

selected bibliography

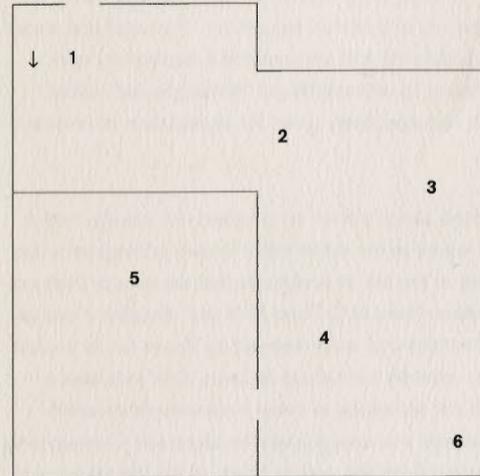
- Joseph Beuys*. New York: The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, 1979. Text by Caroline Tisdall.
- Joseph Beuys*. New York: Dia Art Foundation, 1987.
- Joseph Beuys: Drawings After the Codices Madrid of Leonardo da Vinci*. Ed. Lynne Cooke and Karen Kelly. New York: Dia Center for the Arts, in association with Richter Verlag, Düsseldorf, 1998. Essays by Martin Kemp, Cornelia Lauf, and Ann Temkin.
- Joseph Beuys: Life and Works*. Ed. Götz Adriani, Winfried Konnertz, Karin Thomas. New York: Barron's, 1979.
- Joseph Beuys: Natur, Materie, Form*. Düsseldorf: Kunstsammlung Nordrhein Westfalen, 1991. Text by Armin Zweite.
- Joseph Beuys: Retrospektiv*. Ed. Heiner Bastien. Berlin: Martin-Gropius-Bau, 1988.
- Joseph Beuys: Zeichnungen: Zu den beiden 1965 wiederentdeckten Skizzenbücher "Codices Madrid" von Leonardo da Vinci*. Stuttgart: Manus Presse, 1975.
- The Unknown Leonardo*. Ed. Ladislao Reti. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1974.

Joseph Beuys was born in Kleve, Germany, on May 21, 1921, where he grew up. Trained at the Düsseldorf Art Academy, he taught there as a professor of sculpture from 1961 until his controversial dismissal in 1972. In 1953 the van der Grintens' collection of Beuys's sculpture and drawing was first exhibited. In the early sixties, he became involved with Fluxus, taking part in a number of concerts, as well as devising his own "actions," which for a time became his principal aesthetic mode. In 1970 a large collection of his work formed under the artist's own aegis, the Ströher Collection, was installed in the Hessisches Landesmuseum in Darmstadt, which remains the most important public collection of his work. Joseph Beuys died in Düsseldorf on January 21, 1986.

Pamela Kort will lecture on Joseph Beuys's work on Thursday, December 3, 1998, at 6:30pm. Pamela Kort is an art historian specializing in twentieth-century art in German-speaking Europe.

Funding for this exhibition is being provided by the members of the Dia Art Council.

site map and checklist



- 1. Drawings from *Zeichnungen: Zu den beiden 1965 wiederentdeckten Skizzenbücher "Codices Madrid" von Leonardo da Vinci (Drawings After the Two "Codices Madrid" Sketchbooks by Leonardo da Vinci That Were Rediscovered in 1965)*, 1974**
96 drawings, graphite on paper, and/or, in a few instances, purple pencil and purple crayon
Various dimensions: sheet sizes range between 8 1/2 x 5 1/2 inches and 13 1/2 x 10 5/8 inches
Collection Dia Center for the Arts
- 2. Fond III/3, 1979**
Overall dimensions variable: in this installation, approximately 59 x 239 x 120 inches
Nine stacks: each with 111 sheets of felt, one sheet of copper
Sheets of copper and felt 59 x 79 x 39 1/2 inches
Collection Dia Center for the Arts
- 3. Fond IV/4, 1979**
Overall dimensions 38 3/4 x 392 1/2 x 19 inches
Fourteen stacks: 12 with 77 sheets of felt, one sheet of iron; one with 76 sheets of felt, one sheet of iron; one with 60 sheets of copper, 47 sheets of iron (1,000 sheets of felt altogether)
Stacks of iron and felt 38 3/4 x 27 7/8 x 19 inches
Collection Dia Center for the Arts
- 4. *Brazilienfond (Brazilian Fond)*, 1979**
Overall dimensions variable: in this installation, approximately 74 x 230 x 178 inches
Four U-shaped stacks, each with approximately 155 sheets of felt, and a U-shaped copper base
Each unit 74 x 99 x 79 1/2 inches, each sheet either 3/8 or 5/8 inches thick
Iron horse shoe
Collection Dia Center for the Arts
- 5. *Aus Berlin: Neues Vom Kojoten (From Berlin: News from the Coyote)*, 1979**
Installation including felt blanket, gloves, toenail clippings, animal and human hair balls, cigar box, fire extinguishers, walking stick, flash light, musician's triangle and striker, hay, bundles of the *Wall Street Journal*, hat, plaster rubble and lathe, 10 acetylene lanterns on sticks, arc light, sulfur
Dimensions variable: in this installation, floor measures 18 feet 6 inches x 20 feet 6 inches
Collection Dia Center for the Arts
- 6. *Möbiuswerfer*, 1983**
Thirteen mobius bands made of sheet lead; iron cable 197 inches; drawing on cardboard 19 x 47 inches; a sheet-metal object 5 1/4 x 22 x 4 inches
Private Collection

Joseph Beuys Drawings After the Codices Madrid of Leonardo da Vinci, and Sculpture



Dia center for the arts
548 west 22nd street new york city
September 10, 1998–June 13, 1999

Joseph Beuys Drawings After the Codices Madrid of Leonardo da Vinci, and Sculpture

In 1987–88, Dia Center for the Arts organized, as one of three inaugural exhibitions marking the opening of its facility in Chelsea, an installation of works by Joseph Beuys drawn from its own extensive holdings. One of the largest outside Germany, Dia's collection of works by this seminal German artist provides the basis for this presentation, too. Designed in part to mark the tenth anniversary of the venue, the show, comprising a unified body of drawings, four autonomous sculptures, and an environmental piece, also celebrates the publication of the second in a series of scholarly books devoted to individual works from the collection.¹

The *Codices Madrid* drawings come from a larger group that Beuys made during 1974 for a multiple, a facsimile sketchbook to be printed in a limited edition of one thousand copies. First broached in 1972 jointly by a German art dealer and a museum director, the project was conceived as a response to the recent rediscovery, in a library in Madrid where they had long been misfiled, of two "lost" notebooks by the Renaissance master Leonardo da Vinci. Beuys made numerous studies and sketches in anticipation of his book, which was to be closely modeled on Leonardo's in terms of its size. Its cover, however, significantly departed from that of its predecessor, for Beuys used a design replicating an American schoolbook. With the crop marks for publication readily visible on many sheets, these drawings offer a comprehensive recapitulation and re-examination of motifs, ideas, and concepts that had centrally informed his aesthetic and practice over the previous twenty-five years.

Beuys's enthusiasm for the project was primarily fueled by his desire to extend the reach and impact of his art beyond the narrow circle of established collectors and institutions to which it had largely been confined. Throughout the seventies his growing focus on the production of editioned works reflected his concern to connect with a wider and more diverse audience, whereas for most of the first two decades of his career his activity had been principally directed to sites within the art museum and gallery.² In addition, as he consolidated a philosophy aimed at a revolution in both mind and body through an art devised to effect social and political transformation, he increasingly engaged in public pedagogy, language itself becoming for him an aesthetic medium. Although such concerns seem to have prevailed over a more specific interest in the newly recovered manuscripts or their maker, by 1972 Beuys had evolved a sustained and enduring relationship to the Renaissance master and his work. Indeed, as Martin Kemp persuasively argues, numerous links, parallels, affinities, and even direct debts permeated and informed Beuys's art and thought from the fifties, when he first acknowledged his fascination with his precursor, for whom the desire to wed art and science was equally central and equally critical.³

A suite by default not by design, in that a far more extensive group of drawings had formed the basis from which Beuys chose the hundred-odd that ultimately constituted the publication, this compendium is nonetheless governed by an undeniable unity and coherence, not least through the carefully determined sequence.⁴ Personal and immediate (as rapid sketches often prove), assured and accomplished, exploratory and probing, this corpus offers an opportunity to witness Beuys "thinking aloud"—albeit somewhat self-consciously and even retrospectively given his expectation of imminent publication.

This suite may also be likened to a *fond*, Beuys's term for a battery, for energy held in potentia, in that the accumulation of leaves in the notebook is loosely analogous to the piles of felt and stacks of metal plates in the trio of sculptures that are now in Dia's collection and are included in this exhibition: *Fond III/3*, *Fond IV/4*, and *Brazilian Fond*, all made in 1979. This self-contained structure was much beloved by Beuys for its implicit promise of transformation; an archaic word for fundament or basis, *fond* indicates a source or repository—simple, massive and elemental in these instances—from which other, more complex works might grow, and vital energy might be dispersed. Consequently, in two instances, *Fond III/3* and *Brazilian Fond*, the configuration of the individual parts was not fixed by the artist, but left open, to be determined by the requirements of each future exhibition site and situation.

Aus Berlin: Noten Vom Kojoten (From Berlin: News from the Coyote), 1979, the remaining work from Dia's collection included here, is composed of rubble and plaster lathe from the former Rene Block Gallery in Berlin, plus elements from Beuys's first project in the United States, the action *I Like America and America Likes Me*, which took place in the New York branch of Block's gallery in Spring 1974. For that performance, Beuys traveled to Manhattan wrapped in felt, and then spent a week with a coyote, engaging it in a number of ritualistic encounters. Revered as a deity by Native Americans for its williness and its ability to transform itself at will, this wild animal served as a fitting New World counterpart to the hare and the stag, which, as subjects in Celtic mythology and European folklore, were key motifs in Beuys's pantheon, resonant vehicles through which to extend the range of the viewer's experience and understanding beyond the narrowly anthropomorphic.

A similarly theatrical tone to that which imbued *I Like America* informs *Aus Berlin*. Conceived like a stage-set, its almost barren "landscape" is lit by a projector and a series of miner's lamps elevated on sticks. The eponymous felt hat, the talismanic insignia of the artist, is juxtaposed with a number of materials and elements that are staples in Beuys's visual vocabulary. Within his overall conception of a social sculpture,

materials carried symbolic import. Thus felt was employed repeatedly because it was a good insulator (of spiritual and evolutionary as much as physical warmth); copper was favored as a transmitter, a conductor of energy; and iron as a material suggestive of rootedness to the earth. The walking stick, musician's triangle, and certain articles of apparel are accoutrements of a kind familiar to the magus. Drawing on the anthroposophical writings of Rudolph Steiner, and on the Fluxus postulate that the interchange of energies is the principal form of art communication, Beuys developed a mystical, idealistic vision in which the role of the artist was akin to that of a shaman and art the means to a social utopia. Meticulously recorded, the original installation has been recreated here in a space whose dimensions replicate those of the Ronald Feldman Gallery where it was first realized in 1979.

Executed some four years later, *Möbiuswerfer*, 1983, introduces into his vocabulary the unusual but highly apposite form of the spiraling loop.⁵ Thirteen lead bands suspended from a cable accompany a drawing of a small element on a tripod, as well as the element itself, described by the artist as "an object to throw." Like *Arena*, another key work in Beuys's oeuvre and a piece that also is configured in relation to an endless circular structure, this late sculpture, its continuous, torqued metal bands limning infinity signs, vividly embodies the potent, yet cryptic, nature of Beuys's thinking.

notes

1. *Joseph Beuys: Drawings After the Codices Madrid of Leonardo da Vinci*, ed. Lynne Cooke and Karen Kelly (New York: Dia Center for the Arts, in association with Richter Verlag, Düsseldorf, 1998). The first in this series is *Joseph Beuys—where would I have got if I had been intelligent!*, ed. Lynne Cooke and Karen Kelly (New York: Dia Center for the Arts, in association with Distributed Art Publishers, 1994).
2. Beuys's willingness to undertake a multiple in the guise of a book should be contextualized in relation to the burgeoning phenomenon during the sixties of the artist's book, and the subsequent rapid growth of its market and audience. See Cornelia Lauf, "Multiple, Original, and Artist's Book: The Codices Madrid," in *Joseph Beuys: Drawings After the Codices Madrid of Leonardo da Vinci*, pp. 39–44.
3. Martin Kemp, "Leonardo-Beuys: The Notebook as Experimental Field," in *Joseph Beuys: Drawings After the Codices Madrid of Leonardo da Vinci*, pp. 31–37.
4. The additional drawings reproduced in the multiple have been dispersed into several collections. With the exception of five sheets, all the drawings were executed in 1974. As published by the Manus Presse, Stuttgart, the original drawings were somewhat homogenized, their sizes altered to make them appear more uniform, and their various papers treated as if they were all of the same stock. The effect is to suggest that all came from a single sketchbook.
5. When previously exhibited, in "Joseph Beuys: Natur, Materie, Form" at the Kunstsammlung Nordrhein Westfalen in Düsseldorf in 1991, the date of this work was erroneously published as 1984.