



Everyone Is an Artist

Cosmopolitical Exercises with Joseph Beuys

27.3.–15.8.2021

Kunstsammlung
Nordrhein-Westfalen

“All this only be acquired through practice. Through daily practice. You can call it meditation or concentration exercises. When I talk about the expanded concept of art and say that everyone is an artist, I clearly take into account that this is one of the most important creative moments of human beings—to let it come to a democratic constitution born out of freedom, that is to say from creativity, from the creative power of all people.” Joseph Beuys, 1985

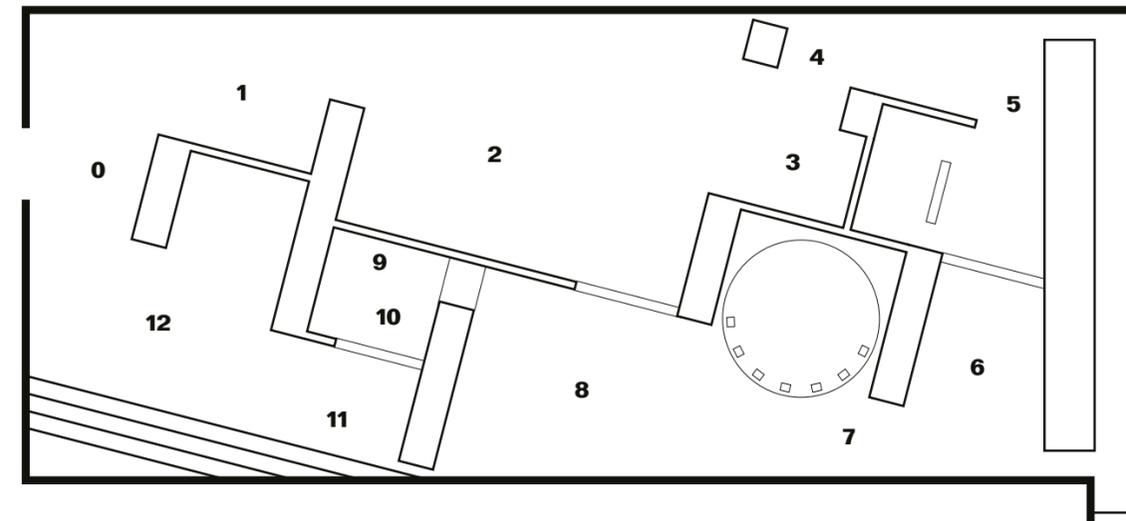
Exhibition Guide

Everyone Is an Artist

Cosmopolitical Exercises with Joseph Beuys

27.3.–15.8.2021

Floor Plan



Contents

| | | | |
|---------------------|----------|--------------------|-----------|
| Introduction | 2 | Prelude 0 | 3 |
| | | Exercise 1 | 4 |
| | | Exercise 2 | 6 |
| | | Exercise 3 | 10 |
| | | Exercise 4 | 12 |
| | | Exercise 5 | 13 |
| | | Exercise 6 | 14 |
| | | Exercise 7 | 16 |
| | | Exercise 8 | 18 |
| | | Exercise 9 | 20 |
| | | Exercise 10 | 22 |
| | | Exercise 11 | 24 |
| | | Exercise 12 | 26 |

Exhibition Guide

Everyone Is an Artist

Cosmopolitical Exercises with Joseph Beuys

27.3.–15.8.2021

As a draftsman, sculptor, teacher, politician, activist, and action and installation artist, Joseph Beuys (1921–1986) left an indelible mark on the art of the twentieth century. Like no other artist of his time, he linked art with social processes, proposing it as a universal creative force for transformation in politics, science, philosophy, and the economy. His influence can still be felt in today’s artistic and political discourses. The hundredth anniversary of his birth thus offers an occasion to appreciate, rediscover, and critically interrogate his complex oeuvre and international impact.

Divided into twelve sections (exercises), the exhibition in the Klee Halle at K20 provides far-reaching insights into Joseph Beuys’s cosmopolitan thinking as manifested in the performance pieces he called “Actions.” Taking center stage for the first time in this show, they illustrate the performative potentials of his art, his actionist approach, his quasi-ritualistic acts, and his transformative handling of objects and materials. In his Actions, Beuys assumes the role of an acting, speaking, and moving figure in order to explore the central idea behind his expanded concept of art: “Everyone is an artist.”

Building on this proposition, Beuys developed a revolutionary theory of “social sculpture” predicated on a process of self-transformation: All individuals should see themselves as artists, shaping their lives according to the principles of sculpture in order to renew society from the ground up. The creative capacities and the unconditional freedom inherent in human thought are at the heart of his expanded concept of art.

In the exhibition, contemporary artists and representatives from diverse areas of society enter into a multilayered transcultural dialogue with Beuys. In each chapter, one of Beuys’s Actions forms the starting point for “exercises in political thought” in the form of dialogues as envisioned by Hannah Arendt. These fictitious conversations reveal central questions, themes, and potentials for action within the utopia of social sculpture that Beuys placed firmly in the here and now, while the complex dialogues with the selected contemporary positions encourage us to delve more deeply into his theses on the possibilities of a future conceived from the standpoint of art.

In view of the discourses on the potential of cosmopolitan thinking that are being conducted today worldwide and with palpable urgency, Beuys’s quest for the kind of interpersonal solidarity that extends to encompass all living beings seems more topical than ever. The questions he formulated, and the tasks he set, are echoed in much of today’s crisis thinking, whether in art, philosophy, politics, economics, science, or ecological endeavors. The exhibition sets out to explore and draw upon this productive potential.

O

Lutz Mommartz *Soziale Plastik* (Social Sculpture) 1969

16mm film, digitized, black-and-white,
no sound, 11:31 min.

Lutz Mommartz, © Joseph Beuys Estate
and VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn 2021

Lutz Mommartz’s films do not tell stories. His works show what *is*. The experimental filmmaker takes a look at the fundamentals of the medium of film, such as here the relationship between protagonists and viewers. For the filming of *Soziale Plastik* (Social Sculpture), Mommartz invited Joseph Beuys to his apartment in Düsseldorf. During the filming, the artist was asked to imagine an “anonymous viewer.”¹ Without speaking, Beuys gazes highly concentrated into the camera—and thus directly into the eye of the viewer. Both sides must endure the gaze of the other and thus enter into an intense dialogue. Beuys described himself as a transmitter and receiver of energy. Here, the viewer takes on this same role.

Beuys always sought to enter into a dialogue and an exchange

with people. He called for an art whose primary concern is the needs of humankind and society. The free human being is at the center of these considerations. The source of this freedom is thinking. Freedom enables creativity. Every individual can thus be creative: “Everyone is an artist.” With this ability, all individuals are called to collaborate in the great social sculpture—a new society that redeems the ideas of freedom, equality, and fraternity.

¹ *Westdeutsche Zeitung*, May 2, 2018, online: www.wz.de/nrw/duesseldorf/duesseldorfer-avantgardefilmer-lutz-mommartz-gastiert-in-oberhausen_aid-25604713 (accessed November 20, 2020).

Joseph Beuys conceived a new image of the artist: He or she should interfere in life. This is accompanied by the question “What is the human being?” Beuys sees the human being as someone who is free and creative—an artist who seeks self-determination in a never-ending process. The prerequisite for this is a way of thinking that combines Western rationality and Eastern intuition. Thich Nhat Hanh conveys the wisdom of the East to the West in order to jointly advocate freedom. Like Beuys, he sees himself as a teacher. While Beuys initiated the Free International University as a place for discussion and the planning of collective action, Thich Nhat Hanh founded the Order of Interbeing, which is dedicated to “the development of compassion, understanding, and committed action in the individual and social spheres.” He opened several Buddhist centers in Europe. Suzanne Lacy is concerned with diversity in society and analyzes social relationships. In the spirit of Beuys, she is not an elitist artist. Lacy brings together people of different backgrounds and interests who, with her as games master, realize collaborative projects and performances to inspire change.

Joseph Beuys
Transsibirische Bahn
(Trans-Siberian Railway)
1970

An Action for a film shot by Ole John in February 1970 on the occasion of the exhibition *TABERNAKEL* at the Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Humlebæk near Copenhagen

16mm film, digitized, black-and-white, sound, 19 min.

© Joseph Beuys Estate and VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn 2021; video on loan from the Medienarchiv Joseph Beuys, Zentrum für Kunst und Medien Karlsruhe (Joseph Beuys Media Archive, Center for Art and Media Karlsruhe)

Joseph Beuys's Action is based on the eponymous installation from 1961/69, which was initially to be set up in a shed, into which one could only look through a small hole with one eye. In the film, the camerawork simulates this view through the static perspective. The camera shake evokes the fatigue of concentrated looking, while the double exposures remind us of changing eyes. The swaying of the camera also emphasizes the motif of the journey—a journey that connects Europe and Asia like the Trans-Siberian Railway connects Moscow and Vladivostok. In his Action, Beuys lends artistic expression to the fusion he strives for between the West, determined by reason and intellect, and the East, characterized by spirituality and intuition—which, moreover, were at the time opposed to each other in two mutually hostile power blocs. Only in this way can the utopia of a new human community be realized.

At the same time, the Action embodies the path from traditional art to the expanded concept of art. The canvases are turned with their fronts facing the wall. For Beuys, art was more than painting, as it were. According to his understanding, art was a process, art was politics; the task of art was to create the social sculpture, in which all people were called upon to participate.

Thich Nhat Hanh
Oprah Winfrey talks
with Thich Nhat Hanh
2013

Video, color, sound, 21:47 min.

Oprah Winfrey Network

How can we preserve our planet? How can we build a just and peaceful world? For Thich Nhat Hanh, the prerequisites for this are compassion, attentiveness, modesty, and the insight that all beings and things are interconnected. The Buddhist monk and Zen master represents a committed Buddhism that is politically and socially active for human and animal rights, equal opportunities, an ecological way of life, and peace. His interest in Western philosophy and religion enables Thich Nhat Hanh to appeal also to Western audiences on a spiritual level.

In the mid-1960s, Thich Nhat Hanh convinced Martin Luther King Jr. and Pope Paul VI to advocate an end to the Vietnam War. He was a member of the Buddhist delegation to the peace negotiations in Paris in 1969. His commitment to peace displeased the government in Saigon—so much so that he was not allowed to return to his homeland. However, he continued to promote social projects in Vietnam and supported the boat people who fled the country. In France, Thich Nhat Hanh founded the Buddhist center Plum Village in 1982, and in Germany, the European Institute for Applied Buddhism in 2008.

Suzanne Lacy
Across and In-Between
2018

The artwork includes *Border People's Parliament* and *The Yellow Line*. Created with Cian Smyth, it involved collaborations with Garrett Carr, Eva Grosman, Conan McIvor, Pedro Rebelo, Helen Sharp, Helen Sloan, Mark Thomas, and communities living on the border in Ireland. Co-commissioned by 14–18 NOW: WW1 Centenary Art Commissions and Belfast International Arts Festival.

Across and In-Between: The Yellow Manifesto, 2018
 Created with Garrett Carr, Eva Grosman, and residents on the border in Ireland, print on paper, 237.8 × 168.2 cm

Across and In-Between: Border People's Parliament, Stormont, 2018
 45 (of 113) black-and-white photographs by Helen Sloan, each 59.4 × 45.9 cm

Across and In-Between: Voices from the Border in Ireland, 2021
 HD video 1080p by Conan McIvor, color, stereo sound, 29:52 min.

Courtesy the artist

Using art to effect social change is the leitmotif throughout the work of Suzanne Lacy. She herself calls her art “public.” Since the early 1970s, when she became a key figure in the feminist movement in California, she has addressed social and political issues in performances, installations, videos, and photographs. She often works collectively with other artists, experts in various disciplines, and affected groups around the world.

Lacy's art leaves the exhibition space. It goes directly into life. For example, Lacy's *Across and In-Between* project involved over 300 people on both sides of the Irish border from communities in the countryside where the demarcation line is not visible. Participants were invited to express their feelings and hopes for the region. In various Actions, they marked the invisible border as *The Yellow Line*. Finally, 150 border residents gathered for the *Border People's Parliament* at the Northern Ireland Parliament building. From their responses to questions about the Irish border, the writer Garrett Carr developed *The Yellow Manifesto: A true account of a border and its people*.

Beuys fought for direct democracy. Angela Davis calls for the “abolition of democracy,” which, in her opinion, is characterized in the United States by racism and capitalism. Michel Houellebecq predicts the destruction of society. The Milk Tee Alliance demonstrates how the commitment of individuals to new ideas can become a mass movement based on solidarity. Masala Yousafzai, too, was initially a lone fighter for the right to education for women; today, she is a role model for millions of others. International Criminal Court Chief Prosecutor Fatou Bensouda advocates human rights. The lawyer Christopher D. Stone fights to give natural objects the status of persons in environmental law, something Beuys also saw as a mandate. Raphael Moussa Hillebrand fights against racism and discrimination with dance, while Zoe Leonard and Jenny Holzer work as visual artists with texts. Phyllida Barlow sees “sculpture as language,” with which she gives physical presence to “non-visual experiences.” Like Beuys, Goshka Macuga is convinced that, in thinking about the future, not only all people, but also all living beings and the earth should have a voice.

Joseph Beuys
Boxkampf für direkte Demokratie durch Volksabstimmung / “Abschiedsaktion” (Boxing Match for Direct Democracy through Referendum / “Farewell Action”)
1972

An Action together with Abraham David Christian-Moebuss on October 8, 1972 at 3:00 p.m., documenta 5 at the Museum Fridericianum, Kassel

Documentation by Karl Oskar Blase (supervision), Walter Cuntze (camera): video, digitized, black-and-white, sound, 9:32 min.

Karl Oskar Blase Estate © Joseph Beuys Estate and VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn 2021; video on loan from the Medienarchiv Joseph Beuys, Zentrum für Kunst und Medien Karlsruhe (Joseph Beuys Media Archive, Center for Art and Media Karlsruhe)

On the last day of documenta 5, a boxing match took place in the Fridericianum in Kassel in the room dedicated to the French Swiss Fluxus artist Ben Vautier. The opponents: Joseph Beuys and the sculptor Abraham David Christian (then Christian-Moebuss), an art student of Beuys and, like the latter, a documenta participant. The referee was Anatol Herzfeld. Beuys won after three rounds, on points.

Christian-Moebuss had challenged Beuys in a heated discussion about direct referendum and the democratically constituted party state in the office of the *Organization for Direct Democracy by Referendum*. The office was Beuys’s official contribution to the documenta. Founded by him—together with Johannes Stüttgen and Karl Fastabend—at Andreasstrasse 25 in Düsseldorf in 1971, the *Organization for Direct Democracy by Referendum* pursued the goal of renewing society through the cooperation of each individual and shaping it into a social sculpture. For documenta 5, Beuys moved the information office to Kassel. He was present there on a daily basis and discussed tirelessly with visitors. His expanded concept of art explicitly encompassed language and speech as a sculptural process that was to contribute to the shaping of the social sculpture.

Malala Yousafzai with Christina Lamb
I am Malala: The Story of a Girl Who Stood Up for Education and Was Shot by the Taliban
2013

London: Orion Publishing Group

Book

Malala Yousafzai was fifteen years old when, on October 9, 2012, members of the Taliban stormed her school bus, asked for her, and shot her in the face. After the Taliban took power in Yousafzai’s home region, the Swat Valley in Pakistan’s hinterland, she had dared to speak out against the reign of terror and continued going to school. Through the mediation of a friend of her father, an education activist, she had blogged under a pseudonym for the BBC’s website about the Taliban’s terror and oppression of girls and women when she was only eleven years old. She soon also made public appearances and reported under her real name.

In an emergency operation, Malala Yousafzai was rescued and

then flown out to a special clinic in England. The assassination attempt did not stop her from continuing to demand the right to education for all children from her exile in the UK. On the contrary, she has become known worldwide as a result and receives support from politicians and the United Nations. In 2014, Malala Yousafzai was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize together with the Indian social reformer Kailash Satyarthi, who campaigns against the exploitation of children.

Raphael Moussa Hillebrand
Von der Straße auf die Bühne: Raphael Hillebrand (From the Street to the Stage: Raphael Hillebrand)
2020

Television broadcast of the program *Drehscheibe*, ZDF

Video, color, sound, 6:29 min.

ZDF and Raphael Moussa Hillebrand

Ein Kubaner in Chemnitz (A Cuban in Chemnitz)
2020

From the series *Unterdrückung – Selbstermächtigung – Befreiung (Suppression – Self-Empowerment – Liberation)*

Interpretation: Yester Mulens Garcia; Camera Operator: Yester Mulens Garcia; Artistic Director: Raphael Moussa Hillebrand; Choreography: Raphael Moussa Hillebrand, Yester Mulens Garcia; Color Correction: Lea Bethke; Music: Nuuki, *Perspektiven Zählen*; A production of Ballett Chemnitz

Courtesy the artist and Städtisches Theater Chemnitz, Ballett Chemnitz, Production “Made in Chemnitz 20|20”

Video Loop of Decolonial Resistance
2019

Video, color, sound, 4:50 min. (loop)

Choreography, Interpretation, and Concept: Raphael Moussa Hillebrand; Music: Prolific the Rapper feat. John Trudel, *It’s not over*; Camera Operator: Naoto Hieda; Place: Academy of Performing Arts Hong Kong

Courtesy the artist

Dancing as a democratic exercise—this is an important aspect of Raphael Moussa Hillebrand’s artistic work. He is concerned with the equality of all people and the courage to live and represent this ideal without compromise. Dancing helped him to come to terms with the racist discrimination he experienced as the son of an African father and a German

mother. Coming from urban dance, he studied choreography in Berlin and is active today as a choreographer, director, curator, and lecturer.

Hillebrand conducts projects worldwide with young people, to whom he strives to convey self-esteem and courage. At the same time, he develops choreographies with professional, often local dancers, whether from the field of urban dance or ballet. In working with others, as he says himself, he finds his best ideas. In 2020, Hillebrand was honored by the jury of the German Dance Prize in the category Outstanding Artistic Developments in Dance. In 2017, the artist co-founded the Berlin-based minor party Die Urbane. Eine HipHop Partei (The Urban: A Hip-Hop Party), which advocates, among other things, equal rights for all, climate protection, equal opportunities in education and work, and global peace.

Zoe Leonard
I want a president
1992

Typewritten text on paper, 27.9 × 21.6 cm

Courtesy the artist, Galerie Gisela Capitain, Cologne, and Hauser & Wirth, © Zoe Leonard

The art of the US-American photographer and sculptor Zoe Leonard is political. The observation and questioning of social developments form the background of her multifaceted photographs and installations. In 1992, Leonard caused a sensation with her appearance at documenta 9. In the Neue Galerie in Kassel, she replaced portraits of men with photographs of female genitalia she had taken herself, which now hung next to the baroque portraits of women. In doing so, she drew attention to the fact that in both the still male-dominated art scene and in museums, women appear primarily as objects. In the 1980s and ’90s, Zoe Leonard became involved as an activist against discrimination against people with AIDS. She spoke up for equal rights for African Americans and the concerns of queer communities.

Her text *I want a president* (1992), displayed in 2016 as a monumental banner on one of the retaining walls of New York’s

High Line Park, drew attention to ongoing social problems in the United States and reflects Leonard’s commitment. “I want a dyke for president. I want a person with aids for president and I want a fag for vice president and I want someone with no health insurance [...]”

Phyllida Barlow
STREET untitled: banners
2010

Fabric, timber, Styrofoam, cement, cotton fabric, c. 400 × 900 × 500 cm (installation dimensions)

Migros Museum für Gegenwartskunst, Zurich

Phyllida Barlow’s sculptures are large. They fill the space in such a way that one can hardly experience them from a distance. And yet they are not sculptures “with a capital ‘S,’” as the British artist puts it. They are not monumental, but provisional and alive, as if they could be changed at any time. Barlow deliberately processes everyday materials such as fabric, cardboard, plywood, plaster, cement, paint, plastic, and foam in an artless manner so that the traces of production remain visible.

Before the sculptor achieved her international breakthrough in 2010 after a long artistic and teaching career, she repeatedly destroyed her sculptures and reused the materials. Economic necessity became an artistic strategy. As with *STREET untitled: banners*—which evokes a forest of banners at a demonstration—her works invite viewers to make their way through or along them, sometimes even to stoop down. The experience of Phyllida Barlow’s sculptures opens up further possibilities for reflection and goes beyond the concrete engagement with the objects themselves—in the artist’s words, “like walking through a landscape.”

Goshka Macuga
Make Tofu Not War
2018

3D wool tapestry, 293 × 447 cm; edition: 5 + 1 AP

Private Collection

Goshka Macuga pursues an expanded concept of the artist. She not only uses the artistic genres

of painting, drawing, collage, sculpture, film, photography, and installation, but also slips into the roles of curator, collector, and scholar. Thus, in her installations, the Polish British conceptual artist often uses—in addition to her own objects—works by other artists, found objects, archival material, and literature. Macuga links art with social, political, historical, philosophical, and scientific events and questions. In doing so, she uncovers hidden or repressed references. The artist attaches great social importance to art and culture, which enable experiences that contribute to the emancipation of the individual and the cohesion of society.

Macuga's themes are embedded in the complex of the history of humanity. The 3D tapestry *Make Tofu Not War* conveys little prospect of good progress. The Tower of Babel on the right in the background represents the hubris of humankind. People dressed as wolves, reindeer, and polar bears warn with protest posters. Are animals wiser? In any case, as a result of their behavior, humans are on the verge of destroying nature, their own basis of existence, as well as themselves.

Milk Tea Alliance How demonstrators in Thailand marshal anti- government protests with hand signs October 18, 2020

Video, color, sound, 3:28 min.

Screenocean/Reuters and South China Morning Post

In 2020, the transnational Milk Tea Alliance, a democratic solidarity movement comprised of netizens from Thailand, Hong Kong, and Taiwan, emerged on the Internet. In addition to their advocacy for democratic rights, they are united by their protest against China's power politics. In Hong Kong, the People's Republic is breaking the guarantee of civil liberties given when the former British crown colony was handed over in 1997, threatening to annex Taiwan into the motherland by force, and increasing Chinese influence in Southeast Asia. The alliance's name alludes to the habit of drinking

tea with milk, which is not common in the People's Republic of China.

The protests of the movement have now reached the streets. People arrange to meet as flash mobs. Their equipment includes hard hats and goggles, gas masks and umbrellas. Similar to the so-called Umbrella Movement in Hong Kong in 2014, people communicate during the demonstrations via a code of hand signals or whisper Chinese words that are passed from mouth to mouth. Protesters in Hong Kong and Thailand have been subjected to massive violence by the state, with deaths, injuries, and arrests.

Fatou Bensouda The Life and Times of an International War Crimes Prosecutor: Fatou Bensouda, ICC Deputy Prosecutor 2011

Fatou Bensouda in conversation with Prof. Leila Sadat, Washington University

Video, color, sound, 36:18 min.

Whitney R. Harris World Law Institute, ©2011 Washington University

Fatou Bensouda is convinced that "every single person can do something ... to change the world." She herself draws strength for her task as Chief Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (ICC) in The Hague from her passionate conviction that she can thus give a voice to the defenseless victims of genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity, and aggression. Before becoming the first woman to be elected to her post in 2011, the Gambian jurist had been Deputy Prosecutor at the ICC since 2004. That period included the trial of Thomas Lubanga, a Congolese militia leader blamed for massacres of civilians, rape, and forced recruitment of child soldiers during the Second Congo War. From 2002 to 2004, Bensouda was a legal adviser at the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda.

The ICC is currently investigating war crimes and crimes against humanity in Afghanistan. It is also focusing on possible crimes committed by the US military and the US foreign intelligence agency, the CIA. Secret CIA prisons—including those in Poland, Romania,

and Lithuania—are being investigated. The United States therefore imposed sanctions on Bensouda in 2020 and banned her from entering the country.

Christopher D. Stone Should Trees Have a Standing? Law, Morality, and the Environment 2010

**Klein Jasedow: thinkOya
(american first edition 1972)**

Book

Christopher D. Stone is an expert on international environmental law and professor emeritus at the University of Southern California at Los Angeles. As a young lawyer, Stone set a milestone in the legal and ethical debate over humankind's relationship with nature.

In 1966, the Walt Disney Company planned to develop a ski resort in California's Mineral King Valley. The oldest conservation organization in the USA, the Sierra Club, filed a suit—legally unpromising because the project would not have personally harmed the plaintiffs' rights. This is where Stone came in. He suggested the Valley itself as a plaintiff since entities such as business corporations are also considered "legal persons." In 1972, Stone published his seminal plea under the title *Should Trees Have Standing? Toward Legal Rights for Natural Objects*. The dispute finally ended in 1978 with the congressional decision to annex the valley to Sequoia National Park—the official end of the proposed ski area.

Christopher D. Stone's thinking spurred the development of environmental law and the understanding of nature as a value in itself. Nevertheless, there is still much to be done before this becomes widely accepted—as regular new editions of Stone's book prove.

Jenny Holzer VOTE YOUR FUTURE 2018

Text: VOTE YOUR FUTURE by March for Our Lives, Jenny Holzer, and many others, Los Angeles, 2018

3 color photographs, each 46.7 × 70 cm

Courtesy the artist, © 2018 Jenny Holzer, ARS, photos: Collin LaFleche (images 1 and 2: LED bus); © 2018 Jenny Holzer, ARS, photo: Ed Mumford (image 3: LED truck)

"Abuse of Power Comes As No Surprise" and other laconic one-liners by Jenny Holzer appeared in large LED lettering on a billboard in Times Square, New York in 1982. Amid the many neon signs, a message that made one stop and think. Text has been the US-American artist's form of expression since the mid-1970s, after she had first devoted herself to abstract painting. Initially pasted as posters, the writing soon appeared with modern computer technology on LED signs and as projections on walls of buildings, as well as on buses, T-shirts, and postcards. Holzer's conceptual text work ranges from *Truisms* and political messages—which she has placed in public especially since Donald Trump's election—to color revisions of American documents about war and intelligence operations.

For the German Bundestag, she installed a stela in the Reichstag building on which LED lettering runs with 447 speeches by Reichstag and Bundestag members from 1871, the year the Reich was founded, to 1999, when the building was reopened after reconstruction. "Enlightenment as Program" was the title of an article in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* on Jenny Holzer's seventieth birthday—an apt formulation.

Angela Davis Angela Davis on feminism, communism, and being a Black Panther during the civil rights movement 2018

Angela Davis in conversation with Matt Frei, Channel 4 News, London

Video, color, sound, 31:46 min.

Channel 4 News/Getty Images

The struggle continues. As it was fifty years ago, racism remains a problem in US society to this day.

Activist, civil rights campaigner, feminist, and philosopher Angela Davis, an icon of the civil rights movement of the 1970s, would like to see the younger generation engaged across differences of gender, sexual orientation, and ethnicity.

From 1968 to 1991, Davis was a member of the Communist Party (CPUSA). In 1970, she was among the ten most wanted criminals in the United States. The starting point was her advocacy for the release of Black prisoners, including George Jackson. When the latter's brother tried to free him from the courtroom, he killed four people with a gun owned by Davis. Davis was subsequently charged with murder, hostage-taking, and conspiracy. As a result, the "Free Angela" movement formed around the world and became a symbol of the struggle against the abuse of justice against minorities. In 1972, Angela Davis was acquitted.

Angela Davis is convinced that capitalism, racism, and sexism are inextricably intertwined. To this day, she advocates for peace, women's rights, better working conditions, health care, and the abolition of prisons.

Michel Houellebecq Houellebecq, Tocqueville, Democracy 2011

Michel Houellebecq in conversation with Sylvain Bourmeau

Video, color, sound, 7:14 min.

Sylvain Bourmeau

Some honor him for his literary work, in which they appreciate the precise language and lucid description of the state of Western society, while others accuse him of being a New Right reactionary: racist, misogynist, Islamophobic—Michel Houellebecq is radical and controversial. The writer claims freedom of thought. He criticizes the narcissism and materialism of the West, as well as the loss of spiritual values. The characters of his novels are self-centered, unemotional, and out of touch. Their lives are unfulfilling and without hope.

Houellebecq finds his ideas already precisely formulated in

the works of the French historian and politician Alexis de Tocqueville. In 1831/32, Tocqueville traveled to the United States on behalf of the French government. In his two-volume work *Democracy in America*, he described the dangers that could emanate from democracy and capitalism. A new, "soft" dictatorship can emerge in which the state takes everything from the people, who are only interested in money, consumption, and pleasure. They revolve solely around themselves and no longer assume any social responsibility, either in private or in public life.

3

Joseph Beuys and Pope.L bemused people with actions in which they subjected themselves to ridicule. The aim was to reveal social role assignments and conflicts. With the *ö ö Programm* performed during the matriculation ceremony at the Düsseldorf Academy of Art in 1967, Beuys violated conventions. With his nonconformist behavior, he took sides with the student protests against the war generation of the fathers and the antiquated structures of West German society. In 1978, Pope.L, who holds Beuys in high esteem, chose the public street as a location for crawling performances. His point of departure was homelessness in New York in the 1970s. With his “crawls,” he made the public aware of the misery of the street and practiced solidarity with the weak. In doing so, he was not perceived as an individual, but rather as a representative of Black Americans. Law enforcement officers and passersby were unwilling to allow this “humiliation of a Black man,” unaware that Pope.L himself had commissioned the white cameraman who filmed him. Both artists used embarrassing situations to create discomfort in order to break down power relations.

Joseph Beuys *ö ö Programm (ö ö Program)* 1967

An Action together with Henning Christiansen in the auditorium of the Staatliche Kunstakademie (State Academy of Art), Düsseldorf on the occasion of the matriculation ceremony on November 30, 1967

Photograph by Volker Krämer (reproduction)

© Nachlass Volker Krämer Estate, Hamburg, VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn 2021

“Professor bellt ins Mikrofon! Düsseldorf: Akademie-Happening” (“Professor Barks into a Microphone! Düsseldorf: Academy Happening”) December 1, 1967

Newspaper article by Alexander Goeb, in: *EXPRESS*, Cologne, December 1, 1967 (reproduction)

With the kind support of the Universitäts- und Stadtbibliothek Köln (University and City Library of Cologne)

After the welcoming address by Eduard Trier, director of the academy, and a speech by Karl Bobek, Professor for Sculpture, Joseph Beuys, at the time Professor for Monumental Sculpture, stepped up to the microphone. In his trouser pocket was an axe with a broken, split handle. Instead of a speech, he emitted the sounds “ö ö” for approximately four minutes. The Fluxus composer Henning Christiansen played two of his own pieces from a tape as well as the phrase “Rastplatz bitte sauber halten” (Please keep the rest area clean), to which he silently moved his mouth, several times. Finally, Beuys brought the axe to Christiansen’s chest as if taking an oath, which Christiansen returned with the same gesture.

The axe, a symbol of strength, had a ritual significance for Beuys. By placing it on the heart, he transformed it into an “inner weapon” that imparts energy.² Beuys’s sounds imitated the roaring of stags. The (white) stag, whose fur was used as priestly clothing by the Celts and represents Christ in Christian symbolism, possessed spiritual powers for Beuys. At the same time, the sounds are language that does not denote a concept, the pure material that is formed in the sculptural process—to which Beuys also included speech.

2

Joseph Beuys, in: *Joseph Beuys*, ed. Caroline Tisdall, exh. cat. Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York (London, 1979), p. 30; quoted in Uwe M. Schneede, *Joseph Beuys: Die Aktionen. Kommentiertes Werkverzeichnis mit fotografischen Dokumentationen* (Ostfildern-Ruit, 1994), p. 203.

Pope.L *The Great White Way, 22 miles, 5 years, 1 street* (Segment #1: *December 29, 2001*) 2001–06

CRT monitor, and resin; video, color, sound, 6:35 min, edition: 5 + 1 AP

Courtesy the artist and Mitchell-Innes & Nash, New York

“Friendliest Black Artist in America” can be read on Pope.L’s calling card. This sounds amusing; at the same time, however, it is an allusion to the fear many white Americans have of their African American fellow citizens. Pope.L’s work focuses on social, gender, and ecological issues. His media include painting, video, photography, installation, and performance, which often takes place on the street. In 1997, wearing only shorts, with a skirt of dollar bills over them, he tied himself to the door of a bank with a chain of sausages, intending to give each passerby a dollar bill—which a security guard quickly prevented. *ATM Piece* was a reaction to the ban on panhandling near automated teller machines (ATMs) enacted by then-Mayor of New York Rudy Giuliani.

Since 1978, Pope.L has used crawling performances to draw attention to his concerns. From 2001 to 2009, he crawled in stages along Broadway wearing a Superman costume. Because of its lavish lighting, the street is also known as “The Great White Way.” Pope.L uses this epithet as an ambiguous title for the performance: The wealth and the world of commodities that characterize Broadway are primarily reserved for white people.

Bob Dylan *Murder Most Foul* 2020

Audio recording, 16:56 min.

© 2020 by Special Rider Music/ Universal Music Publishing Group

In 2020, Bob Dylan published the song *Murder Most Foul*. The US folk and rock musician and Nobel Laureate for Literature borrowed the title from the drama *Hamlet* by William Shakespeare. There, the murder of Hamlet’s father, the King of Denmark, is described by his ghost as “Murder most foul.” Bob Dylan relates the words to the assassination of US President John F. Kennedy on November 22, 1963; and in the song, he takes different perspectives on the assassination, including that of the victim himself. On a second level, Dylan quotes film titles and pop culture musicians from the last fifty years.

With John F. Kennedy, the bearer of hope for America’s awakening and renewal, for peace and justice, was laid to rest. In 1965, the United States officially entered the Vietnam War. The disillusioned young generation found their anti-bourgeois, socially critical, and pacifist protest attitude reflected in Bob Dylan’s songs—such as *The Times They Are a-Changin’* and *Masters of War*. *Blowin’ in the Wind* became the anthem of the anti-war movement. And this, although Bob Dylan has always asserted that he is not politically minded.

4

Joseph Beuys overtly cultivated the habitus of a savior. He thus performed Christian acts such as foot washing and baptism. For *Action in the Moor*, he stood in the form of a cross in front of a bunker and appeared to walk across the water like Christ. However, he also submerged himself in it— as a person seeking healing in nature. Beuys did not want to be a savior. But he was convinced of a “higher ego” of every human being, “in whom Christ lives.” His expanded concept of art attributed to every individual the ability to work on improving society, the great social sculpture, which brings redemption.

At the time when Beuys emerged on the scene with his actions, the youth was rebelling against the war generation of their parents with hippie culture, the anti-Vietnam War movement, and student revolts. The anti-establishment pop musicians were revered like saints: Bob Dylan, Jimi Hendrix, John Lennon—to name but a few—as well as Patti Smith. Like Beuys, Smith is committed to a just society based on love. In order to create this, people do not need a savior, but a common commitment. As Patti Smith sings: “We Have the Power.” And as Beuys said, “Everyone is an artist.”

Joseph Beuys *Aktion im Moor* (Action in the Moor) 1971

An Action in Eindhoven, Netherlands, probably on August 16, 1971

4 black-and-white photographs by Gianfranco Gorgoni (reproductions)

© Maya Gorgoni, VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn 2021

On the car ride from Düsseldorf to the exhibition of his installation *voglio vedere i miei montagne* (I want to see my mountains) in Eindhoven, Beuys—accompanied by the photographers Ute Klophaus and Gianfranco Gorgoni—passed a swamp. There, the artist performed a spontaneous Action that lasted roughly half an hour. Beuys followed the startled birds through the marshland and imitated their movement. With his face to the wall, he leaned in a crucifixion pose against a bunker-like concrete structure, went inside and stopped, notebook in hand. Outside, he jumped around among the water-holes, submerging himself several times fully clothed up to the brim of his hat. He smeared his left hand and sleeve with mud.

Moors are habitats of great importance for the world’s climate and the entire ecosystem. Beuys emphasized this importance several times in conversations. At the same time, however, the moor was for him a mystical storehouse of spiritual energy. Beuys believed that, if they wanted a future, humans must return to nature. The concrete bunker here is a reminder of war and injury, of the wounds of society that need to be healed—this healing is implied in the crucifixion pose. Beuys wanted to open up the possibility of developing a new, free and just society.

Patti Smith *People Have the Power* April 21, 2019

Live performance of the song by Patti Smith from 1988 by the artist together with Choir! Choir! Choir! and the audience at the Onassis Festival 2019: *Democracy Is Coming*, New York.

Video, color, sound, 6:59 min., excerpt: 00:37–05:41

Courtesy Choir! Choir! Choir!

“Outside of Society, They’re Waitin’ for Me, Outside of Society, That’s Where I Want to Be,” Patti Smith sang in *Rock N Roll Nigger* in 1978. “Nigger” here means a person who is outside of society—Jimi Hendrix, Jackson Pollock, her grandmother, and Jesus Christ are mentioned in the lyrics. The piece struck a chord with Smith’s rebellious generation. At the same time, it is an affirmation of life as an artist. Patti Smith, the “Godmother of Punk,” is a poet, rock musician, performance artist, painter, and photographer. She initially saw singing as a way to perform her poetry. Her early encounter with Bob Dylan and his poetry was seminal for her. Her reverence for the French poet Arthur Rimbaud goes so far that, in 2017, Smith bought his house in the village of Roche in the Ardennes. The companion of Robert Mapplethorpe and wife of Fred “Sonic” Smith, with whom she has two children, shaped an—also sexually—self-determined image of women. As the artist put it: “Freedom means that I don’t let other people determine me. Outside of society—that’s where I want to be.”

5

Joseph Beuys’s expanded concept of art is based on the assumption that every human being has the potential to continually change and to be creatively active. For this, the artist found the figure of the nomad, the inquisitive wanderer, who in his or her thinking and acting overcomes the boundaries between East and West, between ratio and intuition, between capitalism and communism. He understood the figure as a political tool, as he demonstrated in the action *EURASIAN STAFF, 82 min fluxorum organum*. Beuys identified himself with the nomadic cultures of Eurasia. According to the myth he invented, having been healed by Tatars with felt and fat after his plane crash in World War II, he was invited by them to become one of their own.

In 1979, Tuan Andrew Nguyen fled as a three-year-old with his family to the United States and recently returned to Vietnam. His work explores how the experiences of refugees, migrants, and nomads complement each other. Despite all the losses and suffering, he sees emancipatory potential in migration. The figure of the nomad stands for the constant re-conception of oneself and the exchange of knowledge and experience with others.

Joseph Beuys *EURASIENSTAB, 82 min fluxorum organum* (EURASIA STAFF, 82 min. fluxorum organum) 1967/68

The Action was performed twice: on July 2, 1967 at 8:00 p.m. in the Galerie nächst St. Stephan, Vienna, and—together with Henning Christiansen—on February 9, 1968 at 8:00 p.m. at the Wide White Space Gallery, Antwerp

Henning Christiansen (sound), Paul de Fru (camera), 16mm film, digitalized, black-and-white, sound, 22:46 min.

© Joseph Beuys Estate and VG Bild-Kunst Bonn 2021; video on loan from the Medienarchiv Joseph Beuys, Zentrum für Kunst und Medien Karlsruhe (Joseph Beuys Media Archive, Center for Art and Media Karlsruhe)

The film shows a summarization of the Action. Beuys repeated the Antwerp version in full length for the filming. From this, Henning Christiansen selected certain parts of the Action for the final film.

The staff is reminiscent of a shepherd’s crook, like those used by nomads wandering with their herds of animals. Nomads do not submit to a rigid order; they are in constant motion. Beuys understood movement as a basic condition of the sculptural process. Without it,

nothing new can emerge. Made of the excellent heat conductor copper, the staff was for Beuys also a transmitter of spiritual energy. He symbolically took the energy from the light bulb—a symbol of knowledge and truth—and coated the felt corners with it. With these, he had marked a rectangular space representative of the principle of solidified reason. In Beuys’s cosmos, the West stands for science and ratio, the East for spirituality and intuition. In the “Eurasian Staff,” West and East are metaphorically united. Only the interaction of both worlds can lead to true knowledge and the solution of the problems of humanity.

Tuan Andrew Nguyen *The Boat People* 2020

Single-channel video, 4K, Super 16mm transferred to digital, color, 5.1 surround sound, 20 min.; edition: 5 + 2 AP (# 3/5) (JCG11340)

Courtesy the artist and James Cohan, New York

With his sculptures, videos, and installations, Tuan Andrew Nguyen explores historical traditions and

individual memories. These concern Vietnamese history and culture, the colonization and decolonization of Southeast Asia, and experiences of war and flight. His video *The Boat People* was produced in Bataan in the Philippines. In 1975, the country played a significant role in preparing for the resettlement of refugees from the Vietnam War to North America, Europe, and Australia.

They came across the sea as boat people—Cambodians, Laotians, and especially Vietnamese. The boat people in Nguyen’s video are five children, led by an assertive girl. They go ashore, where they are all alone. The children find headless Buddha statues, Christian figures, dates and names carved in stone, the words “made by Lao refugees,” and a museum of photographs and guns. Humanity seems to have ceased to exist. Only the found objects can tell the young “Boat People” about what it once was.

6

John Dillinger—the most wanted bank robber in the United States during the Great Depression around 1930, whose shooting Beuys re-enacted in Chicago—was a hero to many contemporaries. In their eyes, he rightly stole from the rich—despite the fact that he did not distribute the loot to the poor. Joseph Beuys appreciated the creativity of “action artists” such as Dillinger. In his view, creativity is intrinsically value-free; good or evil are the ends for which it is used. “It’s hard to imagine what would have happened,” Beuys said, if Dillinger’s energy had been “pointed in the right direction.” The B-Town Warriors, a group of Original Nations school students from the Australian town of Bourke, a “lost city,” are calling for just that. They take on the role of “outlaws” assigned to them and turn it into something positive. In contrast, Núria Güell instigates the collective expropriation of banks as a modern Robin Hood. The looted money is used for social and political projects. Santiago Sierra exposes parasitic strategies by using them himself. Edward Snowden used his creative energy to break the law for moral reasons—celebrated as a hero by some and branded as a traitor by others.

Joseph Beuys Dillinger 1974

An Action outside the Biograph Theater in Chicago on January 14, 1974, on the artist's first trip to the US

Filed by Klaus Staeck and Gerhard Steidl (camera), video, digitized, black-and-white, sound, 21:57 min.

© Joseph Beuys Estate and VG Bild-Kunst Bonn 2021; video on loan from the Medienarchiv Joseph Beuys, Zentrum für Kunst und Medien Karlsruhe (Joseph Beuys Media Archive, Center for Art and Media Karlsruhe)

In January 1974, Joseph Beuys traveled to the United States for the first time, accompanied by Klaus Staeck, among others. In Chicago, they happened to pass an old movie theater, the Biograph. It had once gained fame through an incident that had gone through the world press. On July 23, 1934, the long-sought gangster boss John Dillinger had been shot dead by police in the adjacent alley after visiting the movie theater. Because of numerous bank robberies and police killings by his gang and various escapes from prison, Dillinger was considered at the time to be “America’s Public Enemy No. 1.” Beuys immediately thought of the incident when he saw

the movie theater and spontaneously acted it out in the role of the gangster boss. In an interview with Klaus Staeck, the artist confessed: “Yes, I have always lived with the ideas of John Dillinger who was also a lone wolf [...]. I place great value in the energy that is involved in a biography like that of John Dillinger. This energy, which had a negative orientation in Dillinger’s case, can also give off positive impulses.”³ Beuys recognized a great creative potential in people like Dillinger or even Hitler, which they had, however, “used negatively” and “against the people.”⁴

³ Joseph Beuys, in Klaus Staeck and Gerhard Steidl (eds.), *Beuys in Amerika* (Heidelberg, 1987), p. 210; quoted in: Schneede 1994 (see note 2), p. 325. Quoted in English in Michael Wolfson, “Joseph Beuys,” trans. Michael Wolfson, in Susanne McDowell and Robert Simon (eds.), *Beuys / Ulrichs. ICH-Kunst DU-Kunst WIR-Kunst: Joseph Beuys und Timm Ulrich im Kunstmuseum Celle mit Sammlung Robert Simon* (Celle, 2007), pp. 11–73, here pp. 22–23.

⁴ Joseph Beuys, in: “Ich bin ein ganz scharfer Hase”: Joseph Beuys im Gespräch mit Birgit Lahann,” *Stern* 19, April 30 (1981); quoted in Schneede 1994 (see note 2), p. 325 [translated].

Núria Güell Displaced Legal Application #1: Fractional Reserve: How to expropriate money from the banks Barcelona, 2010/11

Installation, blackboard: 120×400 cm, manual: 19 cm high; video: 60 min.

Courtesy the artist and ADN Galería

How can one take money away from banks? During the 2008 financial crisis, banks around the world were bailed out with taxpayers’ money. According to Núria Güell, the ball is now in the citizens’ court. The Spanish artist has given lectures and workshops on the subject and published a guide with strategies and legal advice. Just as banks create money under the fractional reserve system that is only partially secured by credit balances, she suggests taking out loans with fictitious collateral and declaring bankruptcy after a few repayment installments.

This action is just one of many with which Güell strives to anchor art in real life. It is not enough for her to merely point out unethical and antisocial practices. She is intensively concerned with the struc-

tures and methods responsible for them, in an effort to undermine these with very concrete projects. In this way, she can help those affected and at the same time trigger public debate. Güell often operates on the edge of illegality. She uses the autonomy of art, which enjoys social freedom, as a protective shield, as she herself says, to undermine the capitalist and exploitative system.

Santiago Sierra Destroyed Word: Several Locations, October 2010– October 2012

Ten-channel HD video installation, black-and-white, sound, 24:08 min.

Courtesy the artist and KOW, Berlin

According to Santiago Sierra, capitalism is sadism. In the mid-1990s, he began employing poor people at low wages for his performances. For example, he had a continuous line tattooed on the backs of six young Cubans standing next to each other in exchange for \$30 each. He also paid African street vendors in Venice \$60 to have their hair dyed blond. Sierra documents his performances with black-and-white photographs and videos.

Since the 2000s, the Spanish conceptual artist has been exposing the structural problems of politics and society with words made of oversized letters. In Ciudad Juárez on the border between Mexico and Texas, he dug the word “SUMISIÓN” (submission) into the ground in letters measuring fifteen meters in height. They were to be filled with gasoline and set on fire, but authorities prevented this. Between 2010 and 2012, Sierra had letters measuring three meters in height produced for *Destroyed Word* in ten countries around the world, which together made up the word “CAPITALISM.” He then had them publicly destroyed. The individual letters were made of a material important to the economy of the respective country—in Germany, the letter T was made of insulating foam.

Edward Snowden NSA whistleblower Edward Snowden: “I don’t want to live in a society that does these sort of things” June 6, 2013

Edward Snowden in conversation with the British newspaper *The Guardian* in a hotel room in Hong Kong

Video, color, sound, 12:34 min.

Guardian News & Media

“I do not want to live in a world where everything I do and say is recorded,” said Edward Snowden, arguably the most famous whistleblower of recent years. As an external employee of the US foreign intelligence agency NSA, he revealed in 2013 the global surveillance—even in the absence of suspicion—of millions of people’s Internet and telecommunications connections by the NSA and the GCHQ, the British government’s secret intelligence and security service. In Hong Kong, Snowden handed over the documentary evidence to the British newspaper *The Guardian*. The United States unsuccessfully demanded his extradition. Because they invalidated his passport, Snowden’s escape accidentally ended in Moscow, where he has lived in exile ever since.

Snowden is aware of having broken laws. But he acted in the belief that everyone has a duty to violate national laws to prevent a crime against peace and humanity. The world is now warned, even though Snowden fears that the US and other countries will refine their methods using artificial intelligence to monitor and record everyone’s lives seamlessly, together with the major Internet companies.

B-Town Warriors Rewrite Your Story 2017

Music video, color, sound, 2:58 min.

Desert Pea Media

B-Town is the nickname of the small Australian town of Bourke in the north of the state of New South Wales, approximately 800 km north-west of Sydney. Roughly 3,000 people live there, including many Aborigines. In 2013, Bourke was ranked the most dangerous place

in the world because of its crime rate—marked by violence, high incarceration rates, drug abuse, and broken families. The B-Town Warriors want to encourage their generation and tell a different story of their city: With the help of Desert Pea Media and the Outback Division of General Practice, Bourke High School students have discovered hip hop as their form of expression. The actual mission of the Outback Division is to provide primary health care to remote regions of western New South Wales, while Desert Pea Media is a non-profit institution that works with Indigenous young people in remote areas to create audiovisual projects. Desert Pea Media works with local institutions to promote social and cultural dialogue between communities and build a shared Australian culture. The B-Town Warriors’ song line “Get up and rewrite your story!” is an encouraging call to action.

The machine is the basis for the success of capitalism. For some, it brought wealth, for others unemployment. For Beuys, art was capital. Even more influential for him than Karl Marx's text *Das Kapital* was the teaching of the anthroposophist Rudolf Steiner, who between 1917 and 1922 developed a threefold division of the social organism into cultural life, political life, and economic life. For Steiner, the productive capital was the spirit—that is to say, the individual abilities of humankind. Instead of “mechanical machines,” he called for “moral machines.” Beuys's *Honey Pump at the Workplace* was also such a machine. Steiner and Beuys saw the bee colony as an exemplary community, equating its work processes with the metabolism of the human organism. Rabindranath Tagore named material success as the purpose of the machine, and goodness as the purpose of humankind. When the machine gains the upper hand, humans themselves become machines. The consequence is a politics without compassion and responsibility. The Otolith Group strives to use Tagore's ideas to solve the problems of the present. It explores the history and consequences of global capitalism through the means of art.

Joseph Beuys
Honigpumpe am Arbeitsplatz
(Honey Pump at the Workplace)
1977

The Honey Pump formed the center of the Free International University (F.I.U.), which was hosted by the Museum Fridericianum in Kassel during the 100 days of documenta 6, 1977

From: Werner Krüger, *Joseph Beuys – Jeder Mensch ist ein Künstler (Everyone Is an Artist)*, 1979/80, color, sound, 56 min., excerpt: 45:48–48:33

© Werner Krüger; © Joseph Beuys Estate and VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn 2021; video on loan from Medienarchiv Joseph Beuys, Zentrum für Kunst und Medien Karlsruhe (the Joseph Beuys Media Archive, Center for Art and Media Karlsruhe)

In 1977, the honey pump in the Fridericianum circulated roughly 300 kg of honey through a system of 173 meters of tubes and hoses. These stretched from the first floor through the stairwell to under the museum's skylight dome. For this purpose, two electric motors made a 2.6-meter-long copper shaft rotate in 100 kilograms of piled-up margarine. The honey pump formed a closed circuit. Beuys described it as a “diagram of a human being” with vessels, nerves, heart, spine, and head.

Beuys equated honey with creative thought—the basis for the social sculpture, to which every human being is called upon to contribute. The honey pump was a visually tangible sign for a second “honey pump,” which also had its place in the Fridericianum for 100 days during the documenta in the constant presence of Beuys: The Free International University. Here, topics such as alternative energies or social problems and possibilities in a post-capitalist society based on freedom, equality, and fraternity were discussed with the public. It was a “workplace” because the capital of creativity was used to create, as Beuys put it, “knowledge goods” and “intellectual goods.”

The Otolith Group
O Horizon
2018

Video installation, HD video, color, sound, 90 min.

Courtesy The Otolith Group and Lux, London

Otoliths are tiny calcium carbonate particles in the inner ear. They enable the perception of gravity and acceleration. In a video of the same name from 2003, The Otolith Group imagines a future in which the human ear is no longer calibrated to Earth's gravity as a result of extended stays in outer space. Science fiction and the shaping of the future in the face of ecological catastrophe in the Anthropocene, the history of global liberation struggles, tricontinentalism (the term replaces postcolonialism and refers to Africa, Asia, and South America), the close interconnection between racism, capitalism, and environmental degradation, and the development of global modern arts are the fields of research of The Otolith Group artist collective.

Anjalika Sagar and Kodwo Eshun realize film essays, installations, and performative lectures; they develop projects and programs, promote other artists and curate. In their video *O Horizon*, they combine visual art, dance, performance, music, and recitation to contemplate the reformist activities of the Indian writer, philosopher, painter, and musician Rabindranath Tagore (1861–1941) and their impacts from today's perspective.

8

The challenges of climate change and the extinction of species can only be met through the cooperation of all humans. Joseph Beuys had already identified a crisis of the modern industrial society with “enormous processes of extermination.” He saw the reason for this in the economic understanding of capital. He completely redefined capital as the creative potential of human beings. Beuys expanded the concept of sculpture and art. For him, everything was sculpture, and every single individual was an artist, whom he held responsible for actively helping to shape society and the future of the planet. The action *7,000 Oaks – City Forestation Instead of City Administration* was one example of this.

Mierle Laderman Ukeles involves citizens who lived in New York at the time of the operation of the landfill Fresh Kills in its transformation into a positive social sculpture—a people’s park. Dineo Seshee Bopape sees Africa’s history of suffering inscribed in African soil, which she juxtaposes with narratives of resistance and symbols of solidary action. Vandana Shiva advocates organic farming and “Earth citizenship”—to create a better world of coexistence and equality for all living beings.

Joseph Beuys
7000 Eichen –
Stadtverwaltung statt
Stadtverwaltung
(7,000 Oaks – City Forestation
Instead of City Administration)
1982–1987

An Action begun at documenta 7, 1982 and concluded with the planting of the 7,000th oak tree by the artist’s son Wenzel Beuys at documenta 8, 1987

5 black-and-white photographs by Dieter Schwerdtle (reproductions): Planting of the first of Joseph Beuys’s 7000 Eichen (7,000 Oaks), documenta 7, 1982; Joseph Beuys, 7000 Eichen (7,000 Oaks), documenta 7, 1982; Poster for: Joseph Beuys, 7000 Eichen (7,000 Oaks), documenta 7, 1982; Beuys in front of the Holiday Inn in Kassel, documenta 7, 1982; Planting of Joseph Beuys’s 7000 Eichen (7,000 Oaks), in Ifta, documenta 7, 1982

Photos: Dieter Schwerdtle, © documenta archiv, Joseph Beuys/VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn 2021

For documenta 7, Beuys first had 7,000 basalt stones laid out in front of the Fridericianum to form a wedge-shaped sculpture. At its tip, he planted the first oak tree. Next to each of the 7,000 trees that were planted in the course of the project, one of the basalt stones was erected as a stela. The sculpture on Friedrichsplatz thus gradually

dissolved as the tree population in Kassel grew.

Anyone could participate in the project and, for 500 DM, have a tree with a stela installed at the location of his or her choice. In addition to the project coordination office of the Free International University initiated by Beuys, more than 4,000 individuals, groups, companies, and institutions participated. Nevertheless, the artist himself had to contribute a considerable amount to the financing of the campaign. After five years, just in time for documenta 8, all the trees had been planted.

With *7,000 Oaks*, Beuys implemented his idea of a social sculpture. Many worked together for the benefit of the community. Past and future intertwine. The crystalline basalt stones have existed for millions of years, while the oaks are living beings that can live for over 800 years. Beuys strove to set a “symbolic beginning” for the “transformation of all of life, of society, and of the whole ecological system.”

Dineo Seshee Bopape
Lerole: footnotes
(The struggle of memory
against forgetting)
2018

Installation, soil, ceramics (black clumps, gray clumps), iron oxide, coal, record players, wooden panels, gold leaf, sage, essential oils (incense, sage, absolute rose), dimensions variable, installation: 87 × 480 × 455 cm

Courtesy the artist and Sfeir-Semler Gallery, Beirut/Hamburg

In her multimedia installations, Dineo Seshee Bopape combines videos, sounds, and photographs with natural materials and found objects. Her starting points are events in African history and conflicts with the European colonizers, African American music and literature, such as the songs of Nina Simone and the lyrics of James Baldwin, or statements by anti-apartheid activists such as Winnie Madikizela-Mandela.

For installations such as *Lerole: footnotes (The struggle of memory against forgetting)*, Bopape uses soil. “Lerole” means “living dust”: soil, clay, and sand are culturally and politically charged with history and memories. The lumps of clay

in the installation were formed with clenched fists, a reminiscence of Robert Sobukwe, a South African activist against apartheid and founder of the Pan Africanist Congress liberation movement. He was imprisoned on Robben Island off the coast of Cape Town. When new political prisoners arrived, he would pick up a handful of soil, close his fist and greet the new arrivals. In Bopape’s artistic cosmos, plants, minerals, charcoal, and ashes also hold cultural, political, and economic meanings.

Vandana Shiva
The Wisdom of the
Interconnected System
2018

Excerpt from the documentary film *The Seeds of Vandana Shiva* by Camilla und Jim Becket, 2021

Video, color, sound, 1:33 min.

Becket Films

In 1991, the globally active physicist, science theorist, social activist, and globalization critic Vandana Shiva founded the organization Navdanya (Nine Seeds) on her parents’ farm in Dehradun at the foothills of the Himalayas. The organization is dedicated to protecting the biological and cultural diversity of seeds, which she collects and sows herself. Shiva fights against genetic engineering and the patenting of seeds by large corporations such as Monsanto, which thereby destroy the livelihood of local farmers and biodiversity. She is convinced that Western development strategies are damaging Indian agriculture because they are male-determined and lead to exploitation and destruction.

Shiva is an avowed ecofeminist. As opposed to the aggressive, ruthless exercise of power by men, who, in her eyes, are concerned solely with success and money, the female “inner power” preserves, encourages, and empowers the other. “In nature’s economy the currency is not money, it is life,” Shiva argues. Everything is interconnected; in the smallest seed, there is infinite diversity and energy.

Mierle Laderman Ukeles
TRANSFORMING
FRESH KILLS
1990–2021

18 ENGINEERING IMAGES OF FRESH KILLS’ WEST MOUND—SECTION 1/9 CLOSURE CONSTRUCTION 2016–2020

Grid of 18 color photographs, each 40.6 × 60.9 cm

Courtesy New York City Department of Sanitation and © Bernstein Associates Photographers

Fresh Kills Park, Lifescape, Staten Island, New York, Draft Master Plan, March 2006, City of New York

Two pages from the Draft Master Plan, each 29.7 × 42 cm

Art and Culture at Fresh Kills, including five proposals for public artworks by Mierle Laderman Ukeles, page 26, and axonometric aerial photograph of Fresh Kills and surrounding context, part of page 8

Courtesy the artist and New York City Department of Sanitation

PROPOSAL FOR ONE MILLION PEOPLE TO PARTICIPATE IN A PUBLIC ARTWORK AT FRESH KILLS: PUBLIC OFFERINGS: MADE BY ALL, REDEEMED BY ALL
A transgenerational project, 2000–ongoing

Photographs from the PowerPoint projection, 6:50 min.

Courtesy the artist

“Forgiveness for the Land—Public Offerings: Made by All, Redeemed by All” Mierle Laderman Ukeles, artist’s text and photographs, from: Aleksandra Wagner with Carin Kuoni (eds.), *Considering Forgiveness* (New York: Vera List Center for Art and Politics, The New School, 2009), pp. 174–81

With her work, Mierle Laderman Ukeles explores the role of women, the meaning of labor, and social cohesion. After the birth of her first child, the US-American conceptual artist decided in 1969 in her *Manifesto for Maintenance Art* to henceforth declare her routine domestic chores to be performances—that is to say, art. The distinction between creative activity and the care work of maintaining everyday life was thus abolished.

Ukeles’s art is service to society. This includes the task of enabling and encouraging people to actively participate in an ecological and economic transformation of society. In 1977, Ukeles became the first and only “artist in residence” at the Manhattan Department of Sanitation. In her *Touch Sanitation* project, she thanked each of the 8,500 employees by shaking their hands “for keeping New York alive.”

She still has her office at the Sanitation Department. For nearly three decades, she has been involved in transforming the Fresh Kills Landfill in the New York borough of Staten Island—a social sculpture of 150 million tons of trash and roughly nine square kilometers of land—into a park.

9

Joseph Beuys believed that animals were gifted with spiritual energies that were difficult for humans to access. He was convinced that animals had a greater understanding of art, freedom, and equality. For Beuys, the hare, the coyote, the stag, bees, and other animals were conversation partners and role models. He interacted with them, and he sought to transform himself into them. He was convinced that a better human being could emerge from the connection with animals—a human being who would create a world in which all beings lived as equals. Donna Haraway also pleads for a sense of responsibility between species. In doing so, she does not stop at the spiritual connection between humans and animals. She outlines a utopia of beings that overcome all traditional divisions of life in infinite diversity. Like Joseph Beuys and Donna Haraway, Charles Foster is concerned with a mental exercise and the reassurance that, as living beings, we are not alone, but rather part of the cosmos. The Thai artist Dusadee Huntrakul draws the connecting lines even further. He unites people, animals, rivers, mountains, all nature across all times. With him, they find a common language, the understanding of which is also a mental exercise.

Joseph Beuys *Coyote III* 1984

A concert with Nam June Paik on June 2, 1984 at 6:00 p.m. in Sôgetsu Hall, Tokyo on the occasion of the exhibition *Joseph Beuys. An Exhibition Based on The Ulbricht Collection in the Seibu Museum of Art*

Video, digitized, color, sound, 61:20 min.

© Joseph Beuys Estate and VG Bild-Kunst Bonn 2021; video on loan from Medienarchiv Joseph Beuys, Zentrum für Kunst und Medien Karlsruhe (the Joseph Beuys Media Archive, Center for Art and Media Karlsruhe)

For the event, a double concert by Joseph Beuys with Nam June Paik was planned. However, Beuys surprised the audience by not sitting down at his grand piano, but rather emitting the sound “ö ö” and thus performing a kind of chant. He varied the “ö ö” from soft, exhausted-sounding tones to howls and roars. In between, he recited a speech exercise by Marie Steiner⁶ and spoke the words “Bach Meat Fleisch / Mozart Meat Fleisch / Beethoven Meat Fleisch / Schweinefleisch Schweinefleisch” (Bach Meat Flesh / Mozart Meat Flesh / Beethoven Meat Flesh / Pork Pork). Paik played pieces by Schubert, Beethoven, and Chopin,

as well as Korean and Japanese songs, and tinkered with his grand piano. Finally, Beuys wrote the word “Coyote” on the blackboard provided. After more than an hour, the alarm clock set at the beginning rang, and the action was over.

In 1979, Beuys had presented the exhibition *Aus Berlin: Neues vom Kojoten* (From Berlin: News of the Coyote) at the Ronald Feldman Gallery in New York, with which he referred back to the legendary coyote action *I like America and America likes Me*. In Tokyo, this animal was the focus for the third time. Here, it evolved into a human being. It was his intention that humankind should reach a higher level of consciousness through the coyote, which is connected with the primordial, and thus come closer to a future oneness with nature.

⁶ The actress and anthroposophist Marie Steiner was the wife of Rudolf Steiner. The text on which Beuys drew was taken from her “Language Course for the Participants of the Drama Course,” held in Dornach in 1924; cf. Schneede 1994 (see note 2), p. 369.

Charles Foster *Wie ist das Leben als Tier?* *Charles Foster im Gespräch* *(What Is Life Like as an Animal? Charles Foster in Conversation)* June 4, 2017

Charles Foster in conversation with Barbara Bleisch in the television program *Sternstunde Philosophie*, SRF Kultur

Video, color, sound, 54:25 min.

SRF Kultur

Living as an animal of the forest in order to learn more about himself as a human being—this is what the British biologist, veterinarian, and lawyer Charles Foster put to the test. He teaches at Oxford; his main areas of research are medical law and ethics. As a deer, Foster let himself be chased by bloodhounds; as an otter, he dived in a stream and rummaged among the stones for fish; as a city fox in London, he ate out of garbage cans. How do you perceive the world when you live with your nose as close to the ground as the odor-sensitive badger? Foster wanted to experience the world from a different perspective. Humans usually have a fixed perception of

the world and nature. They are not very open to new, genuine impressions. Foster is convinced that animals can show us how we could deal with the world. Empathizing with animals teaches respect for fellow creatures and for nature, of which humankind is a part. These experiences enable Foster to rediscover the “wild” and primal aspects of his own self, which connects him to animals. Such experiences also help him to empathize with other people, and to show them understanding and compassion. Animals can be our teachers to live better lives and become better people.

Donna Haraway *Donna Haraway: Storytelling for Earthly Survival* 2017

A film by Fabrizio Terranova
Video, color, sound, 90 min.,
excerpt: 00:40:28–01:06:28

Courtesy Icarus Films

“Make relatives not babies!” is Donna Haraway’s challenge to humanity. The US-American biologist, historian of science, and professor emerita of feminist theories and technoscience proposes a way out of the Anthropocene, which, according to her, is inevitably heading toward an apocalypse. It is to be replaced by the “Cthulucene,” a term she derived from the Cthulu myth of intergalactic, immortal beings conceived by the author H. P. Lovecraft. In the new age, humans are no longer at the center of thought and action.

Today, the boundaries between human and animal, between the physical and the non-physical, between humans and machines are already blurred. Here, Haraway sees an opportunity to establish a new way of thinking. She uses the cyborgs of feminist science fiction as a metaphor for a future world in which gender, skin color, and class no longer matter. The oppositions between mind and body, animal and human, male and female, organism and machine, public and private, nature and culture—all constructions of white male domination—are overcome. All species, creatures, and beings treat each other responsibly.

Dusadee Huntrakul *Listening in on a conversation between a woman and a wolf and their rivers* 2019

Ceramic, 17 × 29 × 15 cm; birch plywood shelf, 45 × 100 × 45 cm

Courtesy the artist and BANGKOK CITYCITY GALLERY, © 2019 Dusadee Huntrakul

Clay is a very special material. It is what the earliest surviving cultural objects of humankind are made of. The oldest ceramic figure found to date was created approximately 25,000 years ago. In many religions, it is believed that a creator god formed humans and animals from clayey earth and breathed life into them. Clay is also a favorite material of Dusadee Huntrakul. For him, it holds the past, the present, and the future, the connection of which is what interests the Thai artist.

In his ceramics, sculptures, and drawings, Huntrakul often refers to archaeological finds and links the formal elements of ancient cultures with the visual language of modern and contemporary art. For Huntrakul, time is not linear, but rather cyclical. The present moment is already past, and the future will also be past. In Huntrakul’s view, there is no hierarchy between humans, animals, and nature. The ceramic and plywood sculpture *Listening in on a conversation between a woman and a wolf and their rivers* bears witness to this. All living beings and nature are interwoven in the cycle of life and death, as well as in the cycle of times.

10

Beuys was concerned with thinking. He considered the restriction to rational intelligence and a one-sided mechanistic worldview to be dangerous. He had decided against the natural sciences in favor of art because he saw in it the possibility of approaching the inner essence of the world. The animal is by its instinct much more closely connected with this than the human being. By explaining something to a hare, Beuys wanted to promote the “sense of the mystery of the world.” He warned that materialistic thinking leads to totalitarianism, to cold death, as demonstrated by National Socialism and the other totalitarian systems. He countered this with the energy of sculpture, on which all creation is based. Nelly Ben-Hayoun Stépanian also explores the question of how we should think. She searches for the origins of knowledge and thought. What does it mean to know something? What models of education are there that can deprive right-wing demagogues such as Trump, Le Pen, and Bolsonaro of their basis? Incidentally, in 1974, Beuys had visited Hannah Arendt, as whom Ben-Hayoun Stépanian dressed up for her research, several times in New York after his first lecture at The New School for Social Research.

Joseph Beuys
wie man dem toten Hasen
die Bilder erklärt
(How to explain pictures
to a dead hare)
1965

An Action on the occasion of the opening of the Beuys exhibition ... *irgendein Strang (any one strand)* ... on November 26, 1965 at 8:00 p.m. in the Galerie Schmela, Düsseldorf

16mm film, digitized, black-and-white, no sound, 6:22 min.

© Joseph Beuys Estate and VG Bild-Kunst Bonn 2021; video on loan from the Medienarchiv Joseph Beuys, Zentrum für Kunst und Medien Karlsruhe (Joseph Beuys Media Archive, Center for Art and Media Karlsruhe)

Instead of the usual introductory speech, the first solo exhibition of Joseph Beuys with drawings and objects from the years 1951 to 1965 opened with this Action. Completely unexpected for the guests at the opening, who could only follow the approximately one-hour presentation from outside through the display window of the gallery. Inside, Beuys was alone with the dead hare. He moved it around the room so that it appeared to be alive and showed it the pictures.

Beuys's head was covered with honey and gold leaf—materials fraught with meaning. Among other things, honey can stand for lively, creative thought, gold for purity and spirituality, but both also for birth, death, and resurrection. The mask indicated the transformation Beuys strove to achieve in thought and consciousness. In this, the animal can be a role model. For Beuys, the hare—associated in many cultures with rebirth and intuition—connected spirit and body, cosmos and the earth. It has access to the creative potential. Razor-sharp analysis alone cannot lead to understanding. Beuys wanted his works to stimulate thought processes and associations, to release hidden human experiences, and to expand consciousness through their radiance, which eludes purely rational access. Intuition and imagination are indispensable prerequisites for grasping the “complexity of the creative realms.”

Nelly Ben Hayoun-Stépanian
I am (not) a monster
2019

The film is part of an ongoing project that began in 2019.

Video, color, sound, 98 min.

Courtesy the artist

Hans Ulrich Obrist once called the artist and researcher Nelly Ben Hayoun-Stépanian “a social sculptor.” Active at the interfaces between theater, music, design, politics, and science, Ben Hayoun-Stépanian brings people together, initiates debate, and promotes the free formation of opinion and the independence of thought. She founded the University of the Underground in the basements of nightclubs in London and Amsterdam.

In her project *I am (not) a monster*, Ben Hayoun-Stépanian investigated how knowledge is created and controlled. The starting point was the legacy of Hannah Arendt. The German American philosopher is one of the most important political theorists of the twentieth century. Her book *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* and her analysis of totalitarian societies prompted Ben Hayoun-Stépanian to research the topicality of her thought. The artist interviewed, among others, students of Arendt, philosophers, and members of Pussy Riot. At a time when fascist tendencies are increasingly gaining influence and someone like Donald Trump can become president of the United States, the power relations in the production of knowledge must be exposed.

In the 1950s, Joseph Beuys began to become preoccupied with Siberian shamans. During this time, he suffered a severe depression that lasted two years. Beuys found salvation in the spiritual energies he discovered in the figure of the shaman. This meant a radical change in his artistic work. In 1958, he developed the first ideas of his social utopia in four sketchbooks titled *Projekt Westmensch*, which he later translated as *Energy Plan for the Western Man*. In actions such as *I like America and America likes Me*, the artist then took on the role of a shaman, who is both a provocateur and a healer of society. Greta Thunberg also provokes through her direct and harsh approach, with which she never tires of touching on sore points. The young climate activist has also experienced severe depression and suffers from Asperger's syndrome, a form of autism. Her "initiation" was a documentary film about the islands of garbage floating on the oceans. It prompted her to break out of her isolation and fight—initially on her own—against the climate catastrophe. Like Joseph Beuys, Greta Thunberg has become a symbolic figure, revered and reviled at the same time.

Joseph Beuys
I like America and America likes Me
1974

An Action from May 23 to 25, 1974, each day from 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m., at the René Block Gallery in New York

Documentation by Helmut Wietz (camera), René Block Gallery Ltd. New York in collaboration with Joseph Beuys (production), 16mm film, digitized, black-and-white, sound, 37:28 min.

Archiv Galerie Block Berlin, © Joseph Beuys Estate and VG Bild-Kunst Bonn 2021; video on loan from Medienarchiv Joseph Beuys, Zentrum für Kunst und Medien Karlsruhe (the Joseph Beuys Media Archive, Center for Art and Media Karlsruhe)

For this Action, Beuys had an ambulance take him from the airport to the gallery (and back again after the Action was finished). For three days, he stayed with a coyote in a room separated by a wire mesh fence. At times, loud turbine noises rang out from a tape recording, which, for Beuys, was indeterminate energy, similar to unformed fat.

The coyote—an animal that was familiar to Native Americans and, for them, had divine qualities—stands for the original America, thus also for the original Western human, who still lived in harmony with nature. At the same time, it is a reminder of the extermination and oppression of the indigenous peoples of the United States. For *I like America and America likes Me*, Beuys explicitly slipped into the role of the shaman, outwardly characterized by the felt he wore as a cloak, the walking stick as a shepherd's crook, and the patch of rabbit fur on his vest. Beuys saw the shaman as a mediator between the material and the spiritual realms. The stacks of the current issues of *The Wall Street Journal* stand for capital, which dominates humankind and transforms thought into "rigor mortis."⁵ By referring to the figure of the shaman, Beuys strove to show humankind a future path to freedom and harmony with nature.

⁵ Joseph Beuys in: Caroline Tisdall, *Joseph Beuys. Coyote*, 2nd ed. (Munich, 1980), p. 14; quoted in Schneede 1994 (see note 2), p. 337 [translated].

Greta Thunberg
I Am Greta
2020

A film by Nathan Grossman
 Video, color, sound, 88:25 min.,
 excerpt: 1:18:00–1:23:52

© BR-F

"How dare you!" the sixteen-year-old schoolgirl Greta Thunberg thundered at the heads of state and government at the 2019 UN Climate Change Conference in New York. "You have stolen my dreams and my childhood with your empty words." She accuses politicians of failing to take serious action to save the world's climate, destroying livelihoods for her generation. From the lone activist who first demonstrated for full implementation of the Paris climate agreement on a Friday instead of going to school in the hot and dry summer of 2018, Thunberg has become an icon of the global climate change movement FridaysForFuture. Since then, schoolchildren and students have been demonstrating every Friday for climate protection worthy of the name.

For her part, Greta Thunberg no longer flies; she eats vegan, and buys only the bare necessities. For the World Climate Conference, she traveled across the Atlantic in a sailboat. She has made her vehement and public advocacy for climate protection her main task. There is no more time to lose. Humanity is in its greatest existential crisis. Greta Thunberg is sacrificing her own youth to ensure that everyone finally understands this.

12

“Revolution = Evolution” was Joseph Beuys’s formula for shaping a better future society based on grassroots democracy and a redefinition of capital and the state. For moral and social reasons, Beuys saw “non-violent transformation” as the only possibility for change. He considered the art—or rather the creativity—of every human being to be the only evolutionary force to be used in joint processes of thought and action. Charles Darwin already recognized that nature does not favor the strongest, but rather those who work well together and communicate with each other. For the action *DER CHEF THE CHIEF*, Beuys appeared as a being in a state of becoming which seeks an exchange with its environment. Tejal Shah explores a togetherness in which humans are only one of countless forms of nature. With her film *Between the Waves*, she thus tells an evolutionary story in which mixed beings drift through the world together, touching and loving each other. Huma Bhabha creates figurines that draw from archaeological, film and art historical, and literary works, as well as from science fiction: With these, she invents a speculative future for humankind.

Joseph Beuys
DER CHEF THE CHIEF.
Fluxus Gesang (DER CHEF
THE CHIEF. Fluxus Chant)
1964

The Action was performed twice: on August 30, 1964 as part of the *Maj-udstillingen* festival in the Billedhuggersalen, Charlottenborg, Copenhagen, and on December 1, 1964 at the Galerie René Block in Berlin

2 photographs by Jürgen Müller-Schneck (reproductions)

Bayerische Staatsbibliothek München/
 STERN-Fotoarchiv/Jürgen Müller-
 Schneck, VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn 2021

With this Action, Beuys laid out the fundamentals of his understanding of sculpture. He had previously prepared the space in Copenhagen with, among other things, a line of fat and a fat corner. In addition, there were the most important props of the action itself: a roll of felt, two copper staffs wrapped in felt, and two dead hares. For Beuys, fat was the sculptural material *par excellence*. From a chaotic state, it can be transformed into a firmly defined form in the movement from the heat pole to the cold pole, and then transformed back again. Beuys saw it as a storehouse of spiritual energy. Likewise felt, which he also used as a separating insulator. Copper conducts heat—a process of movement that Beuys saw as fundamental to the creation of a sculpture.

He also saw the artist’s thinking and speech as elementary sculptural processes of creation. The sounds he emitted in the action are “carrier material.” They point at the same time to the animal, which can help humans to a new consciousness in unity with nature—embodied by the hares. Every human being is free to activate his or her creative potentials for this goal. Self-determination is implied in the title *THE CHIEF*. From the felt mantle, in which Beuys rested for six to eight hours as in a shroud, something new would arise—a “colorful,” “light,” “supernatural spiritual world.”⁷

⁷ Joseph Beuys, in: Schneede 1994 (see note 2), p. 72 [translated].

Huma Bhabha
Receiver
2019

Bronze, 250.8 × 45.7 × 63.5 cm;
 edition: 4 + 2 AP

Courtesy Salon 94, New York

Huma Bhabha titled one of her sculptures *We Come in Peace*. This was also the title of her exhibition on the roof terrace of The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York in 2018. The recourse to a topos from science fiction films is no coincidence. The Pakistani American sculptor’s often larger-than-life figures are human-alien hybrids. For Bhabha, in the current situation, science fiction is the hope and future of humanity. Her disturbing and at the same time vulnerable creations seem as if their process of creation has not yet been completed. The artist creates them from completely different, often very simple materials: In addition to clay, styrofoam, and wood, she also uses everyday objects, bricks, and other building materials, as well as found objects. Bhabha has some sculptures cast in bronze and then paints them. During the casting process, all the visual characteristics of the surfaces are reproduced to the finest detail, so that the eye is initially deceived as to the true material composition of the bronze. This can be readily observed in her sculpture *Receiver*, a hybrid of woman, machine, and alien, characteristic of Huma Bhabha’s work.

Tejal Shah
Between the Waves
2012

Video installation, main film, single-channel, color and black-and-white, 5.1 surround sound, 26:15 min., loop; edition: 3 + 2 AP

Courtesy the artist and Barbara Gross Galerie, Munich

Deviations make evolution possible. Tejal Shah sees deviations as part of nature. In her view, they are “the source and core of all life.” Shah is critical of dualistic classifications such as that of man and woman, humankind and nature. The background of her work are queer and feminist life plans, as well as spiritual traditions of Buddhism. With her works, the Indian artist addresses questions of gender, sexuality, ecology, and science. Her artistic forms of expression include video, photography, performance, sound, installation, and drawing. In the video installation *Between the Waves*, these media are linked together. The main film with the same title is accompanied here by four other different film loops. It is a fable that connects the past, the present, and the future. Shot in India, the scenes take place in desolate landscapes, under water, in the archaeological site of Dholavira, and in an Indian metropolis. Here, Shah creates a world between utopia and dystopia, in which the boundaries between man and woman, between humans, animals, and plants, and between culture and nature are suspended.

This short guide is published in
conjunction with the exhibition

*Everyone Is an Artist
Cosmopolitical Exercises
with Joseph Beuys*

27.3. – 15.8.2021

K20 Grabbeplatz
Grabbeplatz 5
40213 Düsseldorf

Curators
Isabelle Malz,
Catherine Nichols (guest curator),
Eugen Blume (guest curator)

Curatorial Assistant
Florentine Muhry

Editor
Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-
Westfalen, Düsseldorf

Texts
Angela Wenzel

Translations
Gérard Goodrow

Graphic Design
Pascal Storz and Fabian Bremer

Overall Production
Druckerei Kettler, Bönen

Cover Image
Joseph Beuys, *Aktion I like
America and America likes Me*,
René Block Gallery, New York,
Mai 1974, Photo: © Caroline
Tisdall, VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn 2021

© 2021 Kunstsammlung
Nordrhein-Westfalen

For information on the
accompanying program, please visit
www.kunstsammlung.de
+49 (0) 211 83 81 204

An exhibition in conjunction with

beuys
2021

Supported by

Ministerium für
Kultur und Wissenschaft
des Landes Nordrhein-Westfalen



Media partner

Frankfurter Allgemeine

Everyone Is an Artist

**“I am not an artist at all.
Or rather only under the con-
dition that we all see ourselves
as artists, then I’m back in.
Otherwise, no.”**

Joseph Beuys, 1985