

Monuments to the Future: Social Resonance in the art of Joseph Beuys

Contents:

Preface; epigrams; chapter; three bibliographies: list of illustrations and their sources.

Preface

This chapter focuses on the work of Joseph Beuys exhibited in the German Exhibition at the Royal Academy, London in 1985; in the Anthony d'Offay Gallery in the same period; and at the Victoria and Albert Museum in 1983. The essay uses the term 'facture' to shift the sacrosanct meanings of such words as 'make' or 'create', which often imply deistic completions or finished products. This decision derives both from Joseph Beuys' ideas of process in his art and its meanings, as well as the contemporary discussion which wishes to include the viewer in the production process of the art. I have taken the concept of 'function' from Jan Mukarovsky to assist in understanding the intersections of functions (such as aesthetic and spiritual) in Beuys' art.

I have found it necessary to make use of extensive footnotes to help substantiate some of the imaginative claims made in the essay, as well as to give credit to my sources. Numerical notation in the essay is as follows: superscripted numbers refer to footnotes beginning on page xx; Roman numerals following bracketed 'ill. ref.' or 'ills.ref.' refer to illustrations the sources of which have been indicated at the end of this chapter.

Allen Fisher, February 1986.

'If we carefully consider the object of all those who are in search of what is useful, we shall find that it is nothing else but safety.' Dante.

'The idea to apply art to something real from the beginning on was my aim ... Freedom is the most secret, *inner* ability of people ... To make people free is the aim of art, therefore art for me is the science of freedom ... My work tries to stress a necessity to speak about humankind's spirit generally ... [in] this way it has to deal with everybody's creativity and ability ... and then to come to a real knowledge about the reality of the spirit ...' Joseph Beuys (Newman 1983)..'

'There is only one attestation of the spirit, and that is the attestation of the spirit within oneself.' Kirkegaard.

The London exhibitions of work by Joseph Beuys over recent years have provided complementary presentations that explore and innovate both aesthetic and non-aesthetic functions and rely on a slow production of meaning in the viewer. Beuys' exploration can be shown to compress these functions, and a part of his innovation has been to transform this compression into sculpture with social resonance¹ Another part of his innovation has been to allow the non-aesthetic functions to direct his facture. This tension between the non-aesthetic and aesthetic promotes an imaginative meaning. It never fixes but allows the enigma, that Beuys' work often encourages on first viewing, to remain as a potent residue for meaning to accrete. It is also meaning that, by Beuys' method of constant self-referral, informs each subsequent work.

Beuys' enigma is a consequence of his tension between functions and the interrelationships of his works. The non-aesthetic functions encourage the viewer to open into a spread of research and the aesthetic facture provides a coalescence to which the viewer refers for values. The meaning continually being produced by the viewers in their energetic processes of comprehension, enjoyment, and disquiet, encourages a social resonance informed by Beuys' spiritual and other concerns as they change, at least potentially, the viewer's interaction with the world outside the gallery. In both microcosmic and macrocosmic senses Beuys' world-view can be simplified as a concern to present transformations, and begin the process of transforming those involved.

Beuys has directed his artistic practice towards ideas of transformation since the late 1940s. Whilst much of this practice gives prominence to its aesthetic function, his proclivity has been to include his research and knowledge as a scientist and his specific interests in the social and spiritual aspects of human existence. As a consequence of this spread of insinuations Beuys' art encourages many potential meanings for transformation. The facture of his art, however, often uses a poverty of materials, the significance of which relies to a large extent on their relativity within Beuys' world-view. These relationships allow a complex field of statements from simple means.

In the first place, his materials are chosen with a view to metaphoric ramifications. His use of fat, for instance, can mean warmth and healing power; it can mean softness and the mammalian; fat is chaotic and in flux as its grease penetrates a wall or a page. In the second place, the arrangement of his material transforms his complex range of explorations through the use of both simple designs, such as the felt

¹ The phrase 'social resonance' is used to make a distinction from 'Social Sculpture', which is Beuys' term for a far wider and extra-aesthetic activity. At the same time it might be noted that that 'social resonance' is part of what 'Social Sculpture' involves in its intention to change the viewer, and thus humankind. Beuys' breadth of meaning for this subject of 'sculpture' from the facture of drawings to the founding of the German Green Party is discussed in his Victoria & Albert museum interview (Newman 1983).

squares partly covering branches of ash tree in *Snowfall* (ill. ref. i), or skilled bending processes to form the skeleton of his *Grauballe Man* (ill. ref. ii). Yet, like the materials themselves, his displays also carry both metonymic and metaphoric resonances for the viewer, beyond the æsthetics of the arrangements, into their relationships with his other work and world-view.

This leads to another strata of his transformational art: his stated intention to change the viewer, and thus humankind, through what may be called ‘social resonance’. His work contributes to this resonance in as much as it lifts the rhetoric of his materials and arrangements into his environments and *aktionen* in such a way as to encourage a series of intersecting meanings. The viewer, Buys implicitly insists, works on the low production of meaning at each encounter, with memory of the previous encounters with his work. This placing of the viewer in the role of potential part-producer is the necessary position for the receipt and understanding of Beuys’ complex of functions. To comprehend, for instance, the spiritual function in Beuys’ art, it is necessary to comprehend at least part of the array of symbolic associations made isomorphically through his work. Like the æsthetic, the spiritual function relies in part on the viewer’s willingness to allow a slow comprehension rather than an immediate fulfilment. The larger intentions of his sculpture may first be considered through his drawings.

3 distinct FUNCTIONS ➔	Drawing in itself for itself. Æsthetic.	To discover beyond <i>gestalt</i> , to explore associations via ‘depth mind’.	To make diagrams for specific works.
4 modes of FACTURE ↓			
Diagrammatic note-making, searching.		✓	✓
Chance generation.	✓	✓	
Ecstasy.	✓	✓	
Deliberate objective or			

imaginative drawing from the seen or remembered.	✓		✓
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Drawings for Beuys show immediately the relationships he finds necessary towards the facture and production of his art. His drawings can be thought of as having three distinct functions that use at least four modes of facture (see diagram above). In the simplest occasion, for example *Untitled* (1957-58) (ill. ref. iii), he has specifically set out to make a pencil drawing of a figure and has inked in the form. Through this use of deliberation the form is specific, and probably drawn from life, but the model's particular characteristics have been ignored. The inking-in relies on chance and his skill to place the wash outside the lines and does not give significance to three dimensions. The purpose has been to continue his range of patterns of connectedness. Tall thin figures recur throughout Beuys' work. The ramifications move from woman as type, and thus as totem², to ideas of the lonely figure seen at a distance as in Giacometti's sculpture (ill. ref. iv). The figure is also conforming, subjugated, standing with her hands to her sides in a posed posture. The work rests on these relationships but insists on itself as simply drawing to be seen and considered; a tension of a vertical modulation of colour and line placed off-centre on a contrasting ground.

Such drawing, in which the æsthetic function predominates, is also factured by Beuys with a stronger reliance on chance-generation. This is exemplified by *Untitled* (1947)(ill. ref. v) in which it is possible to suggest, without saying it is certain, that the origination of the drawing derives from chance splats of ink on an envelope that have been formed into a series of shapes that suggest wild flowers. How much of the drawing is deliberately factured and how much derives from run-ink is difficult to discern, but not crucial to know. What is important, as with the figure work, is the æsthetic object it presents, and the patterns of connectedness it contributes to. In this case the connection between the natural world, the ink and the discovery through 'naturally' formed patterns.

A third mode of Beuys' facture in drawing, which also gives significance to its æsthetic function, is his use of the ecstatic moment. An example of this is *Shaman* (1965)(ill. ref. vi). The drawing gives the impression that it was started from a slow pencil line that increased speed and thus gradually lost conscious control in the top and central part of the paper. It produces a drawing in itself and yet, partly as a consequence of his

² 'Totem' in Claude Levi-Strauss' sense confuses two problems. The first is that posed by the frequent identification of humankind with plants or animals. The second is that posed by the designation of groups based on kinship and so forth. Woman as totem thus suggests Beuys' view of the women in his drawings and sculpture as both identified with 'Nature' and as seen as types. e.g. 'womankind' = the potential for childbirth etc., thus the source of renewing and transforming energy.

titling, takes on a spread of meaning. It displays a tension between depicted forms that can be immediately comprehensible (e.g. the human figure), to those parts more slowly comprehended (e.g. the skeletal ribs leaving the figure and landscape), onto these parts that take on the indefinite forms of a represented energy that could be comprehended as the soul lifting in the figure's arms³. Drawing for itself thus makes the use of three modes of facture which carry, particularly in the last example, a wider significance.

The fourth mode of Beuys' drawing facture is diagrammatic searching, where the predominant function of the work is exploratory. Such drawing for Beuys can be seen to display two functions. Drawings like *Stripes from the House of the Shaman* (1980)(ill. ref. vii) are demonstrably made as sketches for other work, in this case for an environment in the D'Offay show of 1981. This kind of drawing is explicitly a form of note-making. The use of diagrammatic searching, however, finds its wider use in Beuys' most innovatory drawing practice, which uses this searching mode along with the modes of chance-generation and ecstatic or involuntary mark-facture. The drawing becomes a complex of mapping and overlapping from which Beuys makes associational deliberations. The function of this mode is to bring from his unconsciousness those shapes that become form in cognition⁴.

³ It is one of ideas of ecstasis that the soul separates from the body and Eliade's first definition of shamanism is the 'technique of ecstasy'. The 'shaman,' he says, 'is the great specialist in the human soul; he alone 'sees' it, for he knows its 'form' and its destiny.' 'The shaman specialises in a trance during which his soul is believed to leave his body and ascend to the sky or descend to the underworld.' The related concept of 'transformation of substance' is touched upon in this essay, whereas the concept of 'magical flight' and 'mastery over fire', which are also explored by Beuys' work, are not. *vide* Eliade (1964) and *Arts Canada* (1973-74) on shamanism; Eliade and E.D. Phillips (1955) on ecstasis; and Jung (1968), on the 'fiery nature of the soul'.

⁴ Some of the ideas explored by the Surrealists in their insistence on automaticism and the use of dreams are pertinent here. The ideas relate in part to the nineteenth-century research through psychiatry. As Anton Ehrenzweig put it, the idea is to dispense 'with surface Gestalt' and lay 'bare the automatic creation of our depth mind.' Automatic writing is what Breton sees as 'a true photography of thought,' and as a method 'to calculate the quotient of the unconscious by the conscious.' ('The Automatic Message' 1933.) As Levi-Strauss observes, in both shamanistic cure and psycho-analysis 'the purpose is to bring to a conscious level conflicts and resistances which have remained unconscious, owing either to their repression by other psychological forces or – in the case of childbirth – to their specific nature, which is not psychic but organic or even simply mechanical. In both cases also, the conflicts and resistances are resolved ... because ... conflicts materialise in an order and on a level permitting their free development and leading to their resolution. This vital experience is called

In *E-Plan for the W-Man* (c.1974)(ill. ref. viii) the elements of ecstatic, as well as chance-factured unconscious mark (e.g. at the top right and in paint gaps in the left) are used with deliberate note-making in the form of both words and shapes. The overall volition is then to unify the whole as an aesthetic object, (e.g. the decision to discontinue the block). The effect is that of an enigmatic statement which requires a slow comprehension through conscious connections to Beuys' larger project.

Beuys' drawing shows his concerns that may be summed-up as transformational. They display transformations in themselves, and even include the instability of grease marks (e.g. ill. ref. ix & ill. ref. x) to give this emphasis. The modes of their facture; particularly their elements of involuntariness derived from chance and ecstatic moments; their use of transforming substance and their dreamlike mappings; can all be read in terms of their relationship to shamanistic ideas. They become more widely transformational in the connections they collectively produce. For instance, in the use of the 'hook', which occurs as the tops of ladders (ill. ref. xi), as part of *Walking Staff in fat* (ill. ref. xii), as staffs in *Leonardo's Madrid Codices* (e.g. ill. ref. xiii), and as human organs (e.g. ill. ref. xiv). It takes on a spread of significance for his often used Eurasian staff. As an energy symbol, this connects the tops of the heavenward ladders, the energetic chaos of fat, and the internal shapes of the ear and female reproductive organs. They all link directly to the staff's magical role in shamanism and its link to the walking-stick of the infirm, Charlie Chaplin, and the shepherd's crook⁵.

abreaction ...' vide Ehrenzweig (1953), Breton (1978) and Levi-Strauss (1963, 1979).

⁵ The motif of the hooked shape and staff is too extensive in Beuys' work to consider it at more depth here. Other examples can be seen in S. Marx (1982) (*vide* ill. ref. lxxxiii-lxxxvi) and in *The secret block for a secret person in Ireland* (numbered 11, 117, 167, 168 & 184), but they are just as frequent elsewhere. In relation to *aktionen* the walking stick can be seen photographed in *Stockholm* (1971) and the Eurasian staff occurs in the 1968 *Eurasian staff* (which is available on White Wide Space videotape (ills.ref. lxxxvii & lxxxviii). Tisdall, in her Royal Academy lecture (December 1985) concerning *Coyote*, remarked that the Eurasian staff signified the outward going and returning directions of energy from Europe to Asia and back. This returning energy would appear to suggest a neg-entropy, and thuds spiritual, imaginative energy, or the energy of a living system. In the *Stockholm* catalogue the shape also associates with Beuys' swan (neck) and even to the closing curve of a horseshoe. This is confirmed by Beuys in *Te secret block for a secret person in Ireland*, and elaborated to include the shamanistic as it was in his *Eurasian staff* action: 'the androgynous element: the coexistence of active and passive. The crooked staff as the forerunner of the *Eurasienbstab* (Eurasia staff): the vast space of a continent still to be unified, crossed by nomads, Genghis Khan, and the hare. The bend in the staff is placed on the ground to emphasise the direction of the power that comes to the Earth from above. Spirit and material,' and

Such isomorphism is common to Beuys' work. His repeated use of the torso (or headless figure) is another which constantly refers to the move he wishes humankind to make towards nature, the sexual and animal, away from the head-laden pragmatic (e.g. ill. ref. xv-xx). From his drawing and by his *aktionen* these patterns of connectedness persist, transforming as they do so by a widening of what they can mean. The Eurasian staff appears in his *aktionen* and lectures (ills. ref. xxi-xxii) and the headless figure even appears as a still from his Naples video-action (ill. ref. xxiii). The repeated use of skeletal, thus shamanistic forms; genitals and energetic associations with electricity; the repeated use of felt, fat and medical objects, widen Beuys' understanding of living symbolically, and thus contribute to the transformation of his works' potential meanings⁶.

Whilst living symbolically can be considered as a large contribution to Beuys' aesthetic and spiritual functions, it cannot be fully understood without recognising the multiplicity of other artists and their patterns of connectedness. Such recognition can indeed widen the meaning of Beuys' artistic project. Whilst it would not be correct to suggest that the use of precedents by Beuys are always deliberately made to create connections to them, it can be seen that in retrospect Beuys' art is significantly in tune with his ancient forebears as well as his contemporaries. It is part of the contemporary dilemma that such connections may suggest a two-edged tool that both enhances and denigrates the art being discussed.

There is no doubt that Beuys encourages both deliberate and involuntary links to tribal and prehistoric art. They are links Beuys alludes to in his use of shamanistic elements and in his wish to show empathy with the artists whose spiritual function precedes that of the Judaic-Christian tradition.⁷ Examples are manifold throughout his

later, 'the union of opposites that is present too in the figure of the swan ...' *vide* Beuys, Oxford (1974).

⁶ In Jung's view (1977) only the symbolic life can express the need of the soul. As August Wiedmann's lectures (1985-86) confirm, 'the spectacular advance of science and reason which brought about the utter 'disenchantment' of nature and much else besides' encouraged 'the progressive weakening of man's symbolic awareness.' It is part of Beuys' artistic project to correct this, to recover 'the vital art of symbolic participation, of living in and out of images and symbols which affect us directly.'

⁷ I have stated this tradition generally. To be more particular, Beuys also uses mediæval and Quattro-Cento Christian art (*vide* Ills. ref. lviii-lxi). In terms of earlier work the reference is in particular to European neolithic, bronze, and iron age works; drawings on bones, and on other sacred walls and pottery. This in turn relates to Beuys' use of traditions, religions and mythologies, particularly those attributed to the iron age Celts and Altaic peoples, and as a consequence, the North American tribal myths and the shamanistic elements in, for instance, Tantrism, as well as Christianity and Greek myth.

artistic practice. Through his titling alone, with drawings like *Ice Age* and *Stag Woman with Felt Sculpture* (ills. ref. xxiv-xxv); sculpture like *Cairn* and *Grauballe Man* (ills. ref. xxvi & ii); and events like *Bog Action* (ill. ref. xxvii) he directly states his affinity to the cultures that lived before the modern era. *Ice Age*, for instance, relies directly on the images in the Pech-Merle caves (ill. ref. xxviii). It is an affinity to their spatial and spiritual sense of the world, their comprehension of nature, that Beuys wishes to partly reaffirm as a necessary part of post-war living. Beuys' project however is not a matter of coping from these precedents.

His art is made in a context that takes into account the conceptual work of Duchamp, whilst drawing in the expressionist tradition of artists like Schiele and Lehmbruck (ills. ref. xxix-xxxi)⁸. Beuys shows affinity also to the post-Dada world of *Fluxus* and yet parallels the achievements of Twombly's practice and sculptors as diverse as Long and Andre (*vide* ills. ref. xxxii-xxxiv)⁹. In terms of the modern art object the unfinished and rapidly-made feel that some of his drawings have may be clarified philosophically through twentieth-century science, in for instance Heisenberg's 'Uncertainty Principle', or in Whitehead's ideas of 'Process'¹⁰; and yet their fuller comprehension can be garnered from

⁸ This tradition would also include the work of some of the Surrealists (as footnote 4 suggests) and, particularly with regard to allusions to cave pictographs, the work of André Masson and Jean Dubuffet (ills. ref. lxxxix-xc). In terms of drawing it would also be worth noting some of the drawings of the sculptor George Fullard (ill. ref. xci).

⁹ This is clearly too brief a mention. Cy Twombly's ecstatic work has many precedents in the Surrealist tradition, particularly that part of the tradition that Rothko, Newman, Pollock, and others extend (ill. ref. xcii-xcvi). Richard Long is mentioned, as Robert Smithson might have been, especially because of his emphasis on making environmental work which alludes to bronze age forms such as stone circles, stone avenues and spirals (ill. ref. xcv). Robert Morris, who has worked with Beuys, might also have been mentioned, along with Andre, for their simplicity, almost austerity of materials (ills. ref. xcvi-xcix). Andre's 1968 work in particular recalls Beuys' 1967 *Site* (ill. ref. c). But, apart from Eva Hesse's allusions to the organic and animal nature (e.g. ill. ref. ci) these sculptors do not offer the metaphoric transformations and thus symbolic possibilities that Beuys' art does. His connection to their work, however metaphorically they are read, appears to be almost entirely formal.

¹⁰ Heisenberg's clarification for instance that it is no longer possible to simultaneously measure position and velocity in quantum theory, has now been seen to apply as much to macroscopic objects such as living systems as the role of fluctuations in non-equilibrium systems show. His principle necessarily leads to extensive revisions of the concept of causality, the philosophical ideas of 'completion' and the artistic ideas of 'finished product'. Whitehead's idea of process involves irreversibility and has an important role in construction where his ideas of 'everything flows' finds its significance. These are important ideas for

comparisons with archaic petroglyphs. This is particularly poignant in regard to Beuys' use of the tall thin figures in his drawings (e.g. ill. ref. iii)¹¹ and even in the world-tree character of part of his *Tram Stop* (ill. ref. xxxv), which can be related directly to the shamanistic tradition (ills. ref. xxxvi-xxxviii) and to Etruscan votive sculpture (ill. ref. xxxix). Yet such relationships may be made to more recent sculpture by Giacometti, Richier, Lehmbruck or even Newman (ills. ref. iv, xl, xxx, & xli). Of more consequence is the relationship Beuys creates to the Eurasian traditions that the prehistoric works relate to, and which were elaborated in Celtic religion (ills. ref. xlii-xliii). To the tradition, that is, of Yggdrasill, the shamanistic ideas of the above and below, and transformation.

For Beuys, in the context that supersedes modernism, these ideas take on a psychological significance, a symbolic life of the soul. It carries human existence into the undefined 'other' which Beuys sometimes shows as the animal, the shamanistic symbolic connection with the ancestral and the beyond. But, because it does this inside a new context, the formal connections to contemporaries like Schiele or Giacometti signal the distress and loneliness of the human condition, and the conceptual connections to Duchamp's alchemical works and George Brecht's defamiliarising pieces (ills. ref. xlv-xlv)¹² signal a proposal to change this condition. This dilemma that proposes both joy and despair of existence is the ground Beuys works from, and, to take Jung's alchemical usage, it is the dilemma that Beuys wishes to *project*¹³. Thus the connections that may be made with some of Beuys'

Beuys as some of his drawings indicate. He makes direct connections, for instance, between the ideas of thermodynamic irreversibility and spirituality in his two annotated images of Christ (*vide* Celant 17 & 18). On the first he has inscribed 'inventor of the vapour machine', on the second, 'the inventor of the third law of thermodynamics'. (*vide* footnote 5 and Jung 1955.)

¹¹ The form itself, of course, is not uncommon. Duchamp uses it in his drawing for his *Adam and Eve* painting (ill. ref. cii) and there is an extensive use of such forms in pictographic work in Africa and North America.

¹² There hasn't been space in this essay to expand on these ideas. Marcel Duchamp's elaborate systems of connectedness, particularly in his *The Large Glass* and its various 'boxes', are more arcane than Beuys' work. Like Beuys, Duchamp relies on a history of meaning to accrue. George Brecht almost offers an alternative system through the use of very simple materials with defamiliarising connections.

¹³ Jung, in *Psychology and Alchemy* (*vide* Jung 1968) shows the equation in alchemical texts of projection and transmutation. 'The darkness of the sea,' he says, 'symbolizes the unconscious state of an invisible context that is projected. Inasmuch as such content belongs to the total personality ... and is only apparently severed from its context by projection, there is always an attraction between conscious mind and projected context ... The soul functions in the body, but has the greater

work to the shamanistic view of the soul can be coherently focussed to enhance the production of meaning for the viewer. Such ramifications may be examined more closely in particularly works and the connections the works create when brought together as they were in 1985 in the Royal Academy's rotunda.

The choices Beuys makes to assemble an exhibition are elaborate and this is because of the emphasis throughout his work on many strata of significance which can be thought of as intersecting like Yeats' gyres¹⁴. Increasingly, as his work progressed from the 1940s through to the 1980s, these significations shift from a potential, immediate comprehension, to that of a group of meanings the viewer can only produce slowly by repeated attentions. For example, what was a Mars head inside his *Pt Co Fe* became, after 24 years, a bar of platinum. In the rotunda show the works spanned a period of 28 years, yet each informed the other and made a new coherence as they did so.

Taking Beuys' preoccupation with transformation as a premise, his intersecting strata can be seen as strata of Time which informs and thus change the spatial-visual context. Listed chronologically in a simplified manner they become 'Mythology and folklore'; 'European and local history'; 'Autobiography and presentday actions'; and 'Speculation about a future'. The recent show in the rotunda can be a useful starting place for this consideration of synchronistic Time. The work in the show

part of its function outside the body ...' This indicates a connection, pertinent to Beuys' work, between ideas of transformation and ecstasy, between transmuting and the 'flight' of the soul. Charles Olson, the American poet and contemporary of Beuys (born 1910 and died 1970) uses the term projective to describe his poetry. For example, in his essay 'Projective Verse'. Like Beuys, Olson continually uses ideas of transformation and references to his own 'history' as well as Greek, Celtic, and American mythology, folklore and history.

¹⁴ W.B. Yeats' gyres, or cones of Time, are discussed in *A Vision*. His ideas contrast Kierkegaard's discussion of a similar matter in *The Concept of Dread*: '... man was said to be a synthesis of soul and body; but he is at the same time a synthesis of the *temporal and the eternal* because every moment, like the sum of moments, is a process (a going-by) no moment is a present and in the same sense there is neither past, present, nor future. If one thinks it possible to maintain this division, it is because we *spatialize* a moment ...' In this sense my artificial divisions of Beuys' concerns 'chronologically' is simply pragmatic rather than significant, and thus probably not how Beuys would have preferred to consider it. This is particularly so in view of Jung and Pauli's work on synchronicity which might be equated to Beuys' aesthetic function: that is to his use of patterns of connectedness and isomorphism. e.g. the recurrence of the 'hook' motif, vide footnote 5. 'The synchronicity principle asserts that the terms of a meaningful coincidence are connected by *simultaneity* and *meaning*.' (Jung 1955). As James Joyce's *Ulysses* makes clear, all that exists, exists now, and the past is real only as I imagine it.

with the longest process of facture is *Pt Co Fe* (1948-72)(ill. ref. xlvi). It makes clear two of Beuys' characteristic methods of facture, the use of an already-made object, and the work's changing form and meaning. Initially *Pt Co Fe* may be seen as a steel-meshed cabinet in which a metal bar hangs. By reference to its title three metals are to be discerned: platinum, cobalt and iron. The cabinet is to be thought of as iron and, by reference to the catalogue, it is understood that the bar is platinum plated with cobalt, and that the work has a history of facture.

It has been a processual work, in terms of the spread of its meaning as well as its facture. 1948 when it started, a sculptured head of Mars hung where the bar now hangs inside the army-surplus cabinet. This head was exchanged in 1954 for a plaster head of Napoleon; in 1958 by plaster and a piece of fat; in 1963 by a copper bar; and finally in 1972 by the bar that remains in the same cabinet today. The beginning of the work's meaning can proceed from these facts.

The head of Mars and the 'iron', army-surplus cabinet initiate the thought that the overall work is a metaphoric object implying a warring principle like one of Dante's 'worthy' subjects¹⁵. Through knowledge of the work's history this metaphor expands from the negative head symbolising war to the historical figure of a particular 'European' war. When this is replaced with plaster and fat a tension is created between the cold and fragmented order, in its memory trace of Napoleon, and the necessity of the and chaotic aspects added to the warring principle. This can be seen as the dual nature of the male principle, which is emphasised by replacing it with a bar of copper; the female aspect that hangs inside the male frame.

Beuys continued research into anthropology and medicine allows for an increase in the viewer's production of meaning. It will not suffice to simply call this work a sign for the male principle. Viewing the work inside its own history, and then in the wider context of Beuys' world-view, will make the process of what it means available. This viewing can become the process of allegorical journeys from the outside to the inside and back out. The iron cabinet may be thought of as a Faraday Cage: that is the earthed screening Beuys alludes to in his drawing *To Faraday* (ill. ref. xlvi), which shields the inside of the cage from external electrical fields. Inside the bar has been placed against chemical interference. From the skeleton of the cage to the armour of the plating onto the core of the work. It is as if the male principle was being considered in terms of layers of protection, in Dante's terms, the

¹⁵ In *De Vulgari Eloquentia* Dante writes: 'If we carefully consider the object of all those who are in search of what is useful, we shall find that it is nothing else but safety. Secondly, in respect of what is pleasurable ... this is love. Thirdly, in respect of what is right; and here one doubts that virtue has the first place. Wherefore these three things, namely: safety, love, and virtue, appear to these capital matters which ought to be treated supremely, I mean the things which are most important in respect of them, as prowess in arms, the fire of love, and the direction of the will ...'

principle of 'safety'.

From the heavy metal centre, its power core, out through its casing, its Napoleonic skull, its reasoning, to its outer shield, its social guard. This parallels Reich's sexual energetics as a system of character armour around the bio-core to which the *Untitled* drawing (1957)(ill. ref. xlvi) may also refer. In terms of Hahnemannian physiology the viewer is reminded of the iron of the blood cells necessary for the carrying of the essential, yet toxic trace elements required by the body¹⁶. In terms of chemico-physics the allegorical eye moves from iron towards the increasing hardness of the core that simultaneously becomes electrically less resistant and more vulnerable¹⁷. Through such a system of metonyms and metaphors, slowly arrived at by Beuys, and then the viewer, a sculpture of exemplifying part of the human condition has been possible.

Beuys' transformation has been to turn the austere, and abstract display presented by *Pt Co Fe* into a 'worthy' application. Such interpretations are less far fetched than initially stating them can seem. As with his drawings, many intersections of meaning are necessary and are available to be found. In the rotunda environment these interpretations are complexed. The male principle of vulnerability and safety embodied by *Pt Co Fe* is immediately echoed by *Tram Stop* (ills. ref. xxxiv & xlix).

With *Tram Stop* Beuys' gyres, his intersecting strata of Time, come to the fore. *Tram Stop* embodies the male principle, but in the specific situation of Beuys' life with its range of local times, and extensions into the European 'theatre' in the twentieth-century. Simultaneously the sculpture carries the historical condition in seventeenth-century Kleves, where Beuys was born, which is intersected by reference to both ancient times as well as, like *Pt Co Fe*, to the actual time in which the

¹⁶ Wilhelm Reich's concept of character armour is discussed by him in many of his works including that cited in the bibliography. Samuel Hahnemann's homeopathy is discussed in the Vithoukas text cited in the bibliography. In Beuys' use of isomorphism and synchronicity, Hahnemann's work comes to the fore both in Beuys' choice of materials (herbal flowers and bee's wax for instance) and in his metaphoric understanding of the homeopathic method in which the idea of 'like attracts like' is paramount. Beuys' empathy with some of Reich's ideas also come to the fore in his use of materials (iron and felt for instance), but are more prominent in Beuys' understanding of sexual energy and the shamanistic-like stratification or layering he so often alludes to. Mention should also be made of the more pragmatic biochemistry concerning the body's need for trace elements in Earl Frieden and others, *vide* bibliography.

¹⁷ The electrical resistances in iron, cobalt and platinum are 9.8×10^{-3} ; 0.635×10^{-6} and 9.97×10^{-8} respectively, whilst the hardness of these elements respectively increases with their relative atomic masses from 55.85 to 195.09, and their relative densities from 7.86 to 21.45.

sculpture was factored in 1976 as 'A monument to the future'¹⁸.

The sculpture consists of many iron elements, the dominating feature of these is a seven metre, seventeenth-century culverin, with the form of a dragon's mouth at its open end, into which has been inserted a bust with an iron head. The other elements comprise the cast tops of four mortar bombs, a tramline, and metal rods. In its original setting in Venice the cannon with bust was displayed vertically and was surrounded by the cylindrical bomb tops. To its side a hole had been drilled in the floor down into the Venice lagoon. Into this hole the rods were used to connect the water to the gallery floor, so that the top, angled rod acted as a 'key' to facilitate this (ill. ref. l). To the side of these elements the rubble from the drilling was piled up and was found to include part of a human skull. Whether this was added by Beuys or actually lifted from the gallery foundation is not stated. The Royal Academy show (like that in New York in 1979) provides a relic of this display because the vertical column has been laid horizontally across two of the bomb tops, and the rods have been left on the floor (ill. ref. li).

Each element in the sculpture contributes to the overall work and the work itself juxtaposes the other sculptures in the rotunda. To arrive at an understanding of the work it is necessary to understand the elements and how they contribute to the larger meaning of Beuys' other exhibits.

As Tisdall (1979) makes clear, the first association is that Beuys, at he age of five, waited for the tram near Sternberg, in Kleves. At the Sternberg, in 1652, Moritz von Nassau erected a monument as an axis from which radiating avenues were added to create a network of order with other Beuys has used to cast part of his monument. Originally an armoured Eros projected from the cannon's mouth. This head has been 'replaced' with a cast from a mould made by Beuys (similar but not identical to his *Brown head* [ill. ref. lii]) that includes in its features a Roman martial head, such as that of Mars in the Vatican (ills. ref. liii-liv), a Celtic head similar in its mouth design to that of the Tanagergee idol in Ireland (ill. ref. lv). The despair of the mouth recalls gestures found in Quattro-Cento Italian art such as Fra Angelico's *The Last Judgement*, as well as such sculpture as that of a damned soul on the cathedral at Orvieto, and a tribal war head in Leningrad (ills. ref. lvii-lxii). The stance of the head and neck may also associate with the Celtic figure from Ralaghan (ill. ref. lxiii). Putting these elements together provides the initial meaning.

It is a symbol of the contemporary human condition. What was once armoured Eros is now the image of war and despair. Its European condition is a complex of Celtic ancestry and military colonisers in the mouth of archaic weaponry linked by image and meaning to the dragon, and by historical occasion to Beuys' childhood¹⁹. But this only deals with

¹⁸ 'A monument to the future' is the subtitle given to *Tram Stop* by Beuys in 1976 for the *Venice Biennale*, vide bibliography.

¹⁹ The etymology of *culverin* suggests the Latin *colubrinus* meaning

the prominent elements. To the side of the cannon runs the tramline which connects the contemporary condition to Beuys' past in Kleve. but also connects in its curve the ground below with the above. This shamanistic stratification is elaborated by the rods which connect the water to the earth and, in its original display, the horizontal with the ascending and descending. In its new display as relic the overall suggestion is that these shamanistic potentials have changed their significance. The work becomes 'A Monument to the future' as warning out of suffering, but now also as hope in its new link to the sculpture *Lightning* that hangs behind it (ill. ref. lxiv)²⁰. The topological connections it may have once made, to Kleve, Ireland and Venice, now rest without their ascending totemic power. Beuys' allusion in

snake-like. The use of the dragon's mouth at the open end of the cannon then adds to this suggestive 'rhyming'. The link that Beuys would be able to make between 'fiery soul' and cannon fire may be too far fetched, but the connections possible between this 'dragon' imagery and the battle between humankind and the dragon alluded to in the Pythian mythology may not be. The filling of the snake, the 'Python' in the myth, quite clearly links to some extent to the folk motive of St. George and the dragon, and the latter cannot avoid its significance as a symbol of the forces of evil. The fact that Beuys made the beginnings of *Tram Stop* eight years before *Pythia Sibylla* would not mean that he had not made the connection. This is particularly possible because of the incised ciphers on the latter sculpture which recall the Celtic rock carving of Thor's battle with Midgard the serpent (*vide* ill. ref. lxxiv) and also the serpent motif on the Delphic oracle's tripod.

²⁰ There hasn't been space to elaborate on the meaning of *Lightning*. Like *Pt Co Fe* and *Tram Stop* it has a history of facture and meaning potential. It relates to Beuys' *Scenes from a Stag Hunt* of 1961 and his *Monument to the Stag* in 1982, as well as being a major theme for his drawings, in, for instance, *The secret block for a secret person in Ireland*, 1974. The actual sculpture hung in the rotunda was cast from the clay cone in *Monuments to the Stag*. Since the latter directly refers to a supreme life-force, as exemplified in the Stag King, Cernunnus mythology, the *Lightning* work can be thought of as the ecstatic energy leaving the Stag's antlers, and rising to the sky. Whilst this initially appears to contradict the physical act of lightning, it is clear that Beuys is aware of the two-way process that constitutes lightning as well as the shamanistic ideas of light shown on so many shamans' 'antlered' headwear (*vide*, for instance, *ARTS CANADA* Tlingit headdress and Ramón Medina on page 42). In addition Beuys' comments in the previously mentioned *The secret ...* link the stag to Mercury and Psychopompos, that is as a conductor of the soul to the other world. It is sufficient for comprehension of the rotunda installation to understand *Lightning* as making this connection which in turn connects directly to the presence of *Mountain King* in the rotunda, and indirectly to Apollo through *Pythia Sibylla*. *vide* Royal and Tisdall 1979; but more particularly Kenny and footnote 28 below.

*The secret block for a secret person in Ireland*²¹ allows parallels to the condition of Samuel Beckett's 'Listener's face' in *That Time*, which was also made public in 1976. It begins: 'that time you went back that last time to look was the ruin still there where you hid as a child when was that grey day took the eleven to the end of the line and on from there no no trams ...'²²

This 'monument' does not, of course, allude directly to Beckett's 'Listener', despite the use of generations of Time and Beckett's allusions to Blake's image of the suffering Job. Beuys' difficulty is the kind of despair that Taoists saw 'violating the principle of Nature and doubling the emotion of humankind'²³. In this sense it is a shamanistic concurrence with Roman Lucretius who speaks of science, as Beuys does, as a remedy for the many fears of humankind coupled to the knowledge of its destructive power: 'to see with reasonable eyes/Of what the mind, of what the soul, is made,/And what it is so terrible that breaks/On us asleep ...' (Lucretius). For Beuys there are springs in this tension between multiple concerns with the lost ancestry of Europe and a potential, partly through science, to renew. The sculpture in the rotunda stands between the vulnerable and protective male principle of *Pt Co Fe* and the ecstatic clarity of *Lightning* (ill. ref. lxiv) cast from earth-clay. In the rotunda it aligns with the *Mountain king* (ill. ref. lxv), and contrasts with the female *Pythia Sibylla* (ill. ref. lxvi).

Mountain king compliments *Tram Stop* and echoes *Val* (ill. ref. lxvii)(not shown in London). The 'body' of *Mountain king* can be thought of as a skeleton of the land as well as the mountain of the self. Like *Peer Gynt* and the Stag King it connects to patterns of folklore and mythology implying great strength²⁴, and in the king's responsibility for weather

²¹ In *The secret block for a secret person in Ireland* Beuys makes a connection to Ireland with his 'own skull form in an almost invisible bright green'. In Beuys' introduction *Finnegan's Wake* by James Joyce is mentioned with its 'continuous flow'. The novel begins 'riverrun, past Eve and Adam's ...' and the last line of the novel, 'A way a lone a last a loved a long the ...', connects into the beginning. An entry in Beuys' 'Life Course/Work Course' at 1961 reads, 'adds two chapters to *Ulysses* at James Joyce's request.' Joyce had died in 1941. Also included in *The secret ...* is a drawing titled *Dead Man* (1953) which Tisdall (1979) connects to Beuys' *Tram Stop*. In addition it might be added that Samuel Beckett was Joyce's secretary for a time. Beckett's 'Listener' might be aligned to Beuys' *Dead Man* but given the dates it seems most unlikely. A more potent connection might be to Joyce's Finn, who, as Kenny makes clear, is another name for Cernunnus, the Stag King (*vide* ill. ref. civ).

²² The allusion to Beckett's *That Time* occurs in Tisdall (1979). The play also includes a reference to the axle-tree, i.e. Yggdrasil.

²³ The Chhin Shih quotation is from Needham (1956) and translated by Feng Yu-Lan. Needham discusses the shamanistic elements in China in section 10: 'The Tao Chia and Taoism'.

²⁴ The particular section of Ibsen's *Peer Gynt* referred to is Act Five

and crops; 'his life bound up sympathetically with the prosperity of the country', with the potential to regenerate material²⁵. The shape of the 'body' is that of Beuys' *Compost* (ill. ref. lxviii). The sculpture's head is that of Science, or as Tisdall (1979) reports, like a compass, gyroscope, or clock face. It also connects to the idea of the revolving tower in the Stag King mythology²⁶. Its body is hollowed out, excavated, implying a link to its mineral wealth. The whole sculpture thus offers the macrocosmic condition simplified as Nature and Science, or what humankind to the land. But as often with Beuys, it also offers the microcosmic, the individual's responsibility to the self to use mind and body. As Beuys' comments indicate, the king is promethean and needs to be juxtaposed with the ecological care of the shepherd. Such juxtaposition involves responsibility for one's own inner, secret freedom, and where Beuys gives his definition of Art as 'the science of freedom'²⁷

Mountain king compliments *Tram Stop* in its warning yet contrasts it in its potential for change, for transformation of materials. Rather than contrasting the *Wet Washing Virgin* (ill. ref. lxix), who attends *Pythia Sibylla* (ill. ref. lxvi), it awaits to attend to the child, the transformed society or new culture that is to come.

The installation in the RA rotunda is a mixture of mythologies common to Beuys' artistic project. As his drawings, early Christian sculpture

where Peer speaks to the 'Dovre-Master'. Ibsen, writing to the composer Grieg and to his publisher reveals the connection to the folk tales in *Norske Huldre-Eventyr og Foolkesagn*. In particular the tale told by Thor Ulvsvolden about the exploits of a hunter and the account told by Per Fugleskjelle about an encounter between a hunter called Per Gynt and the Boyg of Etnedal. In both cases the tales can be linked to the widespread European legends related to Cernunnus, the Stag King (ill. ref. lxxviii) *vide* Kenny (1975). It is probably also worth noting Grieg's suite 'Hall of the Mountain King' written for Ibsen's work, *vide* Ibsen (1972).

²⁵ I have used Frazer's ideas of the king here coupled to Beuys' discussion in the Victoria & Albert Museum interview, *vide* Newman (1983). In the interview Beuys also mentions whilst discussing 'the inner ability of people' that 'everybody has a chance to be a prospector' and this of course also relates to the 'mountain of the self'.

²⁶ The 'Turning Tower' occurs in the stories of the celestial deer. It brings together the ideas of the turning sky and the divine Deer which, as Kenny (1975) notes 'were significant among the people who fashioned and revered the antlered images', of whom the Celts were a part.

²⁷ *vide* Newman (1983). As Halliburton makes clear, the idea of art as revealing an inner freedom, also occurs in Heidegger. It connects also to Heidegger's mode of openness which he called *Lichtung*. Whilst this is an apparently untranslatable neologism, it can, at least on one level, be understood as bringing together 'light' and 'clearing'. As such it appears to also add emphasis to Beuys' ideas of 'inner ability' and his sculpture *Lightning*.

(e.g. ill.ref. lx) and work subsequent to 1947 confirm, he discovers shamanistic elements and substance transformers, in a plural world: the traditions of Celtic and Christian peoples, as well as Greek mythology. For Eliade this is what should be expected, 'there is no pure culture' (Eliade (1964). For *Pythia Sibylla* Beuys turns to a shamanistic element, 'the oldest religion attending all religions' (Eliade) in the Greco-Roman tradition.

Pythia Sibylla (ill.ref. lxvi) can act as the coalescence of the other pieces in the rotunda. Pythia, the shamanistic prophetess of Apollo, delivers the god's answers in a frenzy to those using the oracle at Delphi. Her body, particularly her hair, is washed beforehand by the *Wet Washing Virgin*²⁸. Sibylla, with a similar 'divine inspiration' is also a prophetess, and Beuys may be referring to the Roman chthonic Sibylla who is consulted only with the greatest solemnity, and only when the State seemed to be in danger²⁹. Metaphorically together this idea works. It gives permission that together they give advice on the human condition and social dangers. In this sense they represent justice, by which Beuys means truth and balance. This is confirmed in the rotunda by the added subtitle to this work: *Justitia*.

These factors are confirmed in the sculpture. The large balls to each side of *Pythia Sibylla* have been cast from the floats used for equilibrium ballvalves³⁰. On the flat sheet incised drawings have been left incomplete (*vide* detail ill.ref. lxxi). Tisdall (1979) reports these incisions to be a female face, but, perhaps because of a deliberate incompleteness, the marks, like Beuys' drawing sometimes, are more ambiguous than this. A wavy line on the lower part could represent hair, or water, or energy. All of these alternatives would fit Beuys' ciphers related to shamanism, prehistoric petroglyphs and the myth of the

²⁸ For the Greek sources I started with Wright (1963) who in regard to Pythia refers to Diodorus Siculus, Pausanias, Euripides' *Ion*, Plutarch's *Moralia*, Strabo and Chrysostom. I have also used Parke (1967) and Phillips (1955). The name first occurs in Herodotus *Book 6*.

²⁹ The Roman references for Sibylla are Cicero, Ovid, Sallust and Virgil, as well as Parke. Wright also adds Florus, Pausanias, Diodorus Siculus, Plato's *Phædrus*, Lucan, Pliny and Valerius Maximus. The Virgil reference gives most weight to the idea of Sibylla as chthonic. So much of the Sibyllan poetry, as Wright puts it, is 'universally reckoned' to be 'spurious'. The ideas used in the essay are based on historic rather than conjectured information, that is with regard to how the prophetess of Cumæ was consulted and on what occasions. As mentioned in footnote 20, Beuys also links in Mercury and Psychopompos. As Beuys says in *The secret ...* this deity appears in time of great difficulty or danger.

³⁰ Equilibrium ballvalves were manufactured in Britain during the 1960s by Edward Barber in Southwark. The company is now out of business. The floats for these valves can be identified by their studdings. The idea of equilibrium fits in well with shamanistic ideas, as it does with those of homeopathy, *vide* essay on equilibrium in *ARTS CANADA* and Beuys' discussion with Newman.

battle between humankind and the 'python' (c.f. footnote 19). In the centre panel the 'face' feature can as easily be read as a yoni or a yoke of the kind Beuys drew in *Being Animal* (ill.ref. lxxv), which relates the shape to goats. He uses the wavy line in one, and the yoke shape in another of his *aktions*, both of which have Celtic references (ills.ref. lxxvi-lxxvii). Also on the flat plane are two small balls which both compliment the floats, and offer the alternative proposals that they are medicinal fruit, or that they represent the celestial justice of Libra and recall the Celtic Cernunnus (ill.ref. lxxviii).

Pythia Sibylla thus speaks ambiguously to the questioner using the other work in the rotunda to specify the nature of the oracle. That is to say, as it can be seen that *Pythia Sibylla* with her *Wet Washing Virgin* is both oracle and female, it can be said that what her oracle speaks concerns the human condition under the dominating pressure of the male principle and on behalf of, perhaps, the Celtic Apollo Vindonnus³¹. It both offers healing science, and despairs at its martial science: it offers protection registered through *Pt Co Fe*, and a relic 'to the future' in *Tram Stop*. This conjunction is re-emphasised by Beuys through the *Mountain king*, and its link to Cernunnus in the *Lightning*³².

Concurrent with the rotunda environment, Beuys made a work for the Anthon d'Offay Gallery titled *Plight* (ill.ref. lxxix). Its elements consisted of a two-roomed environment lined on all walls and ceilings with rolls of felt³³. One room contained a grand piano, a blackboard with five white parallel lines, and a fertility thermometer. The atmosphere in the rooms was enclosing and warm. It acted as an insulation from the pneumatic drilling next door. In a social sense the lining acted as a protection from the gallery's, and viewer's, 'plight' of noise, which because this is Beuys' work, is to say the misuse of science. At once, however, realisations of a bunker technology ensue.

The enclosure the insulation creates suggests a place of waiting, perhaps awaiting nuclear attack. But this enclosed waiting in fact brings another meaning of 'plight' to the fore. The piano and staves for music five the instruments to create an alternative sound in this enclosure, and, because of Beuys' previous work *Infiltration-homogen for Grand Piano* (ill.ref. lxxx), they also connect to the animal and thus the spirit in shamanistic terms, as his untitled 'homogen' drawing confirms (ill.ref. lxxxi). Thus the viewer's presence in the space also

³¹ Apollo Vindonnus is the serpent-killer and the healer, the lw-giver and warrior. His son, Æsculapius, is the serpent-healer. His Celtic name is a Roman approximation of the Celtic. Kenny makes a clear case for associating him with Cernunnus. Kenny's descriptions thus match Beuys' rotunda environment very well.

³² *vide* footnote 20.

³³ A rather crude, but nevertheless possible association, can be made to Marcel Duchamp's *Twelve Hundred Coal Bags Suspended from the Ceiling Over a Stove* (ill.ref. ciii). The hanging bags and the hanging rolls of felt and the connections to warmth are, however, as far as I would want to carry this association.

connects to Beuys' ideas expressed in his watercolour *Before Birth* (ill.ref. lxxxii). The fertility thermometer encourages this extension. The viewer is in the warmth of a womb and waits birth. *Plight* then becomes a promise for the future, a transformation of humankind in the tension of Science and Nature. This 'promise' is to be made possible through, in the first place, Art (i.e. Music), and in the second place, through the viewer's metaphorical rebirth of the spirit. It takes only a brief contemplation to put such a view against the oracle and knowledge provided by the rotunda environment. Beuys' *anthropological art*³⁴ reaches a coherent meaning through a necessary lack of definition or certainty. The oracle's warning and suggestion of hope is reaffirmed and clarified by *Plight* in the form of a rebirth of the spirit through Art.

Such a meaning from simple materials has become Beuys' hallmark. In his innovative use of materials and exploratory drawings it is possible to begin an understanding of the many ways in which he presents his ideas of transformations through patterns of connectedness, his aesthetic dimension. These patterns are informed by the spiritual and scientific functions of his art, and his understanding of archaic and more recent precedents. From a detailed interpretation of particular works it becomes possible to understand how his intersecting, synchronistic method works in the production of meanings. From comprehending a relativity among his particularly chosen juxtapositions for an exhibition or book of drawings the viewer is encouraged to make a coherence of many meanings. It is this coherence of meanings slowly produced by Beuys, his work, and the viewer, that gives his work a social resonance. Beuys' works really do encourage the idea of being monuments to the future.

Allen Fisher, February 1986.

³⁴ Beuys' description in the Victoria *vide* Newman.

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List of illustration references (ill.ref.)

i	Joseph Beuys	<i>Snowfall</i> , 1965	Tisdall (1979) 79
ii	Beuys	<i>Grauballe Man</i> , 1952	Tisdall (1979) 35
iii	Beuys	<i>Untitled drawing</i> , 1957-58	Bastian 33
iv	Alberto Giacometti	<i>Venetian woman</i> , 1957	Wentinck 21b
v	Beuys	<i>Untitled drawing</i> , 1947	Bastian 4
vi	Beuys	<i>Shaman</i> , 1965	Seymour 102
vii	Beuys	<i>Stripes for the House of the Shaman</i> , 1980	Seymour 148
viii	Beuys	<i>The E-Plan for the W- Man</i> , c.1974	Seymour 133
ix	Beuys	<i>Untitled drawing</i> , 1956-61	Bastian 62
x	Beuys	<i>Fettige wolke lost sich aus dem Meer</i> , 1959	Bastian 50
xi	Beuys	<i>Three ladders</i> , 1947	Celant, 173
xii	Beuys	<i>Walking staff in fat</i> , 1964	Celant 26
xiii	Beuys	Drawing from <i>Leonardo's Madrid Codices</i> , 1974	Celant 65
xiv	Beuys	<i>Untitled drawing</i> , 1947	Celant 106
xv	Beuys	<i>Untitled drawing</i> , 1954	Celant 111
xvi	Beuys	<i>Untitled drawing</i> , 1974	Celant 195
xvii	Beuys	<i>Hexen</i> , 1959	Bastian 52
xviii	Beuys	<i>Untitled drawing</i> , 1952	Seymour 16
xix	Beuys	<i>Akt</i> , 1951	Lenbachhaus 32
xx	Beuys	<i>Frauen</i> , 1961	Lenbachhaus 150
xxi	Beuys	from <i>Coyote</i> , 1974	Tisdall (1979) 33
xxii	Beuys with staff	from ICA discussion/lecture, 1974	Royal fig.6, 130
xxiii	Beuys	from Naples video-	Celant 13

		aktion	
xxiv	Beuys	<i>Ice Age</i> , 1951	Seymour 11
xxv	Beuys	<i>Stag Woman with Felt Sculpture</i> , 1959	Seymour 56
xxvi	Beuys	<i>Cairn</i> , 1974	Celant 78
xxvii	Beuys	from <i>Bog Action</i> , 1971	Tisdall (1979) 39
xxviii	Palæolithic drawing	detail from Pechmerle cave, 'Chapel of the Mammoth'	Giedion 258
xxix	Marcel Duchamp	detail from <i>Tu'um</i> showing hat-stand hook shapes, 1918	fold-out in Duchamp
xxx	Egon Schiele	<i>Standing Female Nude with crossed arms</i> , 1910	Schiele 12
xxxi	Wilhelm Lehmbruck	<i>Standing Youth</i> , 1913	Goldwater
xxxii	Cy Twombly	<i>Apollo and the Artist</i> , 1975	Twombly 158
xxxiii	Richard Long	<i>Red Slate Lines</i> , 1982	Long
xxxiv	Carl André	<i>Timber Line</i> , 1969	André, <i>Wood</i>
xxxv	Beuys	<i>Tram Stop</i> , 1976	Tisdall (1979) 244
xxxvi	Mapuche Indians of Chile	Female shaman on top of her <i>rewe</i> pole	<i>Arts Canada</i>
xxxvii	Unidentified Source	Shamanistic drumstick	<i>Arts Canada</i>
xxxvii i	Akiachak	Wood with inlaid bone Burial image	Smithsonian Institute, <i>Arts Canada</i>
xxxix	Etruscan	Votive sculpture from Volterra, Umbria	Wentinck 21a
xl	Germaine Richier	<i>Town against back by Vieri ra de Silva</i> , (probably incorrect title) 1951	Richier
xli	Barnett Newman	<i>Here I</i>	Kulterman 171
xlii	Slavonic Husjiatyni, Galicia	Image of Svantovit	Larousse 293
xliii	Stave church, Urnes, Norway	Woodcarving of Yggdrasil	Savill 67
xliv	Marcel Duchamp	' <i>Why not Sneeze Rose Selavy?</i> ' 1921	Duchamp 274

xlvi	George Brecht	Page 9 from <i>Book of the Tumbler on Fire</i> , 1964	Martin
xlvi	Beuys	<i>Pt Co Fe</i> , 1948-72	Tisdall (1979) 26
xlvii	Beuys	<i>To Faraday</i> , 1958	Seymour 44
xlviii	Beuys	<i>Untitled</i> , 1957 from <i>The secret block ...</i>	Oxford 142
xlix	Beuys	<i>Tram Stop</i> in Venice	Tisdall (1979) 243
l	Beuys	Key from <i>Tram Stop</i>	Tisdall (1979) 245
li	Beuys	<i>Tram Stop</i> in London, 1985	Royal 242
lii	Beuys	<i>Brown head</i> , 1968	Tisdall (1979) 247
liii	Roman bronze	<i>Mars</i> , 4-3rd century B.C.E., from Todi, in Vatican	Strong 5
liv	Roman bronze	<i>Head of a Youth</i> , 1st century B.C.E., British Museum	Strong 4
lv	Bog site in Newry, Co. Down, Ireland	<i>Tanderagree idol</i>	Harbison 14
lvi	Roman marble	<i>Vespasian</i> , British Museum	Hinks 44
lvii	Fra Angelico	<i>The Last Judgement</i> , 15th century	Barasch 5 & 6
lviii	Church of S. Francis in Assisi	<i>The Last Judgement</i> , 13th century	Barasch 36
lix	Giotto	<i>The Last Judgement</i> , c.1300	Barasch 3
lx	Francesco Traini	<i>The Last Judgement</i>	Barasch 4
lxi	Orvieto cathedral	<i>The Last Judgement</i> , early 14th century	Wittkower 7
lxii	Russian tribal	War head, St. Petersburg	<i>Arts Canada</i>
lxiii	Ralaghan, Co. Cavan, Ireland	Celtic figure, British Museum	Stead
lxiv	Beuys	<i>Lightning</i> , 1982-85	Royal 245
lxv	Beuys	<i>Mountain King</i> , 1961	Tisdall (1979) 67
lxvi	Beuys	<i>Pythia Sibylla</i> , 1959 (re-titled in Royal Academy show)	Tisdall (1979) 57

lxvii	Beuys	<i>Val</i> , 1961	Tisdall (1979) 63
lxviii	Beuys	<i>Compost</i> , no date	Tisdall (1979) 14
lix	Beuys	<i>Wet Washing Virgin</i> , 1985	Royal 244
lxx	Beuys	<i>Pieta</i> , 1952	Adriani (1979) 18
lxxi	Beuys	detail from <i>Pythia Sibylla</i>	Royal 241a
lxxii	Beuys	<i>Woman with comb</i> , 1960	Tisdall (1979) 53
lxxiii	Zuni, Hardscrabble Wash, New Mexico	Petroglyph	Barnes 286
lxxiv	Rock carving, Bohusian, Sweden	Possibly Thor's battle with Midgard the serpent	Halifax 81
lxxv	Beuys	<i>Being Animal</i> , 1948	Seymour 5
lxxvi	Beuys	Relationship between 'Celtic' and 'wavy line'	Schellmann (1974)
lxxvii	Beuys	use of 'yoke' on blackboard in <i>Diagrammtafel aus der Aktim Celtic</i> , 1970	Adriani (1973) 126
lxxviii	Aylesford Iron Age bucket	Cernunnus, 50-10 B.C.E.	Brailsford 87
lxxix	Beuys	<i>Plight</i> , 1985	Cooke
lxxx	Beuys	<i>Infiltration-Homogen for Grand Piano</i> , 1966	Tisdall (1979) 170
lxxxii	Beuys	<i>Untitled drawing</i>	Celant 44
lxxxiii	Beuys	<i>Before Birth</i> , 1950	Seymour 8
lxxxiiii	Beuys	detail from <i>Untitled drawing</i> , 1948	Marx 4
lxxxv	Beuys	<i>Untitled drawing</i> , 1948	Marx 5
lxxxvi	Beuys	<i>Geisterhand zerdrückt Urschlitten</i> , 1969	Marx 28
lxxxvi	Beuys	<i>Untitled drawing</i> , 1959	Marx 29
lxxxvi i	Beuys	From <i>Zeichnungen 1</i>	Schellmann (1985) 131b
lxxxviii	Beuys	<i>Environment/Objekt</i> ,	Schellmann

		<i>'Richtkrafte', 1976</i>	(1985)
lxxxix	André Masson	Quare de Vulva Exiditisme, 1923	Ades 9.40
xc	Jean Dubuffet	<i>Ils tiennent conseil,</i> 1947	Dubuffet
xc i	George Fullard	<i>Dancer 3,</i> 1959	Fullard
xc ii	Mark Rothko	<i>Figure in Archaic Sea,</i> 1946	Rothko 54
xc iii	Barnett Newman	<i>The Song of Orpheus,</i> 1944-45	Newman 11
xc iv	Jackson Pollock	<i>Untitled drawing,</i> 1943	Pollock 6
xc v	Robert Smithson	<i>The Spiral Jetty,</i> Great Salt Lake, Utah, 1970	Smithson 109
xc vi	Robert Morris	<i>Untitled,</i> black felt, 1967-68	Morris (1971)
xc vii	Robert Morris	<i>Untitled,</i> expanded aluminium, 1968	Morris (1970)
xc viii	Robert Morris	<i>Corner piece,</i> painted plywood, 1964	Morris (1970)
xc ix	Carl André	<i>Slope,</i> hot-rolled steel, Los Angeles, 1967	André (1975)
c	Beuys	<i>Site,</i> 1967	Tisdall (1979) 161
ci	Eve Hesse	Photograph of sculpture in studio, 1965-66	Hesse 88
c ii	Marcel Duchamp	<i>Standing Nude,</i> 1911	Duchamp 234
c iii	Marcel Duchamp	<i>Twelve Hundred Coal Bags Suspended from the Ceiling Over a Stove,</i> January 1938	Duchamp page 14
c iv	Beuys	<i>Dead man,</i> 1953 from <i>The secret block ...</i>	Oxford 90