identity is something that Bolander also tried. Documents 1-4 it was a big change in the work. The question is why this change in 1955. By looking at Bolander's work it was not that he would be taken seriously as a hero but of other being related to a social context as Bolander. Bolander's objective was to explore the role of the individual in the personal and in doing so he related the status of the hero.

VII

Perhaps the most notable feature about the Bolander work is that it is a deliberately complex piece of work. Having established that the close relation was not a matter of fact for Bolander it became a social context in the sense of the artist's political activity that was being criticized in the German art

Although the *Clown Archive* pokes fun at Beuys it was no mere simple mockery, for on another level Boltanski was consistently engaged in a dialogue about art, which he had previously been working on prior to the *Clown Archive*.

So the question arises as to why Boltanski abandoned the identity of the artist as a bad preacher, in favour of the Clown identity. There are a number of possible answers to this question. Perhaps the most persuasive one is that Boltanski may have felt that his work pre- 1973 was a failure in its attempt to conceptually challenge the ideas that Beuys was advocating. Boltanski's work deliberately shared many similarities with those of Beuys, For instance Boltanski's *Vitrine Reference* (1970) could possibly be mistaken for one of Beuys use of the Vitrine. Perhaps this was a deliberate tactic of Boltanski so as to draw attention to a comparison between their works. Thus on closer inspection the contradictions would become obvious. If he failed he ran the risk of being labelled as a prodigy of Beuys.

The fact that Boltanski was included in the section on *Individual Mythologies* at Documenta 5 may have compounded his failure in his work or perhaps even the failure of his audience. His work was still being perceived and interpreted as being a cultivation of a personal mythology. Documenta 5 certainly marked a turning point for Boltanski and before his return to Germany in 1974 he had rejected the identity of the artist and adopted that of the clown. Referring back to part VI in conversation with Stephano, Boltanski openly expressed his frustration towards Beuys' type of religious and political activity.

The fact that Boltanski should use props in his clown museum that was similar to Beuys *action objects* immediately established a dialogue between the works. We see the whole photographic documentation process of Beuys being mimicked by Boltanski's archive, along with mimicking the presentation and documentation. In a sense the clown archive was the new vehicle which enabled Boltanski to challenge the works and concepts of Beuys.

Beuys expressed his understanding of life through mediated objects associated with his biography. Many of Beuys' personal objects such as *Eurasian staff* had originated in a biographical context, which he used to assimilate some of his universal concepts. What we find is that Boltanski's work denied the possibility of expressing something truly

Although the Commission found that Beau's work was not as successful as it had been in the past, it was not as successful as it had been in the past. Beau's work was not as successful as it had been in the past. Beau's work was not as successful as it had been in the past.

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personal and it was his view that we could only understand each other through collective associations.

Buchloh in his criticism of Beuys described him as engaging in theatrical trickery and that is exactly what Boltanski creates in the clown archive. Another comment that he makes is that Beuys' interaction with education and politics was simple minded. Boltanski made a statement prior to his return to Germany saying that an artist cannot work directly in areas such as politics and philosophy. Beuys seemed to be bigger than any of the particular issues that he adapted and this frustrated many people working in areas such as politics.

Beuys consistently made the statement that every one was an artist. Boltanski also makes a consistent statement, which contradicts that of Beuys', that *art is not real life*. Boltanski constantly questions how anything truly personal can be represented. Boltanski presents an argument that whatever was being expressed would have to be brought back into a cultural frame of reference in order to be understood. This idea would also seem to conflict with the ideals that Beuys expressed through his objects: *I understand everything through my biography*, the object that he presented related specifically to his life and understanding his understanding of the world around him.

On the topic of childhood Boltanski makes reference to his own in the posters *Christian with little Christian*. This work simultaneously parodies Beuys' piece *How to Explain Pictures to a Dead Hare*. But it also makes reference to one's own childhood. The Clown archive in one sense brought about questioned the cultivation of a personal mythology. Boltanski really exposes every method that Beuys used in his art making forcing his audience to question the process of creating a personal mythology and the cultivation of the self made hero.

One other theme of the Clown Archive is that it focuses on issues concerning the use of the self as a subject matter. It was Boltanski that it was impossible to truly use one self as a subject matter, although that is precisely what Beuys set out to do. Beuys not only used himself as subject matter but also frequently made such statements as everyone is an artist, and anything could be art. Beuys also believed that it was possible to transcend this world. Again we find Boltanski also making contradictory statements such as *Art is not Real life*. Boltanski believed that art could only reflect life. It is perhaps ironic that Boltanski should choose to adapt the identity of a Clown to parody

personal and it was his view that we could only understand each other through reflective

communication.

He made a distinction between the two kinds of language in the following way:

and that is exactly what he meant by the two kinds of language. Another distinction

he makes is that he sees interaction with the world and with others as a continuous process.

He also makes a distinction between the two kinds of language in the following way:

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Beuys. For the Clown like that of the shaman priest can be described as being an archetype. The clown or jester has the licence to poke fun even to ridicule a King.

Leave for the town like this at the station where can be described as being an
get help. The town of water has the place to have fun even in the middle of the

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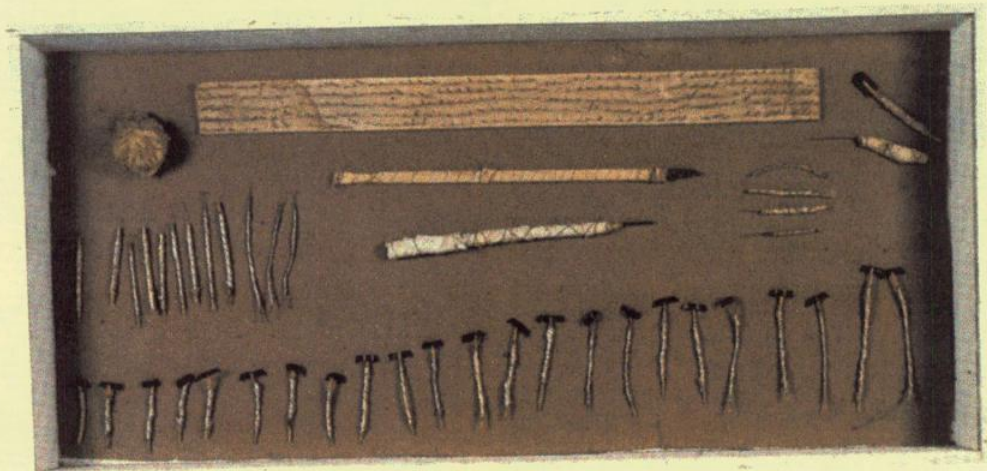


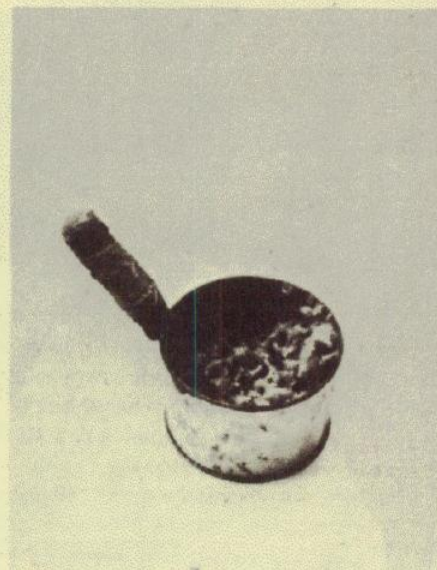
Figure: 1



△ 131 Action object from *Siberian symphony, section 1*, 1963, Ströher Collection, Hessisches Landesmuseum, Darmstadt



△ 132 Hammer for the hard of hearing, 1963, wood, glass, string, brown paint, collection the artist



133 Action object, 1963, acoustic tin. The noise is produced by jabbing the instrument into fat



△ 134–35 Action objects displayed in the Staatliche Kunstakademie during the 'Festum Fluxorum Fluxus', Düsseldorf 3–4 February 1963, Ströher Collection, Hessisches Landesmuseum, Darmstadt. It is characteristic that these objects demonstrate the PROCESS of their making. Simple objects – pliers or a tin – are transformed into action tools and left as relics of an event



figure: 2

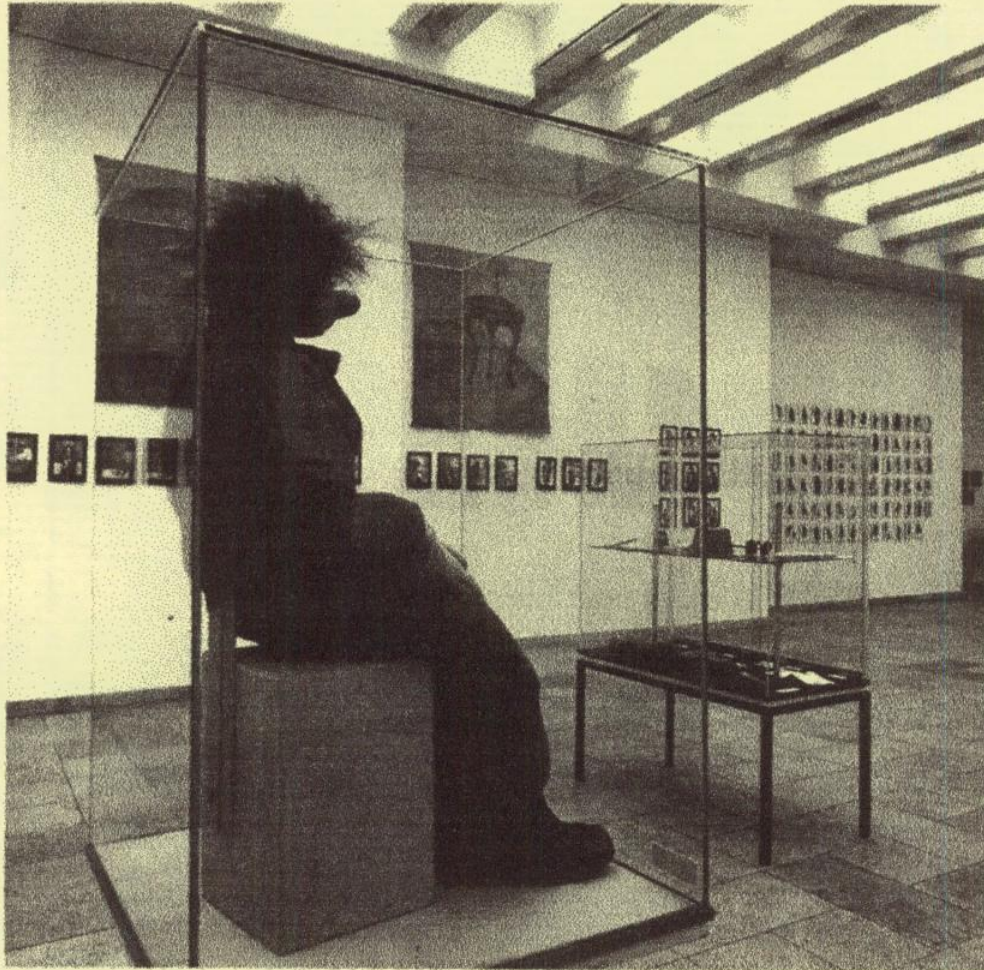
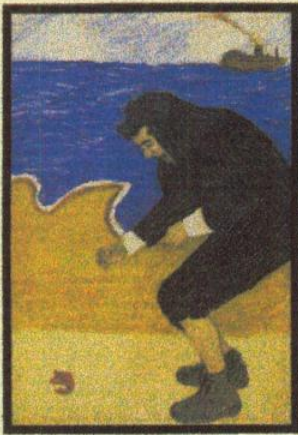


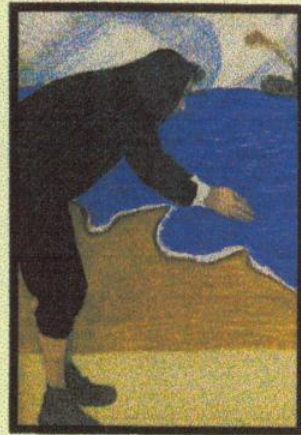
figure: 3



JE PENSE À TON ZÉ



C'EST UNE BONNE IDÉE



ÇA VA BIENTÔT ÊTRE LA PLACE



LA THÈSE, C'EST QU'ON A
ENFIN UN TRAVAIL

figure: 4

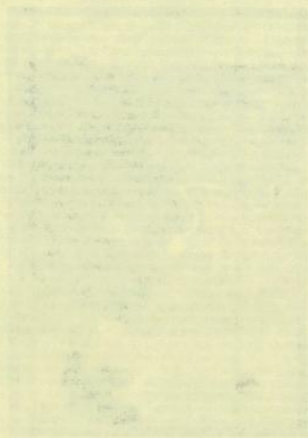
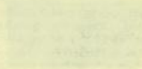
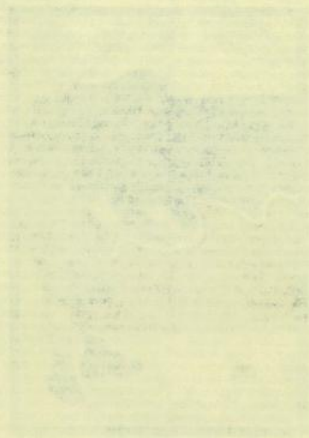
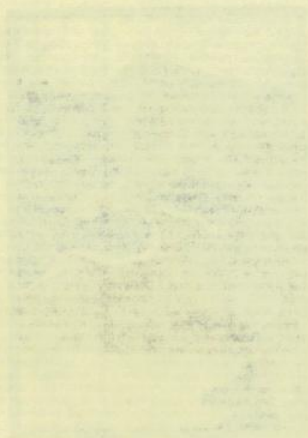
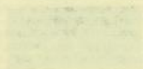
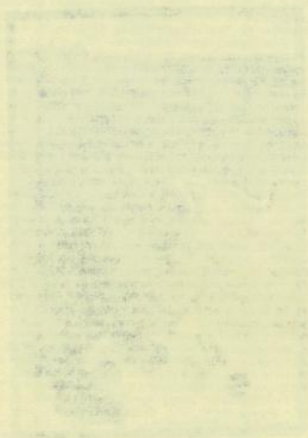




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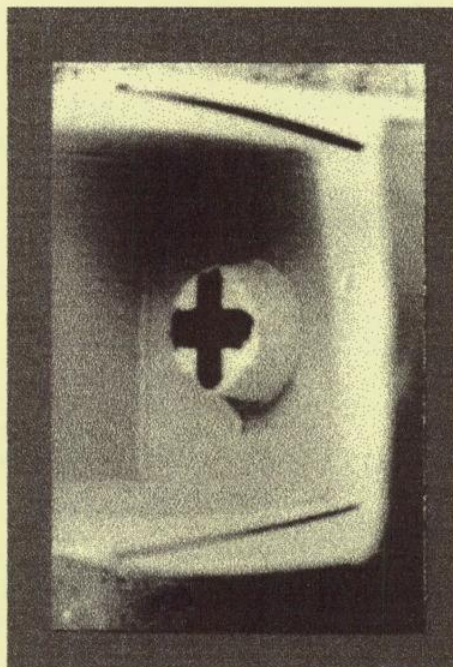
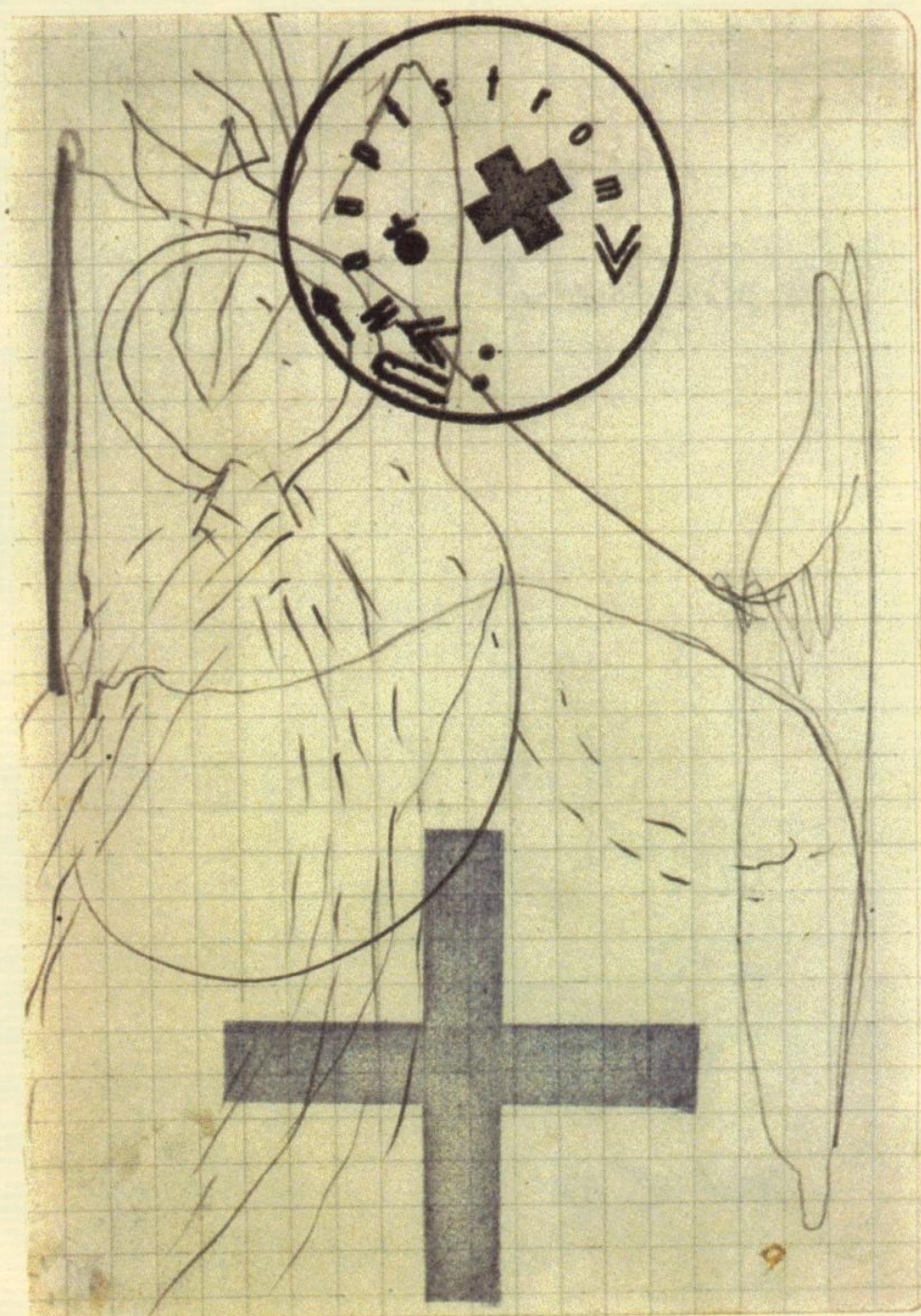


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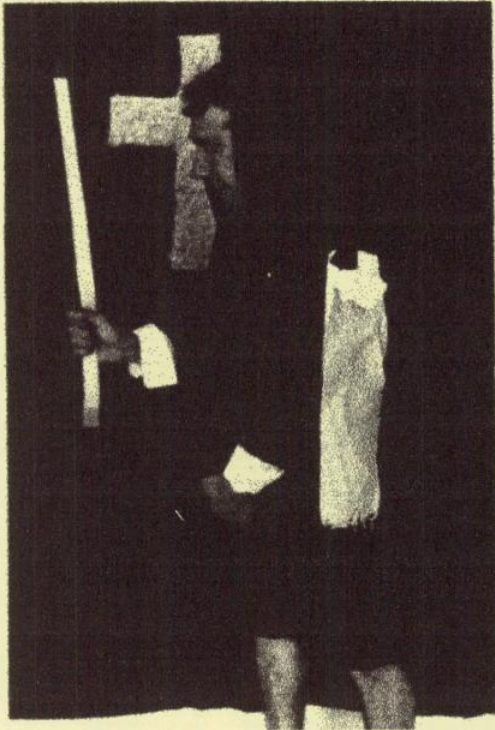
26 Nordlicht, 1954

figure: 7

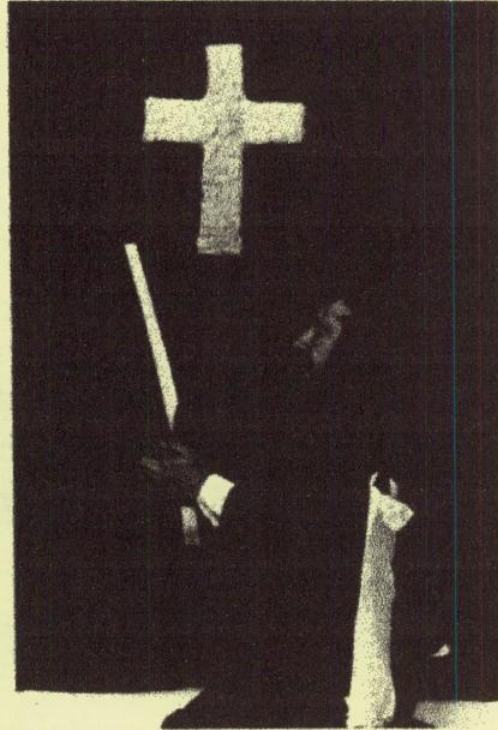


La première communion

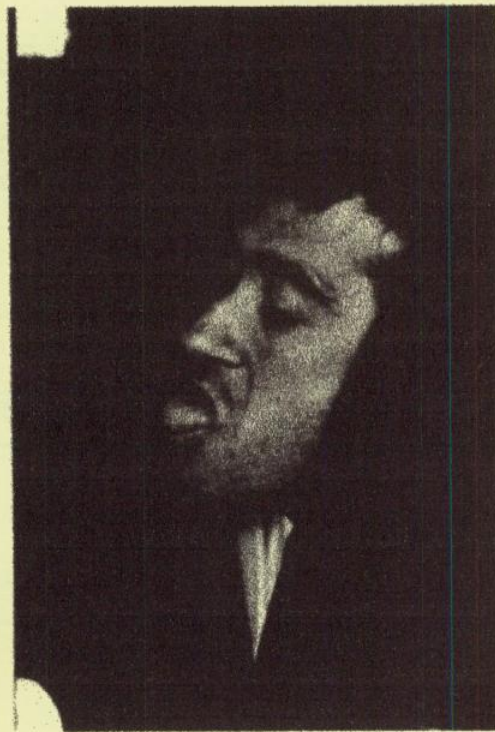
C'est ma première communion, il y aura un grand repas



Je m'agenouille devant l'autel



Le prêtre me présente l'hostie



Je suis très ému



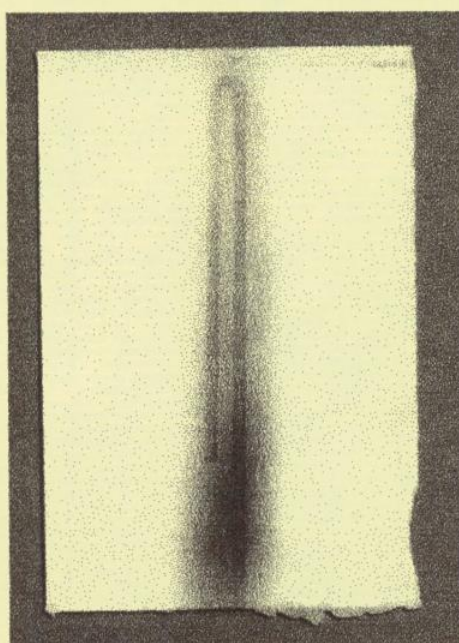


figure :9





figure :11



figure: 12



figure: 13



figure :14





figure: 15



figure :16

