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Joseph Beuys and Social Sculpture in the United States

Cara M. Jordan
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JOSEPH BEUYS AND SOCIAL SCULPTURE IN THE UNITED STATES

by CARA M. JORDAN

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Art History in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York

2017
JOSEPH BEUYS AND SOCIAL SCULPTURE IN THE UNITED STATES

by

Cara M. Jordan

This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Art History in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK
Abstract

JOSEPH BEUYS AND SOCIAL SCULPTURE IN THE UNITED STATES

by

Cara M. Jordan

Advisor: Harriet F. Senie

Alongside the rise of the activist movements in the late 1960s, the German artist Joseph Beuys (1921–1986) proposed his concept of “social sculpture” — a method of fostering creativity, aimed at transforming society through interdisciplinary dialogue — as an alternative to the chaotic political, economic, and social life of postwar West Germany. He sought to heal society through a work of art with holistic and spiritual intentions, centered on the belief that art can include the entire process of living and therefore can be created by a wide range of people beyond artists. Although his ideas are understood and even celebrated in Europe, this dissertation contends that a misunderstanding of his artistic practice as separate from his political engagement resulted in a lack of recognition by art historians and a weakened dissemination of his ideas to politically active artists in the United States until the Reagan–Bush era (1980–1993). This dissertation argues for the centrality of Beuys’ concept of social sculpture to the development of a form of socially engaged public art, now identified as “social practice,” that developed in the United States during this period to address what artists perceived as failing social structures and increasing inequality. Focused on the interaction between artists and audiences, the form of social practice that is informed by Beuys’ concept of social sculpture is characterized not only by its performative nature, but also by the diversity of its audiences, pedagogic intentions, and politically charged themes.

This dissertation provides a nuanced understanding of Beuys’ theories and practice in order to convey how his work resonated in the United States following his acceptance by pioneers in the field of social practice in the late 1980s and 1990s. Beuys’ theory and reception is analyzed through two key figures in U.S. art of the 1990s: artists Suzanne Lacy (b. 1945) and Rick Lowe (b. 1961). While not a method exclusive to these artists, the work of Lacy and Lowe offers two models for the confluence of
social sculpture and community-based activist artistic practice in the United States. Lacy is known for her site-specific feminist media interventions, which in the 1980s and 1990s took the form of bringing together diverse groups to discuss issues such as race and teen violence using mentorship programs and planned performances. Beginning in 1993, Lowe became involved with a low-income African-American area of Houston, which he has socially and economically revitalized using art and dialogue via a long-term collaborative initiative called Project Row Houses. This dissertation will demonstrate how each has interpreted Beuys’ concept by adapting social sculpture to fit the needs of their audience, and thereby revealing Beuys’ shifting critical reception over time, as well as demonstrating the breadth of Beuys’ impact in its application to a range of issues including feminism and racism. By establishing how these artists have employed an aesthetic concept of politics in a manner similar to Beuys, I will argue that the type of artistic practice that was impacted by social sculpture differs from other participatory art practices that have emerged in the United States and Europe since the 1980s.
Acknowledgments

I am grateful for the help and support of many friends, faculty and colleagues, and institutions throughout the writing of this dissertation. My interest in this topic began prior to my graduate studies, while I was working as an intern at Art in General in lower Manhattan in 2006. There I met U.S. artist Michael Rakowitz, who at the time was running a storefront in Brooklyn where he sold Iraqi dates as a means to start a conversation with the public about the U.S.-Iraq conflict. Rakowitz cited his interest in Beuys’ concept of social sculpture, which became the basis for a seminar paper I wrote for Professor Harriet Senie’s course on public art at the CUNY Graduate Center in 2010 and was presented at the New England American Studies Association Annual Conference in Boston later that year. With Prof. Senie’s support, my research on Beuys’ relation to U.S. artists developed into an Independent Study in the Art History department at CUNY in 2012; my research on this topic was published in Public Art Dialogue in 2013, and has been the subject of numerous lectures and conference papers since.

The encouragement and thoughtful comments of my peers at the Graduate Center has been invaluable to me through this process. In particular, I would like to thank Annie Dell’Aria, Randall Edwards, Abigail Lapin Dardashti, Elizabeth Dastin, Morgan Ridler, Gillian Sneed, and Sara Weintraub for exam preparation, editorial expertise, and their friendship. Those who have read and commented on my dissertation drafts, including Meghan Dellacrosse, Saisha Grayson, Hallie Scott, have been indispensable to my progress. I would also like to thank Diana Toman, the Graduate Center’s German instructor, who aided with my translations and was fundamental to my mastery of the language. Artists Luca Buvoli, Peter Halley, and Christian Philipp Müller have provided me with constructive feedback and introduced me to their peers, for which I am very grateful.

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This dissertation is the product of the support and encouragement of my advisor, Professor Harriet Senie, who has guided me through the many challenges of my graduate studies. I am also grateful for the thoughtful critique of Professor Claire Bishop, whose feedback pushed me to consider Beuys' legacy in new ways. Finally, my work would not have been possible without my friends and family including Betsy and Larry Jordan, Nora McCarthy, Juan Monroy, Guillaume de Bourayne, and my loving partner Kamyar Hariri.
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Introduction

In the summer of 1972, the German artist Joseph Beuys set up an office at the Museum Fridericianum in Kassel, West Germany, during the fifth quinquennial *documenta*. Each of the 100 days of the exhibition, Beuys opened the small, white-walled room on the ground floor, amidst other artists working in performance and film. This office, illuminated by two large windows and a neon sign spread diagonally across the wall, was the new space for the Büro der Organisation für direkte Demokratie (Office of the Organization for Direct Democracy), an organization that he co-founded in Düsseldorf in March 1970 (Figure 0.1) to promote citizen-initiated referenda. Outfitted in his signature fishing vest, blue jeans, and brown felt fedora, Beuys sat at a foldout table covered in pamphlets, poised to engage with every visitor who entered. For eight hours a day, the artist and his assistant Karl Fastabend discussed with the local and international art audience the possibility that average people could initiate public policy.¹ Evolving from his participation in the international avant-garde movement Fluxus in the 1960s and the teachings of Austrian philosopher and social reformer Rudolf Steiner, the Organization for Direct Democracy was one of the first concrete manifestations of Beuys’ concept of social sculpture.

Joseph Beuys (1921–1986) is one of the best-known European artists of the twentieth century.² His sculpture, performance, and installations are grounded in humanism, anthroposophy, and an expanded view of pedagogy through art. In Europe (and Germany in particular), his political engagement with initiatives such as the Organization for Direct Democracy, pedagogic experiments at the Düsseldorf Academy of Art, and promotion of the power of creativity to transform society are understood, if not celebrated. However, he has had quite a different reception in the United States. When he made the first of several visits for a lecture tour in January 1974, artists and critics alike derided his bombastic personality, the obscurity of his teachings, and lack of pragmatism.³ Like Beuys, many of these artists were interested in combining their teaching with their artistic practice, exploring how art could be used as

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² Beuys is primarily referenced by artists, included in exhibitions, and written about in publications from Eastern and Western Europe, and North and South America. While his impact on European artists has been explored, there is still work to be done in the Americas.
a political tool, and experimenting with new materials and forms of engagement with audiences; however, they were at a loss as to how to apply the ideas Beuys had developed in West Germany in the United States. Furthermore, Beuys' politics and art were largely seen as separate, resulting in a two-fold misunderstanding of his work: first, by art historians who failed to convey the artist's centrality to European art at the time of his 1979 solo exhibition at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York; and second, by artists, whose misreadings of his work informed a new form of socially engaged art in the 1980s and 1990s.

This dissertation aims to provide a nuanced understanding of Beuys' practice and theories in order to convey how his work resonated in the United States, despite the lack of an accurate and clear interpretation of his work and ideas in English. For example, although many art professionals in the United States continue to interpret Beuys' slogan "everyone is an artist" to decry the dearth of quality art on the market, the artist did not literally believe that every human being had the ability to produce works of art such as paintings, sculptures, and performance pieces that could be sold in galleries or shown in museums. Rather, his theory of social sculpture, developed in the late 1960s and early 1970s, centered on the belief that the concept of art could include the entire process of living — thoughts, actions, and dialogue, as well as objects — and therefore could be enacted by a wide range of people who were not professional artists. Combining the creation of objects, encouragement of dialogue, and political activism, projects such as the Organization for Direct Democracy were forums for enacting social change through art. Only following his death in 1986 did artists begin to embrace the ideas that he introduced to U.S. audiences in the 1970s.

It is my contention that Beuys' pedagogic experiments and theory of social sculpture were not widely understood and therefore not accepted until the 1980s and 1990s (primarily following his death in 1986), when artists who are now recognized as pioneers in the genre of artistic practice now called "social practice" began to reference him as a precursor to the expanding field of participatory art. By this time, the initial aversion to his personality, teachings, and theories had worn off, and artists with an interest in political issues began to embrace many of the tactics he had previously introduced to his U.S.

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audiences. Since then, social sculpture has had an impact on a new genre of artistic practice in the United States, particularly amongst artists who work primarily outside of traditional art institutions. Beuys' ideas were interpreted and implemented by U.S. artists in terms of how they interacted with the public, enabling them to approach political issues related to disadvantaged communities — such as racism, sexism, and economic and class discrimination — and use art to heal social schisms. Because they were also influenced by domestic mentors and applied his commitment to education, democracy, and the environment to specific local issues, they produced a model of activist art that was quite different from that which Beuys practiced in West Germany in the 1970s. Beuys was working in the aftermath of the Second World War, which was quite a different context from U.S. social practice artists who were responding to a neoconservative government during the Reagan and Bush presidencies (1980–1993). Since these artists employed art to address social, economic, and cultural issues using means similar to Beuys', this dissertation claims that Beuys' ideas were sufficiently fluid to be open to interpretation by artists in the United States. Rather than tracing his direct influence, which would imply causality, these artists drew from a variety of sources and modified the concept of social sculpture to fit the needs of their audiences.⁵ Focused on the interaction between artists and audiences, the form of social practice that I discuss as informed by and comparable to Beuys' concept of social sculpture is characterized not only by its performative nature, but also by the diversity of its audiences, its pedagogic intentions, and politically charged themes.

This dissertation analyzes Beuys' reception through two key figures in U.S. art of the 1990s — artists Suzanne Lacy (b. 1945) and Rick Lowe (b. 1961) — each of whom has been impacted by Beuys' legacy either through his students and colleagues or his theoretical writings. Lacy, a California-based artist, is known for her feminist media interventions, which in the 1980s and 1990s brought together diverse groups to discuss issues such as race and teen violence. Beginning in 1992, Lowe became involved with a depressed area of Houston, Texas, which he has socially and economically revitalized via a long-term collaborative initiative called Project Row Houses. While there are certainly other artists that reference Beuys in their socially engaged practice, the highly influential work of Lacy and Lowe offers two

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⁵ Since many of these artists never met Beuys and were not his students, any claim of influence would be problematic. The concept of influence is challenged in Michael Baxandall, Patterns of Intention: On the Historical Explanation of Pictures (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 58–62.
models for the confluence of social sculpture and community-based activist artistic practice in the United States. This dissertation will demonstrate how each has interpreted Beuys' concept in different ways and on various levels. First, these artists provide an interesting comparison in terms of how they adapted social sculpture to fit the needs of their audience: Lacy by working with temporary audiences linked by a common interest and Lowe through a longer-lasting intervention in an established community. Second, since they were trained during different periods and in different areas of the United States, their work reveals Beuys' shifting critical reception on two “generations” of social practice artists. Finally, these artists come from different racial backgrounds and gender identities, and live in different geographic locations, demonstrating the breadth of Beuys’ impact in terms of its application to a range of issues including feminism and racism. Using Lacy and Lowe as examples, I will argue that the type of artistic practice that was impacted by social sculpture differs from other participatory art practices that have emerged in the United States and Europe since the 1980s.

Since 1990, numerous critics have proposed terms to characterize work that involves participation, conversation, and civic action including “social practice,” “dialogic art,” and “new genre public art,” or simply “collaborative” or “participatory” art. French curator Nicholas Bourriaud initiated the search in Europe for a suitable name for works of art that involve dialogue in his 1995 exhibition Traffic at the CAPC Musée d'art contemporain de Bordeaux and his 1998 book Relational Aesthetics (translated into English in 2002). Bourriaud applied the term “relational aesthetics” primarily to European artists in the nineties who constructed social environments in which participants bonded through a shared activity. For example, one could partake in a meal with other gallery-goers for Rirkrit Tiravanija's Untitled (pad thai) (a series he began in 1990) or to converse with strangers under the perched multicolored Plexiglas panels of Liam Gillick's Discussion Platforms (first shown in London in 1996). However, as British art historian Claire Bishop later critiqued, these situations, which often occurred within exhibition spaces or art-
affiliated institutions, merely served to connect conscious supporters of the arts — they became “fictitious harmonious communities” that did not replicate real world encounters.\(^8\) Despite her pointed criticism, the term “relational aesthetics” has continued to be applied to the growing number of social projects produced by artists since 2000, including those whose goals are much more politicized than the artists discussed by Bourriaud. These projects range in scale and level of engagement, some address political issues while others are more pedagogic; the artist's conception drives some while others are more collaborative.

The same year that Bourriaud proposed the term “relational aesthetics,” Suzanne Lacy published *Mapping the Terrain: New Genre Public Art*, in which she identified another type of socially engaged public art in the United States.\(^9\) Lacy states that artists since the 1960s had developed a new type of work, which she called “new genre public art,” as an aesthetic response (with a transformative intent) to political and social issues perceived by the artist and his or her audience such as environmental waste, racism, homelessness, aging, violence, and cultural identity.\(^10\) Her nomenclature combines two tendencies in the history of art — “new genre,” or work that departs from traditional notions of artistic media, and “public art,” which here departs from “art in public places” to include art that directly engages with a public audience about issues related to their lives. For Lacy, the word “public” is the most important component of this work (which she now calls “public practice”), for in the space between the art and the public is “an unknown relationship between artist and audience...that may itself become the artwork.”\(^11\)

Thus, she grounds her discussion in an alternative history of public art in the United States that is different from government-sanctioned programs beginning in the 1960s and includes left-leaning artists who were inspired by a variety of activist causes, most prominently feminism and racial equality — issues that empowered and brought visibility to their own communities. For these artists, whose tactics were often collaborative, the media became an important tool to connect people and inspire change. Lacy's book tracks the development of artists whose work contributes to a critical dialogue about this type of public art, including themes of social analysis, the role of the artist, their responsibility, and their

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\(^9\) Lacy's book was developed out of the 1991 conference of the same title at the California College of Arts and Crafts, and thus precedes Bourriaud’s exhibition and terminology by several years. Curator Mary Jane Jacob was also developing new terminology in the early 1990s with essays accompanying exhibitions such as *Culture in Action* (1992) in Chicago. See Jacob, Mary Jane, Michael Brenson, and Eva M. Olson. *Culture in Action: A Public Art Program of Sculpture Chicago*. Seattle: Bay Press, 1995.


\(^11\) Ibid., 20.
relationships with the audience.

The artists and projects considered in this dissertation do not exemplify Bourriaud's relational aesthetics because each artist explores individual subjectivity, creativity, and the potential for social change through networks of collaborators with divergent opinions, who often are more committed to the political cause than to the artist or work of art. Based on the desire to enable audience agency through physical or symbolic experience (which Bishop ties to participatory practice in the 1960s), this type of art engages audiences through collaboration and derives meaning through collective responsibility. The model that developed in the United States in the 1980s and 1990s, which I explore through the work of Lacy and Lowe, refers to one branch of what U.S. art historian Grant Kester calls “dialogic art” — projects that involve “the creative facilitation of dialogue and exchange” — and focus on audiences over aesthetics. Kester identifies this type of conversation as “an active, generative process that can help us speak and imagine beyond the limits of fixed identities, official discourse, and the perceived inevitability of partisan political conflict.” Canonized through exhibitions such as Living As Form: Socially Engaged Art from 1991–2011 (curated by Nato Thompson, various locations worldwide, 2011–2014), annual conferences such as the Creative Time Summit (begun in 2009), Rick Lowe's MacArthur “Genius” Award (2014), and numerous specialized MFA programs (at Portland State University, CUNY Queens College, and Otis College of Art and Design to name a few), this type of art is now widely known as either “socially engaged art” or “social practice.” Encompassing a wide array of global issues, social practice artists are united in their commitment to shared public dialogue and political activism.

In the past decade, a debate surrounding social practice has developed between historians such as Bishop, who promotes an aesthetic reading firmly rooted in a critique of the ethical implications of these works, and Kester, who discuss the role of the audience to explore issues of democratization and authorship in practices deemed “activist.” Based on Miwon Kwon's critique of socially engaged, audience-specific works of art in her book One Place After Another: Site-Specific Art and Locational

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14 Ibid.
Identity, Bishop argues against valorizing socially engaged art for its attempt to rehumanize subjects who have been numbed and instrumentalized by the oppressive forces of capitalism through participation by proposing that they be judged based on aesthetic considerations.\textsuperscript{16} Throughout her book \textit{Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship} (2012), she references French philosopher Jacques Rancière, whose concept of \textit{aisthesis} (his reinvention of the term “aesthetic” that includes the experience associated with artistic production) is used to return the discussion of socially engaged art to aesthetics.\textsuperscript{17} I propose that his term might also serve to frame Beuys as a precedent for participatory art practice, while at the same time addressing both the activist nature and aesthetic considerations of social practice art. Employing examples from the history of modernism, Rancière explains that the aesthetic regime has always blurred the boundaries between art and life, as well as between artistic disciplines, and therefore artistic practice is inherently meta-political in its ability to shape life. Good art, for him, is able to negotiate the tension between art and life, while still providing an aesthetic-sensorial experience that is distinct from other forms of experience. \textit{Aisthesis} can help us to understand Beuys' practice as both a political proposition and as a work of art: his projects of social sculpture were both autonomous within the cultural sphere and yet purported to ameliorate problematic political and economic structures. The artist tested the boundaries between the purely sensorial and actual politics, yet his projects of social sculpture were both a political proposition and a sensorial experience for participants. In his belief that all humans were creative beings, he perceived there to be no boundaries between artistic disciplines and professional specializations — all people have creative potential that might be used to shape a better society.

Although the U.S. artists discussed in this dissertation do not use social sculpture in the same way that Beuys did, he provided an important model for how an artist might negotiate the art-life tension, while still remaining committed to aesthetic concerns.

\textsuperscript{16} In Bishop's assessment, these works have too often been judged based on the moral value of the ideals of the artists (as promoted by Kester). Instead of valuing the positive aspects of community based art, such as social inclusion and respect, she deems socially disruptive and uncomfortable works of art (a development of Dada and Surrealism) as the best artistic methods to “gain new perspectives on our condition.” Bishop, “The Social Turn: Collaboration and Its Discontents,” 181. While I agree with her criticism that moral judgements predominate and need to return to aesthetics, I disagree that disruption is the only means to bring about a new understanding of the world. Social interaction, which I believe has declined not only due to the alienating effects of neoliberal capitalism but also because of the rise of technology, can be valuable in combination with an aesthetic experience.

As pointed out by Bishop in the same book, by examining the terminology used for these types of works of art we can further illuminate the important differences between them.\(^{18}\) Beuys used the term *soziale Plastik* (translated into English as “social sculpture”), a pairing of words that references the application of the sculptural medium as a plastic art to the social realm. He chose the noun *Plastik* instead of the more common words for a work of sculpture, *Skulptur* or *Bildhauerei*, which suggests that he was more interested in sculpture as a social medium with a link to aesthetics. In the early 1990s, aesthetics was still used by Bourriaud and Lacy to understand such work that employed dialogue as a medium — both used “art” as part of their neologisms. Since the 2000s, however, the terminology used to describe this work has increasingly become “practice”-oriented with terms such as “social practice” (increasingly “social practice art”), suggesting that artists or critics view this work as more closely connected to professional practices outside of art such as social work. While the concept of the sculptural may not figure into the work of Lacy and Lowe as prominently as it did for Beuys, as I argue in chapter four, they still consider aesthetic elements in their work including the visual impact of their installations and performances and their authorial role as visual artists.\(^{19}\) Each demonstrates that one must not completely reject art in order to promote social healing and transformation, nor must one solely engage in object making (or descend from the legacy of the historic avant-garde) in order to be an artistic producer.

In 2013, art critic Ben Davis set off a social media firestorm among stakeholders in socially engaged art (including artists, funders, and other supporters) by joining in the struggle to define the terms by which socially engaged art is critiqued using a Marxist lens.\(^{20}\) Davis argues that although social practice projects aim to critique neoliberal capitalist values, they merely reify its development by replicating its structures and values. Beuys lived during the postwar economic boom known as the *Wirtschaftswunder*, and his idealistic and utopian quest for social change was similarly critiqued by leftists from the student movement for its inability to produce widespread structural change. This dissertation does not argue that social practice projects are attempts to change the structure of or even amplify

\(^{18}\) Bishop analyzes the use of the term “project” to describe artists’ work in the 1990s, which indicates that it is a proposal for an open-ended, post-studio, research-based, durational social process with shifting forms. See Ibid., 193–217.

\(^{19}\) Although Lacy now prefers the term “public practice,” she very clearly describes herself as a visual artist and links her work back to aesthetic traditions rooted in feminist and performance art of the 1970s.

dissent to neoliberal policy (what has recently been called “strike art” might fit this criteria), but rather
argues for the value of the effort of localized social practice projects to shift consciousness on a smaller
scale.21 In alliance with those who have countered Davis’ argument such as Tom Finkelpearl and Nato
Thompson, I argue for the value of artists who use art as a means to improve the conditions of a specific
place. As John Roberts has suggested, this form of art is a response to the market economy because it
establishes a new form of the public commons in which free exchange of goods and ideas serve as the
ideal intellectual community, and the collaboration of artists with non-artists is used in resistance to its
negative effects.22 In defiance of the alienating effects of the rise in technology, undervaluing of labor, and
lack of public services that have resulted from neoliberal policies, these artists have used creativity to
activate and involve the public (and particularly those who have been marginalized) in projects that have
positive effects in their lives. Their connection to Beuys — who thought that art was instrumental to the
restructuring of society in postwar Germany — serves to reinforce their aesthetic concept of politics.

There is a small body of English-language literature that references Beuys’ role in the origins of
social practice, including Claire Doherty’s Contemporary Art from Studio to Situation (2004), and more
recently Bishop in Artificial Hells and Tom Finkelpearl's What We Made: Conversations on Art and Social
Cooperation (2013). These sources tend to focus on one aspect of Beuys’ practice as emblematic of his
aesthetic concepts and apply his term to any form of socially engaged art. Doherty locates what she
terms “the new situationists” within the culture of international biennials of the late 1990s and early 2000s,
in which the viewer has increasingly become a participant and the artist a service provider. As a
component of urban regeneration, the artists that lead these projects work as mediators, agitators, and
creative thinkers; therefore they establish long-term relationships with a group of people.23 She makes a
distinction between projects that have an implied level of social engagement, but are “clearly initiated and
ultimately directed by the artist,” and those that are more collaborative works of “social sculpture.”24 By
employing the term “social sculpture,” Doherty refers to “an interdisciplinary and participatory process in

21 Yates McKee, Strike Art! Contemporary Art and the Post-Occupy Condition (Brooklyn, NY: Verso,
2016).
22 John Roberts, “Art, Neoliberalism, and the Fate of the Commons” (presented at the From Social
Sculpture to Art Related Action Symposium, Zeppelin Universität, Friedrichshafen, Germany, October 29,
2016).
24 Ibid., 12.
which thought, speech, and discussion could be core ‘materials.’” What she omits is that for Beuys such work was largely driven by the artist’s own initiative, although he incorporated the thoughts of others in its implementation. As argued in chapter two, Beuys’ own works of social sculpture were never fully collaborative projects.

Finkelpearl, who writes exclusively about U.S. artists, is equally concerned with authorship. He chooses the term “social cooperation” for this practice because it implies a spectrum of levels of participation, intellectually humanizes the work, and relates to John Dewey’s concept of pragmatism (another central referent for many U.S. social practice artists). Finkelpearl acknowledges the important role that social movements in the United States in the 1960s and 1970s played in the development of contemporary “cooperative” artistic practice, particularly through community organizing techniques utilized in the fight for civil rights, participatory democracy advocated by student groups like Students for a Democratic Society, and collective action taken by feminist artists. While he gives due credit to Fluxus, he proposes that both Allan Kaprow and Beuys wielded “enormous influence on the origins of cooperative art.” By explaining that the creative powers of all individuals could be used to transform society, Beuys was essentially proposing a method that artists like Rick Lowe have employed to be inclusive. Lowe, who often cites Beuys as a major inspiration, is accompanied in Finkelpearl’s book by U.S. artist Daniel Joseph Martinez, curator Mary Jane Jacob, and Cuban artist Tania Bruguera in acknowledging the importance of Beuys’ concept of social sculpture and educational philosophy in their own work. Although Finkelpearl neglects to propose exactly what method unites these artists with Beuys, this dissertation proposes that each has expressed certain commonalities with his practice (namely, empowering non-art audiences using a combination of performance, conceptual art, and educational initiatives with the aim of social transformation).

Bishop has directed her attention to Beuys’ pedagogic activity, which she relates to the growing number of artists who employ lectures, workshops, publications, and schools as both a method and

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25 Ibid., 13.
27 Ibid., 21. Kaprow’s influence is explored in Chapter 4, in which I discuss his student Suzanne Lacy.
28 Ibid., 29.
29 Ibid., 54, 187.
formal expression in their work and in the educational programming of contemporary museums. This, she notes, points toward the changing relationship between art and academia, and indicates that: “education is figured as art’s potential ally in an age of ever-decreasing public space.” In *Artificial Hells*, Bishop refers to Beuys as the “best-known point of reference for contemporary artists’ engagement with experimental pedagogy,” particularly due to his activities at the Düsseldorf Academy, the Free International University, his marathon lectures, and installations filled with blackboards from his performance-discussions, all of which are discussed in the first two chapters of this dissertation. She also recognizes that one of the most important features of his pedagogic work was his desire to develop the creative capacities of each person and his embrace of fields outside of art and culture. The workshops that accompanied Beuys’ 1977 *documenta 6* installation *Honeypump in the Workplace*, for example, demonstrated the artists’ ability to create an interdisciplinary pedagogic environment made up of people from various professions and backgrounds. Though he established an important precedent, his role as a pedagogue is much more akin to a performance; “today’s artists,” Bishop states, “are less likely to present themselves as the central pedagogic figure.” I propose that Beuys’ practice was much farther reaching and that he applied his theory of social sculpture not only to his teaching, but also to his political activism and gallery-based practice.

Bishop argues that, “in the 1970s it was not yet possible to conceptualize public discussion as an artistic activity.” While I agree that such terminology may not have existed at this time, I do not think, as she does, that Beuys “drew a conceptual line between his output as a sculptor and his discursive/pedagogic work.” Beuys’ concept of social sculpture was one way he intended to use dialogue to shape existing social structures (this idea is also inherent in the term “social sculpture”). The materials in his sculptures and his dialogues served to explore the transformation of “everything in the world, physical or psychological, from a chaotic, undetermined state to a determined or ordered state.” Speech was the tangible expression of creative thought, which could be shaped like the fat he squeezed

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31 Ibid., 242.
32 Ibid., 244.
33 Ibid., 245.
34 Ibid.
into the corner of a room.\(^{36}\) In one of his dialogues at the Cooper Union in New York in 1980, he emphasized that there was no distinction between the different modes of his work; each was an expression of his expanded concept of art.\(^{37}\) Though his dialogues served a different purpose than that of U.S. social practice artists in the 1980s and 1990s, all conceived of dialogue as one method that art could employ to make a tangible impact on social and political matters.

Bishop's book in particular has had a measurable impact on artists involved in experimental education; however, taken as a whole, these publications fortify the need for a scholarly study on Beuys' relationship to social practice. The artist is frequently cited by U.S. social practice artists as a reference for dialogic and activist art practices, although there continues to be an incomplete understanding of his practice in the United States due to the dearth of information on his work in English, his infrequent appearance in U.S. exhibitions, and a lingering negative critical reception. A massive open online course (MOOC) offered by Duke University and the New York-based public art agency Creative Time in fall 2015 that reached nearly 7,000 students worldwide, for example, included Beuys among the key figures in radical pedagogy with particular reference to the projects cited in Bishop's book, however there was no mention of the artist's political or environmental activism.\(^{38}\) Additionally, there are a growing number of emerging scholars turning their attention towards the German artist, including at least three PhD dissertations currently in progress in the United States alone.\(^{39}\) This dissertation does not seek to repeat the negative criticism that the artist has received in U.S. scholarship since 1970s; rather, I offer an analysis of his practice that is critical of some aspects while remaining enthusiastic about others.

This dissertation focuses on the reception of Beuys' theory of social sculpture in the United States to define his legacy in social practice of the 1980s and 1990s. While the spiritual intentions of his work did

\(^{36}\) Although the artist divided his practice into "parallel processes" in the late 1960s — sculptural objects and installations on one hand, and lectures on the other — both were part of his artistic practice.

\(^{37}\) See video documentation of this performance, Gianfranco Mantegna, "Joseph Beuys: Dialogue with the Audience," color, b/w, sound (Cooper Union, New York, NY, January 7, 1980), Electronic Arts Intermix, New York, Cooper Union, New York, NY.

\(^{38}\) Taught by Duke University Art Professor Pedro Lasch and Creative Time Chief Curator Nato Thompson with guest presentations by 29 artists, curators, and scholars. Beuys' biography was included in the course Wiki, as was his concept of social sculpture, though there were no bibliographic citations on the artist for reference. Ongoing course enrollment at the time of writing was 6,851, Pedro Lasch, email correspondence with the author, March 14, 2016.

\(^{39}\) These are being completed by Andrea Gyoroody at the University of California at Los Angeles, Daniel Spaulding at Yale University (among other postwar German artists), and Alison Weaver also at the City University of New York Graduate Center.
not translate into the U.S. cultural consciousness until long after his work gained attention in the national art media (and even then, U.S. artists applied his form of spirituality more broadly), there were several aspects that did resonate early on: his conceptualism, political activism, public awareness and engagement, and his development of alternative models of arts education. These four areas are at the core of his concept of social sculpture and are the basis of his commonality with social practice artists into the twenty-first century. Each aspect, I argue, influenced U.S. artists partly due to the fact that North Americans were developing work in these areas concurrently with Beuys’ growing recognition in the United States. However, due to the dearth of information available and the promotion of his ideas as separate from his political practice, artists took little notice of his concept of social sculpture. During the 1970s, Suzanne Lacy was working with Allan Kaprow and Judy Chicago on feminist interventions in Los Angeles. Though she never worked with Beuys directly, her work during this period demonstrates a shared interest in each of these fields, marking an affinity with Beuys’ concept of social sculpture. Rick Lowe, on the other hand, was attracted to Beuys because of the Houston-based artist’s prior interest in expressing political and social issues through his work beginning in the 1980s. Project Row Houses shares these points in common with Beuys’ works of social sculpture, although like Lacy’s work, it also incorporates Lowe’s specific local concerns. Each demonstrates an interest in Beuysian concepts, though their work was clearly similarly influenced by its particular context in the United States during the Reagan-Bush era.

In order to establish Beuys as an important figure in the history of social practice, I begin by investigating the conceptual framework of his practice and the projects that best embody his theory of social sculpture. The first two chapters of this dissertation seek to expand English-language scholarship on the artist, the bulk of which currently relies on the scholarship of British critic Caroline Tisdall, who wrote the catalogue for his 1979 exhibition at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York. This catalogue, as well as the writings of Beuys’ friends and colleagues that have been translated into English for U.S. readers, serve as the basis for the misunderstanding of the artist’s work during his lifetime. I have combined a reading of his work drawn from both English-language and German sources to clarify Beuys’ practice and demonstrate how his ideas have been misinterpreted.

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40 Tisdall, Joseph Beuys.
The first chapter, “Toward a Theory of Social Sculpture,” offers an overview of Beuys' theories and the development of his practice in the 1960s and early 1970s to supplement earlier texts that focus on his performance and sculpture practice. Beginning with a review of the literature on Beuys in English and German, this chapter includes a selection of the artist's statements and interviews about his artistic development and social sculpture seen within the context of the economic, cultural, and political crises that characterized postwar West Germany. I will explore how Beuys' theory grew from his earlier sculptural and performance pieces, including his participation in the international group Fluxus and his radical pedagogic approach at the Düsseldorf Academy of Art, and demonstrate how his engagement with anthroposophist Rudolf Steiner (1861–1925) and the writings of enlightenment philosopher Friedrich Schiller (1759–1805) were also central to the politically driven work that he began producing during the student movements of the late 1960s. This chapter argues that his practice is an important precursor for U.S. social practice artists based on his commitment to spiritual principles, democracy, and the creative potential of all people.

The second chapter, “Beuys in the 1970s: Social Sculpture as an Institutional Alternative” analyzes those works that best embody his theory of social sculpture following the artist's public dismissal from the Düsseldorf Academy in 1972 in order to illuminate how the artist put his own ideas into practice. Beginning with his involvement with radical student groups and the establishment of the German Student Party in 1967, Beuys created alternative methods of direct democracy, education, and environmentalism through the Organization for Direct Democracy, the Free International University, and 7,000 Oaks. Shown at successive documenta exhibitions in Kassel, these collaborative works served as radical alternatives to artistic engagement with the general public. I argue that these projects, literature on which exists mostly in archival material or German publications, set precedents for artists in the United States, providing a model of pedagogic activity that was politically engaged, counter-institutional, and centered on creative development through interdisciplinary dialogue. It is my contention that an incomplete understanding of how Beuys' applied his theory to these works of art has contributed to the negative appraisal of his works by U.S. art historians and a misinterpretation of his ideas by U.S. artists.

Although U.S. artists were aware of his conceptual and political ideas by 1970, it was not until his 1974 lecture tour, "Energy Plan for the Western Man," that they experienced the full breadth of the artist's mission first hand.\textsuperscript{41} Despite his willingness to exchange with U.S. artists, Beuys received critical backlash due to his charismatic persona (at the time, many politically active artists favored collaboration over individual expression) and his controversial wartime history. The artist received a similar response following his 1979 solo exhibition at the Guggenheim, which nearly obscured the significance of his later work such as \textit{7,000 Oaks}. This chapter contextualizes the trenchant critique of his practice by Benjamin H.D. Buchloh in the wake of this exhibition and Suzi Gablik's promotion of Beuys as a model for socially engaged and spiritual art practice in the mid-1980s.\textsuperscript{42} Although the artist's exhibitions and lectures were negatively received in the 1970s, I argue that during in the 1980s and 1990s U.S. artists adapted Beuys' spiritual concepts and holistic model of art into their own issue-centric and politically conscious public art.

The fourth chapter, "Social Sculpture as Social Practice in the United States," focuses on artists who have developed models of social practice that mirror elements of Beuys' concept of social sculpture, while at the same time addressing specific domestic political issues including sexism, racism, violence, and immigration. Incorporating the influence of domestic artists also employing social tactics, these artists' practices employ a wide range of methods — performance, community organizing, exhibition-making, land renewal — and levels of engagement that range from temporary projects lasting several months to those that continue to exist today. However, in keeping with Beuys' concept of social sculpture, their work still privileges an aesthetic experience for participants.

I analyze Beuys' reception through two key figures in U.S. social practice art of the 1990s: artists Suzanne Lacy and Rick Lowe. Lacy's temporary performance projects of the 1980s and 1990s were produced in existing communities or created communities around non-partisan political issues such as teen violence, immigration, and the representation of women in public. Using a model developed in her

\textsuperscript{41} Beuys lectured at the New School for Social Research in New York, Art Institute of Chicago, Minneapolis College of Art and Design, and the University of Minnesota, and met with many young art students.

feminist performances in the 1970s, Lacy collaborated with women and disadvantaged teens in California, resulting in staged temporary events, including *The Crystal Quilt* (1985–1987), *The Roof is on Fire* (1994), and *Code 33: Emergency Clear the Air!* (1999). Lacy has published widely on her own practice, and although she has not discussed her link to Beuys, she has several direct connections including feminist artists Leslie Labowitz-Starus and Ulrike Rosenbach, Fluxus artists Alison Knowles and Happenings-practitioner Kaprow, and her direct awareness of his exhibitions. While accounts of her work focus on the formative influence of her mentors Chicago and Kaprow and her involvement with the feminist movement in Los Angeles in the early 1970s, this chapter proposes that her engagement with youth mentorship and governmental agencies, as well as her media tactics, aligns her method closely to that of the educational initiatives and idea of direct democracy used by Beuys in his own work.

This chapter also analyzes the long-term neighborhood-turned-work-of-art Project Row Houses founded by Lowe and a group of African-American artists in Houston in 1993. Together they rebuilt a group of dilapidated row houses in a downtown neighborhood called the Third Ward in an effort to preserve the city's African-American heritage, provide affordable housing, and transform the neighborhood through art and creativity. By bringing in a roster of emerging and established artists (such as Julie Mehretu and Sam Durant) to help rebuild the community's infrastructure, gaining political traction through educational programs, and serving as a resource for residents who wished to empower themselves, Lowe's project has expanded to over sixty properties, artist residencies, and a mentor and support program for single mothers. Although the work of local artist Dr. John Biggers was central to the project's inception, it is my contention that Beuys' ideas were later adapted here to further catalyze the community's transformation. I argue that while Lowe develops Beuys' educational and spiritual intentions through interdisciplinary coalitions, his method differs from Beuys' in his concentration on the built...

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43 Labowitz-Starus and Rosenbach worked with Beuys in Düsseldorf and later performed with Lacy in the early 1970s. See Sharon Irish, *Suzanne Lacy: Spaces Between* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010). Lacy illustrates her introduction to *Mapping the Terrain: New Genre Public Art* (Seattle: Bay Press, 1995) with an image of Beuys, but his work is not discussed in the text, nor in *Leaving Art: Writings on Performance, Politics, and Publics, 1974-2007*, ed. Suzanne Lacy, Moira Roth, and Kerstin Mey (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010). Lacy recalls her interest in Beuys' 1979 Guggenheim exhibition and had a copy of the catalogue. Suzanne Lacy, interview by author, Los Angeles, CA, April 2, 2015. Beuys' students Ulrike Rosenbach and Katharina Sieverding lectured at CalArts in the mid-1970s while Lacy was practicing in the Los Angeles Area, while Knowles and Kaprow were teaching there (Kaprow was particularly influential to Lacy's practice. Kaprow and Knowles had both met Beuys in West Germany while practicing as artists there (Kaprow through dual exhibitions with Beuys and Knowles through her participation in the same Fluxus events with Beuys in the early 1960s).
environment and efforts to combat racial and class discrimination.

My conclusion summarizes the preceding chapters, arguing that Beuys' theory of social sculpture had a wide impact on U.S. artists during the 1980s and 1990s, and that Lacy and Lowe present only two models of reception. In their attention to socio-economic issues, each artist's practice presents a translation and implementation of Beuys' theories, building on his concerns while preserving the role of education and creativity. I suggest that although Beuys' negative reception has obscured an awareness of his anti-authoritarian projects in the United States, his concept of social sculpture nonetheless is an important example by which to understand an artist's practice as both a political proposition and a work of art. The list of artists who presently cite Beuys as an important influence in their work clearly demonstrates that his concept of social sculpture was widely influential to the field of social practice. Though this dissertation is by no means an exhaustive account of these artists or the variety of work that they produce, it does provide an analysis of the specific ways in which Beuys permeated U.S. contemporary art during the 1980s and 1990s.
Chapter One

Toward a Theory of Social Sculpture

Joseph Beuys began his artistic career during a period in Germany just after the Second World War (1945–1965) when political alliances were questioned, the education system was in disarray, and arts and culture were resurfacing in the wake of death and destruction. He developed his concept of soziale Plastik (translated as social sculpture) against the backdrop of the Cold War politics in order to shape what he viewed as broken social structures by cultivating the creative impulse he felt existed in everyday people. ¹ Derived from his study of the Austrian anthroposophist Rudolf Steiner and the German Enlightenment philosopher Friedrich Schiller, Beuys practiced a radical approach to pedagogy, which he put into practice at the Düsseldorf Academy of Art and through his involvement with the international group Fluxus in the early 1960s. His ideas embodied his desire to seek an alternative to the chaotic political, economic, and social life of postwar West Germany by producing works of art with holistic and spiritual intentions. Through his political activism and participation in the organizations and parties that he founded such as the German Student Party, Organization for Direct Democracy, and the Free International University, he sought to affect widespread social change using creative measures.

This chapter offers an overview of Beuys' early career trajectory and the development of his concept of social sculpture throughout the 1960s and early 1970s, presenting a theoretical backdrop for the projects that are analyzed in detail in the following chapter. While the artist's life has been chronicled in several biographies, none to date has focused on the specific development of this aspect of his thought. This chapter is the first to combine a biographical reading with the development of social sculpture, which preoccupied the artist for the last twenty years of his life. In so doing, I will expand on the current body of English-language literature that excludes an explanation of his theories and a discussion of its practical application. The first notable biographical sketch on Beuys, Joseph Beuys: Life and Work, was compiled in German by Götz Adriani, Winfried Konnertz, and Karin Thomas in 1973. This book was translated into English in 1979, and although it continues to be one of the major references for the key aspects of his life (a second updated German edition was published in 1994), the English translation has

¹ The term soziale Plastik may be translated as social sculpture, referring to the sculptural medium as a
not been updated and retains many unclear passages, particularly on Beuys’ more esoteric thought.² Additionally, the text has limited reference to the artist's later works and does not include the three projects presented in the next chapter as primary examples of his works of social sculpture: the Organization for Direct Democracy, Free International University, and 7,000 Oaks. For English language scholars, one of the main sources on the artist has continued to be the 1979 catalogue Joseph Beuys, written by British critic and curator Caroline Tisdall, which accompanied his solo exhibition of the same year at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York.³ This catalogue was based on interviews and previously published texts (including Joseph Beuys: Life and Works) by Tisdall, a British art historian and curator who met Beuys in 1973 and traveled with him to his exhibitions and lectures throughout the 1970s.⁴ Despite her personal connection to the artist and presence at many of his speaking engagements, the catalogue is a chronological account of Beuys' life as it relates to the objects in the exhibition, and thus elides much of his political thoughts and actions.

Two more recent biographies complete the picture of Beuys' life: Heiner Stachelhaus' Joseph Beuys (1987, translated into English in 1991), and Beuys die Biographie (Beuys the Biography) by Hans Peter Riegel published in 2013. Stachelhaus, a personal friend of Beuys, provides a nuanced view of his life and works, having attended many of the artist's exhibitions, lectures, and actions since the 1960s.⁵ He does an excellent job of identifying key themes evidenced in Beuys' works, dividing his career into chapters around his involvement in Fluxus, political activity, and theory of art, for example. However, the text is not annotated and reads as a narrative introduction rather than a scholarly or documented history of events. (The Felt Hat: Joseph Beuys, A Life Told, a biography written by Baroness Lucrezia De Domizio Durini, presents similar problems.)⁶ Riegel, on the other hand, has produced a well-researched and organized tome on the artist, which presents his work quite clearly for a non-specialist, but also

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⁴ Though Beuys was married to his wife Eva since 1958, he had a quite public relationship with Tisdall throughout the 1970s, as documented by their correspondence at the Joseph Beuys Archive and described in Hans Peter Riegel, Beuys die Biographie (Berlin: Aufbau Verlag, 2013), 406–407.
provides links to both published and unpublished archival sources. Riegel fills the gaps in Adriani, Konnertz, and Thomas' book, discussing Beuys' life from his childhood in Kleve to the projects produced toward the end of his life such as 7,000 Oaks. His book is a chronology of the events in Beuys' life, but like the other biographical texts written on the artist, it was meant for a more general interest audience and does not give an interpretation of how his earlier experiences affected his later works. Instead, it exposes many of the facts that underlie controversy surrounding the artist and his Nazi past, including his associations with former party members following the war. The German text is more accessible than many of Beuys' own writings on his work, but has not yet been translated into English and reviewers have noted that the author at times resorted to speculation when factual evidence was lacking.

While there are a great number of scholarly sources on Beuys in both English and German, there has yet to be a focused study on Beuys' conception of social sculpture, particularly in English, resulting in an incomplete understanding of Beuys' practice. Sources on this concept are limited in German and include Soziale Plastik: Materialen zu Joseph Beuys (Social Sculpture: Material on Joseph Beuys) written by Rainer Rappmann, Peter Schata, and Volker Harlan in 1976. Based primarily on an interview with Beuys by Rappmann for his master's thesis at the Erziehungswissenschaftlichen Hochschule, Landau, this book is nearly entirely comprised of quotations by the artist and images of his sculptures, drawings, and actions. The book separates thematic areas of his work such as “creativity,” “Marxism,” and “provocation,” from visual motifs including “the animal world” and “the cross,” with little analysis linking these aspects of his works. This book is useful in that it groups such quotations by theme, but it lacks critical insight into Beuys' oeuvre. There are several sources that provide English translations of Beuys' thoughts and writings, notably Beuys in America, or Energy Plan for the Western Man (edited by Carin Kuoni and published in 1990), which contains several texts written by Beuys and interviews with the

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7 Riegel, Beuys die Biographie.
9 Ibid.
10 A recent publication by Allan Antliff provides a good summary of Beuys' thought and projects, but is intended as an introduction, not as a scholarly text and has factual errors and no references. Allan Antliff, Joseph Beuys (London: Phaidon Press Limited, 2014).
11 Harlan, Rappmann, and Schata, Soziale Plastik.
artist. It was through this small book that many artists of the 1990s became acquainted with Beuys’ work; however, the lack of critical analysis and socio-historical contextualization resulted in an incomplete understanding of how the artist applied these thoughts to his works of art.

Beuys was quite vocal about his own work and eagerly described his theories on art in both written form, public dialogues, and “performances” such as his office at *documenta 5* (1972); therefore, analyses of his work are often narrated by the artist himself. This has posed a problem for scholarship, which tends to include lengthy quotations based on antiquated translations (such as those in Tisdall or Adriani, Konnertz, and Thomas), reinforcing the opinion that the artist was egocentric and that his ideas were deliberately obscure and quixotic. That Beuys’ used his own biography as a metaphor for his artistic theories further complicates this issue, as art historian Benjamin Buchloh pointed out in his critique of the artist's solo exhibition at the Guggenheim in 1980. The artist's theories and projects were based on subjective experience and he intended viewers to draw out meaning that were not inherent to the objects, a stark contrast to his U.S. contemporaries who were using critical writing as an analytic and interpretive tool for their own work. It is striking that U.S. critics were able to generate a history for Minimal and Conceptual work domestically, yet none were able to clarify Beuys' program. However, this method is not unique to Beuys; there are many feminist artists, for example, that find commonality with Beuys' use of the subjective to draw attention to larger social issues.

As this chapter and the one that follows demonstrate, within the political, social, and economic conditions of postwar West Germany, Beuys was not as idealistic and utopian as his words at first appear. He was not ignorant of the historical and present forms of government or their response to issues such as education reform or environmental concerns, for example. It is more accurate to characterize Beuys as opportunistic; he was able to latch on to popular

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13 For example, Houston artist Rick Lowe.
15 Jan Verwoert has noted, “As a result of this disparity, the generation of American critics then writing for *Artforum* and later for *October* succeeded in developing the analytical momentum of Minimal and Conceptual art into a fully fledged contemporary art history, whereas Beuys’ interpreters and disciples never really managed to unravel the murky belief system underpinning his teachings.” Jan Verwoert, “Class Action,” *Frieze*, no. 101 (September 2006), accessed November 13, 2014, http://www.frieze.com/issue/article/class_action/.
16 Dorit Cypis and Mark Dion have both spoken to this issue, Dorit Cypis, telephone conversation with the author, December 22, 2015; Mark Dion, interview by author, Charlottesville, VA, February 4, 2016.
sentiment in order to promote his own work as he had a powerful presence in the popular media. However, such words tend to negate the artist's overall aim, which Buchloh acknowledged in revising his earlier statements: Beuys was the "first German, if not the first European artist, to have incorporated reflections on recent political German history…and the German responsibility for the Holocaust." His work, therefore, was central to how West Germany dealt with its recent past and how to move toward a better future. Although he continues to generate controversy, the artist is still celebrated in Germany for the attention he brought to social issues, rather than demonized as a cult figure or pedant, as he is often described in the United States. In English, there are several edited editions that have complicated the predominant biographical reading of Beuys' work, including The Essential Joseph Beuys edited by Alain Borer and Lothar Schirmer (1997); Joseph Beuys: Mapping the Legacy edited by Gene Ray (2001); and Joseph Beuys: The Reader edited by Claudia Mesch and Viola Maria Michely (2007). There are a few essays contained within these publications that critically reflect on the reception of his work, such as Joan Rothfuss' "Joseph Beuys: Echoes in America," which looks at Beuys' polarized reception prior to his 1979 Guggenheim exhibition, and Peter Nisbet's "Crash Course" on the construction of the artist's self mythology. Nonetheless, these publications continue to emphasize the artist's biography, particularly his time as a soldier in the Second World War, as an interpretive tool for the objects that the artist produced throughout his lifetime. The texts include several discussions on memory and loss, which leave the impression that the artist was continually reflecting on history and his own past, even later in life. A prime example is Ulrike Claudia Mesch's 1997 dissertation at the University of Chicago, "Problems of Remembrance in Postwar German Performance Art," which includes two chapters on Beuys' practice in the 1960s and

18 His reception in Germany from 1945 until his death in 1986 can be found in Maïté Vissault, Der Beuys Komplex: l'identité allemande à travers la réception de l'oeuvre de Joseph Beuys (1945–1986) (Dijon: Les Presses du réel, 2010).
Mesch published an article in tandem with this research in *Joseph Beuys: The Reader*, “Institutionalizing Social Sculpture: Beuys’ Office for Direct Democracy Through Referendum Installation (1972),” in which she argues that the Organization for Direct Democracy problematizes the history of Conceptual Art. This chapter references Beuys’ experience only as an entry point for understanding his views on how the future should be shaped, rather than viewing them as the subject of continual historical reassessment.

Mesch has been the only English language Beuys scholar thus far to reference social sculpture, with special mention of the Organization for Direct Democracy and the Free International University. She contends that Beuys’ performances were “material allegories,” and discusses social sculpture in terms of its redemptive potential as a collective experience of art. She argues that his performances re-stage his own key experiences, so that his autobiography connects to the site of collective memory. Her reading has been important to my conceptualization of social sculpture as a theory enacted through Beuys’ performances and objects; however, as this chapter and the following show, I am more interested in Beuys’ view of the future than his re-experience of the past. Unlike Mesch, I do not conceive of his works of social sculpture such as the Organization for Direct Democracy and the Free International University as methods to reform existing political and educational systems. Instead, as I argue in the second chapter, Beuys established these organizations as possible models to be used in the future, not as reconfigurations of systems that he saw as failing. Mesch also analyzes Beuys’ work through the lens of Fluxus performance art in the 1960s, despite the fact that Beuys split from Fluxus after engaging with the group for a short period of time (he participated in their events in West Germany from 1962 until 1964, and then only sporadically thereafter). While his work retains elements of Fluxus, such as the production of multiples and his engagement of the audience as participants in his work, towards the end of the 1960s he also began to incorporate the radical pedagogic principles that he employed while at the Academy and the political ideals espoused by recent student movements.

Drawing on Mesch and the multitude of biographical readings on the artist, this chapter expands

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21 Ulrike Claudia Mesch, “Problems of Remembrance in Postwar German Performance Art” (PhD Dissertation, University of Chicago, 1997).

our understanding of Beuys' work by focusing on his political and socially oriented works of the 1970s rather than his well-known sculptures in fat and felt and his more esoteric gallery performances of the 1960s. This chapter will therefore explain his artistic theories in depth, and demonstrate how he applied his ideas to concrete forms of social sculpture in the following chapter. Based on statements and interviews with the artist about his influences, I analyze how Beuys' work reflects the context of the economic, cultural, and political crises that characterized postwar Germany, particularly its conception of the Nazi period and how that figured into the political and social present. The chapter offers a chronological exploration of Beuys' work, analyzing how his early experiences were formative to his development of a theory of social sculpture. Unlike other scholars such as Mesch who have broached this topic, however, I connect his theory of social sculpture to his study of Steiner and Schiller, concluding that by the time of the student movements in the late 1960s, Beuys was already conceptualizing how his work and his social ideals could be combined to transform society.

**Beginnings: From Nature to Destruction**

Born in Krefeld, Germany, on 12 May 1921, Joseph Beuys spent his early life in the German countryside near the small town of Kleve, a predominantly Catholic area north of Düsseldorf, near the Dutch border of the Lower Rhine. Known for its rich history of mysticism, this region exists as an in-between-land, neither fully Dutch nor German.\(^{23}\) The landscape itself, bounded by the forest of the Kaiserwald to the West and the Eurasian plain to the East, still shows evidence of its involvement in numerous political conflicts since the Roman era.\(^{24}\) As is argued in this section, Beuys' formative experiences in his early childhood spent exploring this area, including his interest in the natural world, energy, and music, translated directly into the materials (i.e., fat, felt, animal corpses) and forms of his later sculptures and performances, as well as the theory behind his social sculpture in the 1960s and 1970s.

Although Beuys was raised in a Catholic household, his family did not follow an overtly ideological

\(^{23}\) For example, road signs appear in both languages, attesting to the border character of the region.

\(^{24}\) De Domizio Durini, *The Felt Hat*, 17; Tisdall, *Joseph Beuys*, 10–11. For example, the hills around the town are filled with craters from fallen bombs.
lifestyle in either religion or politics. By all accounts, his childhood during the period of the Weimar Republic (1918–1933) appears to have been an uneventful one. The images used in his work from the 1950s, including animals and natural forms, drew from his experiences wandering around the rural area surrounding Kleve as a young boy during the Depression (beginning in 1929). Later, when the artist became invested in his own self-mythology as shamanistic figure, he described how he role-played as a shepherd: “I walked around with a staff, a sort of ‘Eurasian staff,’ which later surfaced in my work, and I had an imaginary flock gathered around me.” Additionally, he was concerned with the natural world, and animals in particular. He was greatly impressed by the local Schwanenburg castle, situated on the peak of a hill near the center of Kleve and topped by a sculpture of a golden swan. The swan, along with wild stag and hare, was an animal common to the Dutch and German border region around his hometown. For Beuys, not only did these migrant animals express a connection to the local myths and legends he learned about in school, but their movements were also guided by extra-rational thought and (unlike the eagle) they had no connection to issues of nationalism. These anti-nationalist and pseudo-spiritual qualities, as well as more literal representations of these creatures, resurfaced in his drawings, sculptures, and performances, and even in his later works of social sculpture.

Beuys had an early interest in nature and botany that later translated into his interest in environmental causes. He collected specimens for display during his frequent nature walks and set up a home laboratory for scientific experiments. Along with his study of music, particularly that of the turn-of-the-century avant-garde French composer Erik Satie, Beuys cultivated an interest in growth and energy through his scientific pursuits that remained fundamental to his thinking about art throughout his life, particularly through the incorporation of both Goethe’s and Steiner’s thought. During his teens, Beuys studied science while he worked in the studio of a local sculptor, Achilles Moortgat. In Moortgat’s studio he discovered the work of the German Expressionist Wilhelm Lehmbruck, a book about whom introduced

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25 Adriani, Konnertz, and Thomas, *Joseph Beuys, Life and Works*, 12; Stachelhaus, *Joseph Beuys*, 13. His parents were not involved in the rise of the National Socialist party, although the artist did defy his parents by joining the Hitler Youth.
him to Steiner's ideas.\textsuperscript{28} While the National Socialists were gaining power, Beuys avidly read Goethe, Kierkegaard, and Nietzsche; studied Norse mythology and folklore; and, in 1939, ran away to join a traveling circus to perform as a stuntman.\textsuperscript{29} By 1940, he returned to enroll in medical school to become a pediatrician.\textsuperscript{30} The same year, at the age of nineteen, Beuys enlisted in German military training.

Beuys’ experience during the war is well documented in biographies including those by Adriani, Konnertz, and Thomas, Stachelhaus, and Riegel, as it clearly influenced his later career as an artist and theorist. His involvement in the war transformed his outlook on life and culture, and though he retained an interest in the natural world, it was because of the trauma of war that Beuys turned to art. After 1936, Beuys was a member of the Hitlerjugend, and in May 1940 he entered military service willingly, before he finished his school exams.\textsuperscript{31} His reasons for entering are unknown, and not surprisingly, he did not discuss this period following the war.\textsuperscript{32} The evidence that exists proves that he trained and served as a radio operator in Posen, not as a pilot (as reported in numerous sources following the adoption of his self-mythologizing crash story around 1970, discussed below), and later served as a rear gunner in the

\textsuperscript{28} Before his death on 12 Jan 1986, during Beuys' last remarks at the Wilhelm Lehmbruck Museum in Duisburg, Germany, he stated that Lehmbruck was his true teacher, and that he wanted to become a sculptor after opening a book on Lehmbruck's work before the war. He also mentions in the same speech that Lehmbruck was a founding committee member of Rudolph Steiner's anthroposophic group in Germany. See Joseph Beuys, “Thanks to Wilhelm Lehmbruck,” in \textit{In Memoriam, Joseph Beuys: Obituaries, Essays, Speeches} (Bonn: Inter Nationes, 1986), 57–61.

\textsuperscript{29} Tisdall, \textit{Joseph Beuys}, 15; Riegel, \textit{Beuys die Biographie}, 40.


\textsuperscript{31} An extension of prewar youth organizations, the Hitler Youth were first a voluntary organization (though participation was expected) for youth age 10 to 18, but became compulsory by decree in March 1939. Mary Fulbrook, \textit{A History of Germany, 1918–2014: The Divided Nation} (Malden, MA: Wiley Blackwell, 2015), 65. Beuys claimed that he was indoctrinated by such activities, but that he continued to feel free and independent. Riegel, \textit{Beuys die Biographie}, 33. Tisdall's biographical sketch, which has been oft-repeated, claims that Beuys was "called up to be trained" in 1940, though Riegel later verifies that Beuys volunteered when the Germans attacked the Western front in May 1940 based on testimony from his friend, Wilhelm van den Boom, who signed up the same day. Beuys later received his orders around Easter 1941 (the same year other males from his class were called into service) and began his service on 1 May 1941. Tisdall, \textit{Joseph Beuys}, 16; Riegel, \textit{Beuys die Biographie}, 41–43.

\textsuperscript{32} It is uncertain whether his participation was motivated by a commitment to Nazi ideology, or a range of alternatives including a desire to support his family, job training, or even working against the cause from within (although there is no evidence to support the latter). Historian Mary Fulbrook states that membership in the Nazi party could "indicate commitment to Nazi ideals; it might indicate (as for those joining after it became compulsory for certain professional groups in 1937) a desire to support one's family by retaining one's job; it might even indicate a desire to work against Nazism from within, or to fill a position for fear of replacement by someone worse." Fulbrook, \textit{A History of Germany, 1918-2014}, 125.
Luftwaffe (air force) from 1941 to 1945. He was stationed in Southern Russia and the Netherlands, where he crewed combat missions and was wounded several times, finally ending the war in a British prisoner of war camp in Cuxhaven, Germany.

What distinguishes Beuys’ military duty and has made a lasting impact both on his art and critical reception is the story of a plane crash that the artist experienced in Crimea (a German-occupied area in Russian territory) in March 1944. This autobiographical detail became what art historian Peter Nisbet has termed “the story.” According to the artist’s own account, his plane was hit by Russian anti-aircraft fire during a snowstorm in northern Crimea, killing the pilot instantly and rendering him unconscious. Beuys later admitted that his memories of the chain of events leading to his rescue were limited to images that “penetrated his consciousness,” recalling that a group of Tartars (a nomadic group residing in the region) rescued him from the wreckage, covered his body in grease and wrapped him in felt until he was rescued by a German search party eight days later. Severely injured with a fractured skull, multiple broken bones, and singed skin, Beuys would not have survived the incident had it not been for the care that he received from his rescuers. In reality, however, the crash may have been minor — records and personal accounts place him in a field hospital the day after the event complaining of a headache and broken nose. Although research by Jörg Herold (among others) argues that Beuys’ anecdote was mere fiction, it is certain that the mystery of the story (what might be now called a myth) gave him widespread notoriety. It is because of this story that the artist has been viewed as a problematic authority, drawing

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33 Riegel claims that he was unable to train as a pilot either due to the strength of his vision or possibly a red-green color blindness. Riegel, *Beuys die Biographie*, 49–50. Numerous sources have claimed that he was trained as a pilot including Caroline Tisdall’s 1979 catalogue accompanying the artist’s solo exhibition at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York. Tisdall, *Joseph Beuys*, 16.

34 Ibid., 15; Riegel, *Beuys die Biographie*, 65. Here, again, the details are murky in literature. Tisdall claims that the event happened in 1943, though Riegel verifies through flight records that the accident took place on 16 March 1944.


36 For a full account of Beuys’ wartime experience and the crash see Ibid., 50–81.

37 Ibid., 65–66. Riegel also claims that it may not have been snowing, but rather raining, and that the crash could have been caused by an error made by the pilot, not from enemy fire. Furthermore, the site of the plane crash was recorded as only 7.5 kilometers (approx. 4.5 miles) from their home base.

(and repelling) viewers to his persona and his work.\textsuperscript{39} Indeed, much of the negative critique that Beuys received, particularly by U.S. critics, revolves around his participation in the German military and his account of the crash. Many, including the recent biography by Riegel, have been intent to uncover the artist's further associations with Nazis, including his later collector Karl Ströher, who served time in prison for his activities as a sympathizer, and his collaborator Karl Fastabend, who was a ranking official in the SS.\textsuperscript{40} Despite Beuys' subsequent engagement with spiritual principles, political activism, and educational philosophy, his time in the Nazi military has continued to dominate interpretations of his work, particularly in English.

A biographical reading of Beuys' oeuvre nevertheless seems irresistible because the materials supposedly used by the Tartar tribesmen to save his life have come to define him as a sculptor. Nisbet claims that, "the originary account of fat and felt has served both as the exegetical key to understanding Beuys' signature use of these materials — a use that is taken to exemplify and summarize his entire career, as well as the prosecution's case against the artist."\textsuperscript{41} While the fat and felt he began using as sculptural materials in the early 1960s conveniently relate to the events of his fictional rescue, these elements have more meaning for Beuys than simply their connection to the Tartars or his near-death experience. The materials' inherent states and properties were important for Beuys' expanded concept of art, which he developed with the aid of Steiner's social theories following the war.

Beuys' fictionalized version of the crash emerged between 1968 and 1970 (nearly thirty years after the alleged incident), when "the story" was first referenced in interviews. Initially, he spoke about the war reluctantly, referencing the Tartars and his crash, but not connecting the two.\textsuperscript{42} Gradually, over the next few years, the elements of the story fell into place and were concretely tied to the materials in his sculptures by the time critic Georg Jappe interviewed him in 1976.\textsuperscript{43} As Nisbet notes in his essay, the

\textsuperscript{39} Beuys' outgoing personality and panache for attracting media attention wherever he went also added to both his acceptance as an art world magnate while also garnering him many detractors.

\textsuperscript{40} Knöfel, "Beuys Biography."

\textsuperscript{41} Nisbet, "Crash Course," 7.

\textsuperscript{42} Nisbet tracks the emergence of the story the first reference of his wartime experience in a 1968 interview, Ernst Günter Engelhard, "Joseph Beuys: Ein Grausames Wintermärchen," Christ und Welt 21, no. 3 (January 3, 1969): 12. In the interview, Beuys talks of the war detracting his scientific studies, the crash of his plane in Crimea, and the Tartars that found him.

\textsuperscript{43} First published in Georg Jappe, "Interview mit Beuys über Schlüsserlebnisse, 27.9.76," Kunst
story was not used in commentary on Beuys' work in the mid-1970s (as discussed in chapter three), for example, in reviews of his performance *I Like America and America Likes Me* (1974).\textsuperscript{44} Caroline Tisdall, who wrote the catalogue for Beuys' 1979 Guggenheim exhibition, was the first to concretely link the rescue (and hence Beuys' therapeutic intent) to the materials in his sculptures.\textsuperscript{45} At this time, his works were being acquired by major collections throughout Europe and the United States and Beuys' self-mythology was becoming an integral interpretative tool used by critics and curators to discuss both his sculptures and his actions. As Tisdall states, the fat and felt "are not presented as narrative elements, nor as demonstrations of material, but as elements of a theory to do with the potential and meaning of sculpture."\textsuperscript{46} In so doing, she separates Beuys' practice from the material investigations of his contemporaries (Richard Serra, Bruce Nauman, and Robert Morris to name a few), and imbues his materials instead with the artist's own personal meaning. In these terms, Beuys' myth, and eventually the persona of the artist himself, can be read in terms of their metaphoric value. While it contributed to his celebrity, Beuys was more interested in his personal history of trauma as a metaphor for the collective wounds experienced by society during and after the Second World War and consequently how his works could eventually be used as a model for future healing. By the time he developed the myth of the crash, Beuys was already invested in finding a new theory of art, one that connected less to the true events of his life, but rather expanded to include the traumatic experience of society as a whole in the postwar period. This metaphor extended to his concept of social sculpture, which he employed to address these issues.

Beuys' work must be seen within the context of the postwar period, particularly its relationship with the spiritual sense of loss felt by the German people and the physical devastation experienced in many cities. The overwhelming destruction throughout Europe during this period remains incomprehensible to many contemporary viewers of Beuys' oeuvre, particularly to those in the United States. In addition to the crimes against humanity enacted by the Third Reich, the strategic air raids conducted by the Allies in the latter years of the war decimated civilian populations and leveled entire

\textsuperscript{45} Nisbet claims that Tisdall quite possibly incorporated elements of Jappe's interview into her own writing. Tisdall, *Joseph Beuys*, 10–12.
\textsuperscript{46} Ibid., 17.
cities, including Beuys' hometown of Kleve. Emerging from this destruction, the German people found themselves amid piles of rubble, many homeless and dealing with the psychological trauma caused by terror, death, and loss. Germans were both perpetrators and victims of the destruction, and there was little consensus as to how to deal with the aftermath.

As W.G. Sebald notes in his discussion of Allied air raids across Germany in the latter years of the war, the sheer amount of destruction hardly seemed to mark the remaining population. The apathy felt by many survivors was counterbalanced by negation expressed as an extreme drive toward reconstruction.\textsuperscript{47} Recounting the darkest moments of recent German history became taboo and a sense of collective amnesia set in, lasting until reunification in the 1990s. No one who survived wanted to recount their experience of the fires that destroyed residential buildings, leaving charred bodies smoldering for weeks on end, and homeless, scavenging refugees clinging desperately to life. The German people collectively turned away from these memories and toward a new future — one decidedly in their own control and not those of a dictator. While Beuys himself did not experience the same terror as victims of the air raids or concentration camps, his combat experience resulted in a mental trauma significant enough to produce effects of selective amnesia. The chosen myth of the flight crash, which emerged during a pertinent moment in his canonization as an artist and teacher, is evidence of Beuys' own attempt to come to terms with his role as a member of the party perpetrating horrendous atrocities against humankind.

In his 1976 interview with George Jappe, Beuys hints at the fragmentation of his memory in admitting that the images and materials in his later works were used precisely because they were both part of his experience, but also because they helped express his theories: “All the images I had then, I didn't have them fully conscious. I didn't really recover consciousness until twelve days later, by which time I was already in a German field hospital. But all these images fully...entered me then, in a translated

\textsuperscript{47} W. G Sebald, \textit{On the Natural History of Destruction} (New York: Random House, 2003), 3–5. In his book, Sebald discusses literary responses to the destruction and persecution experienced during and immediately after the war. In it, he addresses the needs of the victims of persecution, for whom “the thread of chronological time is broken, background and foreground merge, the victim's logical means of support in his existence are suspended. The experience of terror also dislocates time, the most abstract of all humanity's homes. The only fixed points are traumatic scenes recurring with a painful clarity of memory and vision” (150).
form, so to speak." The materials used in his works, particularly the fat and felt that had long been tied to the myth, were used not merely because they represented the Tartars, but because he was able to conveniently "insert it fully into a theory." In other words, his story helped him form the basis of his conceptual framework, but the materials in his work were not meant to represent historical facts as such. They were mnemonic referents, linking Beuys' own memories with a collective experience of war, loss, tragedy, and destruction in tangible form. He used these referents to make sense of his experience and to connect it to his broader ideas about art. According to his vision, the materials, which symbolized the healing of bodily trauma, could be a metaphor for the ability of art to treat greater social ills.

The war proved to be a defining moment for Beuys, and not merely because he began to use the materials that characterize his later sculptures. In addition to his personal involvement as a soldier, Beuys was profoundly affected by the Holocaust and destruction that occurred in Germany during the war. His best friend, Fritz Rolf Rothenburg, was killed in a concentration camp in 1943, and his parents' home (along with much of the town of Kleve, including his beloved Schwanenburg castle) was demolished by the time Beuys returned in 1946. For Beuys, then, the war represented the destruction of society: he lost connections with his past, and narrowly escaped with his life. Returning home, he found a city that looked and felt different from the place he had known as a child. He decided to leave his medical studies at the University of Posen to devote himself entirely to art. The German nation and its people had experienced a dramatic shift that had a profound impact on how artists like Beuys engaged with their craft in the years to come.

**The Immediate Postwar Period**

When Germany was defeated in the war and an Allied victory was declared on 8 May 1945, the country was in ruins. The period after the war between 1945 and 1949 saw a major shift from the chaos and havoc brought by National Socialist leadership to the division of Germany between U.S., British, French, and Soviet forces; the subsequent sums of money invested in the country under the Marshall

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48 “Interview with Beuys about Key Experiences,” in *Joseph Beuys, Mapping the Legacy* (New York; Sarasota, FL: D.A.P.; John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art, 2001), 188.
49 Ibid.
50 Tisdall, *Joseph Beuys*, 18.
plan; the outbreak of the Cold War; and the transformation of the country's industrial complex. The official division of Germany into Eastern Soviet and Western Capitalist areas in 1949, and the way each side addressed the memory of the war, figured prominently into Beuys’ political awakening during this period.

Culturally, the period just after the war is characterized by a focus on de-nazification, which included both punishment and rehabilitation. In his book *Divided Memory: The Nazi Past in the Two Germanys* (1997), historian Jeffrey Herf outlines the separate East and West German responses to the war, and the Holocaust in particular. He argues that public memory of the atrocity was strategically pronounced in political discourse in the West, where Beuys was living after he returned from his service.\(^{51}\)

Immediately after the fall of the Third Reich, from 1945 to 1946, West Germany was consumed by the Nuremberg trials, during which thousands of former Nazis were judged for their individual crimes. Herf argues that this period was important to establish a democratic, anti-fascist German state that linked back to the economic prosperity and stable political structure that existed during the Weimar period. The trials themselves were seen as a way to cleanse Germans of their collective guilt and reaffirm that individuals had political and moral agency. Memory of the Holocaust had to be kept alive not as an accusation of collective guilt, but according to Herf, as a way to preserve “norms of the rule of law, justice, and individual moral accountability which were necessary for the preservation of postwar liberal democracy.”\(^{52}\)

Thus the public memory of Nazi crimes during the Holocaust invigorated citizens and led to political engagement rather than withdrawal.\(^ {53}\) Re-education was another method used by the Allies as part of this process, including the re-structuring of schools, which lead to the conservative German tripartite selective system and religious-based education, as well as the harboring of Nazis in institutions of higher education and the persistence of radical right-wing factions among student bodies.\(^ {54}\)

German politicians like Konrad Adenauer (leader of the Christian Democratic Union party and chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany, 1949–1963) sought to combat what they saw as the

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\(^{51}\) In the immediate postwar period West German politics were focused on restoring links between political structures and leaders of the Weimar period to those of post-Nazi era — what Herf calls “multiple restorations.” While enacted by German politicians and voters, these “multiple restorations” were shaped by Allied occupiers who aimed to stamp out the threat of future dictatorships in Germany and invigorate the war-torn economy. Jeffrey Herf, *Divided Memory: The Nazi Past in the Two Germanys* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), 3.

\(^{52}\) Ibid., 372.

\(^{53}\) Ibid., 208.

underlying causes of the war exacerbated by authoritarianism and German tradition: the neglect of the individual in favor of the state, materialism, and economic chaos. They asserted that these social problems could be corrected by making a break with certain aspects of national identity and political traditions. In essence, they wanted to re-direct society away from an authoritarian (either fascist or communist) mentality and towards democracy as a liberating political ideology. As chancellor, Adenauer promoted Christian values as a method to reinvigorate the individual and keyed into education as a way to develop an awareness of individual moral responsibility. Other outspoken politicians such as Adenauer's liberal opposition Kurt Schumacher, the chairman of the Social Democratic Party, advocated a direct confrontation with the Nazi past and political reform based firmly in Marxism. Beuys' own theory of social sculpture wavered between these political poles. He referenced the role of religion in the transformation of society and of education in the liberation of the individual by using crosses in his performances and in his later institutional stamps for the Organization for Direct Democracy and Free International University, although his actions remained focused on individual empowerment to initiate political change for the good of all people. For this reason, he was never a member of any of the organized parties, advocating instead for a "third way" of social democracy that was neither capitalist nor communist.

Art and architectural historian Paul B. Jaskot has pointed out that German artists including Beuys were constantly navigating between the Nazi past and the postwar present during the years just following the Second World War. While individuals were concerned with self-preservation, cleansing the past, and justifying their actions, Jaskot argues that "Artists and architects engaged the experience of victims as an intricate conceptual problem, but they also addressed the political implications of the changing status of

55 Ibid., 215. Adenauer was one of the first politicians to run for election in the postwar period, and he advocated the release of German prisoners of war like Beuys. He considered German soldiers to be victims of Nazism, but said little about their role in the persecution and murder of Jews. Herf argues that silence about the Holocaust was strategic — since the postwar German population was still vehemently anti-Semitic, politicians avoided the subject in order to win votes.

56 Ibid., 216.

57 This "third way" must be distinguished from the centrist policies of Western governments like the United Kingdom and United States in the 1990s. The "third way" here does not advocate compromise but rather rejects the ideological extremes of liberal capitalism and Marxist collectivism in favor of an alternative system. The term was used by Beuys and the economists at the International Cultural Center, Achberg (INKA).

perpetrators.” As a figure who participated in the Second World War as a Nazi soldier but later devoted his life to the healing principles of art, Beuys complicates the role of the perpetrator. He was, in effect, part of the movement to whitewash German culture of its culpability while at the same time attempting to rehabilitate it spiritually. The artist often deflected questions about the Holocaust specifically, but as far as we know, he did not have any direct involvement in, nor did he benefit from the murder of Jews in Europe during the war. However, neither did he actively resist the war or its atrocities.

According to Sabine Eckmann, “Concerns within the art world revolved around issues of how to continue and disrupt national trajectories at once, and how art could and should intersect with social and political contexts after the Third Reich’s aestheticization of politics.” Artists were caught between retreating from and engaging in political discourse, looking back toward German heritage and moving forward into a new international future. Beuys struggled with this tension, echoing Herf’s concept of “multiple restorations,” or the desire of Germans to connect the postwar period to Weimar. Beuys’ work clearly relates to the social and political context of the immediate postwar period — both in the radical dematerialized form of his actions and in his holistic aim to heal social ills.

Beuys developed his practice during the early years of the Cold War in formerly British-occupied West Germany (Federal Republic of Germany, or FDR), when German party politicians and the capitalist Western Allies were focused on the threat of communism from the Soviet Union, as well as toward a renewed economy. During this period, there was pressure to conform to a U.S. form of democracy; nonetheless, Germans were concerned that democratic tolerance had allowed the rise of fascism and further that capitalism produced class distinctions that resulted in the communist revolution. Intellectuals including Beuys advocated a “third way” called democratic socialism, which envisioned a unified Germany that was demilitarized and neutral. Nonetheless, U.S. pressure prevailed. In 1949, when the GDR and FDR were officially divided into two nations, the “iron curtain” fell, forming a barrier between capitalist, democratic interests in the West and dictatorship and communism in the East. To the occupying forces,

59 Ibid., 8.
60 Sabine Eckmann, “Historicizing Postwar German Art,” in Art of Two Germanys: Cold War Cultures, ed. Stephanie Barron and Eckhart Gillen (New York; Los Angeles: Abrams; Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 2009), 35.
as well as both the social and conservative democratic parties of the FDR, the Communists had replaced one totalitarian regime with another, posing a threat to both national security and social unity. The FDR, where Beuys spent the remainder of his life, was suspended between the United States and the Soviet Union in a state of perpetual conflict until the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989.

As a divided Germany reflected on its own troubled past and generating political and economic structures for a new democratic society, Beuys experienced a psychological restructuring of his own following his return as a prisoner of war in 1946. Turning from his initial interest in medicine to artistic practice, he began to shift from healing the body to healing the whole person mentally and spiritually. First, he addressed his own vision for how art might be used in this process. Art presented possibilities that science could not; through art he could engage with man's everyday experience on a holistic level. He later reflected: “I started to study the natural sciences, and then came to the conclusion that my possibility perhaps lay in a sphere demanding something completely different from the ability to become a good specialist in some scientific occupation, and that my talent lay in exerting an all-embracing impact on the task facing the nation.”

Judging by the large amount of work that he produced, it seems that Beuys underwent an internal, psychological crisis in the postwar years that led him toward art as a therapeutic process that had implications for society at large. For him, this was best expressed through the analogy of the wound, which harked back to his past interest in medicine. Beuys introduced the terminology of the wound in his somewhat idiosyncratic curriculum vitae titled *Lebenslauf/Werklauf* (Life Course/Work Course) first printed in 1964, beginning with his mythic birth out of a “wound drawn together with an adhesive bandage.” He later extended this theme to the physical trauma he experienced during his plane crash in 1944, and the psychological distress he experienced upon his return to West Germany. The motif ran throughout his

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62 Beuys reflected on this period in his life: “I realized the role that an artist can play in indicating the traumas of a time and initiating a healing process. This relates to medicine, or what people call alchemy or shamanism… Out of it came the Theory of Sculpture. By this, I mean that I glimpsed a relationship between the chaos I had experienced and a sculptural metaphor. Chaos can have a healing character, coupled with an idea of open movement that channels the heat of chaotic energy into order and form…now I began to see how to create structures that relate to every kind of life and work.” Quoted in Tisdall, *Joseph Beuys*, 21.


oeuvre; the artist sought a theory of art with healing effects to counter this damage. For this reason he was more interested in the “content and meaning of catastrophe,” rather than, as he stated to Tisdall in 1979, merely illustrating its effects: “Similia similibus curantur: heal like with like, that is the homeopathic process.”

Particularly following his interactions with Fluxus from approximately 1962 to 1965, Beuys’ work took on a definitive shamanistic tone, with many works that included the materials fat and felt that, in addition to references to his personal history, he used as a metaphor for the spiritual healing of his people. In his performances (which he called “actions”) of the 1960s, as with his later works of more politically determined works of social sculpture, he took on the role of the shaman “to stress my belief in other priorities and the need to come up with a completely different plan for working with substances.”

He hoped that through these actions, he would have a profound effect on how society was formed: “After I am dead I would like people to say, ‘Beuys understood the historical situation. He altered the course of events.’” Such words attest to the powerful role that the artist hoped to play in society at large, not just in cultural affairs. Of course, as the next chapter demonstrates, the lasting effects of projects such as the Organization for Direct Democracy or 7,000 Oaks were somewhat narrow in scope, due to the fact that Beuys was an artist and not a political leader or even a pop culture celebrity able to rouse international interest (though he certainly tried to do so through his use of the media).

Following his return in 1946, Beuys made and exhibited works of art near his hometown of Kleve. He worked under sculptor Walter Brüx, painter Hanns Lamers, and at the Kleve Artist's League, where he exhibited his work until 1955. From 1946 to 1954 he also studied at the Staatliche Kunstakademie Düsseldorf (Düsseldorf Academy of Art), where he was educated in the academic model that had existed since the nineteenth century. Following this system, bachelor students began with an initial orientation year followed by four years during which they were trained in the style of one or two teachers; the best students continued their studies as a “Master student” under one professor. Under the tutelage of

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66 Ibid., 23.
68 For more information about Beuys' time as a student at the Düsseldorf Academy, see Susanne Anna, ed., *Joseph Beuys, Düsseldorf* (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz, 2008).
69 The title of *Meisterschuler oder Meisterschülerin* (Master student) is not the equivalent of a U.S. Master's
Master Professors Josef Enseling (who directed him to model from nature) and Ewald Mataré (who encouraged him to explore non-traditional materials), Beuys learned about the usefulness of the art object and the unifying principles of creation. He produced sculptures, paintings, and numerous drawings illustrating these principles and their application to his own experience throughout his years at the Academy. He spent his days in endless debates on art and philosophy with his friend, the writer Adam Rainer Lynen. It was also during this time that he began to take a serious interest in the Austrian philosopher and anthroposophist Rudolph Steiner, whose lectures and writings had been introduced to him early on through his readings about Lehmbrock and again in 1941 by his friend Fritz Rolf Rothenburg. Riegel verified that by 1947, Beuys' writings were filled with notes on Steiner, and he began his own extensive library of Steiner's writings.

Beuys' experience in the immediate postwar period was quite influential to his later practice and led to the development of his theories that art could be imbued with healing properties. In Lebenslauf/Werklauf, Beuys identified his activities from 1956 to 1957 as “Beuys works in the fields,” and the years between 1957 to 1960 as “Recovering from the field work.” This period of field work was quite fertile for Beuys as it was during this time that he healed from his war injuries and experienced a mental awakening that led him to become an artist. Following a period of productivity and commissions in the early 1950s, Beuys was forced to leave Düsseldorf in 1956 due to financial constraints and a psychological event labeled by historians as either “an acute state of depression” or a “nervous breakdown.” Finlay states that this critical moment was brought on by Beuys' concerns over the

degree. It implies that the student has a master/apprentice relationship with the professor with whom they completed their studies and that they participated in a master class.

Finlay claims that Beuys learned about Steiner from reading about Lehmbrock; Frank Finlay, “Joseph Beuys’ Eco-Aesthetics,” in Green Thought in German Culture: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives, ed. Colin Riordan (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1997), 254.

Riegel contends that there is evidence that Beuys read about one third of the entirety of Steiner's nearly 350 published works. Riegel, Beuys die Biographie, 104, fn 74.

Uwe M Schneede, Joseph Beuys, die Aktionen: kommentiertes Werkverzeichnis mit fotografischen Dokumentationen (Ostfildern-Ruit bei Stuttgart: Verlag Gerd Hatje, 1994), 45. This document was first published in the program for a Fluxus performance in Aachen, Germany, on 20 July 1964.

restrictive specialization in the arts, pressure to become a high-achieving artist-genius, and the neutralization of art by the “culture industry.” He recuperated by working the fields at the farm owned by his friends and collectors, the brothers Franz Joseph and Hans van der Grinten, in Kranenberg and from 1957 to 1964 took a studio in the basement of the former spa in Kleve, the Friedrich-Wilhelm-Bad. Here he made countless drawings featuring organic forms resembling flora and fauna (including honeybees, elk, and trees), female nudes (Figure 1.1), and schematic plans of energy fields; his sculptures (Figure 1.2) from the 1950s were usually figural and incorporated Christian references to death and resurrection. He also began to incorporate nontraditional materials such as wax, cloth, and found objects into his works. He described his experience thus: “Certainly incidents from the war produced an aftereffect on me, but something also had to die. I believe this phase was the most important for me in that I had to fully reorganize my self constitutionally… the initial stage was a totally exhausted state, which quickly turned into an orderly phase of renewal.” Reading Steiner during this period was a regenerative process, and allowed him to reflect on how his own experiences might serve as an allegory for the experience of Germans as a whole. It became his myth, his way of exploring the death and destruction through its correlation with his personal experience.

**Beuys’ Philosophy: Creative Thought and the Threefold Social Order**

The teachings of Rudolf Steiner are essential to understanding Beuys’ conception of art as a catalyst for social change, since the artist often referenced his name and philosophy in his own writings, discussions, and speeches about his work from the late 1940s until the end of his life. Beuys gleaned his spiritual philosophy from Steiner, whose own concept of Anthroposophy was based on his study of Goethe’s theories of perception and Schiller’s aesthetic education of man. As Beuys studied Steiner’s holistic concepts, pedagogic theory, and social vision, his practice evolved to look not solely toward the

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74 Finlay, “Green Thought in German Culture,” 248.
75 The van der Grinten collection, which houses thousands of Beuys’ works, is located at the Museum Schloss Moyland, near Kleve, along with the Joseph Beuys Archive. Beuys’ former studio in Kleve was restored in the 2010s and as of 2014 was on view beside a collection of works by Beuys’ former master Ewald Mataré at the Museum Kurhaus.
76 A sample of his early work can be found in Klaus Gallwitz, ed., Beuys vor Beuys: frühe Arbeiten aus der Sammlung van der Grinten: Zeichnungen, Aquarelle, Ölstudien, Collagen (Köln: DuMont, 1987).
77 Beuys quoted in Adriani, Konnertz, and Thomas, Joseph Beuys, Life and Works, 56.
past and collective memories, but towards a new understanding of how society could be organized and how his experience as a Professor at the Düsseldorf Academy of Art could be employed in cultural interactions.

While Steiner is cited in biographical literature on the artist, for example in *Joseph Beuys: Life and Work* and *Beuys die Biographie*, there are few texts that explore the way that Beuys translated Steiner's thought into his own ideas and artistic practice. The most in-depth study, *Death Keeps Me Awake: Joseph Beuys and Rudolf Steiner, Foundations of their Thought*, was published by Wolfgang Zumdick in German in 1995 (translated into English in 2013).\(^78\) This book provides an explicit explanation of Steiner's theories and how they relate to Beuys, unlike the less detailed connections made by Ulrich Rösch in *We are the Revolution!: Rudolf Steiner, Joseph Beuys and the Threefold Social Impulse* (2013), in which Rösch discusses only Steiner's tripartite social division; and a brief introduction provided in the exhibition catalogue for *Joseph Beuys & Rudolf Steiner: Imagination, Inspiration, Intuition* (2007) at the National Gallery of Victoria in Melbourne, Australia.\(^79\) This section provides an overview of Steinerian thought as a precursor to a discussion of Beuys' artistic practice and teaching method, discussing the pertinent aspects of Steiner's philosophy that relate to Beuys' concept of social sculpture.

Steiner is best known for establishing the Anthroposophic movement in the early twentieth century; he is also recognized for his numerous public lectures (which were later published), and for the Anthroposophical Society, a group based on his theories founded by his followers in 1912. Steiner based his philosophy on his readings of the German Enlightenment philosopher Friedrich Schiller (1759–1805), whose *Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man* (1793) he found in the 1880s. Steiner was interested in a debate in the field philosophy is known as epistemology (the study of the nature and limits of knowledge) about the extent to which our senses help us gain knowledge. Rationalists claim that knowledge is passively innate and a priori, whereas empiricists believe that knowledge is based on sensorial experience and perception (as John Locke argued, we are a blank slate when we enter the

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world). In his book *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781), Immanuel Kant tries to synthesize these two fields, arguing that knowledge is based on experience, but that the mind is active in the knowing process and hence has a subjective dimension in shaping and organizing those experiences. In his letters, Schiller goes one step further by asserting that there is a third way of knowing connected to the mystical and spiritual that cannot be explained by rationality. Schiller argues that this third way of knowing could be accessed through an aesthetic sensibility referred to as “reflective contemplation.” For Steiner, this was proof that there could be other ways of accessing knowledge about the world.

Schiller used his debate with Kant in a number of writings about how the senses and reason should balance one another. His writings on aesthetics and social freedom appeared in several of Steiner’s writings as well as Beuys’ lectures on social sculpture. In his series of twenty-seven letters responding to Kant’s *Critique of Judgment* (1790), Schiller addresses this debate in his evaluation of the revolutionary goals in France in the late eighteenth century. Rather than liberating society, Schiller argues that these men terrorized the French population by exercising state power. He wrestles with the cultural construct of modern man, asking how the ideals of liberty, equality, and fraternity (the ideals of the revolutionaries) could be realized in a rational state. Kant held that there was a difference, or an inherent binary, between aesthetic and ethical judgment: the former was essentially subjective, based on an individual’s bodily senses, while the latter was objective, or based on the mind and rational thought. Schiller argues that in order for an individual to submit to the state, he or she must submit their personal urges and desires (the subjective) to their rational moral duties. This division, he thinks, leads to overspecialization, separating science from the arts, and leaving rational thought devoid of feeling and emotion. He counters Kant by arguing that there must be an intermediary state — aesthetics — where creativity and imagination could unify bodily drives and the rational mind. This translated into Beuys’

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81 See Friedrich Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man: In a Series of Letters*, ed. Elizabeth M.
own thinking about over-specialization in art and more largely in the professional realm, which he thought prevented people from effectively interacting with one another. This was a large reason that he sought to bring together people from a variety of backgrounds, including professionals from a variety of fields and laypeople, to solve larger issues such as environmental destruction and geopolitical conflict. The working groups of the Organization for Direct Democracy and conferences of the Free International University, where people were encouraged to find creative solutions to problems by working together, were intended to revive the emotional connections between people that had been lost through over-professionalization.

In his letters, Schiller presents one way for man to free himself from the drudgery of everyday life and slavery to the political system through its ideal form in the Greek polis: art. Through an aesthetic education, an individual can reconcile his physical desires with his or her moral duties, and hence contribute to an improvement in the polis. By means of what he calls the "play-drive," or the cultivation of the imagination, Schiller called for individuals to recognize a higher spiritual order, much along the same lines as Steiner's anthroposophic exercise of moral intuition (which he called "ethical individualism"). By following the imagination, in other words, one's personal sensory experience combines with a moral and ethical imperative. This play-drive thus provides the individual with social governance. Social freedom, therefore, is enacted through an aesthetic education — the development of the capacities of the imagination to unify the subjective experience with social laws. This was one way that Steiner conceptualized his own education system, the Waldorf Method, which later translated into Beuys' own conception about how politics and aesthetics could be united through his own projects.

Following Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's investigation of human perception, Steiner was interested in accessing an idea of truth that negates scientific or rational knowledge, based on the premise that truth exists exterior to what is observed. Knowledge, as an interaction between the
observer and the observed, can instead be relational and participatory (two key terms in the repertoire of social works of art throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries). His philosophy, which he called Anthroposophy, is predicated on the idea that man exists between the sensory and the metaphysical, and that a higher level of extrasensory knowledge can only be accessed through human imagination, inspiration, and intuition — concepts that have long been connected with art and culture. These moments of creation connect the physical to the spiritual, but they are only available to those who are willing to learn how to access them.  

Anthroposophy is a spiritual practice (often called a "spiritual science") that includes research on the esoteric, or extra-worldly, senses accessible only through clairvoyance or intuition. Steiner thought that modern Western men and women had lost their ability to access the spiritual world — made possible in earlier times and in non-Western cultures through shamans and spiritual guides — which resulted in a sense of alienation in their everyday lives. His teachings offered a method to overcome this alienation by centering on the notion that there is a spiritual world, one characterized by love and associated with the seventeenth century Rosicrucian belief in esoteric truths of the ancient past, which are accessible through self-development and human unity with nature. Using colored chalk on black paper (Figure 1.3), Steiner illustrated his philosophical argument for audiences in thousands of lectures across Europe throughout the teens and twenties. Through his talks and writings, Steiner promoted a holistic lifestyle that included biodynamic farming and extended medicine; he developed the Waldorf education model;

Goethe and Schiller Archives in Weimar in 1889. Goethe promoted direct contact between the student and the object of observation as opposed to a quantitative, materialist approach to scientific inquiry. 


88 Ibid., 3–4. 


90 Steiner's chalk drawings are of particular interest because there is such an affinity with Beuys' later chalkboard images that are now preserved as works of art in their own right. Both men used the drawings not only to demonstrate philosophical teachings, but also as an expressive medium. See "A Different World: The Blackboard Drawings of Rudolf Steiner," in Joseph Beuys & Rudolf Steiner: Imagination, Inspiration, Intuition (Melbourne: National Gallery of Victoria, 2007), 23–30. Many of Steiner's blackboard drawings were shown as works of art in the Central Pavilion of the 55th Venice Biennale in 2013.
and emphasized the importance of human imagination, inspiration, and intuition.\textsuperscript{91}

Steiner’s teachings had a profound impact on Beuys, who was considering a vocation in the sciences before his wartime experience prompted him to question the need for a spiritual renewal of society. After his return from the war, Beuys began to use art as a method to explore the extrasensory relationship between human beings and the spiritual. The materials that he employed, as well as the forms of his sculptures, relate directly to Steiner’s (and Schiller’s) idea that art can be a conduit to the spiritual realm. These ideas became especially pertinent to Beuys’ work in the late 1960s and 1970s as he attempted to create alternative structures to existing institutions that he viewed as social failures, exemplified in the projects discussed in the following chapter. This includes his creation of a new type of art academy, the Free International University, in which he attempted to develop his students’ creative potential rather than train them to follow his own example as an artist. Intuition formed the theoretical basis of Beuys’ expanded theory of art, which he developed during his interactions with Fluxus, and his pedagogic method.

Derived from his readings of Steiner and his reaction to Schiller, Beuys conceived of an opposition between rational thought (in Beuys’ terminology called the “crystalline principle”) and the intuitive (the “organic principle”). The difference between these forms of thought became important for his actions and sculptures in the early 1960s, when he began to integrate soft, flexible materials like animal fat with harder absorbent materials like felted wool. He believed that reason was a “crystalline” activity hardbound by rationalism that involved a logical discursive process; it is quantitative. Intuition, on the other hand, was the extension of this knowledge to include qualitative thinking, or thinking that expands beyond logic into other dimensions. Thus, intuition has the power to shape rational thought through a transfer of energy and is an integral part of our creative impulses as human beings. Intuition was one way to balance rational thought, which Beuys conceived as the key to individual creativity.\textsuperscript{92} Both aspects are necessary for the creative process to occur, but their relationship is constantly shifting because creativity requires flexibility. Therefore, the creative impulse is plastic and can be molded, just like clay for example, and along with personal development, is the source of the human capacity for social change. Beuys’

\textsuperscript{91} Holland, “Introduction,” 15.
\textsuperscript{92} Adriani, Konnertz, and Thomas, \textit{Joseph Beuys, Life and Works}, 144–147; Tisdall, \textit{Joseph Beuys}, 110–113; Mesch, “Problems of Remembrance in Postwar German Performance Art,” 212.
concept of social sculpture united reason with intuition and embodied the energy principles seen in his sculptures. Creativity transcends the physical, or sensory, world and allows the individual to enter the spiritual realm. Thought, as the origin of creativity, could therefore liberate the individual, and on a wider scale, could influence how society is shaped from within. This idea was particularly important for Beuys' political projects, for it was through the physical expression of thought in dialogue that he hoped to unite spiritual life with the democratic process.\(^\text{93}\)

Steiner's pedagogic philosophy, which eventually became the Waldorf School model, is built upon the principle that imagination, inspiration, and intuition could be developed in individuals.\(^\text{94}\) He thought that humans could transcend the natural world by exercising these creative forces, and hence it was this process that could make one free.\(^\text{95}\) Where Steiner applied these principles across all fields of knowledge and focused particularly on children, Beuys employed this theory through in his sculpture classes at the Düsseldorf Academy of Art from 1961 to 1972 and through workshops associated with the Organization for Direct Democracy and the Free International University. At the Academy, Beuys encouraged his students to develop their own intuitive capabilities and to find their own ways of working, which were often quite different from his own. His personal conversations, debate, and group discussions encouraged these young people to find their own direction, to learn from each other, and to integrate their life experience into their own work.\(^\text{96}\) The resulting medium, style, or content of his students' work was irrelevant as long as they were engaging themselves creatively. His guiding principle as a teacher was always: “One can no longer start from the old academic concept of educating great artists — that is always a happy coincidence. What one can start from is the idea that art and experiences gained from art can form an element that flows back into life.”\(^\text{97}\) This was an important part of his artistic practice as well:

\(^{94}\) Imagination, for example, can be trained through the creation of powerful mental images that are beyond mere memories or recollections. Visualizing these images eventually becomes second nature; over time they produce themselves without our intervention. Inspiration is trained by learning to experience one’s self from the perspective of someone else. Intuition, however, deals more with one’s moral imperative, which Steiner calls “ethical individualism.” The individual is encouraged to search for his or her own moral powers rather than relying on doctrine, and is trained to listen without judgment to achieve distance.
\(^{95}\) Zumdick, *Death Keeps Me Awake*, 38.
\(^{97}\) Beuys quoted in Tisdall, *Joseph Beuys*, 265.
although Beuys used specific materials that related to his own personal history, he also hoped that viewers would create their own connections with the spiritual principles present in the composition of each work. Either from their interactions with his sculptures, performances, or within his classrooms, Beuys intended that his work both as an artist and as an educator resonated in other areas of the lives of the people that he encountered.

As C.L. Coetzee points out, Beuys’ concept of social sculpture is precisely defined by Schiller’s conception of the "aesthetic individual," and his later development of direct democracy (by which laws are initiated by individuals instead of a governmental body like a parliament) is based on Schiller’s "aesthetic state” in which all citizens have equal rights. Yet, Schiller’s concept of an aesthetic education requires that viewers are capable of understanding and appreciating objects of art and are thus a member of an educated elite, while Beuys was committed to a broader understanding of art production and consumption. For Beuys, as for Steiner, imagination, inspiration, and intuition were creative acts available to all people. Through the creative process, average people could reach a spiritual consciousness. Liberation is thus available to anyone who takes responsibility for his or her own thought. Beuys' statement "every human being is a creative being" applies to all humans, and creativity is not limited to art or culture. He did not differentiate between the creative impulse necessary to create a work of art, to do scientific research, or to come up with a philosophical treatise. Beuys took from Steiner the idea that all thought requires volition — the conscious energy required to organize perception. Once that thought was "liberated" it could develop outside itself; it could become vivid imaginative thought.

The actualization of thought became Beuys’ artistic mission. These thoughts could transform society from its present destructive state into a new period of enlightenment, and as a creative being, man could direct that evolution through social form. Be it through physics or painting, when the creative drive helps to shape the world around us, it becomes a social sculpture. All people, regardless of their specialized skills, could change society through social interaction and creative development.

By accessing the spiritual in each person through the activation of intuition, Beuys hoped that the

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98 Ibid., 354.
99 Finlay, “Green Thought in German Culture,” 253.
100 Zumdick, Death Keeps Me Awake, 95.
101 Ibid., 97.
social ills caused by the destruction of the war could be overcome and refocused toward a better future. Both Beuys and Steiner were impressed by the disastrous effects of capitalism and communism, and sought an alternative political system. In the period just after the First World War, Steiner noticed that society had fallen into disorder: "We are living in the midst of something which can only be called a cancer of our human social life, a carcinoma of the social order. This carcinoma has now burst." The social and economic ills that had caused the Great War inspired Steiner to develop his philosophy for a "threefold social order" in early 1919 with the publication of Toward Social Renewal. In a lecture in March of that year, Steiner stated:

Not with the most vivid imagination would [an ancient man] be able to think up a world such as the one in which we are condemned to live…We are simply confusing dreaming and waking. It is up to us to shake off this ancient dream of our present-day social existence. One glance at the war: can you imagine anyone with human intelligence devising anything of that kind? If this has not been what we call reality then perhaps it was a dream and now we are awakening.

Just like Steiner, Beuys was searching for a way to order society in the wake of chaos in postwar Europe. His concept of social sculpture was developed out of his desire for art to become the tool that reshapes society.

Steiner had his own solution for how individuals could find freedom: by breaking up the power of the state by separating society into independent realms of economics (production, distribution, and consumption of goods), politics (civil rights or the state), and culture (the spiritual or creative). In order to develop into a strong and healthy social "organism," society must adhere to the divisions between the threefold order and each area must interact with one another "along lines similar to the negotiations between governments of different countries." This division would also transform the realms of art and culture. The cultural sphere, he thought, must remain independent from economics and free from political ideology; it should be founded on the principle of liberty. His ideas resonated for Beuys, who was interested in personal development and social responsibility of individuals in the postwar period. Such ideas pervaded German culture at the time, particularly as the Nazi past was interpreted in terms of

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102 Quoted from Steiner's public lecture in Zürich on 9 March 1919, ibid., 79.
104 Quoted from Steiner's public lecture in Zürich on 9 March 1919, Steiner, The Esoteric Aspect of the Social Question, 67–68.
105 Steiner, Towards Social Renewal: Rethinking the Basis of Society, 39–42.
106 Ibid., 47.
individual responsibility rather than collective guilt. To overcome the fear of nationalism expressed in centralized forms (i.e., from a dictatorship), the Allies had decentralized cultural institutions such as radio stations, television, and newspaper, in addition to state-funded (rather than nationally funded) arts organizations and museums.\textsuperscript{107} By engaging individuals on an international scale, rather just national, Beuys could avoid the ideological divisions that pervaded Cold War politics. Instead he tried to re-enforce the democratic pluralism that provided alternative routes to major party systems, which eventually developed into his participation in the Green movement in the latter 1970s (discussed in chapter two). This limited concept of democracy hindered society from becoming social sculpture, according to Beuys, as did the lack of artistic freedom in education and a conception of economics that was based on money and not creativity.\textsuperscript{108}

Steiner was quite critical of the ability of the capitalist state to make laws about the economy and to control human intellect. He taught that in order to achieve a structured social life the individual must be free from the state, economy, and intellectualism, and a person’s thoughts must not be treated as a commodity.\textsuperscript{109} Steiner thought that the state was the antithesis of the enlightened individual; it was as far away as one could get from the spiritual world as possible. Politics of the state were external — belonging to the sensory world — while the spiritual is internal. He prescribed that people could work together to organize the distinct relationships within each of the three orders in order to remedy this schism.\textsuperscript{110} Further, he asserted that artistic activity was a crucial element of the educational foundation of any human. Steiner notes: “By art alone the intellect is awakened to true life. And the sense of duty ripens when, artistically and with inner freedom, the human impulse to activity commands materials.”\textsuperscript{111} Artists should be invested in the “formation of social communities, whose shared experience can bring about

\textsuperscript{107} Hannah Higgins, \textit{Fluxus Experience} (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 171; Rice and Bullivant, “Reconstruction and Integration: The Culture of West German Stabilization, 1945-1968,” 221, 266.  
\textsuperscript{109} Steiner often brought up the issue of the commodification of labor in his lectures. He thought that instead of contracts between the laborer and employer based on labor, contracts should be based on goods produced. This, he thought, was the evil of capitalism, not the system itself. Rudolf Steiner, “Interior of Society,” in \textit{The New Essential Steiner: An Introduction to Rudolf Steiner for the 21st Century}, ed. Robert A McDermott (Great Barrington: Lindisfarne Books, 2009), 226; Steiner, \textit{The Esoteric Aspect of the Social Question}, 71; Steiner, \textit{Towards Social Renewal: Rethinking the Basis of Society}, 35.  
\textsuperscript{110} Steiner, “Interior of Society,” 219, 225.  
\textsuperscript{111} Steiner, \textit{Education and Art; Education and the Moral Life}, 2.
socially desirable conditions.\textsuperscript{112}

In the early 1970s, Beuys lectured on the importance of social sculpture in the reshaping society using Steiner's threefold division. At the New School in New York in January 1974, for example, he decried the role of the state in determining culture.\textsuperscript{113} In its place, he proposed a new form of art free from state economic and political control to a large audience comprised mostly of artists and students. Under his new concept of art in which all human beings have creative capabilities, individuals are equal to one another in what he called a "universal ratio." If all people play an equal part, then the current system has to change to provide freedom for each individual to create their own meaning, develop their own thoughts, and carry out their own research. In this new utopian state, creativity is no longer controlled by politicians or political ideology, but is instead invested in every person's personal expression.\textsuperscript{114} Beuys applied these ideas to the economic problem in the 1970s through his collaborations with economists Wilhelm Schmundt and Eugen Löbl at the Internationalen Kulturzentrum Achberg (International Cultural Center, Achberg, or INKA). Schmundt had proposed a neutralized form of capital that sought to break up the concentration of wealth and power, which in Beuys' view would aid people in the development of their creative faculties.\textsuperscript{115} Social sculpture was his vision for how society could be holistically organized.

During the early fifties, as Beuys was reading Steiner's words, he was going through his own personal moments of reflection and also of loneliness. He had returned to Kleve, now a pile of rubble, and began to recognize art as a method of healing. At this time, he discovered that the key to an ordered social life was through a spiritual path. Beuys was greatly influenced by Steiner's division of society into three separate parts and his assertion that society could only be healthy if it was consciously organized. However, it was not until the late 1960s, when he began to translate his ideas on a broader scale, that he integrated this into his own projects. Beuys differed from Steiner because he approached the threefold

\textsuperscript{112}Steiner, Towards Social Renewal: Rethinking the Basis of Society, 6.
\textsuperscript{113}Joseph Beuys, Willoughby Sharp, and Andy Mann, Joseph Beuys' Public Dialogue at the New School, New York (Monday/Wednesday/Friday Video Club, 1974).
\textsuperscript{114}His words carried particular weight for his U.S. audience, who at the time had a keen interest in suppression as a political tool, particularly in Communist states like the U.S.S.R. In his speech at the New School, Beuys mentioned the soviet novelist Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, who had won the Nobel Prize in Literature to in 1970 for his novel about a prisoner's experience in the Gulag, was expelled from the U.S.S.R. for his political expression.
\textsuperscript{115}Zumdick, Death Keeps Me Awake, 126.
division from within the cultural sphere; for Beuys, both politics and economics were subsumed by art rather than operating separately from them entirely. Art became his alternative system. Like Steiner, he used the chalkboard to illustrate his concept of social sculpture and document his individual exchanges held with visitors at the Office for the Organization for Direct Democracy, the conferences held in tandem with the Free International University, and his many public lectures. Steiner represented both a conceptual and formal link to social ideas, as expressed in Beuys’ projects of social sculpture. Individual creativity, Beuys thought, could be molded to shape society and social structures by effecting change through referenda that represented the needs of all humankind.

In a lecture given in November 1985 at the Münchner Kammerspiele, Beuys compared his own breakdown and resurrection to the collapse and rebirth of the German state in the postwar period. The first thing, Beuys said, that would lead to the rebirth of the nation “would be the fountainhead of what we call the German language…using the German language, we start talking to one another, then we would discover that this would re-establish our physical health and that we would also attain an elemental, deep feeling for what happens in the soil on which we live and for what has died.”¹¹⁶ Healing the wound caused by the war, in other words, was only possible if Germans started thinking and discussing ideas with one another. His art, moreover, focused on “a concept of sculpture that starts with speaking and thinking, thereby learning to construct concepts which can and will bring feeling and willing into form…so that forward-looking images will present themselves and take shape.”¹¹⁷ These ideas hark back to the Steinerian concepts of imaginative and intuitive thought, conceived in the mind and made material through language. Combining sculptural principles with anthroposophy, Beuys decided that he could heal society by transforming language into a sculptural medium. He put these ideas into practice through his involvement with the artist group Fluxus and his position at the Düsseldorf Academy, out of which he developed his artistic and pedagogic methods.

Fluxus and Beuys’ Expanded Concept of Art

Beuys developed his theory of social sculpture while teaching at the Düsseldorf Academy of Art.

¹¹⁶ Beuys, “Talking about One's Own Country: Germany,” 35.
¹¹⁷ Ibid., 37.
(discussed in the following section), where he experimented with new materials, types of performance, and artistic venues. Beginning in 1962, one year following his appointment as Professor of Sculpture, he began to associate with artists who were involved with the Fluxus movement, including Nam June Paik (1932–2006) and George Maciunas (1931–1978, who was at the time living on a U.S. Army base in Wiesbaden), the founder and chief promoter of its ideology and events. Fluxus brought him into contact with artists from around the world, many of whom were dedicated to breaking the boundaries between art and life and among artistic mediums including music, theater, the written word, and the visual arts. The artist was inspired by the artistic and material experimentation of Fluxus to combine his activities in the classroom with the actions that he performed in galleries, resulting in his “parallel process” of the 1970s. His interactions with Fluxus artists were both formative to his own thinking about his projects as multidisciplinary (including sound and nontraditional materials), participatory, provocative, and process-based, and served as the first point of contact with U.S. artists.

The Fluxus movement came to West Germany during a period of economic prosperity, when there was an explosion in artistic activity and an international exchange among creative practitioners.\textsuperscript{118} Fluxus gathered together around two-dozen artists in several countries (including Germany, Japan, Lithuania, and the United States) where they found both the space and the support to present their work; West Germany in particular was attractive for its enthusiasm for avant-garde movements during this period.\textsuperscript{119} The artists staged performances, created printed publications, games and puzzles, produced multiples between 1962 and 1964, and enjoyed notoriety into the 1970s.\textsuperscript{120} The Fluxus “manifesto”


\textsuperscript{119} This support was aligned with prewar avant-garde movements, which Hannah Higgins claims “typifies the amnesiac propaganda of the Adenauer and subsequent governments.” Ibid.

\textsuperscript{120} Maciunas, a Lithuanian-born U.S. artist, met many of the initial members of Fluxus in New York, where he ran a short-lived space called the AG Gallery. In late 1961 when he began organizing events and editing Fluxus newsletters, he was serving as a civilian graphic designer in the U.S. Air Force at Wiesbaden, Germany. He later returned to New York in the fall of 1963 where he continued to work with Fluxus concepts until his death in 1978. Thomas Kellein and Jon Hendricks, \textit{Fluxus} (London; New York: Thames and Hudson, 1995), 9; Jon Hendricks and Robert Pincus-Witten, eds., “Fluxus and the Silvermans: An Introduction,” in \textit{Fluxus Codex} (Detroit: Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection in association with H.N. Abrams, New York, 1988), 15.
(Figure 1.4) flung into an audience in Düsseldorf in February 1963 by Maciunas (the self-proclaimed “chairman” of the movement), called for a renewal of the anti-bourgeois concepts and anti-art methods of Dada, for art that could be “grasped by all peoples, not only critics, dilettantes and professionals,” and for a movement that would “FUSE the cadres of cultural, social & political revolutionaries into united front & action.”121 Their movement had much in common with the European avant-garde movements of the early twentieth century such as Surrealism and Dada, whose artists also printed their own manifestos, and enjoyed success in West Germany by aligning with these movements.122 Often termed “neo-Dada,” their editions recalled Dada automatic poetry and design principles and their concerts the vaudevillian performances held at the Cabaret Voltaire, and like Dada, Fluxus was not only a critique of high art, but also a rejection of its tenets. However, as much as they were critical of the values and methods of modernism, particularly the large, heroic canvases of the Abstract Expressionists, Fluxus was also a response to the new postwar social and cultural climate, characterized not only by a growing sense of internationalism, but also one that over the course of the 1960s grew increasingly anti-war (particularly the Vietnam Conflict), and aware of civil rights and sexual equality.123 Of central importance to these artists was a spirit of creative exchange (collaboration) and an intimate, yet ephemeral connection to the public. They believed that they could prompt revolutionary change in the lives of participants through their playful, provocative actions, an aim that was shared by Beuys during this period.

As critic Robert Pincus-Witten explained in his introduction to the Fluxus Codex (1988), Fluxus was just as much an artistic movement as a reflection of anti-U.S. and anti-imperialist tendencies in the postwar period. By reacting against the prevailing formalist agenda in the United States, the movement attracted artists from the Left in the United States and abroad, as well as European artists who wanted to curb U.S. primacy in the arts evidenced in political measures like the Marshall Plan in West Germany.124 This plan sought not only to transform the German political system into an U.S.-leaning democratic state, but also resulted in the numerous building and artistic projects of the reconstruction period.

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124 Ibid.
cities like Düsseldorf were rebuilt with modernist glass structures, and exhibitions of U.S. works of art, such as canvases by the Abstract Expressionists, traveled widely as a countermeasure to communism.\textsuperscript{125} Beuys was resistant to U.S. imperialism, as he made clear by altering the Fluxus manifesto to include a purge of “Americanism” instead of Maciunas’ “Europanism” (meaning pan-Europeanism).\textsuperscript{126} The artist rejected all offers to come to the United States in the 1960s because of the Vietnam Conflict and was outspoken in his distaste for U.S. politics, growing increasingly critical in the early 1980s after he helped found the Green movement (discussed in chapter two). However, he also attempted to counteract Eurocentrism through international projects that branched away from the powerful European nations like the United Kingdom, France, and West Germany such as the Free International University (which had many workshops on peripheral areas such as Eastern Europe, Northern Ireland, and Southern Italy) and 7,000 Oaks.

Beginning with the planning of his 1962 performance Das Erdklavier (Earth Piano, unrealized) for the first Fluxus festival in Wiesbaden,\textsuperscript{127} Beuys participated in many Fluxus concerts and events (these were among his first performances), including some that he helped organize at the Düsseldorf Academy, much to the chagrin of school administrators.\textsuperscript{128} He had met Paik, who was then living in Cologne, just a year before.\textsuperscript{129} For Beuys, participation in Fluxus meant a new space for artistic experimentation away from traditional or elitist art institutions. He was brought into contact with a great number of artists, including many from the United States, who were interested in blurring the boundaries between art and life, and among artistic mediums.

What most attracted Beuys to Fluxus was its relationship to music, which he had studied as a child. The initial impetus for the Fluxus movement had, in fact, come from U.S. composer John Cage, who taught experimental composition classes at the New School in New York in the late 1950s. These

\textsuperscript{126} Higgins, \textit{Fluxus Experience}, 171.
\textsuperscript{127} \textit{Fluxus Internationale Festspiele Nueuester Musik}, 1-23 Sept 1962, Städtisches Museum, Wiesbaden. This included 14 concerts by artists including Dick Higgins, Alison Knowles, Nam June Paik, Emmett Williams, Wolf Vostell, George Maciunas, and Ben Patterson.
\textsuperscript{128} Schneede, \textit{Joseph Beuys, die Aktionen}, 20. Beuys considered his activities with Fluxus to be the beginning of his problems with the Academy, which eventually led to his expulsion in October 1972.
\textsuperscript{129} Ibid. Paik then introduced him to Maciunas in 1962.
classes, focused on developing improvisation and incorporating chance into composition, were attended by artists associated with both Fluxus and Happenings, including many who were involved in German Fluxus events such as George Brecht, Dick Higgins, Allan Kaprow, Maciunas, Jackson MacLowe, and others. Gathering together to present event scores that they called “concerts” in music venues, Fluxus artists often incorporated elements of musical composition in their works and emphasized that their style of performance was “non-professional, form-free, simple and pure.” Beuys was particularly drawn to their use of sound as a sculptural material. The artist later stated that the use of sound in their events influenced his thoughts about what artistic mediums could be: if sound and language were now on the same terms as clay and metal in artistic practice, why couldn’t thought be used as a medium as well?

In early February 1963, Beuys staged his first Fluxus evening, *Festum Fluxorum Fluxus*, in collaboration with students at the Düsseldorf Academy, presenting two of his own actions alongside Maciunas, Alison Knowles, Arthur Køpcke, Higgins, Paik, Wolf Vostell and others in a room at the Academy. Beuys helped organize the event and designed the poster (Figure 1.5), emphasizing his key role in the movement by placing his name at the center of a list of 32 artists in a distinct German calligraphic script. Although presented at the nexus of the Fluxus movement and on the first night of performances, Beuys' *Sibirische Symphonie 1. Satz* (Siberian Symphony, First Part, Figure 1.6) marks a distinct separation of his work from the tenets of Fluxus; it also makes the introduction of found materials such as the blackboard, a grand piano, and a dead hare into his performances. Beuys began his performance about halfway through the evening, following approximately ten other artists, each of whom had left remnants of their actions (much of which consisted of collaborative experiments in music) on the

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132 Tisdall, *Joseph Beuys*, 86.
133 “Festum Fluxorum Fluxus,” Düsseldorf Academy, 2-3 Feb 1963. This was the same event at which Maciunas delivered the Fluxus manifesto, which was probably printed by Beuys. Jon Hendricks claims that Maciunas contacted the Academy to stage the event there directly, and Beuys was assigned to help. Jon Hendricks, interview by author, New York, NY, March 17, 2015.
134 Paik pointed out that his name was at the center of the poster, revealing his coexistence as both an artist and founder of the Green Party and Free International University, though these organizations were not founded until a decade later. Schneede, *Joseph Beuys, die Aktionen*, 20.
135 Ibid., 20–29. Schneede's catalogue raisonné of Beuys' actions provides a detailed account of all Beuys' Fluxus actions, in addition to his later gallery-based performances in the 1960s and 70s.
Instead of engaging in these playful collaborations or inviting audience participation, which were the hallmarks of Fluxus, Beuys’ asserted his individual authorial role by clearing the stage to present his piece and erasing musical notation left on the blackboard by Emmett Williams earlier in the evening for his *Alphabet Symphony*. As opposed to the other performers, who presented their pieces simultaneously or in groups, Beuys took the stage by himself. Over the course of 10 to 15 minutes, the artist attached a dead hare to the blackboard and played two pieces by Erik Satie on the piano; he then used a cord to connect the hare's heart to five clumps of clay linked with electric wire (one of which included a large tree branch) on the piano's lid, creating an "empty Siberian landscape" (Figure 1.7).

Next, he removed the animal's heart and left it hanging from the blackboard where the body of the hare once hung, placed the corpse on top of a wooden crate, and silently left the stage.

Looking back on this performance, in 1979 Beuys recalled that it contained “the essence of all my future activities, and was, I felt, a wider understanding of what Fluxus could be.” In part, this was because Beuys was more interested in the social implications of Fluxus than its attempt to shock bourgeois audiences. Some of the other artists, however, felt that he had not participated in the true collaborative spirit of Fluxus. Unlike the other participants, Beuys did not engage in the other performances presented (save a short appearance in Higgins’ *Graphis 118*) and chose instead to take a

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136 For example, the torn pieces of the Fluxus "manifesto" from Ben Patterson's *Paper Piece*—See Maciunas' program reprinted in Ibid., 23.

137 These actions were controversial because the other artists saw it as a gesture that was not in the spirit of Fluxus collaboration. Each participated in each other's performances and used materials from the others throughout the evening save for Beuys.

138 Beuys quoted in Ibid., 24.

139 Tisdall, *Joseph Beuys*, 87. Beuys contended that he was mainly interested in the idea of anti-art, which he hoped to extend beyond Fluxus. “As far as I am concerned, the Anti refers to the redundant concept of art and its retreat into over-specialist isolation. Otherwise it would be meaningless, just as the other pairs of concepts I often mention: mathematics and anti-mathematics, physics and anti-physics, etc., represent only limited sections of these fields. But both poles are necessary if wider concepts are to be achieved.” Beuys quoted in Ibid., 92.

140 Claudia Mesch notes that Beuys' Fluxus performances were quite different from the other members of the group, who tended towards “relaxed staginess.” Mesch, “Problems of Remembrance in Postwar German Performance Art,” 203. In an interview with “Kunst” magazine, Beuys stated: “Es ist keine Schocksprache, sondern eine präzise, oft eine eindringliche Darlegung, die, da sie Antikunst oder Kunst ist, die Fähigkeit zu imagieren erfordert.” (It is not “shock language,” but a precise, often powerful statement that, because it is Anti-Art or Art, requires the ability to imagine.) Wolf Vostell and Jürgen Becker, eds., “Interview des Magazins 'Kunst' mit Joseph Beuys,” in *Happenings, Fluxus, Pop Art, Nouveau Réalisme, eine Dokumentation* (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1965), 327.

seat in the audience and wave a flashlight at the stage (a work of his own invention).\textsuperscript{142} His method of presentation was also much more traditional in that there was a division between his work and that of the other Fluxus artists, and further between himself and the rest of the audience. Beuys' materials were also different than the other performers', which included instruments and other found objects, in their organic and sculptural quality, and also in their reference to life and death (for the artist, the hare was a symbol of birth). Tomas Schmit later recalled that Beuys had only been invited to perform because he helped organize the festival, and that the rest of the Fluxus artists found his intentions too "expressionistic."\textsuperscript{143} Indeed, Beuys had no real commonality with their neo-Dada provocations. By referencing archaic ritual, his work retained the "aura" of the artist genius that the others rejected, and he imbued his materials with spiritual significance that drew on his personal history, rather than collaborating on projects with others.

Further, Beuys used music and sound differently to Fluxus, as can be seen in a comparison with Higgins' Constellation No. 4, performed the same evening (Figure 1.8).\textsuperscript{144} This performance, which Owen Smith has called a "set piece" for their festivals, included Maciunas, Vostell, Schmit, Frank Trowbridge, Bengt af Klintberg, Køpcke, Daniel Spoerri, and Paik, each of whom made a sound using any instrument (including the voice) with a clearly defined "percussive attack" followed by a decay. When ready, each produced the sound simultaneously until the decay of the sounds died away. Not only is this piece entirely collaborative, but it also uses sound in ways that differ from Beuys: although the performance itself was improvised, and the instrumentation was randomly chosen, since it was based on a score. Beuys, by contrast, looked back to his childhood, playing pieces by Satie, one of his favorite composers (Messe des Pauvres and Sonneries de la Rose + Croix). His selection was based on the kabbalistic and alchemistic ideas of Rosicrucianism, an interest Satie shared with Steiner, and the activation of intuitive qualities through tones.\textsuperscript{145} Beuys' work was not a playful or humorous engagement with the audience; it was an intimate spiritual experience.

Though the event was organized by Beuys and Maciunas, Smith has argued that their

\textsuperscript{142} Ibid., 22.
\textsuperscript{143} Schmit quoted in Ibid.
\textsuperscript{145} Schneede, Joseph Beuys, die Aktionen, 25.
association was not necessarily collaborative, but rather part of a loose network of friends and like-minded individuals who needed spaces where they could perform. While many Fluxus events were planned, the participants came together by chance rather than forethought.\textsuperscript{146} Williams later called Fluxus a “united front” rather than a movement or a group, one that provided the artists with a forum to experiment.\textsuperscript{147} Beuys’ participation may have been a consequence of logistical necessity, however, he took his role in the movement quite seriously, even incorporating the word Fluxus into the titles of many works during this period.\textsuperscript{148} Nonetheless, he was still considered an outsider, possibly because he was attached to outmoded concepts, such as the manifesto that he encouraged Maciunas to write for the Düsseldorf performance as well as his attention to the fourth wall in his actions during Fluxus events. Thus, he retained much of the Europeanism that the other artists sought to purge from art.\textsuperscript{149} In Maciunas’ 1966 \textit{FLUXUS-Diagram} (Figure 1.9), Beuys is relegated to the category of an independent rather than a full member of the group.\textsuperscript{150}

During his early collaborations with Fluxus, Beuys also became particularly interested in different methods of audience participation employed not only by other Fluxus artists, but also by other international art movements. He tracked the parallels between Fluxus events and Happenings, which were connected in their early stages through the German artist Wolf Vostell and the U.S.-American Allan Kaprow.\textsuperscript{151} While both art forms relied on the use of various artistic disciplines (e.g., visual arts, music, spoken word) and the spontaneity of their performers, Beuys saw a distinction between the interactions of the artist and the audience. In general, Fluxus was much more disciplined and engaged audiences

\textsuperscript{147} Williams quoted in Block, \textit{1962 Wiesbaden Fluxus} 1982, 86.
\textsuperscript{148} One example, \textit{Der Chef—Fluxus Gesang} (\textit{The Chief—Fluxus Song}, 1964), is discussed below.
\textsuperscript{149} This was one of the goals of Fluxus, as listed on Maciunas’ “manifesto” from 1963. Although Beuys may have encouraged him to write the document, it is unclear if he had influence on its contents.
\textsuperscript{151} Kaprow, another artist whose practice has ties to the origin of social practice in the United States and Fluxus (see chapter four), met Beuys at the Zwirner Gallery in Cologne in July 1963. The two discussed their views on participation, and it was clear that their interest in audience both stemmed from Maciunas’ description of Fluxus as “social, not aesthetic.” Maciunas quoted in Stachelhaus, 128. To each of these men, teaching would be a foundation for their artistic practice — Beuys at the Academy in Düsseldorf and Kaprow in his multiple university positions and lecture engagements across the United States. This meeting is undocumented, save for a small citation in Stachelhaus, \textit{Joseph Beuys}. 
conceptually from their place within a contained audience, while Happenings physically activated the
audience members as actors in scenes that often took place outdoors.\footnote{Quoted in Adriani, Konnertz, and Thomas, *Joseph Beuys, Life and Works*, 56. On 18 July 1963, at an undocumented event at the Rudolf Zwirner Gallery in Cologne, Beuys and Allan Kaprow discussed the differences between Happenings and Fluxus, Heiner Stachelhaus, *Joseph Beuys* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1991), 72.} Fluxus also opposed the
institutionalization of Happenings such as those by Vostell and Kaprow; its members sought an art that
broke the boundaries between elitism and populism.\footnote{Letter from George Maciunas to Wolf Vostell of 3 Nov. 1964, quoted in Adriani, Konnertz, and Thomas, *Joseph Beuys, Life and Works*, 85.}

Fluxus provided Beuys with a venue to experiment with this division, and while he agreed with
Maciunas that the art object should not be restricted to artists and the art market alone, he believed that a
more concrete theoretical foundation was needed in order to enact real change. Of Fluxus, Beuys said,
“They held a mirror up to people without indicating how to change things. This is not to belittle what they
did achieve in the way of indicating connections in life and how art could develop.”\footnote{Tisdall, *Joseph Beuys*, 86.} As a result of this
conceptual schism, Beuys began to theorize sculpture as a changing principle, or as a thrust of energy
that could reshape society. He focused his artistic practice not on the static object (although he produced
multiples, vitrines, and ephemera serving as mementos of his artistic theory), but rather on actions and
demonstrations that showed a readiness and adaptability to change. As a provocation, Fluxus provided
an avenue through which Beuys could broaden his audience’s consciousness and enter into the realm of
direct experience with them. However, he also wanted to prove that the concept of art was as valuable for
social change as their anti-art methods and opposition to art’s commodification.\footnote{On 11 Dec 1964, Beuys performed *The Silence of Marcel Duchamp is Overrated* (Das Schweigen von Marcel Duchamp wird überbewertet) on German TV to demonstrate the importance he placed on art. Schneede, *Joseph Beuys, die Aktionen*, 80–82.}

Beuys began by exploring his concept of sculpture as a social medium using objects, but later
focused on the ability of his actions to stimulate conversation and discussion. His fat corners were an
early exploration of these ideas in material form. As a medium that is highly reactive to temperature
changes, fat can be formless (melting), but also take on more defined forms when cold (solidity). Beuys
placed wedges of fat, as in his installations *Fettecke* (Fat Corners, 1960, 1962, Figure 1.10) or *Fettstuhl*
(Fat Chair, 1963; Figure 1.11) to demonstrate the possibilities of the medium and “to stimulate
discussion...this flexibility is psychologically effective — people instinctively feel it relates to inner processes and feelings. The discussion I wanted was about the potential of sculpture and culture, what they mean, what language is about, what human production and creativity are about." These works were intended to provoke audiences, not to shock them, but to engage them creatively and intellectually. He used both fat and felt to illustrate his theory of sculpture, but it had wider implications for his vision of how art should function in society. The fat used in these works possesses the transformative qualities that Beuys saw in social space that if warmed with psychic energy, could transform social, political, and even economic areas of life. At the same time, he began to use felt for a similar, yet opposing, purpose. Rather than expressing the chaotic and expansive properties of materials like fat, wax, margarine, or honey, felt attracts and absorbs what surrounds it and insulates the outside world from heat and energy. Felt represents the opposing pole of chaos — and the two materials presented in tandem reflect the balance that Beuys attempted to attain through his social works of art. He used these sculptural materials to translate his ideas to his audience: “If I produce something, I transmit a message to someone else. The origin of the flow of information comes not from matter, but from the 'I,' from an idea. Here is the borderline between physics and metaphysics; this is what interests me about this theory of sculpture.”

Additionally, Beuys’ actions demonstrate an interest in temporality and duration, which gradually lengthened throughout the span of his career. Early performances, like those in Düsseldorf, lasted only a few minutes; however, the artist soon engaged in activities that lasted hours. For example, for Der Chef — Fluxus Gesang (The Chief — Fluxus Song, Figure 1.12), an action performed at the Galerie René Block in Berlin in 1964, the prone artist was rolled in a large sheet of felt with a dead hare protruding from either end, uttering noises that resembled the call of a stag over a loudspeaker for eight hours. His cries were interrupted only briefly to play recorded sounds made by fellow Fluxus artists Henning Christiansen and Eric Andersen. Surrounding him lay elements from his visual repertoire: fat pressed along the edge of the wall and piled in the corner, fingernails strewn about, and two metal rods wrapped in small pieces of felt propped near the head of Beuys' encasement. The length of the performance, intended to be mirrored

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156 Beuys quoted in Tisdall, *Joseph Beuys*, 72. The first exhibition in which Beuys included a work made of fat was a demonstration with Allan Kaprow at Galerie Rudolf Zwirner in Cologne on 18 July 1963. Ibid., 25–26.
in New York by Robert Morris, referred to hours of a normal workday and the title to the authority figure of the “boss.” Hence, Beuys was already linking the ritual space of the performance with broader concerns of economics and labor (even if only in its title, as “Chef” also means “boss”). These intentions became clearer as the duration of his performances lasted for much longer amounts of time, such as his 12-hour lectures, 100 days in the Office of the Organization for Direct Democracy at documenta 5, and 7,000 Oaks, which lasted five years. Actions like these display the artist’s process, including the arrangement of the space, interactions with other artists, and manipulation of materials. This had a profound impact on younger artists, such as Marina Abramović, who met the artist in Edinburgh in 1973. Abramović stated that the artist’s presence during the entire performance was evidence of his generosity toward audiences; however, it also demonstrated the movement — through sculpting, performing, or in the creative process — and time necessary to apply energy principles towards social transformation.

From approximately 1965 to 1985, Beuys empowered his audiences to greater action through the creation of thousands of multiples. René Block, a dealer with galleries in Berlin and New York who supported Fluxus, Pop Art, Décollage, and Capitalist Realism, established Edition Block in 1966 to publish limited editions and prints by artists represented in his gallery, including Beuys and Vostell. The creation of multiples reflected these artists’ interest in critiquing the status of the art object and the relationship between art and commodities, and took its lead from multiples made popular by Fluxus artists in the early 1960s. Beuys was not a pioneer of the multiple and the materials he often used in their creation were quite different from Fluxus (which often included playful or absurd elements boxed together in packaged “kits”), but he recognized its potential to widen the reach of his audience. His multiples

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158 In German, der Chef means either “chief” or “boss” (as in the manager of a workplace) though the title of this performance is generally translated as The Chief. As discussed in chapter three, Morris did not complete his part in New York.
161 Beuys and Vostell were the first to show multiples with Block. Block claims that Beuys was initially not interested in making limited edition objects. The first multiple object he made was Evervess II 1, which he introduced with Edition Block in 1968 in a series of 40. “Archive,” Edition Block, accessed January 25, 2016, http://www.editionblock.de/archiv_en.php.
included objects like felt suits or roses, ephemera such as posters and postcards, drawings and lithographs that were produced in limited editions and distributed widely. Often the pieces were relics or documents of an action, although some were original creations, and all carried the artist's signature or stamp.\textsuperscript{162}

Beuys said that his multiples were like anchors cast from the vehicle of the performance itself, "so that people can later think back on it."\textsuperscript{163} However, Mesch contends that the multiples were created as stimuli for conversation and debate and that they were part of his struggle to distribute an experience on a large scale. They were an attempt to democratize his art by enlarging its audience, which led to the development of works that he enacted on a larger public sphere after 1972 such as the Organization for Direct Democracy and Free International University.\textsuperscript{164} The creation of multiples was an initial step toward connecting his object-centered practice with the conceptual and political projects of the 1970s. They are key to understanding his theoretical program, such as the movement and transformation inherent in the materials of his early work such as the fat sculptures, felt corners, metal rods and plates, and animal carcasses. Nonetheless, not all people could own one of his limited edition multiples, restricting his enlarged audience to those that could afford it.

A noticeable shift occurred in Beuys' interactions with members of his audience on the evening of 20 July 1964 during the Fluxus Festival der Neuen Kunst (Festival of New Art) at the Aachen Technical College. The evening of performances was organized by cultural advisors from the student government group called Allgemeiner Studentenausschuss (ASiA), Valdis Abolins, and Fluxus artist Tomas Schmit. By this point, Fluxus artists were already quite divided over their desire to include Beuys in their events at

\textsuperscript{162} Stephen Bury contends that this is the one unifying element of the various types of multiples produced by Beuys, and is what separates his production of multiples from Fluxus. He was more preoccupied with the artist's personality and mark, they were more simple than Fluxus objects, and were more sad than Maciunas'.Ibid., 26–27.


\textsuperscript{164} Mesch, “Problems of Remembrance in Postwar German Performance Art,” 229. While Beuys contended that his multiples were ways for his ideas to stay pertinent and that they could create an affinity between collectors, they were also central to his ideas for political and social reform as his later works of social sculpture. Beuys stated: "although these products may not seem suitable for bringing about political change, I think more emanates from them than if the ideas behind them were revealed directly." Schellmann and Klüser, "Joseph Beuys, The Multiples," 9.
all. Some artists, like Schmit and Maciunas, were angered by Beuys’ distance from the group both conceptually and physically in the performance space. Still others were upset over his re-definition of the goals and chronology of the movement by appropriating the term “Fluxus” for his own personal exhibitions and work. Nonetheless, due to his continued popularity amongst members like Paik, Charlotte Moorman, Knowles, Higgins, Vostell, and others, he contributed several actions alongside his Fluxus contemporaries on this particular evening.

The performance was controversial from its inception: the Vice-Chancellor of the university was initially hesitant to allow such an unusual artistic event, which was scheduled on a national holiday to commemorate the twentieth anniversary of the failed assassination attempt on Hitler. However, he was convinced at the last minute that the event would be used to commemorate anti-Nazi resistance fighters and would begin with an introductory lecture. Thus, the auditorium was filled with some 800 to 1,000 students who were poised for controversy. The performance began with a loud tape-recorded excerpt of Nazi Propaganda Minister Joseph Goebbels’ speech “Do you want total war?,” delivered at the Berlin Sports Palace on 19 February 1943, which drowned out the jeers and whistles of the crowd. Artist Bazon Brock then delivered a reading of Marx and Hegel while standing upside down (Figure 1.13), in reference to Hegel’s statement “Philosophy is the world standing on its head.” Next, he turned to a group of several young men and raised their hands into a fascist salute, while Beuys danced and whistled downstage. Beuys moved toward a piano, which he filled with objects: dried oak leaves, a postcard of Aachen cathedral, geometric shapes, sweets, marjoram, and laundry detergent (Figure 1.14). Several actions took place at once, including Arthur Köpcke’s Was ist das (1964) and Vostell’s Nie wieder/ never/ jamais (1964), amidst even shriller whistles from the crowd. Beuys then played the keys of the piano to

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165 It was known by this point that Beuys had re-titled some of his works from the 1950s with the word “Fluxus,” and that he had exhibited a number of them in an exhibition at the Haus van der Grinten in 1963. Jon Hendricks, interview by author, New York, NY, March 17, 2015; Hans van der Grinten and Franz Joseph van der Grinten, *Joseph Beuys, Fluxus, aus der Sammlung van der Grinten* (Kleve: G.W. Bösmann, 1963).
169 Ibid., 45.
the beat of a metronome (another piece by Satie), creating what he later called a sense of “healthy chaos” that “warms the cold ideas of the past” and “looks forward into the future.” \(^{170}\) Vostell, wearing a face mask with a black light bulb attached to the mouth (Figure 1.15), moved through the audience handing out fliers asking the audience to beat on their desks or blow the whistles distributed to them upon entry, while a leashed dog was escorted over the desks of the auditorium. The space flooded with noise as drums sounded out, a female voice made instructional announcements, Robert Filliou clanged a bell, and speeches were belted out at the lectern by Andersen and Christiansen, who held up images of victims hung by the Nazis during the war. Back on stage, several young men poured a layer of yellow pigment and fell backwards into it, covering themselves and creating a row of bodies on the floor. Beuys arrived back on stage, sat next to a hot plate topped with a zinc box and a radio covered with a pile of animal bones, and presented playing cards and geometric symbols to the crowd. The second part of his action took place near the balustrade of the stage where Beuys had placed a graduated cylinder full of roses (Figure 1.16). There, he illuminated the hot plate to warm a zinc carton of fat (a *Fettkiste*, or fat box) for his piece *Kukei* and raised a copper staff wrapped in felt. \(^{171}\)

Beuys' performances in Aachen were visually distinct and physically separated from the audience as well as from the other Fluxus artists, who were involved in physical and verbal exchanges with the audience. This differentiation only served to heighten his proposal that art could play a larger role in society. In contrast to some of their more playful (and provocative) experiments, his actions referenced the metaphorical transformation of social conventions through the manipulation of soft and hard materials. The artist was demonstrating the primacy of art in the process of social transformation, which he did through a quasi-religious demonstration of the properties of materials and sound. The performances are exemplary of Beuys' for of shamanism in the same period, by which he demonstrated his desire to guide his audiences in their connection with ancient spiritual principles.

In *Joseph Beuys: Life and Works*, Adriani, Konnertz, and Thomas conclude that the event presented a challenge to the audience because “the intentions, concepts and goals of Fluxus were made


\(^{171}\) Ibid., 47.
clear in a particularly provocative political manner. The chaotic nature of the event and the direct relationship of some of the actions to fascist methods of crowd control and manipulation (such as the use of dogs, speeches, and loudspeakers) set off a firestorm in the audience. One audience member knocked over a jar of acid (one of the props in Beuys’ earlier action with the piano), causing countless others to angrily rush at the performers on stage. Beuys was punched in the face at one point, resulting in the iconic photograph in which he raises his arm in a Roman (or a Nazi) salute, blood streaming from his nostrils, while holding a small crucifix (Figure 1.17). Though film documentation of the event shows this gesture occurring only within a split second specifically for the benefit of a photographer, critic Jan Verwoert (the son of two of Beuys’ students) explains that the hand movement demonstrates Beuys’ dual role within the classroom and as an artist. During a period when people were questioning authority and West Germany was in a period of de-nazification, Beuys wanted to be seen as a mythic figure, one dedicated to a spiritual awakening. With one gesture — an upraised arm coupled with the cross held in his other hand — Beuys presented himself as a provocateur and as an authority figure. In this pose, he demonstrated his ability to create and instigate chaos, as well as his command and control over that chaos. He is at once an agitator and a healer, a showman and a shaman.

Despite the arrival of the police, Beuys held discussions with the students and other audience members in front of the auditorium until the early hours of the morning. Students who had attended the performance placed blame on members of AStA, who were encouraged to resign for organizing the event. Several Fluxus members spoke up to draw attention away from the performance itself and toward the students who had created the disturbance. The performers posited that rather than attempting to understand their new form of art, these students had reacted violently with an intent to destroy, in much the same way that the Nazis had reacted to “degenerate” art several decades earlier. Following student Dorothea Solle’s report on the event, the students felt that they were provoked to violence by the performers but were expected to behave as complacent audience members. They were treated as culprits by the performers for reacting with justifiable rage.

173 Verwoert, “Class Action.”
175 Report on the event by student Dorothea Solle, Ibid., 112.
Such a divided reaction reflects the militaristic anti-fascist attitudes of the period, but also demonstrates the heightened tensions brewing amongst German students during the mid-1960s, which developed into a movement in 1967 (discussed below). Early in its planning stages, the Festival der Neuen Kunst drew attention from protest groups that objected to the commemoration of Hitler's assassination attempt with an artistic event. Following the performance, the actions of the students were even deemed “fascist”: if they screamed and whistled at this performance, what was preventing them from returning to other tactics of suppression? These students felt helpless in their role as audience members, for both their participation and prevention of the event could be construed as fascist. Their feelings mirrored their powerlessness in the face of government suppression of the student movements of 1967 to 1968. The performance was interpreted by Adriani, Konnertz, and Thomas as a political gesture itself because the artists had used methods such as noise, intimidation, and absurdity to provoke a fascistic response.  

Beuys later incorporated similar references to Germany's fascist past into his performances, including ÖÖ–Programm in 1967 (Figure 1.18), when he “barked” into the microphone at the Academy's matriculation ceremony with an axe hanging out of his pants, a reminder of the fasces carried by Roman magistrates and the root of the term “fascism.” Nonetheless, as Verwoert points out, the absurdity of these actions was also humorous, since the public did not interpret them using Beuys' terms and instead took them at face value.

Following this event, Beuys began to assume the role of the teacher — focusing on demonstrating, mediating, and discussing his theories to students. He abandoned the improvisational nature of Fluxus in favor of a more ordered effort to direct the experience of his audience. Further, he harked back to his studies of the principles found his readings of Steiner's concept of anthroposophy. In contrast with the other artists involved with Fluxus, Beuys endeavored to re-instill a sense of the spiritual

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176 Ibid.
177 Verwoert, “Class Action.”
178 While the newspaper reported that Beuys had “barked,” the artist would have described these sounds in his own symbology as animal cries, like those made for The Chief (1964).
179 Beuys' affiliation with Fluxus was short-lived. His last performance with the group was entitled Und in uns…unter uns…landunter… (And in us…under us…flooded) for the event 24 Stunden (24 Hours) in Wuppertal, Germany, 5-6 June 1965. Block, 1962 Wiesbaden Fluxus 1982, 34. Thereafter, he performed his actions alone or with one other artist such as Nam June Paik or Henning Christiansen.
in his work. Like Kaprow and Robert Rauschenberg before him (as well as members of earlier twentieth-century avant-garde movements like Dada, Surrealism, and Constructivism), who were striving to bring art into life and life into art, Beuys was attempting to bring the experience of everyday men and women into the realm of culture. However, unlike these precursors, he was also attempting to reconnect them to a spiritual or mythic past. This meant imbuing his materials with spiritual functions (such as the fat and felt with warming and cooling principles) as well as incorporating animal forms and sounds into his actions. It was from animals such as the stag, elk, honeybees, the European hare, and the American coyote that Beuys found the elemental forces of creation, embodying his principles as shamanistic forces in themselves. These creatures, devoid of reason, rely solely on instinct for their cosmic and earthly orientation. Beuys explained his works on paper to a dead hare in How to Explain Images to a Dead Hare at the Galerie Schmela in Düsseldorf in November 1965 (Figure 1.19), captured on film by his ever-present documentarian Ute Klophaus.

Wearing his classic fishing vest with his face covered in honey and gold leaf to emphasize the head's role in the generation of free thought, Beuys cradled a dead hare in his arms, whispering nonsense to the corpse for three hours while he walked around the drawings framed on the gallery's walls. Surrounded by his audience (Figure 1.20), who witnessed the event from the street, looking through the gallery's window, and from within the gallery itself, Beuys whispered to the hare in a primal language unintelligible (and inaudible) to viewers. Beuys later explained that the hare “incarnates himself into the earth, which is what we human beings can only radically achieve with our thinking: he rubs, pushes, digs himself into Materia (earth); finally, he penetrates (rabbit) its laws, and through this work his thinking is sharpened then transformed, and becomes revolutionary.” People, in order to be free, must access this sense of intuition through trained creative thought (for this ability had been lost during the

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180 Beuys stated: “I have always tried to show why art has to do with life. Only from art can a new concept of economics be formed, in terms of human need, not in the sense of use and consumption, politics and property, but above all in terms of the production of spiritual goods. The questions of what shall be produced and how are all cultural considerations, if you really think it through, are therefore spiritual considerations. That means culture flows through the whole of life right through to every detail, and its products are the concrete concept of CAPITAL”...Jörg Schellmann and Bernd Klüser, “Questions to Joseph Beuys: Part II, June 1977,” in Joseph Beuys, the Multiples: Catalogue Raisonné of Multiples and Prints, ed. Jörg Schellmann (Cambridge, MA; Minneapolis; Munich; New York: Busch-Reisinger Museum, Harvard University Art Museums; Walker Art Center; Edition Schellmann, 1997), 28.

Enlightenment), emphasized through the combination of viscous honey and energy-conducting metallic flakes applied generously around the head — the site where pure thought accesses the spiritual dimension. This action captures many of the elements that are characteristic of Beuys’ gallery practice: the creation of a ritual space, a spiritual dialogue between himself as both the master and the student to the hare, and the transformative properties of his materials. As the shaman, the artist was in touch with nature and the cycle of life and death (exemplified by the hare), however, he was also able to materially direct energies through the gold leaf, felt, and metal. These elements were part of his expanded concept of art, and hence were metaphoric for the amelioration of society through art. His actions of the later 1960s and the more overtly political projects he undertook over the next two decades elucidate his method of expanding human consciousness through the development of individual creative capabilities.

Beuys’ interactions with his students and with Fluxus artists in Aachen caused his work to become much more experimental and conceptual. Although he was criticized by many Fluxus artists for his inability to collaborate, as a result of his participation in their events Beuys began creating open-ended works that were produced alongside or in tandem with other artists. While he performed as part of Fluxus for only a few years, it was during this time that he began directly confronting his viewers as participants in his works, rather than disengaged viewers or witnesses. His sculptures and drawings were no longer hermetic: they were challenging, provocative, and generated dialogue.

**At the Academy: The Artist as Teacher**

Beuys’ artistic practice developed alongside his position at the Düsseldorf Academy of Art from 1961 to 1972, during which time he began to exhibit many of his iconic fat and felt sculptures. However, to many who knew him personally, Beuys was foremost an educator. This is partly because as early as 1968 he opened his classroom at the Academy to anyone willing to attend. As a result, hundreds of young people were encouraged to become creative professionals. Many artists, particularly in Germany, still claim him as a mentor because they interacted with him directly while he was teaching in Düsseldorf. The Academy provided him with space, a readymade group of participants, and classes in which he could test out his pedagogic theories. It was here that he was able to transform his interactions with students into a longer-lasting political endeavor. The foundational elements that Beuys enacted in his classrooms,
including mentorship, discussion, debate, and personal development, also became central elements of the practice of Beuysian-influenced artists in the United States in the 1980s and 1990s.

A chronology of Beuys' educational foundation and philosophy in the classroom has been outlined not only in the Riegel biography, but in several German tomes including *Mit, Neben, Gegen: die Schüler von Joseph Beuys* (With, Alongside, Against: The Students of Joseph Beuys, 2000) by Petra Richter, which includes interviews with several dozen of his best known students, and the all-encompassing *Der Ganze Riemen: der Auftritt von Joseph Beuys als Lehrer* (The Whole Belt: The Appearance of Joseph Beuys as a Teacher, 2008) written by Beuys' Master Student Johannes Stüttgen, which provides an insider's view into the most political and contentious years of Beuys' tenure.\(^{182}\) Both texts give an excellent, if not extensively detailed account of Beuys' teaching methods and his students' recollections of the artist in the classroom. Although Cornelia Lauf argues that Beuys' formal style transformed as a result of his teaching, as did his conviction that art could have a social message, his teaching method has yet to be clearly linked to his later practice of social sculpture, in which Beuys established a quasi-classroom or workshop where he attempted to unite his Steinerian principles of spirituality with the failing economic and political structures of postwar West Germany.\(^{183}\)

In autumn 1961, Beuys began his long, and at times quite public, position as a Professor of Sculpture at the same school he had attended after his return from the war. Based on his prior experience as a student at the Academy under Enseling and Mataré, he started out as a classical pedagogue — strict in the classroom and eager to pass on his own knowledge to his students. He was well liked by those who participated in his classes, though not by his colleagues, for the value that he placed on the self-direction of his students. His courses were not guided by lesson plans like those of the other professors, but rather by his students' own interests. Additionally, in contrast to the traditional atelier model, many of Beuys' pupils did not follow his example stylistically, for example the abstract painters Imi

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\(^{183}\) Cornelia Lauf, “Joseph Beuys: The Pedagogue as Persona” (PhD Dissertation, Columbia University, 1992). While not discussed at length, there is a noteworthy article that briefly describes his method: Verwoert, “Class Action.”
Knoebel and Blinky Palermo. Instead of teaching his students to have a practice that was a copy of his own, he encouraged them to find their own direction, medium, and to develop their own motivation for artistic creation. Nevertheless, several followed in his path of social engagement. As a result of his unconventional style and international acclaim, he attracted many students who had been studying with other professors, and even at other academies in Germany.

Beuys encouraged discussion in his classrooms, just as he later promoted dialogue and debate in the Office of the Organization for Direct Democracy, Free International University conferences, and while planting oak trees in the streets of Kassel. Amongst his students, who called him by the traditional salutation “Herr Professor” out of respect, he was equally known for his humorous personality as for his sculptures and performances, many of which were seen in nearby galleries and even within the walls of the Academy. He often went out with his students after classes and made an effort to speak to his students informally, rather than maintaining the strict social division of professor to student followed by the other Academicians. By speaking to his students as an equal, he was able to reach them in ways that their other teachers had never previously achieved. At the same time, however, he commanded his students with a sense of authority.

Art historian Hannah Higgins, daughter of two Fluxus artists, has said that Beuys’ educational philosophy was closely aligned with those of fellow Fluxus artists like Filliou and Kaprow (discussed below). Nonetheless, his charm and charisma as a lecturer led his students to idolize him. He cultivated this personality with his shamanistic actions and his uniform of the felt hat, fishing vest, jeans, and at times a full-length fur coat. Higgins argues that these aspects of his practice paradoxically replicated the hierarchies of traditional education, establishing him as a charismatic leader at a time when authority was being questioned in the art world and in educational institutions. Fluxus, for example, opposed the

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184 Beuys explained: “I am not a teacher who tells his students only to think. I say act; do something; I ask for a result. It may take different forms...Although I am a Professor of Sculpture at the Düsseldorf Art Academy, I accept all forms of creativity.” Sharp, “An Interview with Joseph Beuys,” 47.

185 His students’ work was shown in the exhibition “Joseph Beuys and His Students–Works from the Deutsche Bank Collection,” Sabancı University Sakıp Sabancı Museum, Turkey, 9 Sept-1 Nov 2009.

186 Riegel, *Beuys die Biographie*, 238.

187 Ibid., 239.

188 Higgins, *Fluxus Experience*, 204.

189 Ibid.
European concept of the artist-genius, while the student movements of the latter 1960s defied the old systems of authority that pervaded everyday life in West Germany since the 1950s. As Verwoert argues, “Beuys' performances and approach to pedagogy could indeed be seen as a purposeful if largely intuitive attempt to performatively dismantle the role of artist and teacher as a figure of mythic authority in the process of staging it.” Verwoert notes that Beuys’ method was radical and anti-authoritarian, but at the same time his critiques were severe and at times crippled his relationships with his students.

Nonetheless, the artist was respected for the environment of artistic freedom in his classrooms, which can be attributed to his study of Steiner’s aforementioned educational theories. Steiner taught that humans could access the spiritual through the development of their own creative faculties alongside an experienced teacher, which Beuys assumed by guiding the progress of each of his students’ intuitive and imaginative capabilities. In essence, he wasn’t training artists, but rather facilitating the thinking process itself. He thought that by fostering these creative capabilities, he was also grasping the spiritual world that had been lost to modern materialist society. Teaching was a spiritual act for him because it nourished the soul of the person. When the primary nature of man was cultivated and trained, a new type of energy developed that was separate from that which was necessary for physical existence. Beuys understood this energy to transcend political ideology and culture, which informed the principles espoused by the Organization for Direct Democracy and the Free International University. Thus, people from a variety of social, economic, cultural and professional backgrounds were invited to contribute to the process.

Beuys extended this focus on dialogue into his later practice, encouraging audience members at his lectures to question his ideas and to point out where they found shortcomings. This did not, however, diminish their pedantic quality. By January 1974, when he first came to the United States, he presented his ideas from a stage, set apart from his audience. This prevented the kind of intimate discussions that he had with his students at the Academy. Film documentation of his lecture at the New School, transcribed in Kuoni's Joseph Beuys in America, demonstrates his style. He first presented his theories on spiritualism, the threefold division of society, and direct democracy using pre-drawn blackboards,

190 Verwoert, “Class Action.”
191 Zumdick has described the process used to develop imagination, inspiration, and intuition, Zumdick, Death Keeps Me Awake, 48–61.
followed by a discussion consisting of questions posed to him by audience members who joined him on
the stage for a verbal exchange. Especially in the United States, where Beuys was known primarily for his
fat and felt sculptures or his gallery performances (as are discussed in chapter three), these discussions
either focused on aesthetics or socialist ideology (although not irrelevant questions to his practice, he was
not strictly interested in making objects and was not part of the organized left movement in Europe) or
turned into heated debates about the role of spirituality in an individualist, materialist society. Even though
his ideas diverged sharply from those of his U.S. audience, many of whom were interested in European
political movements and the aesthetic qualities of the artist's sculptures, Beuys nonetheless saw value in
their conversations because they acknowledged social problems in the public realm. This desire makes
sense for an artist coming from West Germany, where the social impact of the war had not been
addressed publicly. In these discussions, he claimed his first interest was to “point people in the right
direction” and to exchange ideas with persons from different fields to arrive at a new level of
understanding one another and the problems in society. That he viewed his interactions this way points to
a contradiction in his efforts: although he claimed to want an equal exchange and that his students could
choose their own path, he was authorial in his need to show them which path he thought was correct.

Appearing first in his early Fluxus performances like *Siberian Symphony* (described above), the
blackboard became an ever-present prop in his actions during this time, for they combined his material
interests with the concepts that he played with in the classroom. As Steiner had before him, Beuys
illustrated his ideas using words, diagrams, and symbols, charting his discussions with students and the
public with chalk on the black or green surface. The eccentric and elaborate drawings combined with his
idiosyncratic and often indecipherable script make them markedly different from traditional schoolroom
props. In fact, photographs of Beuys at the Academy (Figure 1.21) show him not at the head of the
room next to framed blackboards, but rather at the center of a circle of his students, demonstrating his
ideas through conversation or using chalk directly on the floor. As his artistic practice developed and he
attracted larger and larger audiences like those in New York in 1974, these conversations in the round

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193 In fact, it can be difficult to retroactively trace the trajectory of his conversations merely by looking at
the board on its own, compounding the already difficult task of interpretation for the uninitiated museum-
goer with little prior knowledge of postwar art or Beuys’ oeuvre.
became quite impractical and he opted instead for a stage with a freestanding blackboard.194

The diagrams outlined on Beuys' blackboards were translations of the communicative process that he had with his students, which developed into his expanded concept of art. Just as his conversations in the classroom germinated ideas with his students and encouraged them to develop their creative capacities, so too did he hope that his sculptural and performance pieces generated thoughts and ideas external to the pieces themselves. Thus, his sculptures may be considered the material form of his pedagogic relationships. Through their representation and transcription of ideas, dialogues, and relationships, they function as a conduit toward the spiritual transformation that Beuys hoped to enact on a grander scale, and are linked to his later works of social sculpture (an example of how this functions is found in chapter two in the section about the Organization for Direct Democracy with an explanation of Figure 2.15). This process could also be made tangible through the process of speaking. As thoughts are shaped or molded during the education process, speech becomes a plastic, sculptural material.

Educational reform was a major issue in both East and West Germany following the Nazi period, as new methods, teachers, and material were brought in to replace the National Socialist system. In West Germany, there had been a return to the pre-Nazi tradition founded in the nineteenth century, which separated students at the secondary level into the Gymnasium, a vehicle toward elite education, Realschulen for vocational training, and Hauptschulen for general education. While there was a movement among West German states to reform this system in the 1950s, an agreement was made not to experiment.195 Historian Mary Fulbrook explains that the tripartite selective system was based on the “theory that the distribution of intellectual ability broadly conformed with the existing social structure.”196

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194 Following each demonstration, the artist could be seen “fixing” the chalk to the board, producing a relic of the temporary social exchange. As works of art now installed in museums worldwide, the efficacy of these “relics” to transmit Beuys’ ideas has greatly diminished. Beuys later incorporated the blackboard in his exchanges at the Organization for Direct Democracy and the Free International University, and they became part of his later installations such as Richtskräfte (Directional Forces, 1974-1977), Das Kapitalraum (The Capital Room, 1970-1977), Feuerstätte I (Hearth I, 1968/1974) and the Museum des Geldes (Money Museum, 1980). Some of these boards, such as the ones first used to demonstrate his ideas to U.S. students during his lecture tour in 1974, are now found in the collections of institutions such as the Museum of Modern Art in New York. Their sale, along with the sale of his multiples, was intended to fund Beuys’ later projects, including the Free International University.

195 This was confirmed with the Düsseldorf Agreement made at the Kultur-Minister-Konferenz in 1955.

196 Fulbrook, A History of Germany, 1918-2014, 190.
Such social inequalities were greatly contested in the 1960s, particularly by left-leaning students.\textsuperscript{197} In higher education, the selective system based on class divisions was perpetuated through access — in West Germany, universities instituted a limit to the number of places available.\textsuperscript{198} As a result of the reaction against these inequalities, as well as the authoritarian nature of schooling in the first two decades after the war, the 1960s were characterized by movement towards the democratization of the tripartite system, which had consequences for art academies as well.

Confronted by new regulations put forth by the state government, by 1965 the Düsseldorf Academy discussed how it might alter its admissions and training procedures, give instructors more autonomy, and incorporate the political and social interests of the students into the administration.\textsuperscript{199} The situation, however, was becoming increasingly dire as students clamored for more changes to admissions and testing procedures. Faced with inaction, Beuys set out to establish his own rules, separate from those imposed by the state. By the winter session of 1968–1969, Beuys was experimenting with the concept of the “free academy,” where he invited any student into his classes who wanted to learn for a one-year probationary period. His initial efforts enraged his fellow professors.\textsuperscript{200}

These ideas were percolating with other artists as well, including fellow Fluxus artists Robert Filliou, who published \textit{Teaching and Learning as Performing Arts} in 1970, and Allan Kaprow, who began collaborating with students across the United States throughout the mid-1960s (including the California Institute of the Arts, where he inspired many future social practice artists such as Suzanne Lacy in the early 1970s). Filliou's book, which he began to write in spring 1967, advocates that techniques from participatory art forms like “happenings, events, action poetry, environments, visual poetry, films, street performances, non-instrumental music, games, correspondences, etc.” be applied to problems associated with teaching and learning.\textsuperscript{201} Like Beuys, Filliou thought that these principles could be applied outside of the arts, for example in physics and chemistry, but his text focuses on the use of intuition during leisure

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item[\textsuperscript{197}] Ibid., 193. This protest led to the creation of a \textit{Bildungsrat} (Board of Education) in 1965, as well as the expansion of \textit{Gymnasien} and \textit{Realschulen} and initiatives to standardize education in different states in the early 1970s.
\item[\textsuperscript{198}] Such procedures were eventually dropped in all fields except for medicine. Ibid.
\item[\textsuperscript{200}] Adriani, Konnertz, and Thomas, \textit{Joseph Beuys, Life and Works}, 188–189.
\item[\textsuperscript{201}] Filliou, \textit{Teaching and Learning as Performing Arts}, 12.
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time. Also similar to Beuys, Filliou was attempting to address the over-specialization and lack of creative impulses amongst young people, which resulted in a general feeling of alienation and resignation. Creativity as an act of organizing leisure is a process, he asserted, and must be instilled from an early age. Echoing Beuys' statement, Filliou writes, "At the limit, everything is art, everybody is an artist." Though Filliou wrote down and eventually published these ideas, his thoughts on creative development were first transmitted to Kaprow, his friend and collaborator.

Kaprow, who is discussed in chapter four, insisted that everyone involved in his happenings was a performer, including teachers and students, and therefore learning was something performed. Art should be made available to all people, and artists should take an active part in transmitting creative impulses to others through new forms of pedagogy. Like Beuys, Kaprow did not separate his teaching from his art practice, although he did not equate his interactions with students in the classroom with works of art as Beuys had. Instead, he thought of his works, like those made in collaboration with students at Rutgers University from 1953 to 1961 and CalArts in the early 1970s, as forms of teaching. For Kaprow, the learning process could take place though ordinary activities, which were consciously arranged to trigger one's awareness of their own experience. As Jeff Kelley explains, Kaprow used copying and playing in

202 Ibid., 19.
203 Ibid., 24.
204 Kaprow in conversation with Filliou. Ibid., 127–29.
206 Ibid., 142. Kaprow applied principles of Zen philosophy — that educational experiences should come from improvisational play — to his educationally focused Happenings (as in Project Other Ways, described in chapter four) in the late 1960s. Informed by John Dewey, an American educational reformer associated with the philosophy of pragmatism, and his own training with painter Hans Hofmann and composer John Cage, Kaprow also believed that one learned from experience and experimentation, not from an artist's theories. In her in-progress dissertation at the City University of New York Graduate Center, "Teaching=Doing: Communication Pedagogy in California, 1966-1974," Hallie Scott argues that Kaprow's teaching method was "communication pedagogy": an approach to teaching and learning that is modeled after communication technologies and theories. His method emphasizes the exchange of ideas and facilitation of interactions over the creation finished products, prioritizes horizontal teacher-student structures, and refuses to adhere to disciplinary boundaries.
his classroom to restore the connection between art and experience.  

For Beuys, who was informed by anthroposophic pedagogy, the concept of art was key to one's experience of the world and his or her role in transforming it for the better.

Though Beuys and Filliou met through Fluxus, they did not exchange their views on education until November 1969, when curator Kasper König published a conversation between the two on artistic practice and pedagogy. Unlike his former Fluxus collaborators, Beuys insisted on the importance of verbal communication as the best way not only for students to learn, but also for the teacher to learn from the student: "I must after all attempt to learn from the audience. A discussion arises. Through a pedagogical process, we must always try and this must always be tried, to scan what is occurring in the audience, what they are able to understand, and yes, how I can communicate with them." Beuys and Filliou were responding to the growing student movements that rose throughout Europe in 1967, and both were interested in how art could be used to mitigate the students' reactions towards authority in schools and in public. While Filliou tried to address the sense of alienation that he saw by asking everyone to act like an artist, Beuys attempted to learn from the experiences of his audience, who were primarily students. He was inspired by their revolutionary sentiments, and in turn he wanted them to see that creativity could be used as an agent of change. Just as he could shape materials as an artist, so too could they shape their social environment through political action and dialogue. For Beuys, the disaffection amongst young people was caused by a gap between real world experience and the spiritual collective that could be bridged by applying the creative principles that he employed in his classroom to social realities. He explored how these could be brought together with the founding of the German Student Party in 1967 (discussed in the following section).

Despite the fact that by the late 1960s Beuys still had relatively few solo exhibitions outside of the Düsseldorf area, he was gaining wider international acclaim as an artist. In 1969 he was interviewed in his studio by the critic, curator, and publisher Willoughby Sharp. In this conversation (published in Artforum) he reflects on the importance that his role as an educator had on his own artistic practice: "It is

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207 Ibid., 158.
208 Filliou, Teaching and Learning as Performing Arts.
209 Beuys interviewed by Filliou, Ibid., 168.
210 Ibid., 170.
my most important function. To be a teacher is my greatest work of art. The rest is the waste product, a demonstration.”

Downplaying his sculptural output, Beuys wanted to focus on the concepts behind his objects and how they might be combined with his pedagogic philosophy. Additionally, he looked to other venues outside of the gallery system to present his works to a wider public. He had already taken the first step by producing multiples, however, he also speculated that his teaching methods could be broadcast to a larger audience through large public lectures and even satellite television technology. In just a few short years, as his interactions with students both inside and outside of the classroom began to pose problems for the Academy administration, and the artist became a public martyr to the failing education system.

By January 1971, Beuys took steps towards opening a Free Academy in Düsseldorf to take the place of what he saw as an increasingly antiquated educational system that the state refused to reform. His plans, which he hoped to realize by 1972, included utilizing a vacant two-story building on the old Düsseldorf fairgrounds. His Academy would not focus on a specialized fields of education like the German art academies, but rather on a holistic educational system that encouraged creativity in all disciplines. At the same time, he began testing how his expanded concept of art could be applied to the political system. He campaigned for a re-organization of the political hierarchy from one wherein policy is enacted from the top down by elected representatives, to one determined by direct referendum from the majority. One of the primary goals of organizations such as the German Student Party and the Organization for Direct Democracy was to educate citizens about their role in government and to develop an alternative to the dominant party system through direct democratic measures (discussed further in chapter two).

**Actions as Institutional Alternatives**

Beginning in 1967, Beuys began to divide his work into “parallel processes”: his sculptures,

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211 Sharp, “An Interview with Joseph Beuys,” 44.
212 This is topic that deserves more research. Beuys participated in several satellite broadcasts, including an interview with Douglas Davis and Nam June Paik during his visit to the United States on 12 January 1974 and the broadcast for *documenta 6* in 1977. Both are available at the Electronic Arts Intermix (EAI) in New York.
performances, installations, and multiples on one hand, and on the other a “permanent conference,” an open platform for public debate and discussion of political and social issues. Initially he tested his ideas through the establishment of political parties such as the German Student Party (established in 1967), but he came to the fullest expression of his theory of social sculpture through organizations and social networks such as the Organization for Direct Democracy and the Free International University (discussed in chapter two). Through these two projects and his later initiatives like the Green Party and 7,000 Oaks, Beuys hoped to create a model for widespread social and political transformation to develop a “real alternative to the existing systems in the West and in the East.” Such projects were, to be sure, utopian and idealistic in conception, a fact for which the artist was often criticized. Nonetheless, the ideas he presented in each of these projects were pre-existing cultural undercurrents in West German society that Beuys helped to promote through his relentless self-presentation in the media.

Beuys’ work became overtly political in June 1967 following the founding of the German Student Party (Deutsche Studenten Partei, or DSP) at the Düsseldorf Academy of Art. The founding of the DSP was closely linked to student movements in West Germany, which became a nationwide revolt following the shooting of a twenty-six-year-old student named Benno Ohnesorg during a protest against the Shah of Persia in West Berlin on 2 June 1967. Social protest movements had been present since the early 1950s in West Germany, particularly in relation to the question of rearmament of both East and West Germany and the use of nuclear weapons. Artists banded together with journalists and academics against the institution of “Emergency Laws,” proposed by the Adenauer and Erhard governments (1963–1966) and put into effect in May 1968, which gave the government the power to circumvent parliament in the event of war or nuclear disaster. There were also widespread protests at the beginning of the Vietnam Conflict in the mid-1960s in response to saturation bombings and the use of napalm. Students band together with journalists and academics against the institution of “Emergency Laws,” proposed by the Adenauer and Erhard governments (1963–1966) and put into effect in May 1968, which gave the government the power to circumvent parliament in the event of war or nuclear disaster. There were also widespread protests at the beginning of the Vietnam Conflict in the mid-1960s in response to saturation bombings and the use of napalm. Students

214 Both were offshoots of the same conceptual ideas that the artist had been working with since the mid-1960s and exemplified his expanded concept of art. Beuys’ first major solo exhibition, Parallelprozess I, was held at the Städtisches Museum, Mönchengladbach, from September 13-October 29, 1967. This exhibition was the first of a numbered series of Parallelprozess exhibitions presented throughout 1968. Beuys quoted in Schellmann and Klüser, “Joseph Beuys, The Multiples,” 24.


216 Ibid., 239–240. Despite their protests, these laws were put into effect on 30 May 1968.

in particular were catalyzed because the conditions within the education system that necessitated reform during the 1960s, including the lack of restriction on the number of students enrolled in higher education, which resulted in overcrowding and insufficient response to students' needs, and the authoritarian attitude of professors, many of whom had retained their positions during denazification. While this period is globally characterized in terms of the blossoming of youth culture, in West Germany, as in the United States, there was a revival of Marxist thought tied to Frankfurt School figures like Theodor Adorno, Max Horkheimer, and Herbert Marcuse. Jürgen Habermas' neo-Marxist thought influenced many students — the New Left — to consider how people might alter social reality through direct action rather than through research. 

The New Left was catalyzed by the shooting of Ohnesorg, which Martin Klimpke claims "confirm[ed] their analysis of West German society as authoritarian and already in a state of 'emergency.'" There was also considerable attention directed to the "Grand Coalition," the alliance between the major Christian Democratic Union (CDU)/Christian Social Union (CSU) and Social Democratic Party (SPD) parties, resulting in the need for Außerparlamentarische Opposition (Extra-Parliamentary Opposition) groups to back dissenting public opinion in parliament. The event generated widespread support not just for Beuys' group but for the Socialist German Student League (Sozialistischer Deutscher Studentenbund, or SDS), which had sponsored the event where Ohnesorg was killed. While at one point the SDS was tied to the socialist party in West Germany (SPD) and German trade unions, by the beginning of the 1960s they positioned themselves closely with international New Left groups in the United States, elsewhere in Europe, and even Japan. Led by charismatic student activist Rudi Dutschke, the SDS was active in promoting the democratization of universities and opposing the conflict


219 Fulbrook, A History of Germany, 1918-2014, 229.
220 Ibid., 230. The New Left was formed by groups who had participated in the peace movement, anticipating the central tenets and protest strategies of the student movements of the late 1960s.
222 Ibid.
223 Ibid., 97.
224 Ibid., 98.
Recognizing the important role of students in social change, the SDS was particularly focused on structural reforms and the democratization of the academy. Protests emerged across West Germany from June 1967 and into the following year (inspired by the May '68 movement) that included teach-ins, sit-ins, student strikes, and the occupation of university buildings. Beuys' DSP group thus acted independently, but in accordance with, similar student groups across the country.

Beuys and the students at the Düsseldorf Academy were equally incensed by the shooting on 2 June 1967, and began to organize their own student group to promote similar goals as the SDS, although lacking the Marxist orientation. The DSP was formed in an initial meeting on 22 June and publicly announced at a gathering of around 200 students, journalists, and student government representatives on the lawn adjacent to the Academy (the classrooms at that time were off limits for political meetings). Reporting on the first DSP meeting later that year, Johannes Stüttgen summarized the party's goals and methods: "the education of all men to a spiritual maturity…oriented by the acute threat of materialism, and the idea-less politics and stagnation that explicitly emerge from it." The organizing members, which later included Fluxus members Henning Christiansen and Bazon Brock (Figure 1.22), state that "Real discussion will be necessary, as Beuys says, but is only possible on a spiritual, artistic level. Democracy and genuine human activity only take place in the struggle over ideas." Thus, while certainly aligned with the general student movements happening elsewhere in West Germany, the DSP was markedly Anthroposophical in focus rather than ideological.

Many of the DSP's goals were similar to that of the SDS — disarmament, a unified Europe governed by autonomous political, economic and cultural spheres, the ending of the use of East and West Germany as a political tool in the Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union, and "new perspectives" in education. However, the area in which Beuys had the most to contribute was the

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225 Ibid., 99.
226 Ibid., 100.
229 Translation by the author. Ibid.
educational institution. Since his first attempt at an alternative institution was fueled mainly by student involvement and located within the Düsseldorf Academy, it is hardly surprising that he had the most impact in this area. The party was meant to be an educational experiment, with members reframed as students (“every man whose personal interest lay in the process of learning and of spiritual development is a student”).¹²³° Legitimizing itself through a pseudo-bureaucratic stamp containing the name of the organization and symbols of the Greek cross (Figure 1.23), the DSP was one way in which Beuys combined his educational and political goals with his expanded concept of art. However, as Riegel has pointed out, the fundamental difference between the DSP and SDS is that the former was the idea of an older generation — Beuys and the teachers were leaders rather than the students — and therefore its attraction did not hold the same appeal for younger people.²³¹

The following year, in 1968, Beuys' position at the Düsseldorf Academy was severely threatened not only because he engaged his own students in political organizing, but because he began lobbying for the autonomy of the Academy from state control. At the time, there were nearly 400 students at the Academy (of which Beuys had more than 50 in his own classes), and nearly three quarters of the student body supported his views. Nine of Beuys' fellow professors at the Düsseldorf Academy ratified a mistrust manifesto against him on 24 November 1968, prompting DSP members to announce the creation of a “Free Academy” using Academy resources.²³² The first classes were scheduled for May of that year, but Minister of Education Johannes Rau intervened by sending in the police and closing the Academy for two weeks. The following month, June 1969, the administration instituted new restrictive admissions procedures. Beuys and his students protested, forcing Rau to close the school again for several weeks.

Beuys claimed that the DSP and the organizations that he later founded were the concrete manifestations of his concept of social sculpture. Nonetheless, the goals of the DSP and those of the more general social protest movements in West Germany at the same time were remarkably similar. How, then, can his projects of social sculpture be differentiated from student activism at that moment?

²³¹ Riegel, *Beuys die Biographie*, 266.
²³² The manifesto accused him of dilettantism, demagoguery, intolerance, and abuse of power. By 1968, Beuys' employment contract with the state had expired and he was teaching without pay. Adriani, Konnertz, and Thomas, *Joseph Beuys, Life and Works*, 178–180.
The artist nested his engagement with activism under his broader artistic theory and the teachings of Steiner (as described above), as opposed to other activists such as the members of the SDS, who prioritized politics over creative expression. Beuys, following Steiner, believed that the true freedom of the individual rested in intellectual and cultural life. However, Beuys moved one step further to assert that individuals could attain democratic autonomy by cultivating intellectual engagement through political action. An interview with Georg Jappe published in *Studio International* in 1971 elucidates Beuys' views on creative potential and the freedom of the individual. Jappe explains that the core of Beuys' argument is that "man is free in so far as he is creative." Freedom can be attained through creativity, and creativity, in all its forms, is called "art." The generative force behind this creativity is thought — thoughts that, "introduce new causes which determine the future course of history." The point of education, then, is to foster "intensified thought" rather than hindering students' self-discovery. These ideas coincided nicely with the broader social atmosphere in West Germany in the late 1960s — a convenient time and place for a radical educator like Beuys.

Beuys developed his concept of social sculpture in the wake of his involvement with the DSP, when his work was evolving from gallery and museum-based performances and installations to what he called a "permanent conference": the expression of his concepts in both physical and verbal form. Developed in tandem with his political activism, the education- and discussion-based projects produced by Beuys in the early 1970s were meant to demonstrate an alternative to Western capitalism and Eastern communism — a living embodiment of a "third way." In lectures given in Europe and the United States, Beuys described his plan to extend his concept of sculpture to social sculpture, transforming his "Theory of Sculpture" into an "Energy Plan for Western Man" (which was a loose concept of how one might realize his ideas rather than a schematic plan of action). Standing at the blackboard, Beuys described his thoughts on the expansion of art beyond the specialized skills of artists to include the activation of every individual's creative abilities. He then demonstrated how this creative energy could be used to mold

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234 Adriani, Konertz, and Thomas, *Joseph Beuys, Life and Works*, 163–166. This term originates from the "Exhibition, Parallel Process 1" shown at the Städtisches Museum, Mönchengladbach, from 13 Sept–29 Oct 1967, where Beuys later installed the collection of Karl Ströher. He continued to employ the phrase "parallel process" to describe his exhibitions throughout 1968.
society. The image of the sun, which dominates Beuys' chalk drawings from these lectures (Figure 1.24), relates to the writings of the Baroque period Italian philosopher Tommaso Campanella, which describe a utopian city-state of the sun in which men and women are on equal terms with their gods, and where all labor has equal value. The sun state points towards energy as a transforming principle and to the awakening of consciousness as the animation of these invisible spiritual forces. For Beuys, the chalk drawings on a blackboard were part of this energy plan, representing the artist's ideas in physical form. These lectures and the ideas discussed were not intended as works of social sculpture; however, they were considered by Beuys as social sculpture when the ideas were transmitted to another person through discussion.

Although he did not conceive of social interaction or the participants of his works of social sculpture as an artistic medium in the same way as many contemporary social practice artists, Beuys was keenly aware of the importance of language, which he used literally to frame and disseminate his ideas, but also conceptually as an energetic force that could express the creative impulse. Tisdall explains, “Language is the great transformer, since all problems are basically language problems, and language gives form. But language itself must be transformed, and much of Beuys' activity is directed towards raising the awareness of its revolutionary potential as an instrument of freedom.” Beuys saw the creative activation of all people through language as an opposing force to official or state-run educational institutions, which he thought suppressed thoughts and speech. Social exchange and communication, articulated by Beuys in terms of “sociology,” could provide an alternative model. Only by working together with others outside of existing institutions could those structures be dismantled, and only through freedom of thought and expression could people reach a higher level of understanding.

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235 Caroline Tisdall, who began to accompany Beuys on his many lecture engagements across Europe in the early 1970s, described his plan: “[The Energy Plan for Western Man] is an evolutionary diagram, a statement of faith in humankind's ability to emerge from the current crisis brought about as a result of positivist, materialist and mechanistic thinking in the West, and to evolve a stage further. This Energy Plan for the future...takes its impulse from Beuys' belief that the human being is fundamentally a spiritual being, and that our vision of the world must be extended to encompass all the invisible energies with which we have lost contact, or from which we have become alienated. Then new energies can be created, and for Beuys these are real and living substances: democratic forces of love, warmth and above all freedom — the substances of Thomas Campanella's Sun State.” Caroline Tisdall, Joseph Beuys, Coyote (London: Thames & Hudson, 2008), 8.

236 Ibid., 9.

237 Ibid.
In 1971, Beuys was asked by Achille Bonito Oliva whether his works of art were an extension of a Socratic space, “in which the works are no more than a pretext for dialogue with the individual.” Beuys responded: “This is the most important side of my work. The rest — objects, drawings, actions — all take second place. Basically I’m not that much connected to art. Art interests me only in so far as it gives me the possibility of dialogue with individuals.”

Beuys moved swiftly from a practice centered on objects, sculptures, and performances in museums and galleries to conversations about politics. This movement was in line with many other artists of the late 1960s and early 1970s who were more concerned with the art-making process and the concepts behind their work rather than with a final form, exemplified by Beuys’ inclusion in the exhibition Live in Your Head: When Attitudes Become Form curated by Swiss curator Harald Szeemann at the Kunsthalle Bern in spring 1969. Though he still produced sculptures, including fat corners and stacks of felt, his art became increasingly concept driven, centered on the idea that if ART = MAN, then art could only be produced by in the mind through human thought. The physical manifestation of thought is speech, through the physical motions of the body and the sound waves emitted and received between two people in communication. This plastic quality of speech, as well as the ability of thought to shape social structures, became his concept of social sculpture. “I personally attach very great importance to the fact that something psychic turns into a physical product,” said Beuys, “And so I always urge students not only to think but to project their thinking further. It has to be realized that thinking is a sculpture in itself — and that you get a really fantastic sculpture when you speak.”

Beuys’ theories on art were impacted by his study of science and perception before he went to war, where his experiences were shaped into the artist’s later persona. While the artist connected his use of materials and concept of healing to his story of the wartime crash, his expanded concept of art was

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240 Filliou, Teaching and Learning as Performing Arts, 171.
also derived from his postwar study of Rudolf Steiner's anthroposophic philosophy and the aesthetic education proposed by Friedrich Schiller. He applied these theories to the physical objects (e.g., drawings, sculptures), installations, and performances that he made during the 1960s. During this decade, he engaged in Fluxus performances with an international cadre of artists (including many U.S. artists) while teaching at the Düsseldorf Academy. Through his artistic actions, Beuys became much more interdisciplinary, employing participatory methods and using nontraditional materials in his work; his interactions with students in the classroom allowed him to experiment with Steinerian pedagogic techniques. His work during this period must also be contextualized within the *Wirtschaftswunder* (economic miracle), when much of Germany's infrastructure was in the process of being reformed, providing Beuys with the opportunity to enact his concepts on a larger scale. By the late 1960s, when the student movement was growing larger, Beuys bifurcated his practice into two areas, which were united under his theory of art. Sculptures, drawings, and performances, such as *How to Explain Pictures to a Dead Hare*, exemplified his healing principles by exemplifying energy transfers in physical form. The artist also began to engage politically, initially connected to his students at the academy through groups like the DSP. His political engagement during the 1970s, which will be discussed in the following chapter, was considered by Beuys as a branch of his aesthetic activity. Through his projects of social sculpture, Beuys hoped to transform society on a larger scale, starting first with the art students at the academy and later turning towards West Germany as a whole.
Chapter Two

Beuys in the 1970s: Social Sculpture as an Institutional Alternative

Following his dismissal from the Düsseldorf Academy on 10 October 1972, Beuys began to put his theory of social sculpture into practice through utopian works of art with spiritual and holistic intentions. Based on his integration of concepts culled from Rudolf Steiner and Friedrich Schiller (as described in the previous chapter), the projects that Beuys considered his works of social sculpture demonstrate his commitment to direct democracy, education, and environmentalism. His ideas culminated in three projects presented at the Museum Fridericianum at the international quinquennial exhibition *documenta* in Kassel, Germany: the Organization for Direct Democracy through Referendum (ODD) founded in 1970 and presented at *documenta 5* in 1972, the Free International University for Creativity and Interdisciplinary Research (FIU) founded in 1973 and presented at *documenta 6* in 1977, and *7,000 Oaks* begun in 1981 and presented at *documenta 7* in 1982. Although not all of the projects were conceived specifically for *documenta*, their iterations in Kassel brought the public sphere into the arena of the exhibition, transforming the museum galleries (or its surrounding streets, in the case of *7,000 Oaks*) into sites of dialogue and interchange based on Beuys’ social ideals.¹ Engaging a large international audience, the artist drew attention to the failures of West Germany’s political structure, educational system, and environmental policy and presented alternatives to pre-existing institutions such as the Bundestag (the West German Parliament) and state-run art school. Although a lack of access to these projects meant that U.S. artists were unable to connect Beuys’ theories to his more conceptual and politically oriented projects during the artist’s lifetime, I contend that these projects nonetheless became a model for contemporary artists interested in creating their own institutional alternatives in the United States by the time of the Reagan-Bush period.

This chapter contends that these three projects best embody Beuys’ theory of social sculpture

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¹ *documenta*, begun in 1955 by designer Arnold Bode and held every four to five years thereafter in Kassel, strategically situated between East and West Germany (approx. 30 miles from the border), was intended to introduce both East and West German audiences to international modern and contemporary art. However, German art has always had a consistent presence at the exhibition. Beuys first showed at *documenta III* in 1964, and continued to present works there until 1982. The *documenta* in 1987 presented a memorial for the artist following his death in 1986. Sean Rainbird, “Past Battles, Distant Echoes,” in *German Art Now*, ed. Cornelia Homburg (London; New York; Saint Louis: Merrell; Saint Louis Art Museum, 2003), 25–26.
and analyzes them within the context of the economic, cultural, and political crises that characterized postwar West Germany. As expressions of social sculpture, each demonstrates Beuys’ vision of how individual creative development can be used to transform social, political, and economic structures. I propose that these participatory projects serve as radical approaches to artistic engagement with the general public and in so doing set precedents for artists in the United States. This chapter also highlights the importance of *documenta* as a platform for Beuys to express his social, political, environmental, and cultural theories to a wide-ranging and international audience, particularly in the years following the student and anti-war movements in Europe and the United States. Beuys provided a model of pedagogic activity that was politically engaged, non-institutionalized, and centered on individual empowerment; he was an important precedent for U.S. artists facing their own domestic challenges such as the Vietnam Conflict, racism, and sexism.

While Beuys’ gallery and museum practice is well documented in art historical scholarship, there has yet to be a focused study on Beuys’ concept of social sculpture or the implementation of his theory of art into wider social and political actions during the 1970s and 1980s. This noticeable lack is particularly evident in English literature, in which publications with widespread readership, including Tisdall’s 1979 Guggenheim exhibition catalogue and the numerous edited anthologies such as *Joseph Beuys: Mapping the Legacy* (2001), have bypassed discussions of works such as the ODD and the FIU. The biographies available in English map out the trajectory of the two aforementioned projects, but provide little insight into the connection between Beuys’ artistic theories, pedagogic method, and political activism during this period. Claudia Mesch, who has provided the most in-depth scholarly discussion of these projects thus far in English, explores the role of Beuys’ performances in relation to collective memory during the postwar period in her 1997 dissertation. Mesch explains that Beuys’ actions were used as counter-}

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2 The first source dedicated to the topic of social sculpture was Volker Harlan, Rainer Rappmann, and Peter Schata, *Soziale Plastik: Materialien zu Joseph Beuys* (Achberg: Achberger Verlag, 1976). The book appeared in German in 1976, just a few years after Beuys founded the ODD and the FIU. The most extensive German publication to examine these works in their context within the *documenta* exhibition is Veit Loers and Peter Witzmann, eds., *Joseph Beuys: Documenta, Arbeit* (Kassel: Museum Fridericianum, 1993).


4 Beuys’ concept of social sculpture was discussed in two dissertations in the 1990s: Christa Weber, *Vom
institutional frameworks, by means of which he “realized his theoretical system of social sculpture and the ‘expanded notion of art.’” She argues that Beuys transformed existing institutions of art (the academy, exhibition space, and even documenta), “reforming them into institutions functioning as a public sphere of free debate, where broad social and political issues and possible alternatives were discussed.”

The artist made several attempts to publicize these projects more widely through speaking engagements including those in New York in 1974 and 1980. However, his limited ability to translate his ideas into clearly spoken English meant that few critics and scholars turned to this area of his practice, and chose instead to focus on his sculpture, drawings, and installations. There is limited extant literature on 7,000 Oaks in English, rendering this project nearly invisible in the scholarship on the artist. By connecting what Beuys was doing in the classroom and in the gallery, I show that in the 1970s, his attempts to heal social and political wounds move beyond the symbolic and shamanistic into a precursor of the type of social practice that fosters community and democracy as a model for widespread social change. This chapter offers the first comprehensive discussion in English of the evolution of the FIU into his subsidiary project 7,000 Oaks, and also addresses his environmental work as a model for how social sculpture could be globally implemented.

Beuys produced his larger counter-institutional social projects within the walls of the art museum, the exhibition, and even the Academy, temporarily transforming them into “a functional alternative system.” He did not attempt to transform the art institutions themselves (by the early 1970s he already realized that the Academy was beyond reform), but rather he sought an alternative model to established


5 Mesch, “Problems of Remembrance in Postwar German Performance Art,” 250.

6 Ibid., 259.


8 Mesch, “Problems of Remembrance in Postwar German Performance Art,” 259.
cultural, political, and economic structures that involved public participation, intervention, and debate in his “permanent conference.” Arts institutions and exhibitions like documenta provided a working space where he could carry out his larger social and aesthetic goals, and served as a platform for the artist to engage artists, critics, and curators from around the world (including the United States). Beuys considered these projects underneath the umbrella of his expanded concept of art, although at times they appeared to engage more in politics than aesthetics. Like his sculptures and performances, the artist united his conferences, lectures, and political organizing through his artistic theory. Therefore, while they may have been considered as purely political at the time, or at best a hybrid of his political and cultural activities, in retrospect it makes more sense to consider them as works of art. Through his concept of social sculpture, Beuys created aesthetic experiences that were intended to transform the ways that people socially and politically interacted with one another.

The Organization for Direct Democracy

Beuys began organizing spaces for political and philosophical discourse during his tenure as Professor of Sculpture at the Düsseldorf Academy, where he held discussions in his classrooms as early as 1965 and formed the German Student Party in 1967. These early attempts to transform the relationship between professors and students and between the students and larger social structures, however, were increasingly met with resistance. While still functioning within the walls of the Academy, Beuys developed a plan to create an alternative to the state-run educational system and political power structure that in his mind had become defunct. He first introduced dialogue into his pedagogical technique as a new approach to education; however, these discussions tended to germinate broader social and political themes including direct democracy and ecology rather than a rethinking of art education. The necessity for such political organization began with the student movement in the late 1960s, but later developed into the political actions that consumed the artist for the final decade and a half of his career. The ODD was the artist's first attempt to demonstrate his concept of social sculpture to the general public and represents a stepping stone from his interactions with his students at the Academy to his participation in the founding of the Green Party in the late 1970s.

Beuys' activism during this period retained many of the ideals that arose in his interactions with
students (nuclear disarmament, peace, and ecological concerns to name a few), though now applied to a broader context within the city of Düsseldorf, state of North Rhine-Westphalia, and West Germany at large. While the 1960s was a period of intense political polarization, the years following saw the relative normalization of relations between political parties and the divided Germanies. In November 1966, a “Grand Coalition” was formed between the conservative Christian parties (CDU/CSU) and the social democratic party (SPD), uniting the left and the right and establishing West Germany’s main political parties (until the formation of the Greens in 1980); their goal was to overcome economic recession and pacify the restive social situation. This period is also notable for the formal relationship established between West and East Germany known as Ostpolitik, which regularized their interactions through mutual recognition and communication between the nations. As their collective history receded, recognition of the current division meant that the two Germanies “diverged further as societies,” particularly when deployed in a Cold War power play between the United States and Soviet Union with the Berlin Wall (erected in 1961) at its fault line. Pitted against the Soviet government in the East, West Germany's political system appeared to be a pluralist Western democracy based on U.S. and U.K. models.

The projects that the artist initiated throughout the 1970s are related to a broader movement within West Germany to counter the dominance of the major parties. During this time, political pressure on the formation of policy was exercised by an elite group with access to the major parties and politicians, funding, and maneuvering skills, akin to lobbying groups in the United States. In 1966, the Freie Demokratische Partei (Free Democratic Party, or FDP) encouraged the formation of citizens' organizations (Bürgerinitiativen) to combat the coalition between the dominant SPD and CSU/CDU parties, shaping West German protest movements. Such groups fought for non-partisan local issues including feminism, environmental, and even educational reform and advocated participatory democracy. The ODD functioned as such a group, though it incorporated a wide variety of activist causes. Thus, Beuys was able to use some of the momentum catalyzed by the student movement and direct it into the

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10 Ibid., 175.
form of a citizen's organization, just as other activist movements were doing across West Germany. The main difference is that his project incorporated his theory of social sculpture, and emphasized the role of art in ushering in social and political change.

Despite the formation of such activist groups, the tension once felt between young, idealistic student revolutionaries and the older, more materialistic generation that preceded them began to dissipate in the early 1970s, leaving Beuys with fewer young followers (a problem that was exacerbated by his departure from the Düsseldorf Academy in 1972). Attention to neo-Marxist theory waned and liberal youth turned towards other outlets for experimentation.12 Only a few years following the radical student-led movements of 1967–1968, by the early 1970s groups such as the SDS had dissolved and diversified into smaller interest groups like the women's and ecological movements; some members adapted themselves to mainstream culture, while others joined terrorist organizations such as the Rote Armee Fraktion (Red Army Fraction, also known as the Baader–Meinhof Group, founded in 1970) and planned attacks aimed against the West German system. Such groups challenged the perception that West Germany was a model democracy through provocation and violence.13 Energy crises, unemployment, and inflation increased civil tensions with the government causing, as historian Mary Fulbrook states, “considerable unease…that a small party, commanding only a minimal fraction of the popular vote, should be able to change so radically the complexion of the government without reference to the general will of the people.”14 It was within this context that Beuys shifted from student organizing to direct political action, focusing on the concept of direct democracy as the only way to ensure personal freedom in a democratic state.

The Organisation für direkte Demokratie (Organization for Direct Democracy), was co-founded by Beuys, his student Johannes Stüttgen, and Jonas Hafner on 2 March 1970, when Beuys re-named the organization from its former title, Fluxus Zone West (the name of the German Student Party since December 1968), to its new iteration: Organisation der Nichtwähler für freie Volksabstimmung (die direkte Demokratie) (the Organization of Non-Voters for a Free Referendum, or Direct Democracy). The purpose of this project, as Beuys later stated, was to educate average people about the working process of the

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12 Fulbrook, A History of Germany, 1918-2014, 231.
13 Ibid., 175.
14 Ibid.
democratic system and how they might avoid engaging with the dominant political party system.\textsuperscript{15} The organization’s primary goal was to discourage citizens from voting in elections as a means to break the “dictatorship” of the party system and secondarily to encourage those same citizens to enact their own legislative referenda through a direct democratic process. Beuys was convinced that the only way to radically transform society was through the grassroots activities of a broad range of people. The group began by securing an office space at Andreasstraße 25 (Figures 2.1, 2.2), in the heart of the Altstadt (medieval quarter) in Düsseldorf, demonstrating their intention to make the organization available to a broader cross-section of the public, not just Beuys’ students at the Academy (Figure 2.3). Posters were hung in the windows, and passers-by were encouraged to take brochures or engage in discussion with the members inside through workshops about topics such as environmentalism, women’s rights, and nonviolence.\textsuperscript{16} This was an important step, for it showed that Beuys was becoming more interested in how his concepts could be introduced to a bigger audience, applied to broader social structures, and produced by a wider range of individuals than his students at the Academy.

The previous month, the artist had begun to distribute fliers in Düsseldorf calling for citizens to boycott the coming election in the North Rhine-Westphalia region, emblazoned with the slogan “Boycott Against Party Voting” (Figure 2.4). The original document, calling for the end of political parties and for voters to put an end to “sham democracy” using their own self-determination, cites the Grundesetze (basic law of the Federal Republic of Germany) on two issues: “Alle Staatsgewalt geht vom Volke aus, Grundesetze art. 20/2” (all state authority comes from the people, fundamental law, article 20/2), and “die Erfüllung des Grundgesetzes auf freie Information” (fulfillment of the fundamental law of free information).\textsuperscript{17} The bulletin suggests that a solution to these issues could be found through Volksabstimmung, or popular referendum, the political mechanism through which Beuys sought to express Steiner’s threefold social division (see chapter one).

The concept of direct democracy had a history in Germany, although not a favorable one. It was

\textsuperscript{15} Harlan, Rappmann, and Schata, Soziale Plastik, 10.
\textsuperscript{16} He had the opportunity to explain his position personally to the West German chancellor, Willy Brandt, on 1 May 1970, Stachelhaus, Joseph Beuys, 108.
associated with the politically unstable Weimar Republic, when it was a tool of the extreme Left and Right, and during the Third Reich. Adolf Hitler had used the plebiscite to ratify the annexation of Austria in April 1938. After the Second World War it was perceived that if the people were given the power to influence policy without government oversight disastrous consequences may occur. In 1949, the issue had been put before the drafters of the new constitution, who were fearful of such results and opted instead for a representational democratic form of government in West Germany. Direct democracy was again addressed in the early Cold War years in relation to nuclear armament, an issue that also concerned Beuys, though it was never enacted for fear that the population would support extremist views that challenged the authority of the newly formed state. Nonetheless, positive models of direct democracy do exist, as in the case of Switzerland, where popular initiatives and referenda have been an integral part of democratic life since the mid-nineteenth century. Economist Bruno S. Frey argues that such measures effectively fulfill individual preferences and break the dominance of politicians and parties. In order for direct democracy to be successful, however, citizens must be given the time to consider and discuss proposals; direct democracy also has the ability to break political coalitions that oppose them. The ODD was a tool to initiate this type of discourse and educate the populace about the types of decisions they might make through referenda.

The boycott was Beuys' first promotion of the idea of direct democracy and other ideals that were not currently part of the German system. The referenda noted on the poster include: Grundrechte (Basic Law of the FDR), liberties, education, armament, ownership, means of production, land, property, retirement and health insurance, the dissolution of the state, gender equality, and environmental issues such as the detoxification of earth, water, and air. These issues are at the same time anti-war, pro-gender

19 Ibid., 314.
20 Though armament was sanctioned by NATO in 1957, popular opinion opposed nuclear weapons both militarily and for fear of an environmental disaster. The Social Democrats proposed a popular referendum to oppose the NATO's recommendations in 1958 but it was defeated. Nevertheless, referenda were not unlawful except in the state of North Rhine-Westfalia, where Beuys lived. Ibid., 316–318.
equality, Marxist in orientation, and focused on the environment — concerns that predominated his public discourse from this point forward. The Organization of Non-Voters provided a voice for citizens where the established governmental structure did not. It was not a political party, but an “instrument for consciousness-raising,” bringing together citizens of various ages, professions, socio-economic classes, and creeds to meet, discuss, and debate initiatives.\(^{23}\) Growing gradually over the next two years, the Organization eventually included a spectrum of participants such as Beuys' students, colleagues, and better-known political figures, including the activist Karl Fastabend, who later appeared with Beuys at *documenta 5* in 1972.\(^{24}\) More than just a grassroots initiative, the items outlined on the fliers demonstrate that Beuys was attempting to give a bigger voice to the concepts he had been working with in his art, including Steiner's philosophy. His organization was about more than just politics — this was to become a work of art that he thought could have symbolic resonance throughout West German society.

Remaining at the same location in Düsseldorf, the organization was officially renamed the Organisation für direkte Demokratie durch Volksabstimmung (freie Volksinitiative e.V.) (Organization for Direct Democracy through People’s Initiative) in July 1971. It changed its focus to direct political engagement rather than a complete boycott of the electoral process altogether and began a trajectory that led Beuys towards the formation of the Green Party in 1978–1979. When the ODD registered as a nonprofit organization in the state of North Rhine-Westphalia in August 1971, it published its first charter.\(^{25}\) This document, which describes constitutional laws and the basic rights of citizens, concentrates on the implementation of *Volksabstimmung* (the people's initiative). Its nine goals include grassroots political organizing, the people’s right to veto, politics based on equality not privilege, referenda on important issues, and the removal of incompetent officials. Above all, the charter calls for the equality of all people according to the basic laws set out by the state, and the right of all men and women, regardless of party affiliation, to represent their will freely within the official political structure. The


\(^{24}\) Fastabend was a pensioner who had also participated in the National Socialist army as an administrator for the SS. After the war, not much is known about his life until he met Beuys and dedicated his time to the cause of Direct Democracy. Fastabend was integral in the daily operations of the ODD, handing administrative duties and helping Beuys with his actions in conjunction with the office. Hans Peter Riegel, *Beuys die Biographie* (Berlin: Aufbau Verlag, 2013), 357–359.

\(^{25}\) “Organisation für direkte Demokratie durch Volksabstimmung Satzung und politisches Programme” (Freie Volksinitiative e.V., Düsseldorf, August 16, 1971), JBA-B-E 00002, Joseph Beuys Archiv, Museum Schloß Moyland, Bedburg-Hau, Germany.
goal of the ODD was to educate all people about these issues and to promote equal rights before the law through the creation of working groups based on mutual interest.

For Beuys, the concept of direct democracy became the perfect expression of his engagement with Steinerian social structures and the equality and freedom described by Schiller (see chapter one). He referred to these principles often in his public dialogues. Direct democracy insists on the immediate involvement of citizens in matters of the state, which was not possible under parliamentary or constitutional law. Beuys thought that the existing law did not guarantee freedom for individuals and that representatives could not fully represent the free thought of individuals, since they were biased towards special interests or tended to vote with the majority. His primary concern in setting up such an office was quite utopian — to provide an outlet for the political expression of the individual who felt powerless in the current system where his or her views were not represented and where he or she could not veto laws or oust corrupt politicians. According to the artist, in order to realize their full liberty on equal terms with all other people, voters must be able to express themselves politically through their own initiatives rather than deferring to the decisions of elected representatives (as they do in the United States, for example). Instead of voting for more power for local political elites, the ODD called for the direct passage of laws initiated by the people. In co-founding the organization, Beuys intended to cultivate such free thought that could be directed towards political expression on a larger level. “All I do,” he said, “is inform people of their own possibilities. Art is a technical means of transmitting information. The formation of a bureau is a physical act of dissemination.”

Around the same time, Beuys' gallery practice began to shift, transforming into his “parallel process” or “permanent conference,” uniting the foundational concepts of his gallery practice with his lectures, dialogues, and political activism. Educational diagrams, often drawn on blackboards, became the unifying visual element of his increasingly discussion and debate-based performances, such as in Aktion mit der Tragetasche (Action with Carrying Bags) in June 1971, during which the artist passed around small plastic bags emblazoned with the goals of the ODD (Figure 2.5). The spontaneous conversations that occurred in the street were his trials for documenta 5 the following summer. He also

scheduled large-scale discussions in tandem with his exhibitions such as *La Rivoluzione siamo noi* (We are the Revolution) at Naples Modern Art Agency in November 1971 (Figure 2.6). At the invitation of Lucio Amelio, he arrived at his exhibition opening ready to engage in a political action, “Free Democratic Socialism: Organization for Direct Democracy through Referendum,” during which he explained Steiner's threefold organization of society and the concept of direct democracy.\(^{27}\) His subsequent lectures had titles such as “The Political Problems of European Society Today” (Naples), “Art Equals People” (Krefeld, Essen), and “Free Democratic Socialism” (Rome). These actions and lectures created opportunities for Beuys to discuss the goals of the ODD with a wider, more international, public audience that might include chance passersby that were not attracted because of his celebrity in the art world (though it's likely that many were indeed seduced to attend for this reason). Either staged outside the gallery as in Cologne or inside the exhibition space as in Naples, his new pedagogic actions were, at least in theory, focused on the idea of empowering individuals through education and dialogue. As Heiner Stachelhaus notes, “Beuys was now making practical use of nearly all his exhibitions, actions, and lectures to propagate his radical democratic ideas and programs.”\(^{28}\)

Beuys' presence in the media also began to grow as a result of his political engagement.\(^{29}\) Like the literary figure Heinrich Böll, he used the media to intervene in public debates, serving as a spokesperson for anti-authoritarian views. In this he differed from other artists during the period, such as the younger Gerhard Richter and Sigmar Polke, who had been at the Düsseldorf Academy while Beuys was teaching there (though they studied with painter Karl Otto Götz). While the numerous profiles on the artist that appeared in German newspapers and television programs attest to the artist's popularity (he was a household name during this period and continues to be so in Germany), they also demonstrate the artist's passion for expressing dissenting opinion in the public realm. Just like other cultural figures of the same period, he used the media in order to foster dialogue.\(^{30}\) For Beuys, the media was another forum in


\(^{28}\) Stachelhaus, *Joseph Beuys*, 110.

\(^{29}\) Beuys' presence in the German media from the 1970s until today has been exponential. While a review of this literature would be helpful for scholars today, it was not available for most U.S. artists during the period under review in this dissertation, and hence has not been translated for inclusion here. However, it is a valuable project for future scholarship on the artist.

which to talk about how the public might exercise its freedom — one of the hallmarks of his artistic philosophy.

In 1972, the ODD was installed as the Büro der Organisation für direkte Demokratie durch Volksabstimmung (Office of the Organization for Direct Democracy through People’s Initiative, hereafter BODD) at *documenta* 5. The project was part of the exhibition curated by director Harald Szeemann and Jean-Christophe Ammann entitled *Individuelle Mythologien. Selbstdarstellung – Performance – Activities – Changes* (Individual Mythologies: Self-Representation – Performance – Activities – Changes). This was a section of the larger *documenta* exhibition, *Questioning Reality — Image Worlds Today*, which included images and ephemera from everyday life such as advertisements, films, and science fiction alongside conceptual and performance art.\(^{31}\) In 1969, Szeemann had curated *Live in Your Head: When Attitudes Become Form* at the Kunsthalle Bern and many of the artists from this exhibition were also included in *documenta* 5, including Beuys. Szeemann conceived of the exhibition as a 100-day event, or “action-art” Happening complete with pedagogic workshops and audience participation.\(^{32}\) Szeemann’s goal was to question what art is, or what it could be, and Beuys’ office certainly tested these limits.

The BODD was located on the ground floor of the Museum Fridericianum (Figure 2.7), in a corner of the building reserved for artists presenting their own work (*Selbstdarstellung*) within the *documenta* schema. The room was framed by another filled with painted signs by Ben Vautier (a French artist who had been involved in Fluxus), one devoted to the political work of fellow German artist K.P. Brehmer, the exhibition’s cafeteria, and a room containing a library-cum-exhibition including catalogues, a bookstore, and a piece by Christo.\(^{33}\) Conceptually, Szeemann had placed him between “politics,” “information” (written and audio visual material), and “activity” (Performance Art), all of which were included in Beuys’

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31 *documenta* 5, 30 June to 8 October 1972, curated by Harald Szeemann and a curatorial team including Jean-Christophe Ammann, Arnold Bode, and others, Museum Fridericianum, Kassel, Germany. Florence Derieux, ed., *Harald Szeemann: Individual Methodology* (Zurich; Grenoble; New York: JRP Ringier Kunstverlag Ag; Le Magasin; Distributed by D.A.P., 2007), 119.


33 Vautier commented on the uselessness of art through his presence each day in a space he filled with text-based paintings; Brehmer showed a German Flag (*Korrektur der Nationalfarben*, 1972), wherein the size of the colors corresponded to the distribution of wealth in West Germany; Christo presented an information stall for the *Valley Curtain Project* (1972).
installation, although none of these terms could be used to exclusively define his project. Many of these works, including those by Christo and Hans Haacke (also nearby), questioned the social role of art and appropriated social forms such as the information stand and the polling booth. Not only did the exhibition showcase new developments in art that had been categorized as Fluxus, Performance, or Conceptual Art, but it also put artists in contact with one another, an important step in Beuys’ reception in the United States during this period. Here, he met many U.S. artists who resurfaced in the coming years to attend lectures, meetings, and participate in collaborative works including James Lee Byars, Joan Jonas, Claes Oldenburg, and Dorothea Rockburne.\(^{34}\)

The installation at *documenta* was a re-staging of the ODD office in Düsseldorf within the Museum’s walls: desks, cabinets, blackboards, and boxes full of leaflets were arranged within this new space in a similar fashion (Figure 2.8). In addition to a new blue neon sign announcing the name of the office in Beuys’ handwriting and a wall filled with portraits of recognizable female art historical figures (a reference to the empowerment of women), one remarkable feature of the BODD was the inclusion of the “rose for direct democracy,” a single red rose inside a graduated cylinder that was placed on Beuys’ desk.\(^{35}\) Thereafter, the rose became an emblem for the ODD, connecting it symbolically with romantic love and international socialism. Paradoxically, Beuys distanced himself from the organized left by rejecting materialist philosophy. Nonetheless, the rose had been part of his symbolic repertoire since the early 1960s, including his performance during the Fluxus festival at Aachen in 1964: transforming from a bud to an opened blossom, the growth of the flower was a symbol of the evolution of the individual as he or she moves toward revolutionary social change. In combination with the glass cylinder, representing (according to Beuys) empirical knowledge through science, the artist balanced his utopian aspirations with rational thought. He developed a slogan based on this idea, “Ohne die Rose tun wir's nicht, da können wir gar nicht mehr denken” (we can't do it without the rose, then we can't think any more), in other words, without love, rational thought cannot produce change.\(^{36}\) Two multiples were produced in

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\(^{34}\) Many of these artists attended lectures, however, some participated in Beuys projects such as the Free International University. Beuys was consistently referenced by Byars’ own work, as described in James Lee Byars, *James Lee Byars: Letters to Joseph Beuys = Briefe an Joseph Beuys* (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz, 2000).


\(^{36}\) Beuys wrote this phrase on the image of himself and the rose at *documenta* Jörg Schellmann, ed.,
conjunction with this rose: *Rose for Direct Democracy* (1973), an empty beaker signed with Beuys' handwriting in which viewers insert a fresh flower and *We Won't Do It without the Rose* (1972), a photograph of Beuys speaking with a BODD visitor with the rose in the foreground (Figures 2.9, 2.10).\(^{37}\) With the production of these editions, he hoped to spread the dialogue and debate of the BODD to a wider audience beyond the exhibition space, but they also gave the project a sculptural form.

Another multiple was also sold from the BODD directly to visitors: the carrying bag used in Beuys' action in Cologne earlier that year (Figure 2.5), now combined with a sheet of felt and entitled *How the Dictatorship of the Parties Can Be Overcome* (1971).\(^{38}\) On the small white plastic bag, Beuys illustrated the concepts that he later elaborated on at the BODD: in handwritten script, Beuys explained the flow of capital in free democratic socialism. In his new system, capital flows directly from schools, culture, research and "on the level of information," circulating through society and reinvesting itself based on the people's referendum.\(^{39}\) Under a free democratic socialism, he explained, one should never vote for parties, but for one's own beliefs: "Keep your voice and your vote in your hand, use it politically and don't give it away to party functionaries!"\(^ {40}\) On the reverse, Fastabend included a circular diagram comparing two types of society: one based on direct democracy and the other based on the current party state, where citizens are treated as merely voters and taxpayers, rather than creative, freethinking individuals. The top part of this circle, filled in green and marked with a definitive "Ja" (Yes), illustrated the separation of democratic qualities to party politics, which were written in the lower red semi-circle stamped "Nein" (No). Though green was the official color of Die Grünen (the Greens), the political party Beuys helped to establish in the late 1970s, at this point he claimed that it lacked symbolic value: "The colors only have meaning in that they distinguish [the two areas], no symbolism…Here the influence of people is marked with green."\(^ {41}\) As with his other multiples, this bag was intended to both physically and symbolically

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\(^{37}\) Ibid., cat. no. 61, 71.

\(^{38}\) Ibid., cat. no. 40. This multiple was originally produced in an edition of 10,000.

\(^{39}\) Ibid., 277.


\(^{41}\) “…die Farben haben nur unterscheidende Bedeutung, keine symbolische…Hier ist mit Grün der
contain and transport the ideas of the BODD into other areas of the visitors’ lives.  

For each of the one hundred days of the *documenta* exhibition, Beuys manned the BODD office with Fastabend from 10AM to 8PM (10:00 to 20:00), poised to engage all who entered in conversation about politics, philosophy, and society. The visitors, who came from a variety of nations, political affiliations, occupations, and ranged greatly in age, were both sympathetic and critical of Beuys and his assistants. The crowd ebbed and flowed throughout the day, as hundreds of people passed through the doors, gathering around particularly interesting or heated debates. Visitors who wanted to speak with Beuys about his other works of art or the exhibition as a whole were redirected to the concept of direct democracy. Stachelhaus recounts that Beuys “talked patiently, intensely; not without humor, but mostly in dead seriousness.” As with his other public discussions, such as the one earlier that year at the Tate Gallery in London, he explained his theories in simple, understandable terms, as not to alienate a general audience. His voice served as the transmitter of his ideas, and not his objects (which he refused to discuss in this venue).

In her book *Joseph Beuys: Jeder Mensch ein Künstler* (*Joseph Beuys: Every Human an Artist*, 1975), Clara Bodenmann-Ritter documents several of the conversations that she overheard over the course of one weekend spent in the Office. During her two-day residence, she witnessed conversations about humanity and education, Beuys’ expanded concept of art, the structure of the political system,

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42 He used the bag on several occasions throughout late 1971 and early 1972, notably as part of *Überwindet endlich die Parteiendiktatur* (Overcome at Last the Party Dictatorship) in Düsseldorf on 14 December 1971 and *Auszegen* (Sweep) in Berlin on 1 May 1972. In Düsseldorf, the bag was part of an action in the Grafenberg Wald, a nearby forest, where Beuys had gathered with nearly fifty people to protest the plan to replace the trees with a tennis court. During this action, Beuys and his followers cleared a path in the forest and marked the trees planned for demolition with white crosses. This was the first activist response on behalf of the ODD that directly addressed environmental issues, laying precedent for Beuys’ future ecological projects and involvement with the Greens. On May Day the following year, Beuys arranged to sweep the streets after a demonstration by the official German Trade Union Federation on the Karl-Marx-Platz in Neukölln, West Berlin. For this action, the artist metaphorically “swept out” official parties by filling the carrying bags with the socialist ideologies pronounced on the proletariat banners during the parade.


45 Tisdall, “Joseph Beuys,” 411.
labor, and Steiner’s threefold social order. While Beuys declared the office open to a two-way dialogue, it becomes immediately clear flipping through the pages of this text that the visitors were foils to the expression of Beuys’ political ideas. Few seem to engage him in meaningful conversation or counter his ideas; the majority pose questions about the work, or are prompted by the objects and posters in the room to inquire about specific issues. These conversations present the kernels that became the ideas expressed in his more formal lectures throughout the seventies, including those presented to artists in the United States in 1974 and 1980. It was here that he worked out his thoughts in tandem with his visitors and learned new techniques to persuade people of his new concept of art.

Laden with monologues by the artist, each conversation shifts focus from the experiences of the documenta visitors within the exhibition to Beuys’ utopian ideals and how they relate to each visitor’s life and personal situation. While this emphasis on the artist could be due to his domineering personality, the site of the BODD within the larger exhibition of documenta may have contributed to a somewhat unequal atmosphere. His interlocutors all seemed to have approached the BODD as a work of art found in an exhibition filled with paintings, sculptures, videos, and performances, and not as a tool for political consciousness raising. While the artist claimed that the work was more related to art than to politics, his project was quite different from the other works in this exhibition in that he was physically present throughout the run and that he required audience members to interact as active participants. Coming across this room, visitors to documenta were confronted with the artist and asked direct questions about issues unrelated to aesthetics and objects, such as their experience of society, culture, politics, and economics. While artist Leslie Labowitz-Starus suggests that the work of art on display was Beuys himself, it is more apt to say that the people were part of Beuys’ larger artistic project. The BODD was another type of performance used to draw in audiences to Beuys’ ideas, rather than an attempt to develop a viable political alternative. To be sure, many documenta-goers shied away from this type of experience, which required them to think and speak, or even debate, with one another in public. Regardless, as Bodenmann-Ritter’s book demonstrates, there were several conversations in which Beuys was able to connect with his guests, some of whom he addressed informally using the pronoun du (you) instead of

47 Leslie Labowitz-Starus, phone conversation with the author, February 18, 2015.
the more formal Sie.\textsuperscript{48}

Of particular note is the attention Beuys paid to his female visitors, who encountered slogans of gender equality when entering the office: “Equality for men and women! Twenty years of party rule have not secured the fundamental right to recognition of housework as an occupation. This occupation is to have equal status with other occupations and to be rewarded with wages for housewives. Wages for housewives!!!” and “Genuine freedom for women!”\textsuperscript{49} These placards were surrounded by images of female artists from throughout German history, such as Käthe Kollwitz and Paula Modersohn-Becker (Figure 2.11). Beuys’ choice to include feminist issues in his installation fit well into his plan to initiate political action beginning with those with the least power. In his conversations, he focused on the equal value of all labor and the role of women in the economy, reflecting the then-popular Marxist-feminist strategy for including women in the economy based on the idea that their labor was valuable but not recognized or compensated.\textsuperscript{50} He even extended this mission into the work of the women in the cafeteria just outside his office. As soon as it was closed by the manager for lacking a contract, Beuys declared that the cafe become part of his art — he re-opened the counter, now emblazoned with the words “Kunstwerk! Nicht berühren! Kaffeeismus” (Artwork! Don’t touch! Coffee-ism!), but instead staffed it himself.\textsuperscript{51}

While Mesch argues that the installation at \textit{documenta 5} was “[Beuys’] first and perhaps most successful large scale restructuring of the museum institution,” I maintain that the project was not meant to restructure the museum as an institution, but rather the exhibition as a site.\textsuperscript{52} The office that was set up at \textit{documenta} was intended as a temporary hybrid performance/installation, one that was manned at all times by Beuys, Fastabend, or another assistant. They used the office to start conversations about political issues, not cultural ones. While Beuys used the museum to house his project, his objective was not to reform the structure of the cultural sphere but rather to tap into a cultural audience that might have

\textsuperscript{48} For example, in one of his more balanced two-way conversations about the educational system, he was able to relate his thoughts to his visitor’s children and their experience in school. Ibid., 53–56.


\textsuperscript{50} Myra Marx Ferree, \textit{Varieties of Feminism German Gender Politics in Global Perspective} (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2012), 79.

\textsuperscript{51} Translation by the author. Loers and Witzmann, \textit{Joseph Beuys: Documenta, Arbeit}, 85.

\textsuperscript{52} Mesch, “Problems of Remembrance in Postwar German Performance Art,” 274.
an interest in his concept of social sculpture and his utopian political philosophy. He did not speak about the concept of art, aesthetics, or even social sculpture by name, for his politics and his conversations about issues were his art. The work on display was social sculpture.

During the course of the exhibition, a collaboration developed between Beuys and the young Hamburg performance artist Thomas Peiter, who roamed the exhibition dressed as the German Renaissance artist Albrecht Dürer. Their interactions resulted in the sculpture Dürer, ich führe persönlich Baader + Meinhof durch die Dokumenta (sic) V, J. Beuys (Dürer, I'll guide Baader + Meinhof through documenta 5 personally, J. Beuys, Figure 2.12). The title derives from an encounter between the two artists, during which Beuys shouted “Dürer, ich führe Baader-Meinhof über die documenta V, dann sind sie resozialisiert!” (Dürer, I'll lead Baader–Meinhof around documenta 5, then they'll be resocialized!) in reference to the leaders of the RAF who were involved in bombings, kidnappings, and murders throughout West Germany in the 1970s. Peiter painted his version of this statement on two signs, which he carried throughout the exhibition and deposited in the BODD, where Beuys and assistant Klaus Staeck placed them inside a pair of margarine-filled felt shoes sprinkled with rose stems and petals.

The resulting installation has been interpreted by Mesch as an expression of the limited potential of radical art; by Svea Bräunert as an ironic gesture aimed at the co-optation of radical political expression in the art world; and by Joseph Henry as both a relic of political action and as an illustration of Beuys' expanded concept of art. In line with the therapeutic concept of social sculpture, through this assemblage Beuys seems to be alluding to the inefficacy of such violent methods of change and to promote the value of his own cultural alternative. It also references the agenda of the ODD, which opposed the state’s undemocratic use of power, including surveillance tactics and fear mongering. As Henry states, in its new configuration the combination of the message on the placards and the margarine-filled shoes suggests that the violent tactics of the RAF could be offset through the reparative qualities of art. Using the same symbolic language of his fat and felt sculptures — which represented the energy

54 Henry, “Jeder Mensch Ein Terrorist.”
processes involved in social transformation — inserting the signs in the shoes, and removing the last line of his statement “then they will be resocialized” materially demonstrates that creativity is a transformative social force. The installation *Dürer, ich führe* thus references not only his desire to transform heal society but it also illustrates how Beuys interacted with his audience and the participants that gathered around him during the exhibition. By playing into the controversy created by Peiter, who was aware that any mention of the Baader-Meinhof would draw attention, Beuys demonstrated his political allegiances to exhibition visitors, while at the same time indicated that his project could extend beyond the reach of the Museum itself. Beuys was again capitalizing on his presence in the art world to draw attention to his political work.

During the course of *documenta 5*, several large blackboards were produced that later became part of Beuys’ installation *Das Kapital Raum* (The Capital Space), installed in different locations between 1970 and 1977 (Figure 2.13). Derived from Karl Marx’s eponymous work of 1867, the title refers to the artist’s consideration of Marxist theory following the recent student upheaval in Europe and Beuys’ own concept of economics. Unlike Marx, who was concerned with class and the means of production, Beuys was interested in a redefined notion of capital — an alternative to communism and capitalism — that he called the “third way.” To devise this, he looked toward the Latin root of the word “capital,” *caput*, meaning “head”; within his Steinerian worldview, Beuys translated this as the creative function, or thought process, that takes place in the mind. Hence, he drew models on the boards illustrating his new formula: “Kunst = Kapital” (Art = Capital). In 1984, he stated:

> This economic system, which relates to this [expanded definition of art] and is impelled by it, will change its form. And…a monetary exchange economy that degrades human dignity to a commodity for money…would change into an economy in which human ability is the sole capital. And when this matter has been taken care of…then money would disappear as the economic value and shift to this area and become a legal regulative, a legal document.\(^55\)

These boards at *documenta 5* illustrate his concepts of capital, democratic socialism, individual freedom, and his theory of sculpture as an evolutionary and transformative process. All of these concepts circled back to his economic theory. Once humans realized their own abilities to act independently and produce creative thought, they could restructure the system of capital. His ideas were utopian to be sure, for the

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artist was being overly optimistic in his expectations that his installation could achieve such grand ideals.

The blackboards, which often include both sprawling text and basic diagrammatic images, are now considered art objects in their own right. Some were clearly made for aesthetic purposes and were not related to lectures. For example, Mensch (Figure 2.14) includes only one word, “Mensch” (Human), written in very precise and non-Beuysian handwriting at the center of the board. This work presents one legible concept: the importance of the human being above all. While this idea connects to Beuys’ larger worldview, it is also understandable as a stand-alone object without the artist’s explanation. Others, however, require a more detailed interpretation.  

Ohne die Rose tun wir’s nicht (We Won’t Do It Without the Rose, Figure 2.15) references the multiple created for the installation, however, there is no image of a rose evident on the board. Instead, the center of the board is dominated by the words “Ohne die Rose tun wir’s nicht / da können wir gar nicht mehr denken” (We won’t do it without the rose because we can no longer think). Arrows point down from these words to a human brain, labeled “Eindruck” (Impression), and flow further into the feet, “Ausdruck” (Expression). Both concepts, which relate to human thought transforming into verbal expression, are presented as united under democracy and government. The top half of the board contains the words “Schauen” (Look) and “Direkte Demokratie,” thrice underlined. Standing opposite a triangular diagram with a long arcing arrow, these elements probably refer to Steiner’s threefold division of society (economics, politics, and social life). The board also includes a small diagram of a clock or a sun, perhaps a reference to either Campanella’s sun-state (see chapter one) or time as a circulatory system. Without the artist present to engage the viewer or an informed expert on Beuys’ theories to explain them, these scrawls merely serve as documents of a conversation.

Beuys wanted all of the conversations to focus on the creativity of all people and the concept of democracy as it applied to an alternative model, not simply Marxism or party politics. While he continued these conversations in his various lectures throughout Europe during the early 1970s, the office

56 Some of the boards from the BODD are interpreted in Loers and Witzmann, Joseph Beuys: Documenta, Arbeit.
57 Ibid., 122.
58 Beuys’ writings on the blackboards and on drawings is at times quite difficult to understand owing to the artist’s poor handwriting. A recent book transcribes some of his drawings without providing analysis. Steffen Popp, Joseph Beuys: Mysterien für Alle (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2015).
59 For example, he brings up issues of direct democracy and political freedom in his talk at the New School, New York, in 1974. Joseph Beuys, Willoughby Sharp, and Andy Mann, Joseph Beuys’ Public Dialogue at the New School, New York (Monday/Wednesday/Friday Video Club, 1974).
space as such was only installed in locations within West Germany, including its original site in
Düsseldorf, documenta in Kassel, and at the Kunstverein Hannover for the group exhibition Kunst im
Politischen Kampf (Art in the Political Struggle) curated by Christos Joachimides in spring 1973. Unlike
the other artists participating in this controversial show, Beuys again chose to be present throughout the
duration of the exhibition in order to communicate his political ideas directly to visitors.

Beuys’ theories, and not just the installation of the BODD, expanded beyond documenta to other
cultural institutions willing to host his lectures and exhibitions of sculptures and works on paper that
demonstrated his expanded concept of art, allowing his political ideals to be tested on a larger audience.
By spring 1974, the artist was invited by Joachimides and Norman Rosenthal to participate in a
colloquium and exhibition entitled Art into Society, Society into Art: Seven German Artists at the Institute
of Contemporary Arts (ICA) in London along with Albrecht D., K.P. Brehmer, Hans Haacke, Dieter
Hacker, Gustav Metzger, and Klaus Staeck. This exhibition brought together artists (many of whom took
part in the Hanover exhibition the previous year) who had been developing social and political awareness
through their work, not only in form but also in concept. Beuys’ installation Richtkräfte (Directional
Forces), presented in the exhibition, marks a shift from sculpture to the lecture and workshop format,
which Beuys called a “permanent conference.” Participants were encouraged to interact with Beuys and
the chalkboards strewn around the gallery space. Performance documentation shows Beuys sitting in
front of a chalkboard upon which he has written “Fill it out with your own imagination” (Figure 2.16) while
a young art student sketches his portrait. By this point, he had moved away from the politicized issues of

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60 Kunst im Politischen Kampf, 31 March–13 May 1973, Christos M Joachimides and Helmut R Leppien,
eds., Kunst im politischen Kampf: Aufforderung, Anspruch, Wirklichkeit (Hannover: Kunstverein
61 The other participating artists included H.P. Alvermann, K.P. Brehmer, Albrecht D., Siegfried
Neuenhausen, Dieter Hacker, Hans Haacke, Klaus Staeck, and Wolf Vostell. At the colloquium held the
next year for Art into Society, Society into Art (ICA London, 1974), the exhibition was criticized for its
spectacular representation of political views (particularly in the work of Wolf Vostell and Siegfried
Neuenhausen). Caroline Tisdall, ed., Art into Society, Society into Art: Seven German Artists (London:
Institute of Contemporary Arts, 1974), 7–8.
62 Art into Society, Society into Art, Institute of Contemporary Art, London, 30 October–24 November
1974. The colloquium took place 26–27 April 1974. Participating artists included Albrecht D., Joseph
Beuys, K.P. Brehmer, Hans Haacke, Dieter Hacker, Gustav Metzger, and Klaus Staeck. Tisdall, Art into
Society, Society into Art: Seven German Artists.
63 First shown at the ICA, Richtkräfte later evolved into installations at the René Block Gallery, New York,
in April 1975; at the Venice Biennale from July to October 1976; and at the Nationalgalerie in Berlin in
February 1977. Installation images of all iterations are included in Christos M. Joachimides, Joseph
the ODD, and was instead encouraging others to speak with him directly about the power of creativity in everyday life.

Transcripts of the accompanying April 1974 colloquium at the ICA reveal that all of the participating artists were more concerned with art that developed "the social, and by extension the political language and context of art" than with advancing one particular political message. Beuys wanted the show to be seen by a wide audience; both he and Staeck noted that the exhibition was an important medium to express political ideas to the public. The catalogue, which reprised much of the text used by Joachamides for the 1973 Hanover exhibition and included a critique of political exhibitions like Kunst im Politischen Kampf (Beuys thought the show should not just represent politics, but rather should demonstrate how artists are politically active), served not only to establish a political context for the exhibition, but also as a retrospective for each of the artists and a chance for them to consider the social or political context that prompted the forms and ideas for the new projects in the show. Beuys conceived of his politics as emanating from his art practice and concepts, and he used the outlet of the exhibition to voice his ideas both to the public and to the other artists who were included. It was in this catalogue that Beuys' essay "I am Searching for Field Character," first appeared in English.

In this seminal text, Beuys lays out the basic principles for his theory of social sculpture, which had first appeared in his many discussions at the BODD. First, he called for the widening of the definition of art, one that included the "social organism as a work of art," which every living person can create, sculpt, or build. Beuys states that "revolutionary" art could be a "politically productive force" by necessitating participation in ways that Fluxus or Happenings could not or did not achieve — for example, a person could attain spiritual awareness by exploring their own creative potential through thinking, feeling, and desiring. These forces, which Beuys sees as works of art in themselves, shape the "content

64 Included in Tisdall, Art into Society, Society into Art: Seven German Artists. A video of the closed-door colloquium proceedings was shown during the run of the exhibition.

65 This short essay appeared in a number of catalogues during this period, including Joachimides and Leppien, Kunst im politischen Kampf: Aufforderung, Anspruch, Wirklichkeit, 30–31; Tisdall, Art into Society, Society into Art: Seven German Artists, 48; Manfred Schneckenburger, ed., Documenta 6 (Kassel: P. Dierichs, 1977), 156; Caroline Tisdall, Joseph Beuys, exhibition catalogue, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum. (New York: Thames & Hudson, 1979), 268.

of the world right through into the future.” As a creative being, each person has the freedom to direct the future through communication and self-development. While certainly idealistic, such views were important within the history of Germany, for Beuys was encouraging people to think for themselves rather than follow political or even spiritual leaders. He was suggesting that each person had a right to shape his own destiny and to take part in the future of the country. Although he did not provide a practical plan for the implementation of his ideas, his contribution in this aspect should not be overlooked. Beuys was not using aesthetics in service of politics, but was suggesting that under his concept of aesthetics (which included the creativity of all people more generally) society could be shaped from within. He saw his own role as an artist as that of an organizer and collaborator, rather than a cult figure or pedant. That said, he was not above using spectacle to win an audience. Following the closing of documenta on 8 October 1972, Beuys staged a “Farewell Action” — a boxing match with his student Abraham David Christian, who objected to the premise of the ODD and challenged Beuys to a match on the first day of the exhibition. Announced as a “Boxing Match for Direct Democracy” (Figure 2.17) Beuys was declared the winner on behalf the ODD, which received all proceeds.

Neither purely incidental conversation nor politically aware work of art that highlights one issue, the BODD sought to expand the concept of art and thereby to transform the social structure. Through this intervention, Beuys hoped that others would be inspired to enact direct democracy on their own terms. However, ultimately the ODD had little tangible effect on the actual political structure during this period. Beuys was a figurehead for a movement that had little chance of survival without his charismatic charm and media power, but he had no experience in establishing a political organization, developing strategies to attract audiences or funding opportunities, or training local leaders. As a household name in Germany, his star power brought awareness to issues like direct democracy, even if his alternative model did not take hold as a working system. Because of his celebrity and his lack of political pragmatism, projects like the ODD had little hope of establishing a tangible political foothold. They were seen as performances within the cultural context of documenta, rather than a viable political strategy enacted within the social sphere. In the end, he could not organize his political supporters behind his art or attract other artists,

67 Ibid.
68 Adriani, Konnertz, and Thomas, Joseph Beuys, Life and Works, 251; Riegel, Beuys die Biographie, 375–376.
collectors, or arts administrators to his political or social ideals. Outside of the space of the exhibition, press covering the project was rare, and the expected resonance of his project was never actualized. The ODD closed its office in Düsseldorf in 1980, but its mission has continued to the present day through the Omnibus für direkte Demokratie, established by Stüttgen, and the Mehr Demokratie e.V., run by Beuys’ former Green Party collaborator Lukas Beckmann, Gerald Häfner, Thomas Mayer, and Daniel Schily.

Above all, Beuys’ project was an artistic action rather than a political one, and hence it had little to offer outside of symbolic value. The project demonstrated to the public that it was still possible to have a utopian vision for society and that there was hope for a better future. Considering what most (older) Germans had lived through in the past half century, this was no small task. On these terms, it makes no difference whether Beuys and his assistants at the BODD were able to convince anyone to push for further democratic measures. Like the U.S. artists that followed his model of social engagement, Beuys was providing an artistic commentary, a utopian vision of a future possibility, which he had little hope of realizing only through the workings of the ODD or on his own. His presence brought awareness to an issue, but the ODD could not solve the disastrous effects of communism or capitalism on its own. It was certainly more than a performance or conceptual project, but it was not exactly a political party either.

Like the DSP, the ODD was a stepping stone for Beuys to gain a larger audience for his ideas, which he continued to build in the years that followed. He began to look outside of the Academy and the

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69 Ibid., 373.
71 Beuys said, “Für mich is es eine künstlerische Aktion. Denn dieser Kunsbegriff ist so gefasst, dass die Selbstbestimmung, die ja die Demokratie fordert, jetzt gesehen werden muss als eine Möglichkeit... Wir wollen also eine Freiheitswissenschaft diskutieren. Wir wollen mehr und mehr von der Selbstbestimmung, also von der menschlichen Freiheit als einem kreativen, d.h. also einem künstlerischen Ausgangspunkt — davon wollen wir ausgehen. Also ist es eine kulturelle Frage zunächst. Es ist weiterhin eine Frage des gesamten Schul- und Erziehungswesens, nicht?” (For me it is an artistic action. For this artistic concept is so composed that the self determination that democracy certainly demands must now be seen as a possibility... We also want to discuss a science of freedom. We want more and more from self determination, so from the human freedom as a creative, meaning an artistic starting point, from which we want to depart. Therefore, it is initially a cultural question. It is furthermore a question of the whole nature of school and education, no?) Translation by the author. Loers and Witzmann, Joseph Beuys: Documenta, Arbeit, 92.
art world for venues to present his concepts. This included several campaigns for political positions. In the local elections in North Rhine-Westphalia on 3 October 1976, Beuys unsuccessfully ran for office on behalf of an offshoot of the ODD called the Aktionsgemeinschaft Unabhängiger Deutscher (Action Group of Independent Germans). His campaign slogans included many of the ideas he had discussed while at *documenta* several years prior: “Free culture! Free people’s universities! Fifty percent women in the legislatures! True democracy!” He received only six hundred votes. Indeed, he was unable to fully participate in politics because he had no interest in leaving the art world.

**Free International University**

Two days following the end of *documenta* 5 on 10 October 1972, the Minister of Education Johannes Rau officially dismissed Beuys from his position as a Professor of Sculpture at the Düsseldorf Academy of Art. Tensions had been building between Beuys and school administrators for some years, but the state became involved over the summer when Beuys began opening his classes to anyone who wanted to attend, completely disregarding the *numerus clausus* system of admissions restrictions.73 Beuys believed that every student should be able to choose his or her own course and place of study corresponding to his or her ability and desire. His dismissal without notice caused an uproar amongst his students, who occupied the offices of the Academy in protest. Demonstrations continued throughout the week and Minister Rau eventually terminated Beuys’ contract, setting in motion a series of court cases that remained unresolved until 1978. The commotion at the Academy caused quite a stir in the press, more so than the ODD had the previous summer, prompting artists from around the world to send letters of support and the German public to begin to question the state education system.74 This confrontation pushed the artist to actively pursue his own model of education that was based on the concept of creativity and freedom from state intervention. Again lacking any means of practical implementation, the artist brought his concept of social sculpture to an international audience through the activities of the FIU.

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73 *Numerus clausus* restricts the number of students that can enter an incoming class at a German university in order to reduce overcrowding and protect certain professions.

and over time his discussions about education reform transformed into a broader dialogue about world healing.

Beuys started to advocate state educational reform during the student protests in 1967. He took part in conferences with his fellow professors, administrators, and students at the Düsseldorf Academy aimed at such goals beginning in early 1968. In an essay for the art magazine *Interfunktionen* in late 1969, Beuys stated that his ideal type of academy was one that was expressly not under governmental control. For Beuys, this institution would function in the service of individuals and not the nation, fostering creativity and freedom. The problem with the national art academy system, in his eyes, was that it trained students to be artists, rather than creative thinkers. To counter their focus on traditional mediums and concepts of art, schools should instead adhere to an “anti-art” concept, whereby humans were equated to aesthetics: “Ästhetik = Mensch” (Aesthetics = Human). In this equation, Beuys defined aesthetics as creativity in general rather than specialized abilities, and therefore intended it to mean that humans should be equated with their creative potential. These ideas parallel Steiner’s reasons for founding of a “Free School of Spiritual Science” based on his outline of Anthroposophy in Dornach, Switzerland, in 1923 that also turned away from specialized professions. They also match fellow Fluxus artist Robert Filliou’s ideas for a new school in the United States in the late 1960s. Filliou’s ideas, outlined in *Teaching and Learning as Performing Arts* (1970, see chapter one), evoke Beuys’ call for an institution of higher learning that was self-directed by students, taught by guest lecturers, and centered on creative problem solving. At this early stage in 1969, Beuys saw the German Student Party (DSP) as the natural convergence of his work with Fluxus, his role as a Professor at the Academy, and his political ideals; the DSP was a prototype for such a school. However, as tensions brewed between the artist and the other faculty members, the artist gradually conceptualized a school entirely separate from the Academy. At this

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77 The artist said, “If one says that aesthetics are the same as man, then man is just like an artist, whether he develops into a useful specialist in this area that is significant to art history that is just a secondary thing…man comes [to the academy] possibly purely as an artist and leaves the house with the intention to study technique. He has, however, meanwhile obtained important information about humanity itself. This can be well addressed above all from the artistic side.” Ibid., 61–62.
point, he had ideas but little in terms of practical application (for example, he needed to find other artists interested in teaching). In addition to gaining support from professors like Erwin Heerich, Panaramenko, and Wolf Vostell, Beuys found willing participants amongst his many students, most notably Stüttgen, who worked with him on projects like the DSP, ODD, and his designs for a new academy.

Simultaneous to his decision to break from the Academy, Beuys involved himself in his students' independent alternate education projects, such as Jörg Immendorff's LIDL Akademie (referring, like Dada, to a nonsensical word — not to the supermarket) during the winter semester in December 1968. The LIDL Academy was formed on the heels of the open letter of protest written by Beuys' fellow faculty members, who felt that the standards of the institution were under threat by the ideas presented by Beuys and the DSP. Immendorff, along with several other students, erected a plywood and paper structure in the hallways of the Academy, inviting unofficial guest lecturers such as Marcel Broodthaers and Panamarenko, and displaying painting, films, and ephemera (Figure 2.18). Utilizing the classrooms of professors Beuys, Warnach, and Wimmenauer, the students operated their academy-within-an-academy until Immendorff was expelled and the campus was closed by the police after struggles with students over the legality of the project escalated. Immendorff's project continued outside of the academy (Figure 2.19), and despite Beuys minimal involvement, press attention focused on the professor rather than the student. The commotion led directly to Beuys' dismissal by the Minister of Education in 1972. As he did not have a civil service status guaranteeing him a position and his one-year contract had expired, Beuys had been teaching without a contract or pay. He returned on probation, but while he continued to propose new ideas for an autonomous academy that year, his requests fell on deaf ears.

The Free International University (Freie Internationale Universität) began as the Freie Internationale Schule für Kreativität, Kommunikation und interdisziplinäres Gespräch (Free International School for Creativity, Communication, and Interdisciplinary Discussion) in January 1971 and was officially established at the home of lawyer and activist Klaus Staeck on 27 April 1973. At this meeting, roles were

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79 Beuys initially proposed Erwin Heerich, Panamarenko, Wolf Vostell, Ellsworth Kelly, Hamilton (whose first name was omitted by the artist, although he may have meant Richard Hamilton who was teaching in the United Kingdom during the 1960s), Allen Jones, and Per Kirkeby. Heubach and Beuys, "Zur Idealen Akademie. Gesprächst Mit Friedrich Wolfram Heubach," 62.
80 Adriani, Konnertz, and Thomas, Joseph Beuys, Life and Works, 188–189.
81 Riegel, Beuys die Biographie, 320–321.
82 Adriani, Konnertz, and Thomas, Joseph Beuys, Life and Works, 179.
established amongst a small group of collaborators: Staeck became the chairman, Karlsruhe painting professor Georg Meistermann the deputy, journalist Willi Bongard the secretary, and Beuys the founding rector. The initial plan for the FIU was to set up a communication space similar to the ODD and lay the groundwork for a system of several schools. Although the founding of the FIU is often attributed solely to Beuys, the history of the organization as documented in numerous organizational brochures can be credited to individuals including Staeck (who later accompanied Beuys on his first trip to the United States), Meistermann, Bongard, Düsseldorf Academy professors Erwin Heerich, Gerhard Richter, Walter Warnach, Nora Hengstenberg, and Melitta Mitscherlich, gallerist Alfred Schmela, and museum directors Paul Wember from Krefeld and Eugen Thiemann from Dortmund. These men contributed to the founding and direction of the FIU, but since the idea for the project came from Beuys and continues to be linked to his expanded concept of art, it is hard to call them full collaborators in its conception and execution.

Since he conceived of the project as part of his art, Beuys served as the spokesperson for the organization. He spread the word about its mission and secured funding (mostly through the sale of his own work). However, as the project was primarily symbolic for him, he did little in terms of the practical implementation of ideas. Planning documents emphasize the contributions of the other founding professors by stating that the FIU was not a “private school of Joseph Beuys,” but an organization built by a team of interested people whose mission was to serve the public. A frame focused only on Beuys would have been contrary to its founding principles of human awareness and a holistic worldview, a typical inconsistency in Beuys’ projects. His name was inextricably associated with the FIU, as it had been for the ODD, particularly when it was presented in exhibitions or described in catalogues like Art into Society, Society into Art (ICA, London, 1974). Whether or not it was his intention, the FIU, like his other projects of social sculpture, continues to be attributed to Beuys as the sole author. The artist presented not only a face and voice for these organizations, but he also provided access to arts institutions, wealthy funders through his collector base, and art world cachet. However, his promotion of the FIU also raised

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83 Riegel, Beuys die Biographie, 392.
84 Ibid., 393.
85 In this catalogue, the project is represented by an manifesto without a byline; as it is placed underneath a photograph of Beuys lecturing, readers may presume that Beuys wrote it. Tisdall, Art into Society, Society into Art: Seven German Artists, 49–50.
86 For example, the continuations of the FIU satellites that exist as of 2016 name Beuys and his theories as founding principles of their organizations. See below.
awareness and attracted audiences who may not have encountered his ideas elsewhere.

Beuys brought the ideas of the FIU to a broader audience in tandem with his many exhibitions across Europe during the early 1970s. He took his cue from Steiner and lectured in front of packed audiences, presenting his ideas on politics, economics, and education. Tisdall later recounted:

In the blackboard drawings that emerged during these lectures, Beuys attempted to describe the line of time, the development of the Western world, and in particular the concept of freedom, which he felt was crucial to the development of Western thought. He would trace it through his interpretation of Christianity...to the Renaissance when individual expression emerged...and on through to the French Revolution...the establishment of the separate academies for each discipline, the separation of art and science, then the scientific revolution from Faraday to Darwin, which for him meant the scientific proof that human beings can take charge of their own lives.  

With each lecture, which was tailored to the issues that most concerned local audiences, Beuys provided his outline for energy flow, therapy, and social sculpture. These ideas were reinforced via press coverage in traditional media outlets such as newspapers, radio, and television. He took every opportunity afforded to him to express his ideas to the public.

Over the course of the next several months, the founding committee, along with the help of poet and Nobel laureate Heinrich Böll (1917–1985), applied the FIU's recommendations to a set of teaching plans. A manifesto written by Beuys and Böll was published alongside Beuys' conference at the ICA in London in late 1974 explaining the plans together with a brief curriculum. The manifesto was based on Beuys' theory of creativity, and extends it to apply to society as a whole, not just specialized fields within culture, suggesting that Beuys had a direct hand in the creation of the document. The school would be based on developing creativity through interdisciplinary research, including psychology, communications, information theory, and perception teaching. As an educational institution, such research would be done through a “mobile learning system,” consisting of educators from a variety of disciplines teaching as guest lecturers in collaboration with one another. This way of learning would be inherently international, in

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88 Böll was known for his critical examination of Germany's Nazi past and was an early supporter of the Green Party. He met Beuys in the 1960s and the two exchanged ideas. His input on the ICA manifesto is unclear, aside from his concept of the Wörtlichkeitslehre (the theory of discourse). Frank Finlay, “Joseph Beuys’ Eco-Aesthetics,” in Green Thought in German Culture: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives, ed. Colin Riordan (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1997), 251.
89 Tisdall, Art into Society, Society into Art: Seven German Artists, 49–51.
90 Finlay, “Green Thought in German Culture,” 252.
91 Adriani, Konnertz, and Thomas, Joseph Beuys, Life and Works, 265.
order for cross-cultural exchanges to expand an understanding of art forms to a “comparison of the structures, formulations, and verbal expressions of the material pillars of social life: law economics, science, religion.” It would also have a green focus, since “environmental pollution advances parallel with a pollution of the world within us.” Their early plans included several satellite schools, including an ecological institute and an institute for evolutionary science, based around Beuys’ environmental concerns. The institutes were intended to research biological needs, the environment, and ecology, evaluating existing social and economic structures and developing new possibilities for the future.

Building on Beuys’ existing network of scientists and educators, they began work immediately not in their own building, but housed within the Netherlands Pedagogical Institute (NPI) and the Norwegian Goethe Institute in Bergen, Norway. The group also conceived of an international satellite television network to encourage a global exchange of information, a Kindergarten, and a center for senior citizens. However, concerns over lack of space derailed the implementation of the latter two programs.

The school was intended to open in April 1974 (just prior to his coyote performance in New York) in a large hall on the former Düsseldorf fairgrounds, organized and financed entirely by the founding members of the FIU. However, their plans to open in these locations was cancelled shortly thereafter. It was meant to function both as an institution into which students matriculated and followed courses of their own choosing, and as an open forum for interdisciplinary research that was open to the public. While artists would initially teach classes such as drawing, sculpture, and art criticism, the FIU was to be a learning environment for non-specialists seeking to explore their creativity in other areas including human behavior, pedagogy, and verbal articulation. The program of interdisciplinary research was to be announced on posters in public rather than internal bulletins accessible only to students, faculty, and school administrators. It was conceived as a utopian educational space free from state and corporate interests, where students could work creatively in an open environment; the organizers eliminated entrance exams and student fees, and evaluation was only performed during a two-semester trial period.

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92 Tisdall, Art into Society, Society into Art: Seven German Artists, 50.
93 Ibid.
94 Adriani, Konnertz, and Thomas, Joseph Beuys, Life and Works, 266. It is also unclear how far the satellite network went in terms of implementation, aside from the broadcast that was produced during documenta 6. This area of Beuys’ practice deserves further scholarly attention.
95 This version of the FIU no longer exists and the location of its archives were unknown to the author at the time of writing.
In tandem with their pedagogic goals, the organization produced a cycle of art exhibitions organized by Staeck that attempted to break down the barriers between artist, work of art, and viewers.

Beuys and Staeck conceived of the FIU as a “permanent documenta” with an international scope, in reaction to the “hypertrophied art market.” Importantly, it was not meant to entirely replace either the existing educational or art market structure, for of course Beuys continued to conceive of the project as a work of art:

The Free School should offer a model for an educational system...the Free School should ideally be completed through a possibility that allows the international presentation of creativity in all areas. This possibility cannot and should not replace the current system of the art market (through galleries) but complete it. Permanently.

Thus the FIU functioned as an alternative educational system, but one that operated within (and complemented) an existing art frame. The physical manifestations of the FIU were intended to illustrate this principle: they drew attention to the mono-directional communication between artists and viewers experienced through a traditional work of art by engaging the audience as participants in a two-way conversation, while at the same time proposing an alternative vision of how education and culture could function within broader social structures.

In late 1974, Beuys expressed interest in establishing a permanent site of the FIU in Ireland while he was there for an exhibition of his drawings, *Secret Block for a Secret Person in Ireland*. This announcement was the first step towards making the FIU an international network of free schools. He also noted his vision for the FIU as a network of sites on the European periphery: smaller areas with relatively little economic power, with a less complicated economic structure than West Germany, and with a growing industrial system in need of communication restructuring. He took steps to establish such an outpost in Belfast and in Dublin and sought funding with the help of Tisdall, who wrote a report in 1975 to request funding from the European Economic Community in Brussels. The FIU received small grants for the establishment of offices across Europe, including England, Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland, Eire,

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96 Staeck quoted in Riegel, *Beuys die Biographie*, 393.
97 Translated in Mesch, “Problems of Remembrance in Postwar German Performance Art,” 285.
98 Schneckenburger, *Documenta 6*, 172.
99 Caroline Tisdall, “Report to the European Economic Community on the Feasibility of Founding a ‘Free International University for Creativity and Interdisciplinary Research’ in Dublin” (Free University Press, 1975). An extract of this report is published in, Tisdall, “Joseph Beuys,” 411–413.
and Sicily by 1976. However, more importantly, the report disseminated the ideas of the FIU to people in other nations and generated support on an international scale. Branch offices opened across West Germany in Achberg, Hamburg, Gelsenkirchen, and Kassel. They also spread to Italy through the Mediterranean Institute of Interdisciplinary Research (ISMERI) in Bologna and the Organization for the Regeneration of Italian Agriculture in Pescara. With the help of the Art and Research Exchange and co-operative industries, the FIU came to London, Derry, and Belfast; and members also emerged in the United States through the Art Corporation of America (under the direction of John Halpern). By late 1976 and early 1977, workshops attended by local artists, economists, politicians, and educators were being held all over Europe.

Beuys’ two-part installation at documenta 6 in 1977 (Figure 2.20) marks a definitive moment in the transformation of the FIU into a concrete alternative model of education built on Beuys’ artistic theories. Entitled Honigpumpe am Arbeitsplatz (Honey Pump at the Workplace), the project comprised two parts: thirteen interdisciplinary workshops on a variety of topics and a mechanized apparatus that, as Mesch states, “functions as a three-dimensional conceptual model of the public sphere the FIU realized contemporaneously.” Consisting of an enormous motor that churned several tons of honey through plastic tubing, the Honey Pump (Figure 2.21) was installed in an empty section of a curved stairwell in the Museum Fridericianum. The two halves of the installation were linked by honey-filled tubes that pierced the wall, leading from the machinery in the stairwell to a space where the discussions, seminars, lectures, films, and demonstrations of the FIU were held throughout the 100 days of the exhibition both inside the museum and outside on the grass of the Friedrichsplatz. Inside the workshop space, which was filled with chalkboards (some of which Beuys wrote on, others written on by the participants), anatomical drawings, posters, and diagrams (Figure 2.22), chairs were arranged in a circular formation to allow for greater conversation amongst attendees. Both components together served as the model “cooperative” social

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102 Documenta 6, 24 June to 2 October 1977, curated by Manfred Schneckenburger, Museum Fridericianum in Kassel, Germany.
body, or the integrated threefold “social organism.”

The *Honey Pump* both literally and conceptually connects Beuys’ expanded concept of art (*erweiterter Kunstbegriff*) to his theory of social sculpture (*soziale Plastik*), demonstrating that both halves of his parallel practice were united under his concept of aesthetics.\(^\text{104}\) Materially, the flow of honey relates to Beuys earlier work of the 1950s and 1960s, which expressed the warmth and energy principles of his expanded concept of art primarily using animal fat. He had included references to bees and honey in his oeuvre since the series of drawings he created as a student entitled *Queen Bees* (1952, Figure 2.23), however it wasn’t until the later 1960s that this material began to be associated with psychological expression in actions such as *How to Explain Pictures to a Dead Hare* (1965, discussed in chapter one). Steiner compared the functioning of the beehive to human society; the bee has also long been associated with socialism due to the collaborative effort of the workers to produce honey. In the *Honey Pump*, Beuys brought these connotations into his wider theory of social sculpture through three major principles — thinking (rational thought), feeling (intuition), and will: “Will power in the chaotic energy of the double engine churning the heap of fat. Feeling in the heart and the bloodstream of honey flowing through the whole. Thinking powers in the Eurasian staff, the head of which rises from the engine room right up to the skylight of the museum and then points down again.”\(^\text{105}\) In order for the *Honey Pump* to be complete, following Beuys’ schema, it needed the ideas, communication, and participation of the people involved at the FIU. At one point during the one hundred days of the exhibition, Beuys famously proclaimed: “wer nicht denken will, fliegt raus” (whoever does not want to think will be thrown out). Like his earlier installation for the ODD, the *Honey Pump* conducted thoughts and ideas on a larger social scale, although it remained a work of art conceived and executed by him (and is now installed as a sculpture without the pedagogic workshops). It served as a metaphor for his ideas in sculptural form.

Communication occurred in the adjoining room, where hundreds of people from all over the globe participated in workshops and activities around the FIU organized by Tisdall and Belfast artist Robert

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\(^{104}\) Beuys stated, “With *Honey Pump* I am expressing the principle of the Free International University working in the bloodstream of society. Flowing in and out of the heart organ — the steel honey container — are the main arteries through which the honey is pumped out of the engine room with a pulsing sound, circulates around the Free University area, and returns to the heart. The whole thing is only complete with people in the space around which the honey artery flows and where the bee’s head is to be found in the coiled loops of tubing with its two iron feelers.” Quoted in Tisdall, *Joseph Beuys*, 254.

\(^{105}\) Beuys quoted in Ibid.
McDowell. The participants included some artists in the exhibition (Nam June Paik, John Latham, and Arnulf Rainer), and younger artists, musicians, and actors, who participated alongside tradesmen, lawyers, economists, sociologists, journalists, and educators. Rudi Dutschke, a former student leader during the protests of 1967–1968, even joined in as a teacher. Thirteen consecutive workshops (Figure 2.24), the topics of which were determined by the international network of FIU members from the United Kingdom, Ireland, Italy, and West Germany, were scheduled around weeklong themes deemed to be in need of both practical and creative re-thinking. The workshops addressed these problems in an interdisciplinary manner, with a range of people from different backgrounds addressing issues that would typically be the domain of specialists. Topics included nuclear energy, an issue gaining traction in West German politics; community organizing; the manipulation of the media and possible alternative outlets such as independent radio and small distributors; human rights in connection to Eastern versus Western economic systems; urban decay; Northern Ireland; violence and human behavior; and labor and unemployment. The series was capped with a final workshop on the last day of the exhibition summarizing and analyzing the preceding hundred days, which brought up conflicting opinions about whether the desire for social change was a utopian endeavor.\textsuperscript{106}

The FIU workshops involved a multitude of participants and sought to engage audiences in ways that conventional works of art in the exhibition did not. Documents produced by the FIU offices in London, run by Tisdall and McDowell, justifies their presence in the exhibition thus:

This venue is unusual for us since it represents ‘official’ culture at its most formal. We feel that we should respond to invitations to appear, but we wish it to be clear that our participation is an attempt to provide a positive alternative to the old isolated model of culture produced by individual geniuses for a passive public. We will be there for 100 days, and our attempt to establish public dialogue and participation is intended as a criticism of ‘official’ culture.\textsuperscript{107}

Though Beuys' name was attached to the project in promotional materials for the exhibition and his activities dominated newspaper headlines for the exhibition within Germany, documents like this one avoid mentioning him by name in order to promote the idea of collective authorship and transdisciplinarity.\textsuperscript{108} However, for Beuys, his name merely brought recognition to topics in need of more

\textsuperscript{106} A summary of all the workshops is included in the catalogue for Beuys' 1979 retrospective at the Guggenheim Museum, New York. Ibid., 260–264.
\textsuperscript{107} “Free International University Initiatives (Outside Germany).”
\textsuperscript{108} The newsletter mentions the names of some 28 participants in a seminar on “the periphery of Europe”
press and public attention, for example, inequality in the democratic process (ODD), education reform (FIU), and environmental issues. He was determined to use his platform within documenta and in the cultural world in general to bring more recognition to his projects of social sculpture, and hence promote their participation in the transformation of society. This included a live satellite television broadcast at documenta 6, through which Beuys presented his ideas alongside performances by Nam June Paik, Charlotte Moorman, and Douglas Davis. He continued to use similar language to counter criticism of his solo exhibitions like the one at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York in 1979–1980, which — despite his protests — presented him to the U.S. public as an “individual genius.”

Beuys welcomed others’ viewpoints as part of his expanded concept of art but he did not collaborate with participants in the FIU workshops as co-authors — in other words, they contributed in terms of form but had no input on the idea for the project itself, which was Beuys’ concept of art. Through their participation, attendees of the conferences, workshops, and lectures were taking part in social sculpture, in which they were acting as freely thinking creative agents. By bringing dialogue back into the public sphere, Beuys was reacting against the Enlightenment positivism and specialization that helped to structure modern industrial and post-industrial economic and political structures like those found in Germany in the 1970s. The Honey Pump, both in its apparatus and its conversations, offered an arena within the public sphere where people from a variety of disciplines could come together, circulate ideas freely, and develop holistic alternatives to the existing state in economic, political, and even cultural areas.

Although the FIU incorporated many voices and experiences into its planning, programming, and implementation, Beuys continued to relate his own life story to the methods and goals of the organization. In a 1977 interview with Jörg Schellmann and Bernd Klüser, Beuys links the creation of the FIU to the trauma that he experienced both as a German during reconstruction and in his own mental and physical health. He hoped that the FIU could provide an alternative model to those that had caused such atrocity:

held in Palermo in 1977, and indicates that interest has necessitated the need for a member directory. Ibid.


110 See, for example, his comments during the lecture associated with the Guggenheim exhibition at the Cooper Union on 7 Jan 1980. Gianfranco Mantegna, “Joseph Beuys: Dialogue with the Audience,” color, b/w, sound (Cooper Union, New York, NY, January 7, 1980), Electronic Arts Intermix, New York, Cooper Union, New York, NY.
I certainly feel that the things I have experienced in my life have not been without effect. That is why for instance we are building up the Free International University: really radical alternatives must be set up as a balance to the factors that produce catastrophes in the world. The last world war was one such example… Art expresses the realm of experience and goes far beyond the comprehensibility of logical content. For art depends only on experience and experiences should of course aim at the objective elucidation of the universal content of experience.\textsuperscript{111}

While the school had started as an outgrowth of his interactions with art students at the Düsseldorf Academy, and state art schools more generally, Beuys' language shifted in the latter 1970s to tie back to his desire to heal society at large. He applied his experiences beyond his own life, beyond his interactions with the public on the streets of Düsseldorf or Cologne, and beyond Germany to include issues faced by others in a global context. For example, one workshop at documenta 6 pointed out areas of Europe deemed to be on the “periphery” such as Southern Italy and Ireland, which faced economic and social challenges due to the policies of the European Economics Commission, and encouraged dialogue “to find alternatives to the hegemony of power exerted by the economically dominant countries, multinationals, and intelligence agencies.”\textsuperscript{112} FIU members gathered together to find solutions to issues such as the social, psychological, and economic effects of migration of unemployment; the political consequences of nuclear armament; and the role of culture, education, and the media in effectively representing these regions.

Throughout the 100-day conference, one of the major themes to draw attention from both economists and artists alike was Beuys' attempt to shift the conception of capital, which he called the “bloodstream of society.” As part of the conference program, the artist helped organize a weeklong congress for Human Rights Week, during which Germans and other Central Europeans convened to discuss an alternative (the third way) to the existing system of capitalism in the West and Soviet communism. Through this congress, Beuys hoped to synthesize the ideas that he had been developing in connection with the Internationalen Kulturzentrum Achberg (International Cultural Center, Achberg, or INKA), where he had attended lectures by economists Wilhelm Schmundt and economist Eugen Löbl since 1973. These lectures were particularly captivating for Beuys, because they managed to combine his


\textsuperscript{112} Tisdall, \textit{Joseph Beuys}, 260.
Steinerian Anthroposophic thinking with his economic concerns. Beginning during the Prague Spring of 1968, Löbl, Schmundt and others had begun to seek a third way. They discussed their ideas at an annual summer conference held by a section of the Center, "Aktion Dritter Weg" (Third Path Action). Beuys lectured here under the Institute for Social Research and Developmental Theory, in which he tied his own tripartite division of society to the concept of theory, education, and practice promoted by INKA.

Beuys had long discussed the connection between the production of capital and the labor system, which he saw as exploitative of freethinking individuals (an idea he shared with Marx). The Honey Pump was a visual manifestation of the circulating flow of this system of capital. He described the founding of the FIU as if it were a free enterprise connecting the spheres of culture and economics through human capabilities: "It is necessary that the national income flow back into the cultural areas so that the circulation and development of capabilities and production on the basis of acquired capabilities are complete." By this, he meant the labor system needed to be holistically integrated with culture through the state’s economic prioritization of culture. This could be accomplished through education (a part of culture), for example, by which the worker becomes aware of his own position in the system of labor, thus integrating the cultural sphere of education into the economic structure of production and capital. This new (Steinerian) economic system would take a holistic view of the individual, including credit banks that would ensure a balanced flow of income between cultural and economic areas. In order to ensure the implementation of this idea, however, the artist would have to work on a larger scale.

These ideas had been building since the creation of the ODD, where Beuys promoted alternative means for democratic participation and a new conception of capital that included all people. However, the FIU allowed him to engage on a broader scale, promoting his ideas not only within Germany but in other countries as well. In the years following documenta 6, Beuys traveled and lectured widely, spreading the concept of the FIU through exhibitions filled with his blackboards and presentations on the concepts discussed at the conferences in 1977. The artist recognized that his hopes for a new type of educational system would not gain traction quickly.

People must first know that the first important foundations are only the ideas. They shouldn't be so rushed and impatient if the physical foundations don't come so quickly…you must first only know that it is important to emphasize very clearly the outlined idea. To work intensively on the

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113 Beuys quoted in Adriani, Konnertz, and Thomas, Joseph Beuys, Life and Works, 268.
Such vague notions reflect the artist's total lack of pragmatism — he left no real plans for how the FIU should be implemented. Once he was no longer around to promote its mission, the organization quickly dissolved. Its office in Düsseldorf closed in 1988, just two years after the artist's death. It has continued to survive through the efforts of Rainer Rappmann, who continues to publish FIU and Beuys related books, pamphlets, and DVDs through the FIU Verlag, and several of Beuys former students, who established later iterations of the FIU in Amsterdam, Antwerp, Hamburg, Munich, and in South Africa (some of which still exist to this day). However, as with the previous manifestations of his ideas, the FIU was primarily symbolic. By instituting his vision for a school that operated outside of the state system, no matter the length of its existence, the artist was proving that an alternative to the existing system was possible.

Political Ecology: The Green Party and 7,000 Oaks

In conjunction with a lecture given in Pescara, Italy, in February 1978 in which he discussed the formation of an Institute for the Rebirth of Agriculture, a small red booklet was published entitled Aktion Dritter Weg (Third Path Action). Informed by his interactions with the conference of the same name, the booklet outlines the formation of an Institute of Agricultural Studies that was to be linked to his previous efforts in Ireland, the United Kingdom, Germany, and the Netherlands. By focusing on the plant instead of mechanical exploitation of the land, Beuys contended that the question of agriculture "appears as a religious question because if we extend our sight then we also see the invisible purposes of the plant, its

114 Quote from an interview with Beuys in 1975 from Harlan, Rappmann, and Schata, Soziale Plastik, 15. Translation by the author.
placement within the entirety of a universe that envelops it at a cosmic level.”116 With the establishment of outposts of the FIU gradually growing throughout the late 1970s, Beuys began to see how his concept of free access to creativity could apply directly to his ecological concerns, and how a new ecological platform might alter mainstream German political structures on a grander scale. Through 7,000 Oaks — the only project promoted by the artist as solely a work of art — and his participation in the Green movement, the artist sought to apply these concepts to the everyday lives of people.

Beuys' preoccupation with the natural world, animals, and botany, which began in his early childhood in the wooded areas around his hometown of Kleve, translated into the materials and subjects of his work throughout his life. However, it was not until the 1970s, when the environmental movement was gaining momentum worldwide, that Beuys was able to unite these interests with his concept of social sculpture. “Now,” he said, “it is no longer regarded as romantic but exceedingly realistic to fight for every tree, every plot of undeveloped land, every stream as yet un-poisoned, every town center, and against every thoughtless reconstruction scheme. And it is no longer considered romantic to speak of nature.”117

Since the late 1950s, German writers had warned of the dangers of deforestation, chemical pollution, radioactive disaster, nuclear war, and other apocalyptic environmental crises.118 By 1972, these issues had reached such a distressing level that the United Nations established an agency devoted to environmental protection, policy, and education. Beuys responded in kind. Problems caused by mankind must also have man-made solutions, and those solutions began with dialogue: his concept of social sculpture.

Beuys' cause dovetailed with the public's increased support for the environmental movement in West Germany, which grew alongside larger social protest movements such as student activism of the late 1960s.119 Frank Finlay has rightly pointed out that Beuys anticipated many of the slogans of Green

116 Quotation translated in De Domizio Durini, The Felt Hat, 57.
117 Tisdall, Art into Society, Society into Art: Seven German Artists, 50.
politicians like Petra Kelly with his calls for direct democracy and environmentalism.\textsuperscript{120} For example, one of his earliest environmental actions, which took place in Düsseldorf in 1971 under the auspices of the ODD, \textit{Überwindet die Parteiendiktatur. Rettet den Wald!} (Overturn the Party Dictatorship. Protect the Forrest!), was dedicated to overcoming the dictatorship of the political parties and saving the forest (Figure 2.25). Throughout the 1970s, citizens' organizations dedicated to environmental issues emerged across West Germany, partly in response to the environmental destruction caused by postwar industrialization, though they often occurred in isolation from one another.\textsuperscript{121} The network created by the Federal Alliance of Citizens' Initiatives for Environmental Protection (Bundesverband Bürgerinitiativen Umweltschutz or BBU, formed in 1972), which focused on nuclear disarmament as well as the publication of scientific studies about the global impact of environmental destruction, aided in the consolidation of these environmental concerns into a strong movement between 1973 and 1976.\textsuperscript{122} However, historian Mary Fulbrook explains that it had only indirect impact by forcing a response from the major parties.\textsuperscript{123} The nuclear issue, which had been a rallying cry since the 1950s and was exacerbated by Cold War nuclear installations across West Germany, brought together the concerns of many politically active groups that emerged from the student movements of the late 1960s — including environmentalists, conservative ecologists, and left-wing radicals.\textsuperscript{124} The time was ripe for a more concerted political intervention in order for any real change to take effect: it was the beginning of the green movement in West Germany.

In 1978, ecological groups participated in state elections on a platform that included questions of nuclear safety and considered how they might unify into a single force for the 1979 European Elections.\textsuperscript{125} Beuys responded to this problem in December 1978 with the publication of a public appeal, “Aufruf zur Alternative” (Appeal for an Alternative), in the cultural section of the \textit{Frankfurter Rundschau}, which set out
\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{120} Finlay, “Green Thought in German Culture,” 246.
  \item \textsuperscript{122} This timeframe is based on Dieter Rucht, \textit{Von Whyl nach Gorleben: Bürger gegen Atomprogramm un nukleare Entsorgung} (Munich: Beck, 1980) cited in Ibid., 2.
  \item \textsuperscript{123} Fulbrook, \textit{A History of Germany, 1918-2014}, 209–210.
  \item \textsuperscript{125} Scharf, \textit{The German Greens: Challenging Consensus}, 3.
\end{itemize}
the policy positions of the soon-to-be formed Green Party. This document is widely cited as Beuys’ manifesto in which he established his artistic and political goals for the remainder of his life. In the article, Beuys reiterates the ideals set forth by the ODD and FIU, and insists that all Europeans demand a radical alternative to Western capitalism and Eastern communism (called “eastern state-monopoly capitalism”), a “relationship founded on command and subjugation, power, and privilege.” He further outlines the ways in which money and the state had caused a crisis in the postwar era: the threat of nuclear war, the destruction of the environment, consumer culture, overproduction of goods, and inequality produced by state-control of the economy, all of which contribute to a “crisis of consciousness and meaning.” His list makes no distinction between capitalism and communism, as both were equally at fault in the alienation of the individual from the Self and from the natural world. His solution is a “third way,” in which society is organized by the individual who creates social sculpture through his own initiative.

Beuys proposed a new form of politics to remedy this crisis by restoring freedom, creativity, solidarity, and mutual affinity. Citing economists Schmundt and Löbl, in his “Appeal” he calls for a restructuring of labor and monetary circulation not based on class but rather on individual need, with corporations organized around worker’s collectives and advisory boards. The first step towards enacting this evolutionary change, he says, had already begun with the dialogue generated by the FIU: “interfactionary, interdisciplinary, and international communication between alternative theoretical solutions.” He proposes that alternative movements started by ecological groups, women’s liberation, gay liberation, civil rights, citizen’s initiatives, humanist liberalism, Christian sects, and democratic socialism join forces, setting in motion a new democratic state in the upcoming 1979 European elections. While the ODD and

126 Stachelhaus, Joseph Beuys, 120–124; Riegel, Beuys die Biographie, 458–460; Finlay, “Green Thought in German Culture,” 247.
127 Joseph Beuys, “Appeal for an Alternative,” Centerfold 3, no. 6, translation of an article published on 23 Dec 1978 in the Frankfurter Rundschau (September 1979): 307. Riegel contends that the “Appeal” was written mostly by the anthropologist Wilfried Heidt, who was also involved in the founding of the Green Party, and Beuys merely submitted his handwritten changes to the composed document. Riegel, Beuys die Biographie, 459–460. This seems plausible given that Heidt came up with the concept of “unity in diversity.” “Copy of a Letter from Helmut Lippelt to Wilfried Heidt”, February 14, 1979, JBA-B 005280, Joseph Beuys Archiv, Museum Schloß Moyland, Bedburg-Hau, Germany.
128 Finlay, “Green Thought in German Culture,” 247.
FIU were founded as grassroots initiatives, Beuys was now appealing for a combined effort of many
groups to directly engage in politics through the establishment of referenda and to operate in higher
political structures like the German Bundestag. This iteration culminated in the work that he had begun
with a small group of students at the Düsseldorf Academy in 1967 (DSP), citizens of the city of Düsseldorf
in 1970 (ODD), and an international network of education reformers (FIU), to become a viable political
entity within the state of West Germany just over ten years later.

In January 1979, Beuys met the young sociologist Lukas Beckmann and the two began plans for
such an ecological group in the studio he now occupied at the Düsseldorf Academy as part of his
settlement with the state over his unlawful dismissal. The FIU and Aktion Dritter Weg became a part of
this organization, which was founded as a sonstige politische Vereinigung (other political organization) at
a conference in Frankfurt in March 1979, permitting them to participate in the upcoming European
Parliament elections in June. Their coalition of alternative groups became Die Grünen (the Greens, or
the Green Party), a political organization that continues to promote the concept of “unity in diversity.” In a
sense, the party offered the third way sought by Beuys and others following the founding of West
Germany in 1949. While inspired by environmental radical movements in the 1970s, the Greens had a
human-centered agenda concerned not only with the protection of nature and the awareness of
environmental concerns, but also a new sense of political efficacy through shorter term limits for
politicians, internal party checks and balances, and citizen involvement in democratic measures. The
point of connection between the coalition members, according to Beuys, was their relationship to a
broadened definition of ecology:

In my understanding, ecology today means economy-ecology, law-ecology, freedom
ecology…we cannot stop with a kind of ecology limited to the biosphere…the ecological problem
is a result of the unsolved social question in the last century. Therefore I say the only thing which
[sic] works is again a sort of enlarging of the idea of ecology towards the social body as a living
being.

The Greens were intended as an organization for the future structure of the social order, founded under

130 Riegel, Beuys die Biographie, 461–462.
the auspices of the FIU. However, they quickly crystallized into a political party at a meeting in Karlsruhe in January 1980, as political pragmatism took precedence over the varying competing goals of the groups that made up the party. In order to win seats in the elections on a unified platform, Thomas Scharf notes, the groups needed to compromise on organizational and ideological questions. Their first goal as an organized party was to present a candidate for the 1980 parliamentary elections. They set themselves apart from the prevailing three-party system led by the Social Democratic Party (SPD), Christian Democratic/Christian Social Union (CDU/CSU), and the Free Democratic Party (FDP), by proclaiming their opposition to politics focused on industrial growth, nuclear energy, and atomic armament. In contrast, they presented their guiding principles as “ecological, social, grass-roots democratic, and non-violent.” Beuys initially took a leading role alongside other career politicians who shared his views, although this phase was short lived.

Beuys never considered himself a professional politician, although he did run for office several times throughout the late 1970s and early 1980s. As noted in the previous section, he unsuccessfully ran for parliament in 1976 as part of the Aktionsgemeinschaft unabhängiger Deutscher (Action Group of Independent Germans) and garnered only 600 votes; he wasn't able to gain traction as a viable candidate until the media began to pay serious attention to the Greens. The artist positioned himself as a Green candidate in the 1979 European Parliament election, but he came fifth in a list of candidates topped by future Green leader Petra Kelly. In the same year, he became a Green candidate in the state election in North Rhine-Westphalia. During his campaign he produced a poster featuring a work from 1963: The Invincible, a small sculpted hare facing off a tin soldier with a gun (Figure 2.26). Through these “toys” he was setting the spiritual symbolism of the hare in opposition to nationalistic military aggression (which here could be either capitalist or communist). He became even more ubiquitous in the media — and this time not solely for his success as an artist on the pages of the arts section, but for his political beliefs and

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136 Ibid.
137 Mesch, “Problems of Remembrance in Postwar German Performance Art,” 324–325.
activities as a Green candidate.\textsuperscript{138} Although he again failed to be elected, Beuys continued to promote Green Party ideals and attend conferences throughout the early 1980s, as it became a more significant factor in the German party system and expanded its policies to include opposition to nuclear armament and the advocacy of gender equality.\textsuperscript{139}

While Beuys' actions were decisively political, his artistic ideas opposed career politicians and caused clashes with other party members. Beuys' problem was that he never fully subscribed to any political belief system, and therefore his participation was at odds with those who wanted to develop a unified agenda as well as a strategy to win elections. He was adamantly against political orthodoxy, and he was perceived by many as "a warm anarchic socialist."\textsuperscript{140} Although he worked closely with Green politicians such as Beckmann and Kelly, he eventually had to confront the fact that the party had begun to integrate itself into the same established parliamentary system that he had opposed for many years. Beuys was among a group of critics who questioned the ability of the Green party to also be an "anti-party" that embraced grassroots democratic structures such as open meetings, self-enforced term limits, and representatives who were bound to act according to members' decisions.\textsuperscript{141} The party itself was conflicted over how best to compete with professional parliamentary groups that had access to information and federal funds, the desire for which took precedence over the ideals of its members, and led to internal friction particularly in the late 1980s.\textsuperscript{142} The more the Greens operated as a political party, the further they strayed from the individualism that Beuys had promoted through the DSP and ODD. While many of Beuys' thoughts coincided with green policy, he was ultimately dedicated to art as a means to transform society for the better, fulfill individual creative potential, and ensure harmony between the human and natural worlds. Social sculpture focused on the development of creativity, not the formation of a political ideology — as the Greens needed to do in order to win votes. His utopian vision, which was

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{138} Beuys campaigned openly in the German media, including mass publications such as \textit{Der Spiegel}, \textit{Stern} magazine, and others. Ibid., 325.
  \item \textsuperscript{139} The Greens gained national success in the 1983 Federal Elections, when they secured 5.6 percent of the vote and 27 seats in the Bundestag, and again in 1987 with 8.4 percent of the vote and 42 seats. This success was paralleled in the 1984 and 1989 European Elections. Scharf, \textit{The German Greens: Challenging Consensus}, 3.
  \item \textsuperscript{140} Tisdall, "Joseph Beuys," 380.
  \item \textsuperscript{141} Scharf, \textit{The German Greens: Challenging Consensus}, 4–5.
  \item \textsuperscript{142} Ibid., 5–6; Frankland, "Germany: The Rise, Fall and Recovery of Die Grünen," 33. This struggle led to a decrease in voter support, which was particularly felt between 1987-1990.
\end{itemize}
focused on individualism, and the political praxis of an alternative party, which requires a unity of purpose, were at odds from the beginning.

Just as Beuys was becoming estranged from Green Party activities in parliament, organization members began to separate themselves from Beuys the artist. Beckmann, the Greens’ spokesman, states: “The revolutionary content of the message he conveys inevitably remains inaccessible to many people. There are biographical overtones in everything he says. He sets out to strip everyday perception bare, to reveal, through the creativity of his own thought, what lies concealed behind mere perceptible reality.” Even as early as 1980, some party members complained that they didn't understand “modern art” or Beuys’ art to begin with, and that they voted for the Greens “in spite of Mr. Beuys.” Critics complained that he spoke unclearly and in a complicated manner, and party ranks were concerned that Beuys was chasing away voters. These criticisms were justified, as Beuys had a tendency to be long-winded and esoteric in his speeches and writings. The artist was not committed to attracting average blue collar workers, despite his credo that “everyone is an artist” and efforts to include the public in his performances and political organizations. Though he himself came from working-class roots, he could not connect with those who were not accustomed to intellectual debate, analyzing symbolism or visual forms, or those who could not comprehend why an artist would engage directly in the political system. He was more interested in expressing his own ideas in the public than being pragmatic for the greater good of the party.

Beuys was, however, successful in connecting his own goals to the art community, and in gaining support from those in the art world. One of those connections was with the U.S. artist Andy Warhol. Inspired by a lecture that Beuys gave on Warhol at the Galerie René/Mayer in Düsseldorf in early 1979, the two artists began a short, but public relationship. They met several times, in May 1979 at the Galerie René/Mayer in Düsseldorf and in New York during Beuys’ exhibition at the Guggenheim, when Warhol

143 Beckmann quoted in, Stachelhaus, Joseph Beuys, 121.
145 The Greens emphasized that it was a bottom-up organization intended for the people, their electorate tended to be young, middle-class, secular, and educated. Frankland, “Germany: The Rise, Fall and Recovery of Die Grünen,” 30.
began a series of large silkscreen paintings based on Polaroids he took of Beuys at the Factory.\footnote{Russell Bowman, “Warhol/Beuys/Polke: Three Artists of Their Time,” in Warhol/Beuys/Polke (Milwaukee: Milwaukee Art Museum, 1987), 7.} Warhol originally suggested that this portrait be used by the Greens in their 1980 campaign; however, the image of Beuys’ face would have suggested that his involvement with the Greens was another political performance. Instead, Warhol designed a new poster (Figure 2.27) with several self-portraits that was distributed locally around Düsseldorf by means of a VW van driving around the city and tented area where Beuys again spoke to passers-by.\footnote{An account of their campaign activities can be found in Johannes Stüttgen, “Die Grünen,” Impressions, no. 27 (Spring 1981): 32–39.} Despite the U.S. artist's notoriety, his poster was not widely used. The Düsseldorf Greens instead recycled the image of Beuys’ 1963 work with the clay hare and toy soldier used in their previous advertisements, which was paired with the text “Europawahl — die Grünen” (European Election — The Greens) or “bei dieser Wahl — die Grünen” (For this Election — The Greens) for both the 1979 and the more successful 1983 elections.\footnote{Images of these posters are available in Beuys, “Appeal for an Alternative,” 311; D’Avossa and Ossanna Cavadini, 94; Petra Karin Kelly and Joseph Beuys, Diese Nacht, in die die Menschen-- (Wangen: FIU-Verlag, 1994), np.} Although Beuys’ art was problematic for many party members, he nevertheless aesthetically unified the movement.

Beuys’ own work began to directly reflect his exposure to environmental issues debated by the Greens while he began campaigning for office in 1980, as Jürgen Binder (a Green Party member) suggests in his reading of the work Vor dem Aufbruch aus Lager 1 (Before Departure from Depot 1, Figure 2.28) from the same year.\footnote{Juergen Binder, “Die Grünen – Vor dem Aufbruch aus Lager 1?,” in Similia similibus: Joseph Beuys zum 60. Geburtstag, ed. Johannes Stuettgen (Köln: DuMont, 1981), 55–61.} The work, originally created for an exhibition at the Kunstverein in Bonn, is an installation comprising a table, boxes, and chalkboards found in the recently closed office of the ODD in Düsseldorf, expresses the transformative processes that were so central to his earlier work. On the green chalkboard, filled with diagrams, the artist scrawled the words “Wille,” “Seele/Gefühl” and “Denken” (will, soul/feeling, and thought) — the three capacities of the psyche described by Steiner — which he uses to connect his ideas about individual consciousness and spirituality with the political views that had informed the ODD and later the Greens. It wasn't enough for him to think of the FIU and the Greens as a collaboration; rather, he thought that the Greens should be the expression of a larger Free University, in which the organization would catalyze the creative energies of individuals in hopes of
holistically integrating larger social, economic, and cultural systems. He thought that the Green party could continue the goals of the FIU — including the threefold division of society, re-conceiving economics to include creative capital, and the unity of diversity — and attain an established position in German politics. Perhaps in response to his estrangement from the party in late 1983 when he was not chosen as the candidate for North Rhine-Westphalia, Beuys began to conceptualize an environmental project that characterized his later work, spreading his theory of social sculpture to an international audience: *7000 Eichen* (*7,000 Oaks, 1981–1987*), which he proposed to curator Rudi Fuchs as his contribution to *documenta 7* in late 1981.¹⁵⁰

The conception of *7,000 Oaks* owes much to Beuys’ involvement with the Greens and their attention to environmental issues.¹⁵¹ For this action, he suggested planting 7,000 trees within the city of Kassel, where the exhibition was held, under the motto “Stadtverwaldung statt Stadtverwaltung” (wordplay meaning roughly “a forest-like city instead of city administration”).¹⁵² The planting of these trees was intended to replenish the dearth of foliage caused by the destruction during the war, a problem that the city had already recognized and was addressing with the planting of nearly 5,000 new trees in the six years preceding the exhibition.¹⁵³ Despite official efforts, the number of trees was nowhere near where it had been prior to the air raids that leveled most of the city. To distinguish his contribution from any other tree planted in the city, Beuys planned to install a four-foot tall basalt column, mined from a quarry near Kassel, next to each newly planted tree. These materials once again signaled a life-giving energy force: the growth of the tree and the crystalline form of the stone column balanced each other just as his the properties of fat and felt had in his previous work.

Beuys conceived of the oak tree as emblematic of the ideas he was then working with: social regeneration, creativity, liberation of individual thought from the present social order, and

¹⁵⁰ *documenta 7*, 19 June – 28 September 1982, curated by Rudi Fuchs. Beuys began planning *7,000 Oaks* with Fuchs as early as November 1981, but the project did not officially begin until Spring 1982.

¹⁵¹ Though nuclear disarmament and power remained key Green issues, environmental issues became more prominent in the mid- to late-1980s due to media coverage of ecological issues, scientific studies on topics like acid rain, eco-disasters like Chernobyl, and local stories of toxic chemicals. Frankland, “Germany: The Rise, Fall and Recovery of Die Grünen,” 30.

¹⁵² Mesch translates this phrase as “a well-wooded town seems far better to me than a badly-administered one.” Mesch, “Problems of Remembrance in Postwar German Performance Art,” 331.

environmentalism in particular. The oak tree has specific relevance in Germany history and mysticism, and was used by rulers throughout history as a symbol of survival and rebirth. Although the oak was imprinted on the Iron Cross by King Friedrich Wilhelm III of Prussia in 1813, and later appropriated by the Nazis as the foliage surrounding their iron cross and found on the first post-1945 coins, the artist intended to revive the connection between the oak and ancient holy rituals:

I think the tree is an element of regeneration which [sic] in itself is a concept of time... The oak is especially so because it is a slowly growing tree with a kind of really solid heartwood. It has always been a form of sculpture, a symbol for this planet ever since the Druids who are called after the oak... They used their oaks to define their holy places.154

The columns were also of symbolic importance:

This kind of basalt column can be discovered in ancient volcano flues. Cooled down inside the chimneys by specified and particular manner, it finally brings about its characteristic facets and crystalline shape... In whatever way, I made out the kind of basalt exhibiting a halfway crystalline and angular shape besides a certain amorphous tendency too.155

During the exhibition, the basalt steles were placed in a large triangular lawn in front of the Museum Fridericianum on the Friedrichsplatz (which was redesigned in the 1990s), awaiting placement next to an assigned tree. As each stone was removed and installed beside its tree, the dwindling pile symbolically marked the duration of the project and the exhibition itself (Figure 2.29). On 16 March 1982, several months before the exhibition opened to the public, Beuys planted the first tree and column next to a large heap of basalt on the lawn in front of the Museum Fridericianum (Figure 2.30). Despite reminding many residents of the rubble caused by bombings during the war, the image of these stones in front of the exhibition hall, chaotically piled next to the first planted oak tree, became the icon of the entire project.

The work was intended as the most expansive project initiated by Beuys to date as he explained to Richard Demarco in March 1982: “I wish to go more and more outside to be among the problems of nature and problems of human beings in their working places. This will be a regenerative activity; it will be a therapy for all of the problems we are standing before.”156 Beuys chose to plant 7,000 trees because the number referred to sacred traditions held by the Druids and Celts. The number seven had particular gravity because of its relation to the seven sacred trees of the Irish, but it also corresponded to the

155 Mesch, “Problems of Remembrance in Postwar German Performance Art,” 325.
156 Demarco, “Conversations with Artists,” 46.
exhibition’s title: *documenta 7*. Planting seven, 70, or even 700 trees would not create much impact, nor demonstrate the German concept of *Verwäldung* (natural reforestation); however, it was feasible for him to plant 7,000 trees within what Beuys first projected as a three-year duration (it ended up lasting five years). Such a large number of trees was a strong visual reminder of the passage of time.157

Like later social practice projects that involve large networks of participants and assistants, *7,000 Oaks* would have been impossible without the participation of local politicians, city administrators, and planners who aided in the implementation of the work from its inception. As with his previous projects, however, these people aided him in the practical aspects of his work, but did not contribute to the conceptual ideas that inspired it. In order to realize *7,000 Oaks*, Beuys emphatically involved the city administration in his planning process, and began by organizing a meeting between his planting team and Hans Eichel, the young mayor of Kassel, and representatives of local government just before the first tree was planted. The town gladly accepted *7,000 Oaks* on the condition that Beuys finance it himself, noting that only an artist of his stature could turn his artistic vision into a work of art that captivated the public interest.158 He involved several members of the FIU and the Greens, including Rhea Thönges, the city councillor for the Greens and one of the founders of the FIU in Kassel who helped obtain city permits for the project, and Johannes Stüttgen, Beuys’ former student and collaborator on the ODD and FIU in Düsseldorf. The project was planned by the FIU Koordinationsbüro *7000 Eichen* (FIU Coordination Office of *7,000 Oaks*, often called the Baumkoordinationsbüro, or Tree Coordination Office), a subsidiary of the FIU (Figure 2.31). However, unlike Beuys’ other *documenta* installations that had taken place within the walls of the Fridericianum, *7,000 Oaks* was intended as a three- to five-year-long project within the city of Kassel itself. Beuys noted: “I wished…to make a symbolic start for my enterprise of regenerating the life of human kind within the body of society and to prepare a positive future in this context.”159 As soon each of the 7,000 initial trees was planted in Kassel, the project was intended to (and did) gradually expand to other towns within Germany, then Europe, and eventually become a global initiative.

157 Ibid.
158 Ibid. From the moment *7,000 Oaks* was announced to the public in late 1981, it met resistance because of the lack of clarity when it came to funding. This is the reason why much of the ephemera related to the project proclaims that the venture was a non-profit funded by individual donations with ties to the Dia Art Foundation. See "Kunst-Professor Beuys Beschert Kassel 7000 Bäume Für 2 Millionen"; “Beuys’ Bäume: Ihre Bedeutung, Bezahlung, Bürgerbeteiligung,” *Extra Tip*, April 22, 1982.
159 Ibid.
As is made clear through pamphlets produced by the Baumkoordinationsbüro, one of the most important aspects of the project is the play of proportions between the trees, the steles, and the site. This was initiated by the pile of basalt stones on Friedrichsplatz, which gradually decreased over the course of the project, creating a visual marker of its progression (Figure 2.32). However, a proportional displacement also occurred between the stones and the trees themselves: the basalt columns dominated the oaks as saplings, but would gradually be overtaken as the trees grew. At the same time, the stones remained a constant element — unchanging compared to the gradual growth of the tree:

My point with these seven thousand trees was that each would be a monument, consisting of a living part, the live tree, changing all the time, and a crystalline mass, maintaining its shape, size, and weight. This stone can be transformed only by taking from it, when a piece splinters off, say, never by growing. By placing these two objects side by side, the proportionality of the monument's two parts will never be the same.¹⁶⁰

As Beuys saw it, a balance would be achieved about twenty to thirty years after planting, when the stone would become an accessory or adjunct to the tree. This ripple effect was intended to repeat as the project grew in geographic scale as well.

Already as the project was beginning, Beuys recognized that working with living materials was a new direction in his work, albeit one that continued his iconography since the early 1960s. The project was also tied to the threefold social order and anthroposophic ideas investigated by each of his other projects of social sculpture. For him, the project encapsulated what he had done with the Green party: it created a new way of conceiving the individual within the world order that was linked to the spiritual concepts and holistic vision of Steiner.¹⁶¹ Further, he thought that 7,000 Oaks could awaken creativity in a way that was understandable, yet still promoted the value of culture. The trees make the spiritual leap that Beuys’ other projects were arguably unable to make, due to their differing relationship with time. As living beings, trees grow organically from the earth on their own clocks, embodying the principles of

¹⁶¹ In 1982, Beuys stated, “It is about the metamorphosis of the social body in itself to bring it to a new social order for the future in comparison with the existing private capitalistic system and state centralized communistic system... It is also a spiritual necessity to which we have to view in relation to this permanent performance. This will enable it to reach to the heart of the existing systems especially to the heart of economics since the wider understanding of art is related to everybody's creative ability. It makes it very clear and understandable to everybody that the capital of the world is not the money as we understand it, but the capital is the human ability for creativity, freedom and self-determination in all their working places.” Demarco, “Conversations with Artists,” 47.
intuition and warmth. The trees then become an allusion to the spiritual world, a portal for humans to access another dimension beyond rational thought. In planting the trees, Beuys intended to spread the quality of warmth — love as the “most creative and matter-transforming power.”

The Baumkoordinationsbüro was a non-profit, like the FIU itself, tasked with supplying trees to the city of Kassel and eventually worldwide. This included building interest in the project, negotiating with local administrators, supplying trees and stones, organizing spots to plant the trees, speaking with residents near the planned sites, and the entire planting process itself. Additionally, the Baumkoordinationsbüro was responsible for generating funds for the project. From its office within one of the documenta exhibition buildings, managed by Rose-Maria Kandler and Fernando Groener and staffed by local city planners, gardeners, political activists, and members of the FIU team, Beuys’ collaborators solicited donations from individuals willing to participate — those that were interested in re-directing the flow of capital from the realm of economics to that of culture and creativity. Promotional materials circulated by the organization call for all people to modify the circulation of money, in place of investing it back into the “malignant ulcer” of the economy; instead they should cover the expense of planting at least one tree and stele by sending a tax-deductible donation of 500 Marks (approximately $223 in 1982) directly to the bank account of the FIU. In exchange, the donor received a certificate (Baumzertifikat) with a “tree stamp” of the FIU signed by Beuys (and posthumously by his son Wenzel) and a newsletter from the FIU featuring a small drawing by the artist (Figure 2.33).

The funding of the project was consistently referenced in promotional materials and in articles in the press; clearly the public had great concern about how the project was financed. One group was so enraged by their (false) assumption that public funds had been spent on the project that they covered the pile of stones in the Friedrichsplatz with pink paint just before the opening of the documenta exhibition, and held demonstrations during the press conference. Although Beuys had expected this project to be

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162 Ibid.
163 Stüttgen, Portrait of a Performance: FIU, Joseph Beuys: 7000 Oaks, 7–8. For the planting of all 7,000 trees, this equated to a budget of 3.5 million Marks (approximately 1.5 million USD), although the Baumkoordinationsbüro reported that trees actually cost between 400 and 1,400 Marks each. Calculation is based on the exchange rate of 2.242 DM to USD in 1982.
financed largely by individual donations, from his friends, his collectors, and those attracted to his ecological concerns, the bulk of the financing ended up coming from the artist himself, who at this point was a multimillionaire. Eventually, as the initial excitement of the project wound down following the closure of *documenta* in fall 1982, Beuys began to solicit donations from others in the art world, including Warhol and dealer Heiner Bastian. He even loaned his own image to a whiskey campaign in Japan to raise further funds. Beuys was not philosophically opposed to using his celebrity, since it served to bring wider awareness of his artistic mission. This inconsistency was not uncontroversial, especially when he drove a luxury Bentley between his speaking engagements about environmental matters.

The German art dealers Franz Dahlem and Heiner Friedrich also secured funding for *7,000 Oaks* through the Dia Art Foundation in New York in early 1982. The two had met Beuys in the early 1960s through their gallery Friedrich & Dahlem in Munich. Friedrich subsequently opened a gallery in New York, and together with his wife Philippa de Menil and Helen Winkler (both from Houston, Texas) established the Dia Art Foundation in 1973. Dahlem managed the European part of the foundation from his base in Cologne, where he arranged pre-financing for the purchase of the basalt stones for the project and donated a considerable sum to start the planting of the trees. The connection between Dia and Beuys' *documenta* project would later merge into the New York installation of *7,000 Oaks* (discussed below).

Beginning in March 1982, several months before the opening of *documenta 7*, trees were planted throughout the inner city of Kassel. Proposed sites poured into the Baumkoordinationsbüro from residents, neighborhood community boards, schools, churches, local groups, and even a prison, each of whom wanted more greenery in their area. These trees were planted near the churches, schools, sports fields, playgrounds, and other open buildings, courtyards, pedestrian areas, parks, and streets around Kassel, where many still stand to this day (Figure 2.34). From the initial proposal to the planting of the tree, the process of evaluations, site visits, meetings with city planners, and gathering materials took

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165 Tisdall, “Joseph Beuys,” 406; Riegel, *Beuys die Biographie*, 475.
166 Ibid., 476.
168 Interim progress report dated 24 May 1984 printed in Ibid., 16.
about seven months. Trees were planted during the planting season in spring and fall, and during the summer months caretakers were hired to water and maintain the rooting trees. While a majority of the trees were oak, several other varieties were eventually used, including ash, linden, chestnut, crab, elm, gingko, hawthorn, locust, maple, and walnut.

While the mayor and city council welcomed the project, a group of residents in Kassel were unhappy with the disruption to the flow of traffic in the city caused by the trees, and especially by the accompanying stones. They found the stones unsightly in addition to blocking traffic and creating parking problems on side streets. They were particularly perturbed by the large heap on the Friedrichsplatz, which only receded during prime planting months. This posed a real problem for Beuys, as his collaborators Karl Heinrich Hülbusch and Norbert Scholz point out, because without the support of citizens, the success of the project was inconceivable. The city council intervened on Beuys' behalf to save the project from this dissent, partly out of fear that Kassel might lose documenta if they didn't. To regain public support, a "Planting Saturday" was established to make the project more appealing to residents — the act of planting a tree with others was a fun and practical way to get people involved. Gradually, 7,000 Oaks gained some acceptance as more trees were planted throughout the city and more and more citizens began to take ownership of trees they had helped plant or that they saw on a daily basis. While the work took a few months to gather speed, by early 1983 more than 2,000 trees had been planted within the city. This sense of project ownership on behalf of a community also informed the work of U.S. social practice artists who relied on the participants in their projects to continue the project once the artist is no longer present.

Beuys wanted to expand the project beyond Kassel to the whole world (or at least the West): "As many as I can in my lifetime." The public agreed. After visiting Kassel for documenta 7, many cities and groups contacted the Baumkoordinationsbüro asking that trees be planted in towns such as Berkeley, California; Bogota, Colombia; and Boston, Massachusetts. After documenta, individuals, groups, classes,

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169 Ibid., 17.
171 Huelbusch and Scholz, Joseph Beuys, 9.
172 Loers and Witzmann, Joseph Beuys: Documenta, Arbeit, 233.
museums, galleries, foundations, and cities all over the world began sending in donations for their own trees and stones. This included several cities in the United States and the Dia Foundation in New York, which requested the first of their many trees in 1986. Although the foundation had ceased funding the project by 1985, the first five of some thirty trees were planted along West 22nd Street in New York's growing gallery district in 1987.\footnote{Uncatalogued archival material, Dia Art Foundation, New York.} As is discussed in the following chapter, more were added as Beuys' reputation improved in the 1990s. Former Dia Curator Lynne Cooke connected the act of replicating the project in sites beyond Kassel as an outgrowth of Beuys' production of multiples in the 1970s. Like the Rose for Democracy and the carrier bags made for the ODD, the trees become another material "anchor" that attaches to an idea and marks a spot for a future conversation about the issues Beuys' promoted. As such, Cooke states: "7,000 Oaks functions not just literally, in environmental terms, but symbolically, as 'inspirational images.'"\footnote{Lynne Cooke, "7,000 Oaks," Dia Art Foundation, last modified 2004 1995, accessed July 8, 2014, http://web.archive.org/web/20150316205133/http://www.diaart.org/sites/main/7000oaks/essay.html.}

Alongside 7,000 Oaks, Beuys performed another action in front of the Fridericianum in Kassel on 30 June 1982, during which he melted down a reproduction of the golden crown worn by the Russian Czar Ivan the Terrible in the sixteenth century (Figure 2.35). Standing on a wooden stage placed over the basalt blocks, Beuys demonstrated the sculptural theory of transformation that ran throughout his work, from the lessons explained to the hare at the Galerie Schmela in 1965 to the oaks spread throughout the city. Like an alchemist, Beuys pulled the crown from a plastic bag, removed the cross from the top, plucked out its precious stones, and placed the remaining gold of the crown into a container held above burning embers. As he shouted the names of famous alchemists to the crowd of spectators and cameras, the gold melted into a hot, bubbling, chaotic form. He then poured it into the mold of a hare (the "peace hare" according to the artist) and a small sphere (Campanella's sun). He held them out above the crowd and paraphrased the words proclaimed by Admiral Lord Nelson after the Battle of Trafalgar: "documenta 7 expects every man to do his duty!"\footnote{Johannes Stüttgen, "Die Skulptur '7000 Eichen' von Joseph Beuys," in 7000 Eichen, Joseph Beuys, ed. Fernando Groener and Rose-Maria Kandler (Köln: Walther König, 1987), 55.} Meaning, of course, that everyone had a duty to donate a tree.\footnote{The hare and sphere, which were kept in a case just inside the Fridericianum for the duration of documenta 7, were acquired by Beuys' collector Josef W. Froelich of Stuttgart; the proceeds of the sale went directly to finance the Oak project.}
Such public actions only served to bring the artist and his project more attention.

In 1983, he began two other projects in tandem with *7,000 Oaks*. The first was an installation in Düsseldorf that began in May, entitled *Das Endes des 20. Jahrhunderts* (The End of the 20th Century, Figure 2.36), for Szeemann’s exhibition *Der Hang zum Gesamtkunstwerk* (The Tendency Towards the Total Work of Art).\(^{178}\) Using steles from his stockpile in front of the Fridericianum, Beuys installed a total of 65 basalt stones inside two venues for the exhibition: 21 at the Düsseldorfer Kunsthalle and 44 nearby at Galerie Schmela; a third iteration was created in 1985 using 31 steles for the Tate Modern in London. He transformed his public project back into an art installation with the intention of retaining the same structural currency. Using the stones as a metaphor for the reconciliation of human thought with nature (rather than the trees and stones, as in *7,000 Oaks*), Beuys cut out a small cylinder of each stone, wrapped it in felt and reinserted it using clay to bind the pieces. Installed with building tools like a mallet and jacks strewn about the gallery, the installation suggests that humans have the capability to act, organize, and transform society. The title suggests the end of an era — one that has been mired in environmental destruction — from which something new can emerge.

For the second project, begun in summer 1983, Beuys met with the city of Hamburg, which had offered the entire city as a site for one of his ecological works of art. Instead of proposing a similar project to Kassel, Beuys suggested that he redesign a spoil ground where waste was deposited from dredging the Elbe River and install a basalt stele (taken from *The End of the 20th Century* in Düsseldorf the same summer) inscribed with the title at its center.\(^{179}\) The stone would be surrounded by fast-growing trees like poplar and willow, which would prevent the land from being further poisoned by the toxic materials in the dredge. Beuys stated that he wanted to transform this *Todeszone* (zone of death) into a *Kunstzone* (zone of art).\(^{180}\) The city of Hamburg gave an initial donation of 400,000 DM to start the project, and with the help of the FIU, a foundation was created to inform citizens about the project and coordinate the planting.

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\(^{178}\) The installation was made for a double exhibition at the Düsseldofer Kunsthalle and the Galerie Schmela, which ran from 27 May to 15 July 1983. It now exists in four forms: in 2002, the original that the artist installed at the Haus der Kunst, Munich, was relocated to the Bayerische Staatsgemäldesammlungen, Munich, and three other versions are now found in the Hamburger Bahnhof Museum für Gegenwart, Berlin, the Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen, Düsseldorf, and the Tate Gallery, London.

\(^{179}\) Ibid., 45–47.

\(^{180}\) Riegel, *Beuys die Biographie*, 477.
of the trees. However, like the residents of Kassel, citizens in Hamburg were concerned that Beuys was power-hungry and using the project to express his control over city affairs. After all, once his proposal was accepted, all he had to do was plant the trees. It was up to the city and the residents to maintain the project once he had moved on to another site. This critique has often reappeared in social practice projects, where the responsibility for sustaining the work is left to those involved after the artist has left. As a result of these concerns, the mayor of the Hamburg refused to support the project and by July 1984 it was called off. However, Beuys had already moved on to another project, planting 7,000 Oak saplings in a warehouse in Italy for the installation *Piantagione Paradise* with Lucrezia de Domizio Durini.

Toward the end of his life, as Johannes Stüttgen later recalled, Beuys focused solely on lectures and making works that he considered as the clearest expressions of his concepts. This included, of course, the completion of *7,000 Oaks*, the coordination of which had been nearly entirely managed by the Baumkoordinationsbüro in Kassel; his final solo exhibition held at the Palazzo Regale, Naples; and the completion of his only bronze-cast installation, *Blitzschlag mit Lichtschein auf Hirsch* (Lightning with Stag in its Glare, 1985). He was also invited to participate in the second Skulptur Projekt Münster in 1987; his plan to transform another sewage drainage site into a wildlife reserve consumed his thoughts until his death caused by a coronary at age 64 on 23 January 1986. Beuys was present at the inception of the project, to announce it in the press, and during his short visits to check on the progress of the project and to plant landmark trees — for example the two-thousandth on 25 April 1983 and the half-way point on 16 November 1984 and the forty-five hundredth on 26 April 1985 — alongside residents and the watchful lenses of the local newspapers.

By the following *documenta* in 1987, the pile of stones on the Friedrichsplatz had all but disappeared — they had become integrated into the fabric of the city of Kassel. In total, 3,800 oak, 1,000 ash, 650 linden, and many other tree varieties were planted throughout Kassel, reaching the goal of 7,000 planted trees in the city limits alone. The trees had also spread to other cities and towns in Germany, and were growing next to basalt stones as far away as Japan. The final tree was planted adjacent to the first by Beuys’ son Wenzel at the opening of *documenta 8* on 12 June 1987, seventeen months following the artist’s death. This tree stands on the opposite side of the path leading up to the Museum Fridericianum.

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marking the beginning and end of Beuys' last project and the culmination of the work of social sculpture (Figure 2.37). These two trees, which are still growing, also call attention to Beuys' parallel practice. Between art and everyday life, the trees and stones are a reminder to all who gather beneath their leafy shade that culture can become a priority of equal importance to working life and economics. This was the most important lesson that Beuys taught — and it was through this idea that U.S. artists began their own works defined not by the gallery space or the size of their collectors' pockets, but by their social capital.

Beuys' 7,000 trees still stand today throughout the city of Kassel and throughout the world: lining West 22nd Street in New York's Chelsea neighborhood, in public parks in Minnesota and Nebraska, near the art academy in Oslo, and another (albeit now without a stele) in Sydney, Australia, planted during the Fifth Biennale of Sydney in 1984. Standing next to streets and in alleyways, in car parks and playgrounds, and marking peace, friendship, and the effort of all those that donated money, time, energy and expertise, the trees and stones are an ever-present reminder of Beuys' ideals. He was able to transform the city from one covered in asphalt and tar into his vision of Verwaldung — an area completely covered by greenery. But was his theory of social sculpture realized through 7,000 Oaks and did it gain the international following that Beuys had hoped? While it is hard to measure the success of his project aside from the popular affection for trees themselves, 7,000 Oaks has inspired other artists to consider how their work might reflect ecological issues. There have been many adaptations, commemorations, and homages to this project led by artists, musicians, environmental activists, and art historians worldwide.182

In 1998, Tisdall and Stüttgen opened the Social Sculpture Research Unit at Oxford Brookes University in Oxford, United Kingdom, an interdisciplinary Masters and Doctoral program dedicated to continuing Beuys' legacy.183

Beuys was at pains to discover how his projects of social sculpture such as the ODD, FIU, and 7,000 Oaks could become effective agents of social change. Lacking the pragmatism to implement reform

182 There have numerous several iterations of the project in cities worldwide, including those in the United States described in chapter three. In 2007, artists Heather Ackroyd and Dan Harvey germinated 250 oaks from the original trees in Kassel for a project called Beuys’ Acorns, which has been exhibited in the UK and France since 2010. In 2012, the German-Canadian electronic group Knuckleduster committed to plant trees along their tour route in honor of 7,000 Oaks (although it's unclear if they did so). Environmental activists planted their own trees on the hill of Uisneach in Ireland.

183 The program is currently run by artist Shelley Sacks, who also began a worldwide ecological group called the University of the Trees in 2002. “Social Sculpture Research Unit,” Oxford Brookes University, accessed February 1, 2016, http://www.social-sculpture.org/.
to the current system, the artist expressed his complex and utopian thought through the art world, where he could safely expand his sphere of influence on public matters including education reform and environmental destruction. U.S. social practice artists have continued to conceive of their position as firmly planted within the cultural sphere; however, unlike Beuys, who could be perceived as a pedant and a showman, they have created collaborative interdisciplinary projects that rely on the skills offered by community members, government officials, and professionals. In relinquishing some of the authorial role that Beuys cultivated, their work has reached a variety of people aside from other artists, curators, critics, and arts administrators, or members of the public who go to art museums and galleries. Although documenta was an important venue through which Beuys could access international audiences, he only skimmed the surface of possibilities of communicating his message through such exhibitions and through satellite television programs produced with Nam June Paik and other artists, a topic that deserves further scholarly attention. Further, Beuys' use of the media — from his persona as a radical educator to his candidacy in local elections — has caused artists to consider how they might use their image to bring attention to larger social issues. In this too, U.S. artists made significant progress in the years since Beuys' death in disseminating their message using multiple media outlets, both local and global, and have continued to take advantage of developments in communication like the Internet to connect audiences to their causes.
Chapter Three
The Initial Reception of Social Sculpture in the United States

Beuys made his first of several visits to the United States in January 1974 for a ten-day, three-city lecture tour entitled “Energy Plan for the Western Man.” Inside packed auditoriums at the New School in New York, the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, the Minneapolis College of Art and Design, and the University of Minnesota, Beuys filled blackboards with drawings that explained his theory of social sculpture (Figure 3.1). Traveling with Italian dealer Lucio Amelio, his New York dealer Ronald Feldman, fellow artist Klaus Staeck, publisher Gerhard Steidl, and art critic Caroline Tisdall, he met with many artists, a women’s group, and participated in student performances, in addition to holding numerous press conferences and interviews. Together they visited studios and workshops, haunted by what Staeck described as “the rather sad outcome of students’ artistic activities displayed on easels.”\(^1\) Comparing the advanced technology in their classrooms with his own experience in art school just after the war, Beuys tersely responded to what he saw: “Once again, nothing achieved with the very best possibilities. I’d give all of them a potato-peeling knife and a piece of wood and see what came of that.”\(^2\)

On this occasion, Beuys did not exhibit any of his works or bring any objects; rather, he spoke with students about his ideas and answered their questions. His purpose was to make a connection — to discuss and laugh with Americans openly and without prejudice or criticism.\(^3\) Just two years after his public dismissal from the Düsseldorf Academy, this lecture tour consolidated the ideas he originally laid down for the FIU in 1972 (see chapter two). For Beuys, who had refused to come to the United States during the Nixon administration and Vietnam Conflict, this lecture tour was not intended as a performance, but rather the beginning of a dialogue on the power of creativity and the ability of everyday people to transform society. At the New School, Beuys asserted: “I’m not here to speak about the particular problems of artists, but about the whole question of potential, the possibility that everybody can do his own particular kind of art and work for the new social organization. Creativity is national income.”\(^4\)

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\(^2\) Ibid.
However, his U.S. audiences did not receive his ideas with the same enthusiasm as European ones. Critic Kim Levin claims that his visit was “greeted in America with derision, suspicion, and distaste, as well as fascination and awe.” He did not appear as a “Picasso of the avant-garde” (though he was considered a cultural pioneer in West Germany), but rather as an ordinary man dressed in jeans, a fishing vest, and his ever-present felt hat. Artist and critic Douglas Davis noted that Beuys' biggest problem in the United States was reconciling his role as an artist and as an agent of social change — a challenge that U.S. artists had faced for some time and continue to grapple with today. I contend that although he attempted to do just that through his concept of social sculpture, the lectures did little to elucidate his ideas for either U.S. artists or its critical community.

Beuys' work was known in the United States prior to this lecture tour — his presence in the Fluxus movement meant that he had been in communication with artists from New York to Northern California since the early 1960s. His participation in their European events brought some awareness of his objects and performance “actions,” particularly after George Maciunas relocated back to New York. Despite the fact that he remained close with several Fluxus members including Maciunas and Nam June Paik throughout his career, in the mid-1990s curator and art historian Joan Rothfuss argued that his negative interactions with others colored his reputation in the United States. She contends that Beuys' polarized reception began with Fluxus, which promoted “anti-individualism” and “anti-Europeanism.” As discussed in the first chapter of this dissertation, he was rejected by Fluxus for his self promotion and inability to collaborate with other artists, criticism that Rothfuss claims became “the paradigm for the reception of his work in America years later.” Rothfuss also asserts that his work posed particular

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7 Ibid.
9 There are few accounts of Fluxus artists who were outspokenly against Beuys' participation in the group. Rothfuss cites Eric Anderson's account of a flight between Beuys, Vostell and a group of other
problems that at the time remain unresolved: for example, how is his work at once “universal” (applicable
to all people regardless of nationality) while at the same time “inherently German” (as his work is often
described). Although the artist has been continually celebrated in Europe for the quality of his work, his
influence on younger artists, and as an agent of social change, interpretations of his work in the United
States have remained relatively unchanged since the late 1960s.

By the time Beuys brought social sculpture to the United States through his lectures in 1974, the
cultural climate had already been transformed from the rampant consumerism of the immediate postwar
period to the radicalism of the 1960s, which should have produced a welcoming atmosphere for an artist
like Beuys. Artists who were mobilized by groups that opposed the Vietnam Conflict, the student
movement, and women's liberation during this period responded to what they saw as elitist and
exclusionary market practices; conceptual artists began to critique the art object and formal strategies;
bringing art closer to life was the “art-world equivalent of the ‘real world’ urge toward greater participation,
inclusivity, and democratization of existing institutions.” Accordingly, artists sought other ways to
express their political beliefs and to reach broader audiences than galleries or museums could provide.
The quest to be anti-art, anti-market, and for the freedom of the individual were in line with U.S.
conceptual art practice by the time Beuys arrived, however, his efforts to address these issues did not
resonate with U.S. artists in the same way they had in London, Amsterdam, and Naples.

U.S. artists were also affected by their experience in World War II and in Vietnam, although their
experiences were different from Beuys'. U.S. soldiers, some of whom became artists, had geographic
distance from the atrocities of war once they returned home, unlike Beuys who returned to a ravaged
country and was therefore eager to create works that promoted spirituality and healing. Additionally,
Beuys was known to have fought with the Nazi Luftwaffe against Allied soldiers, and arguably may have
been considered as an enemy, a potential Nazi sympathizer, and therefore implicated in crimes against
humanity. His self-mythology posed problems in the United States, particularly his conflation of victims
and heroes. In 1980, for example, art historian Benjamin H.D. Buchloh wrote a searing critique of Beuys'
artists including himself, Williams, Köpke, and Schmit at an event in Copenhagen in late summer 1964 as
well as Vostell's account that Maciunas "rail[ed] against" Beuys. Ibid., 42–43. Jon Hendricks also claims
Ibid., 39.
Nina Felshin, But Is It Art?: The Spirit of Art as Activism (Seattle: Bay Press, 1995), 17.
reversal of these roles in his crash story, arguing that Beuys was avoiding the question of responsibility.\textsuperscript{12} Further, his scholarship contributed to a critical misinterpretation of Beuys' artistic practice as separate from his political activism. It was not until several years later that artist Suzi Gablik rehabilitated Beuys as a model for art works that privilege meaning over self-marketing and restore harmony to an alienated society, thereby re-igniting interest in his work.\textsuperscript{13} Her book argues that Beuys can be seen as a model for U.S. artists to address environmental issues, apply spiritual and healing principles to disadvantaged groups such as minorities and the poor, and launch urban renewal projects using a non-object based practice rooted in creative pedagogy.\textsuperscript{14} While Beuys' lectures and exhibitions were misinterpreted by both artists and critics during his lifetime, his ideas had a broad impact in the 1980s and early 1990s, when neoconservative de-funding of the arts and social support systems like welfare and public housing prompted artists to address social problems using similarly holistic methods.

Despite the clear connections between Beuys' concept of social sculpture and the artistic environment in the United States in the 1960s and 1970s, scholarship on the artist in English has focused nearly exclusively on his gallery and performance practice. Accordingly, he is better known for his second visit to the United States from 23 to 25 May 1974 during which he performed \textit{I Like America and America Likes Me} at René Block Gallery in Soho than for his lectures earlier the same year. This omission, I argue, is partly to blame for the lack of understanding about his concept of social sculpture in the United States. Aside from notations in biographical texts such as \textit{Joseph Beuys Life and Works}, Stachelhaus' \textit{Joseph Beuys}, and Riegel's \textit{Beuys die Biographie}, his interactions with U.S. audiences scarcely appear in the literature. Most accounts are documentary rather than expository. This includes film documentation of his lectures and the edited volume \textit{Energy Plan for the Western Man: Joseph Beuys in America}, compiled by Carin Kuoni in 1990, which contains a brief introductory essay by Kim Levin and numerous previously


\textsuperscript{14} Despite Gablik's positive assessment, the artist's legacy in art historical scholarship continued to be mired in the criticism he received following his 1980 Guggenheim exhibition. However, since the early 1990s, social practice artists who live or work in the United States including Tania Bruguera, Mel Chin, Rick Lowe, Daniel Joseph Martinez, and numerous others have increasingly cited Beuys as an influence on their work. Given that the number of large-scale museum exhibitions of the artist's work in the United States did not substantially increase during this period, and that literature on his more politically and socially engaged projects continues to remain limited to writings in German, this development seems quite curious.
published interviews and statements by the artist.\textsuperscript{15} Despite its lack of analysis, this book has been immensely influential in bringing Beuys' concept of social sculpture to U.S. readers (although its lack of contextualization led artists to interpret his ideas in different ways than the artist intended). Klaus Staeck, who accompanied Beuys on his first trip in January 1974, also published a volume in 1997 entitled \textit{Joseph Beuys in Amerika}.\textsuperscript{16} This bilingual publication includes a short essay by the author outlining the itinerary of the trip, a large section of photographic documentation, an interview with the artist, and Douglas Davis' \textit{Newsweek} article about Beuys from 1974.\textsuperscript{17} The German group that accompanied Beuys to the United States also produced a complete video record of their journey, which now resides at the Joseph Beuys Media Archive.\textsuperscript{18}

This chapter connects social practice in the United States to Beuys' concept of social sculpture through an analysis of his polarized reception in the wake of his 1974 lecture tour, “Energy Plan for the Western Man,” and his 1979 retrospective at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York. I argue that a misunderstanding of his work resulted in art historians' failure to reveal the centrality of his practice to European art and artists' transformation of his ideas into a new form of public art by the late 1980s. Through a review of literature on the artist appearing in U.S. publications of this period and interviews with artists inspired by his work in the 1970s, this chapter therefore accounts for the trenchant critique of his practice by Benjamin Buchloh, Suzi Gablik's promotion of Beuys as a model for socially engaged and spiritual art practice, and the popularity of Beuys' environmental projects, such as 7,000 Oaks. Despite the negative criticism that the artist received for his exhibitions and lectures in the 1970s, I argue that during in the 1980s and 1990s U.S. artists adapted Beuys' spiritual concepts and holistic model of art into their own politically conscious public art.


\textsuperscript{16} Staeck, “The Point, at which the Forms Arise.”
\textsuperscript{17} Joseph Beuys, Davis Douglas, and Nam June Paik, \textit{A Conversation Joseph Beuys, Douglas Davis and Nam June Paik} (Electronic Arts Intermix, Inc., 1974).
\textsuperscript{18} The Archive was formerly located at the Hamburger Bahnhof Museum für Gegenwartskunst in Berlin, however, it was closed during the entire period of this writing and thus its holdings could not be verified. It closed permanently in 2015 for unknown reasons and its current location can not be confirmed.
Joseph Beuys was recognized in the U.S. art press several years after he garnered critical acclaim in Europe, the key moment being his fat installation in the exhibition *Live in Your Head: When Attitudes Become Form (Works – Concepts – Processes – Situations – Information)*, curated by Harald Szeemann for the Kunsthalle Bern in 1969. Szeemann, who pioneered the authorial role of the curator, gathered together artists who emphasized process from European and U.S. movements including Conceptual Art, Land Art, Post-Minimalism, and Arte Povera. The show essentially brought the artist's studio into the institution by putting each artist's process of production on display. Beuys' inclusion among U.S. artists such as Bruce Nauman, Keith Sonnier, Robert Morris, Joseph Kosuth, and Eva Hesse ignited U.S. interest in his work and established him within a new class of internationally acclaimed artists whose work was site specific in itinerant locations worldwide. By the end of that year, two features appeared in the U.S. art press: an interview by the media artist and curator Willoughby Sharp in the pages of *Artforum* in December 1969 and an essay by artist Ursula Meyer in *Artnews* in January 1970.

Beuys' early reception can be characterized by its attention to his sculptures and performances, as well as his relation to U.S. artists and movements. Although there was a similar desire to use art as a revolutionary tool in society, attention was not paid to Beuys' concept or projects of social sculpture during this period.

From the beginning, Beuys' work was interpreted in relation to the concerns of U.S. artists. While this created a point of reference for readers, the majority of whom were artists, critics, or other art world aficionados, it neglected to provide a suitable context for his work and obscured his importance to European postwar art. This was particularly apparent when the artist was asked about the impact of the

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20 At this time the U.S. art press was focused nearly exclusively on the art world in New York and Los Angeles; few articles appeared about contemporary European artists and advertisements of exhibitions were confined to North America until around 1968. Beuys was one of the first postwar European artists to receive a profile. Even U.S. artists like Robert Morris, who appeared in the pages of *Artforum* on numerous occasions to discuss critical issues in contemporary art (such as the turn toward anti-form), did not reference Beuys despite his personal interactions with the artist in Germany 1964. Willoughby Sharp, “An Interview with Joseph Beuys,” *Artforum* 8, no. 4 (December 1969): 42.

21 Critic Kim Levin reflected on this after his show at the Guggenheim in 1980: “Ten years ago and more, Beuys was an underground name in the U.S. art world and a hero to art students. His reputation preceded him to this country. When we saw bits and pieces of his work — a felt suit, a silver broom, a blackboard with scrawls — we related it to Oldenburg, to Pop art. When we heard of his use of fat, we thought of our own post-Minimal involvements at the time in non-art materials and informal structure.
historic avant-garde on his work, which the artist vehemently denied. Though he used found objects in his work, he disavowed neo-avant-garde influences (Neo-Dada and Happenings) and Pop, and instead claimed that his objects referred to his larger theories about art. Beuys even went so far as to argue that his concept of anti-art differed from Duchamp's, for whom the term "anti" was associated with readymade objects. For Beuys, anti-art was a problem facing artists in general rather than society at large. He applied his concept to actions such as *The Silence of Marcel Duchamp is Overrated* (1964, Figure 3.2), a televised action during which he made a fat corner and painted a sign with the words "das Schweigen von Marcel Duchamp wird Überbewertet" (the silence of Marcel Duchamp is overrated) to criticize the French artist's decision to withdraw from the art world in 1918. While the German artist championed the ability of the "every-man" to change the world using creativity, he also emphasized the power of culture, and art in particular, as a catalyst of social transformation. This failure to acknowledge European avant-garde precedents proved problematic for U.S. art historians of the early 1980s, even though Beuys had come through a completely different trajectory (e.g., he was influenced by Wilhelm Lehmbuch).

Following Szeemann's show in Bern, Beuys was associated with the Post-Minimal and Post-Studio movements due to the simplified forms and amorphous materials of his fat and felt sculptures. Critics often linked him to artists such as Robert Morris, Eva Hesse, and Richard Serra, all of whom had also participated in *When Attitudes Become Form*. Of these artists, Robert Morris, who shared a similar interest in performance and materiality in his work in the 1960s and 1970s, appears to be most closely related to Beuys. Both used felt during this period, although it is unclear whether Morris was directly inspired to create his own felt sculptures (which appeared around 1967–1968) from his visit to Beuys' studio in 1964.

When he came to New York in 1974 and talked to a coyote in a gallery, we interpreted it in terms of our own performance art. The parallels were misleading." Kim Levin, “Joseph Beuys: The New Order,” *Arts Magazine* 54, no. 8 (April 1980): 154.

22 Sharp questioned Beuys about whether Marcel Duchamp influenced his work *Untitled* (1954), a plaster-covered gas cartridge suspended over an open container. Beuys responded, "No, I don't think Duchamp influenced it at all. It was influenced by life. The open form is like a barracks window, or ones [sic] you can see in old industrial cellars." Sharp, “An Interview with Joseph Beuys,” 42.


25 It's also unclear who came up with the first corner piece, as each made sculptures in this form between
meaning of their work. Unlike Morris, whose interest in material was quite literal, non-representational, and non-referential, Beuys intentionally chose fat and felt because they were referential, symbolic, and alluded to his expanded concept of art (as described in the chapter one). He was quite clear that, “the idea of minimal is expressed in these works, but they are not Minimal art… It's minimal, but in the sense of something very reduced. But there is no direct connection in my work to Minimal art.”26 The artist retained a link to the utopian and spiritual aspirations of Modernism, while many U.S. artists consciously broke from the European avant-garde.27 They rejected interiority as a relic of European tradition, preferring exteriority, while Beuys retained a continuity with an avant-garde notion of the subject. Furthermore, he explained his use of materials through his personal history — a symbolic language that was difficult to decipher without the artist’s interpretation. Nonetheless, Sharp’s 1969 Artforum interview promotes the idea that Beuys was doing nothing more than enacting his own material investigation.

There was little interest in the purportedly spiritual properties or anthroposophic aspects of Beuys' materials in the late 1960s, which, I argue below, was not manifest until later in the mid-1980s with the help of artist Suzi Gablik. An early link was made between Beuys and the San Francisco-based artist Terry Fox (1958–1981), who had participated in the May 1968 student riots in Paris and was later afflicted with a mysterious chest infection that permeated its way into the materials and concepts in his work.28 Like Beuys, Fox created eerie installations with basic geometric materials and found objects, accompanied by inaudible recorded sound and was interested in exploring the healing properties of art. Fox sought out Beuys and the two collaborated on the work Isolation Unit (Figure 3.3), which was performed at the Düsseldorf Academy in 1970. For this piece, the two artists worked independently in a small empty storage room in the basement. Beuys wore a prototype of his felt suit and carried a dead mouse, manipulated a silver bowl and spoon, ate fruit, and played sounds on a tape recorder for a work he called Action the Dead Mouse. Concurrently, Fox played sounds on pipes, broke a window, set fire to

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26 Sharp, “An Interview with Joseph Beuys,” 44.
28 Fox, who is better known in Germany than the United States, spent much of his life in Europe including Berlin and Cologne. He was also associated with René Block, a gallerist who showed Beuys’ work in Berlin and New York in the 1970s. See Angela Lammert and Arnold Dreyblatt, Terry Fox: Elemental Gestures (Dortmund: Verlag Kettler Kettler, 2015).
a cross made of cooking jelly (which he called “napalm” in reference to the Vietnam Conflict), and smoked a cigarette near a suspended light bulb in a piece entitled *Isolation Unit*. The two had similar interests in sound, and in the potential healing properties for the individual and for society.

In contrast to Sharp, German-born artist Ursula Meyer's early review focused more on the mystical aspects of Beuys' performances. She picked up on the ritual in his work, describing several of his sculptures and actions in minute detail so that readers could visualize Beuys' the breadth of his practice. She also included a detailed inventory of his social and political projects, including his ideas about the Art Academy system and his work with the German Student Party. Where many other critics found his work "too German," perhaps because of her German heritage and ability to speak the language, her article is laudatory, identifying Beuys as "a man of extraordinary complexities, a persecuted dreamer desperately defending himself and a skillful organizer with good horse-sense." These words hint at the difference between art criticism in West Germany and in the United States. Such words were not often used to describe U.S. artists, who were often cloaked behind their work. There were few examples of artists whose personality was as much a part of their work as the objects he or she produced (though Warhol may be one exception). Meyer explains that Beuys valued his philosophy more than the work itself, stating "It does not matter whether his creed is convincing or not; he is a believer. It is precisely that belief which lends authority to his work, permeating it with religious concern and making it impervious to the influence of prevailing styles from America or the Continent." In this remark, she hints at the controversy that would permeate the U.S. reading of his work for more than a decade to come. She points out that the spiritual and transcendent aspects of his work would pose problems for pragmatic, literal, or conceptual U.S. artists.

It was precisely this mystical aura that first attracted New York gallerist Ronald Feldman to Beuys'...
sculptures while traveling in Europe in the late 1960s.\textsuperscript{33} Together with Sharp, Feldman and his wife Frayda became key supporters of Beuys' work in the United States in the early 1970s. The Feldmans opened their first gallery, Ronald Feldman Fine Arts, near East 74\textsuperscript{th} Street and Madison Avenue on the Upper East Side of New York in November 1971. Soon thereafter, Feldman began reaching out to artists whose work he felt had "special relevance to our time."\textsuperscript{34} This included contemporary artists in West Germany, which up to that point had had a very small presence and next to no market in the United States, arguably due in part to a prevailing anti-German sentiment since the war.\textsuperscript{35} Feldman wrote to Beuys for the first time in March 1972, after following his work for several years. He remarked to Beuys that each time he inquired about his work, the German art community had told him to look elsewhere, as the artist was not interested in showing in the United States. He encouraged Beuys to work with him, stating, "I believe that your work will be very warmly received by the art community and that the public response will be favorable."\textsuperscript{36} Feldman's words, as well as the growing attention the artist received in the U.S. art media at this time, demonstrate the growing interest in Beuys' work from U.S. artists, curators, and critics.

While Beuys was known at this time in the U.S. for his use of materials, he was also using his lectures and political organizing as part of his growing "parallel practice." Though not a conceptual artist per se, Beuys was using his persona in a way that was attractive for U.S. artists making dematerialized work. For Suzanne Lacy, Beuys was known as a part of the constellation of conceptual artists working during this period, rather than for his sculpture.\textsuperscript{37} Beuys' conceptual project was twofold: the form of his objects was determined by the materials themselves (as in his fat sculptures), but he was also concerned with how everyday life could be framed as a creative experience (social sculpture). Both of these aspects were critical for U.S. conceptual artists at the time. Critic Lucy Lippard included both in her book \textit{Six Years: The Dematerialization of the Art Object from 1966 to 1972} (1973), which chronicled international

\textsuperscript{33} Beuys' sculptures, which he first saw at the Kunstmuseum in Basel in 1969, reminded him of Picasso's early work.
\textsuperscript{34} Ronald Feldman, "Introductory Letter to Joseph Beuys," March 1, 1972, JBA-B 027635, Joseph Beuys Archiv, Museum Schloß Moyland, Bedburg-Hau, Germany.
\textsuperscript{35} According to Riegel, this is why other larger galleries like Castelli and Sonnabend took little interest in showing Beuys' work. Hans Peter Riegel, \textit{Beuys die Biographie} (Berlin: Aufbau Verlag, 2013), 409.
\textsuperscript{36} Feldman, "Introductory Letter to Joseph Beuys."
\textsuperscript{37} Suzanne Lacy, interview by author, Los Angeles, CA, April 2, 2015.
developments in Conceptual Art.\textsuperscript{38} Beuys alluded to this schism in his practice in his interview with Sharp, stating that his sculptures were a “waste product” from his primary role as a teacher: “Objects are not very important for me anymore,” he said, “I want to get to the origin of the matter, to the thought behind it.”\textsuperscript{39} By this point, the artist was not interested in going to exhibitions or reading about other artists in art journals and he preferred not to show his works in galleries unless absolutely necessary. He claimed that his work was living, whereas “an exhibition is something that is already dead.”\textsuperscript{40} Nevertheless, galleries in the United States began to exhibit and sell his multiples by the early 1970s, including posters and images of the artist emblazoned with his name or a slogan such as “We are the revolution.”\textsuperscript{41} Thus, from an early stage, Beuys’ ideas and his own image were commodified in the United States far more than in West Germany. As critic Edit de Ak later commented, “In confirming the strength (or corniness, depending on your mood) of Beuys's persona, the posters were a tangible reminder of the function of personality in the art system. The artist, now more than ever, has the capacity to become a public personality as well as a producer of objects.”\textsuperscript{42} With the disappearance of the art object, the artist was now becoming more theatrical in public on both sides of the Atlantic.\textsuperscript{43}

As the artist’s reputation was growing, Sharp recognized the importance of bringing Beuys’ persona to a wider public. He followed his \textit{Artforum} interview with several articles in the art magazine \textit{Avalanche}, which he co-edited with Liza Béar from 1970 to 1976.\textsuperscript{44} The first issue in fall 1970 included a series of photographs of Beuys at \textit{When Attitudes Become Form} (one of which was used on the front cover), a news item covering the artist's appearance on German television, and a mention in a feature article on body art, all of which demonstrate that the artist was playing with the slippage between everyday life and art. His presence in the magazine so early in its run suggests that he was a member of \hfill

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{38} See Lucy R Lippard, \textit{Six Years: The Dematerialization of the Art Object from 1966 to 1972} (New York: Praeger, 1973). The book contains descriptions of \textit{How to Explain Pictures to a Dead Hare} and \textit{Eurasia} in order to explain the symbolism behind his materials, and includes selections from his interviews with Sharp and Meyer about conceptual art, Marxism, education, and art and the everyday.
\textsuperscript{39} Sharp, “An Interview with Joseph Beuys,” 44.
\textsuperscript{40} Ibid., 46.
\textsuperscript{41} Edit de Ak and Walter Robinson, “Beuys: Art Encagé,” \textit{Art in America} 62, no. 6 (November–December 1974): 76–77.
\textsuperscript{42} Ibid., 77.
\textsuperscript{43} De Ak discusses how artists in the United States such as Lynda Benglis and Robert Morris, neither of whom were considered conceptual artists but rather anti-form sculptors, were also producing and disseminating images of themselves at the same time. Ibid.
\textsuperscript{44} Beuys was featured in six of the thirteen issues published by Sharp and Béar, from 1970 to 1974.
\end{footnotesize}
the budding Conceptual Art movement, albeit within a U.S. rather than West German context. Avalanche presents him as the “founder of the local SDS” (the acronym for both the U.S. and German student movements in the late 1960s), his action How to Explain Pictures to a Dead Hare was compared to Bruce Nauman's body as a prop, and he was described as Terry Fox's collaborator. Gradually, as the seventies wore on, his political work generated more feature articles. His installation of the Office of the Organization for Direct Democracy at documenta 5, for example, received a prominent review in Avalanche, albeit in a nearly illegible English version of German calligraphic script (Figure 3.4) that only served to make the project more obscure and rooted in German history.

While these aspects of his practice were attractive to U.S. artists, Beuys' social sculpture was little known to artists in the United States. Beuys had much to offer U.S. artists in terms of how he used political activism as part of his art, though unfortunately his ideas were not conveyed in print. This is partly because artists in the United States were not facing the same issues as Beuys in West Germany; while he and other left-leaning artists and critics in Europe rallied behind student movements and protested against U.S. imperialism, artists here were more closely aligned with specific protests against the Vietnam Conflict, racism, and sexism. By the early 1970s, a debate about whether U.S. artists should use their work for revolutionary means was re-invigorated from earlier calls in the 1930s. Like Beuys, these artists were frustrated by existing political and economic structures, which had become intertwined.

47 The German feminist movement, for example, was interrupted by the Nazi reversal of many Weimar-era reforms, and therefore developed at a different pace than the United States. Myra Marx Ferree has argued that the movement in West Germany began with the empowerment of mothers tied to the student movement in 1968 and became visible through local action committees that later mobilized behind the decriminalization of abortion in the early 1970s. She claims that the U.S. movement was important to the development of West German feminist techniques such as consciousness-raising, the Germans favored autonomy, while the Americans fought for equal rights. For example, in the United States, where many more women returned to work following marriage and childbirth, women fought against discrimination in the workplace, unlike West Germany, where feminists promoted the Marxist idea that women should be paid for housework. Myra Marx Ferree, Varieties of Feminism German Gender Politics in Global Perspective (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2012), 53–82.
48 Letters, critical essays, and statements appeared in the pages of Artforum attesting to this in 1970. For
approach had been entirely conceptual — he used social sculpture as an umbrella for his political activities, and hence his project was purely symbolic. U.S. artists came from an opposing viewpoint. They were more interested in using aesthetic strategies as part of a broader political movement.

This tendency is exemplified by the creation of the Art Workers' Coalition (AWC) in New York in 1969, which had a more pragmatic approach to enacting change within the art world. As “workers,” they argued for the social value of art as a form of labor. They took their lead from the civil rights, feminist, and anti-war movements by empowering artists to recognize the impact of their work on a broader scale. In practical terms, this meant bringing an awareness of an artist’s right to control his or her work and have consistent contracts, and also persuading institutions to engage political issues such as the war, sexism, and racism. The goals of the AWC were similarly utopian to Beuys’ — they pushed for the social efficacy of art in a revolutionary period in U.S. history — however, they were more practical in their approach in that they pushed for more diversity within the arts and pointed out institutional relationships with corporate power. Also unlike Beuys, who took a leading role in the organizations he established through his consistent presence in their offices and installations and promotion of their causes in the media, the AWC was collaborative, positioning itself as a coalition rather than an association, guild, or as the concept of one artist. Inspired by an anti-authoritarian philosophy derived from the German critical theorist Herbert Marcuse (which had fueled the New Left student movements of the late 1960s), their gatherings allowed artists to air their concerns about the relationship between art and power, and provided the group support necessary to take direct action. For example, the AWC was active in many forms of protest including those for diversity at the Metropolitan Museum (Figure 3.5) and Museum of Modern Art. For Lippard, who was a member, this meant she could now “take [her] rage into the streets, to leaflet, picket and fight back in person and in print;” it was the first contact many artists had with community organizing.

The AWC distanced itself from Beuys over the issue of the value of artists as creative workers.

Former AWC members who later attended Beuys' lectures may have had problems with his tagline “Every human being is an artist,” as it implied the de-valuation of artistic work. With this one phrase, he seemed to undo all of the efforts not only on behalf of the AWC, but of the history of artist collectivization, particularly those gains made by artists in the twentieth century to recognize that art is a form of labor. However, Beuys did not mean that anyone could be an artist and create works of art. The German, who advocated the separation between labor and politics, believed in the social value of art and tried to employ art as a model for social change. He also believed that creativity was not exclusive to artists and that the imagination could be used to solve scientific, philosophic, social, and economic problems. Unlike the AWC members who sought to redefine the value of their work, Beuys believed that the creative development of all people, promoted through the arts, would generate the initiative necessary for revolution. Artists would take a privileged role in the development of creativity amongst the general population.

Artists and critics in the United States were also distinct from Beuys in their ability to organize communities, a skill that was developed through their participation in larger civil rights and feminist movements, who in turn were inspired by labor unions in the early twentieth century and promoted by figures like Saul Alinsky. The AWC took its cues from these movements, but applied their tactics towards mobilizing artists for the anti-war effort. Beuys, in contrast, was not particularly adept at organizing people who shared his interests, despite attracting participants for Free International University.

Julia Bryan-Wilson uses the Mexican muralists and artist's unions in the 1920s and 1930s as models for how U.S. artists approached this issue. She states that artists in the 1960s and 1970s were particularly interested in federal funding programs for the arts during the New Deal. Ibid., 26–29.

In his books *Reveille for Radicals* (1946) and *Rules for Radicals* (1971), which may have been read by some artists, Alinsky established guidelines for how U.S. “radicals” could use democratic methods to confront systems of oppression. Alinsky promoted the creation of long-lasting institutions and local positions of leadership to give fractured communities a unified voice against oppression. Using his method, social movements transformed local problems into collective action. Like the concept of direct democracy advocated by Beuys, Alinsky's method of community organizing aimed to reverse the traditional political power structure in which a small group of people exerts control over marginalized communities. He thought that such groups could regain power by banding together in large numbers, learning leadership skills, developing strategies, and sharing funding resources. They could enact social change by creating conflict to attract and educate more participants in the cause, and by establishing a larger stronghold in larger policy issues. Working in cooperation with local churches in the South, for example, the Civil Rights Movement was an organized effort to gain equal rights for African-Americans. Aaron Schutz and Marie G. Sandy, *Collective Action for Social Change* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 2–12; Saul David Alinsky, *Reveille for Radicals* (New York: Vintage Books, 1969); Saul David Alinsky, *Rules for Radicals; a Practical Primer for Realistic Radicals* (New York: Random House, 1971).
workshops or his activity with the Green Party. He established a small group of like-minded professionals from a variety of fields who could put his projects into motion while he traveled to international locations promoting his theories. He was a leader — someone who serves as the face of the organization by promoting its mission — but he did not put its ideas into effect like an organizer — someone who carries out day-to-day activities.\(^{54}\) While he was successful as an artist, Beuys was less effective at engaging the public in his causes because his energy was always divided between his individual career and his political projects (such as organizing workshops at the Free International University). Therefore, it appeared to many as if he was promoting himself as the author of these projects while denying the participation of others and that he was using the media to propel his own celebrity. This clashed with the sensibility of politicized conceptual artists who were circumventing the market and institutional settings, and who viewed self-promotion as antithetical to collective action.

Further, the language barrier posed a problem for Beuys in both English and in German.\(^{55}\) In interviews, the artist sounded obscure and opaque, estranging a public audience that might otherwise be sympathetic to his ideas. His Steinerian approach was loosely informed by Marx, but he had trouble conveying meaning for his dense philosophical thoughts. The lack of concreteness of his ideas, amplified by written statements that included half-formed sentences, made him appear ill-informed and naive. This made his ideas seem even more mysterious and impenetrable. When he lectured in front of U.S. audiences, his words were often jumbled, owing to his limited command of the English language; he often relied on the aid of Tisdall who served as his translator. This prevented U.S. artists from understanding his political platform and spiritual intentions.\(^{56}\)

Beuys’ role as an educator and his desire to create an alternative educational model was nevertheless of interest for artists who were considering how their teaching and art practice could be

\(^{54}\) Schutz and Sandy distinguish “organizers” as staffers who are paid to support community organizing efforts by carrying out day to day activities. “Leaders,” on the other hand, are volunteers that govern the group and decide on its goals. Schutz and Sandy, *Collective Action for Social Change*, 24.

\(^{55}\) Angela Westwater Reaves, “Claes Oldenburg, An Interview,” *Artforum* 11, no. 2 (October 1972): 36–37. Feldman recalled that when he first spoke to Beuys, the artist discussed his ideas in German but seemed to understand when the dealer replied in English. Ronald Feldman, interview by author, New York, NY, April 15, 2015.

\(^{56}\) Even when translated with some accuracy on the pages of *Avalanche*, the formal presentation of the text in an arcane handwritten German font made his project at *documenta 5* nearly impossible to grasp. See “Direkte Demokratie: Joseph Beuys Rapping at Documenta 5,” *Avalanche Magazine*, no. 5 (1972): 12–15.
combined. Beuys was known as an educator early on in the reception of his work in the United States, probably due to his many supporters, including Allan Kaprow, who became a prominent arts educator at several institutions across the United States in the 1960s and 1970s. Kaprow was aware of Beuys' dismissal from the Düsseldorf Academy, and like many other artists, he sent a letter of support to Minister of Education Johannes Rau on behalf of the California Institute of Arts.\(^{57}\) A petition was also sent in January 1973, signed by hundreds of artists, critics, and arts educators from across the country such as Chris Burden, Agnes Denes, Dan Graham, Walter Hopps, Irving Sandler, William Seitz, Joel Shapiro, and Hannah Wilke.\(^{58}\) Students in the United States had heard about the open door policy in his classroom and sent him letters asking if they could come to the Academy. Kaprow and Alison Knowles, both working in California, recommended students to study with Beuys in Düsseldorf.\(^{59}\) His influence on students was one of the reasons by leading educational institutions across the United States began to invite him to lecture, exhibit, and contribute to publications.\(^{60}\)

By summer 1973, when Feldman visited Beuys' studio to discuss the possibility of the artist coming to the United States, there was already a great demand for Beuys' work to be shown.\(^{61}\) His reputation was growing due to his presence in the art press; his ideas and work were in line with the growing field of conceptual, performance, and politically oriented art; and the artist had plenty of support from other artists who met him in major exhibitions such as *documenta*. However, outside of German-speaking critics, attention to the symbolism in his work or his concept of social sculpture was rare. As Beuys was involved with the student movements and garnering attention for his Organization for Direct Democracy, activist artists in the United States were testing out how their talents could be applied to


\(^{58}\) “Petition against the Dismissal of Joseph Beuys from the Düsseldorf Academy,” October 12, 1972, JBA-B 015320, Joseph Beuys Archiv, Museum Schloß Moyland, Bedburg-Hau, Germany.

\(^{59}\) At the time, there was even some discussion of an exchange program between the California Institute of Arts (where Kaprow worked) and the Academy. Allan Kaprow, “Letter to Joseph Beuys Recommending Student Jim Baumann,” April 12, 1971, JBA-B 019787, Joseph Beuys Archiv, Museum Schloß Moyland, Bedburg-Hau, Germany.

\(^{60}\) These included the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis, the Art Institute of Chicago, the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, and the Museum of Modern Art in New York. MoMA curator Kynaston McShine at the MoMA sent Beuys several requests to participate in exhibitions such as *Information* (1970), which Beuys declined. Nonetheless, McShine continued to pursue the artist with numerous letters and telegrams. See letters, Joseph Beuys Archiv, Museum Schloss Moyland, Bedburg-Hau, Germany, JBA-B 020900-JBA-B 020904.

political issues. While Beuys cited Steiner's philosophy and subsumed political issues under his concept of art, the U.S. artists were more pragmatic and used their art in the service of political issues. Despite their differences, however, U.S. artists were interested in Beuys’ growing body of work. The timing was right for him to finally make a visit and by all indications his concepts should have been warmly received.

Energy Plan for the Western Man: Beuys in America, 1974–1979

Beuys’ first trip to the United States took place in January 1974, only a few months before his better-known trip in May when he performed the iconic I like America and America likes Me at the René Block Gallery in New York. On 9 January, Beuys, along with Amelio, Staeck, Steidl, and Tisdall, arrived in New York at the invitation of Ronald Feldman, who had organized a short tour of New York, Chicago, and Minneapolis.\(^62\) In each city, Beuys had a “pubic dialogue,” as he called them, including lectures and discussions on the topic of social sculpture. He also met with the press, artists, and most importantly with students.\(^63\) This was his opportunity to bring social sculpture to a wider audience, including both artists and students; however, he did not receive a warm reception. Although artists were searching for their own ways to incorporate their activism and art practice, he was lambasted for his lack of pragmatism and the opacity of his utopian thought. The critical backlash that Beuys received during the lecture tour continued to be propagated throughout the following decade.

Feldman had to procure a special visa for Beuys because the artist was suspected as a communist sympathizer by the U.S. State Department; as a result, his trip was limited to only ten days and a select number of locations.\(^64\) The next day Beuys met with the press, and the following evening he gave the first of his public dialogues in the large auditorium at the New School for Social Research in downtown Manhattan. Staeck says that this first trip was Beuys’ “attempt to leave the traditional frame of

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\(^{62}\) The press release for his discussion at the Minneapolis College of Art and Design dated 10 January 1973 (which may be incorrectly dated one year prior), notes that the trip was also sponsored by the Dayton’s Gallery 12, where Beuys spoke on 17 January 1974. Oehler, Ben. “Press Release, Minneapolis College of Art and Design,” January 10, 1973. Uncatalogued. Ronald Feldman Gallery, New York.

\(^{63}\) Beuys had a number of requirements that had to be met in order for him to come to the United States. Feldman set up specific meetings that ultimately led to further projects. This included meetings with Douglas Davis, Nam June Paik, and a group of female artists and critics in New York. Ronald Feldman, interview by author, New York, NY, April 15, 2015.

\(^{64}\) According to Feldman, Beuys was questioned by U.S. customs for many hours about his ties to the Turkish underground movement. Ibid.
art exhibitions and to appear in front of the audience with a different work of art... in universities, schools, institutes and galleries [he] presents his 'social sculpture.' In crowded houses he describes his ideas about a new society, talks about all the questions and problems connected with it." Beuys presented his concept of social sculpture through the lectures, which were intended to inform U.S. artists about employing art as a means for social change.

Despite his admiration for American blue jeans, big cars, and wide, open spaces, for nearly ten years the artist had declined invitation after invitation from curators, dealers, artists, and educators across the country who wanted him to participate in exhibitions, collaborate on work, submit statements for publications, and speak with students. Several sources claim that Beuys refused to visit the United States in person prior to this tour in protest against the Vietnam Conflict. This argument makes sense when viewed in light of the goals of the Organization for Direct Democracy, which included disarmament, conscientious objection to military service, and assertions of the will of the people in higher government structures. The artist remained silent, however, on issues that plagued U.S. artists at the time he arrived. For example, he did not speak out against the suppression of political expression by institutions such as the Guggenheim, which in 1971 cancelled an exhibition of fellow German artist Hans Haacke, whose conceptual work addressed arts patronage and wider social problems such as slum tenements. Beuys stated that his own work had its home in West Germany, or at the furthest other Western European

65 Klaus Staeck, “The Point, at which the Forms Arise,” in Beuys in America (Heidelberg: Edition Staeck, 1997), 213. Conversely, Riegel argues that the trip was partly economically motivated, since Beuys' German collectors were annoyed with his work following documenta 5 in 1972. His work wasn't selling in his home country, but dealers still had hope that the publicity caused by his dismissal from the Academy would make his prices rise. Riegel, Beuys die Biographie, 408.

66 René Block, interview by author, Berlin, January 29, 2016; Ronald Feldman, interview by author, New York, NY, April 15, 2015; Levin, “Joseph Beuys: The New Order,” 154; Riegel, Beuys die Biographie, 409; Tisdall, “Beuys in America, or The Energy Plan for the Western Man,” 8. Despite the presence of this argument in the literature, the artist was not recorded making such statements in interviews with the press. René Block, Beuys' dealer and publisher of multiples since the mid-1960s, has also said that the artist had turned down offers to exhibit because he had a negative view of the U.S. art market, which favored bringing U.S. artists to Germany but did not welcome German artists in return. Britta Bürger, “Kurator René Block — Wie War's Mit Joseph Beuys Und Dem Kojoten?,” Im Gespräch (Berlin: Deutschlandradio Kultur, October 27, 2015), accessed January 29, 2016, http://www.deutschlandradiokultur.de/kurator-rene-block-wie-war-s-mit-joseph-beuys-und-dem.970.de.html?dram:article_id=335114.

nations, because only there could people understand the conditions that caused him to create it.\(^68\) West Germany was at the fault line of Cold War frictions between the United States and the Soviet Union and by the mid-1970s the threat of nuclear destruction was quite real for citizens; therefore, German audiences could more easily understand his mission to subvert ideological discourse with the formation of his own organizations like the Organization for Direct Democracy. While there were moments in U.S. history that made communist threats more real, such as the 1961 Bay of Pigs incident, after the end of the Vietnam Conflict in 1974 the war was too geographically removed. The revolutionary fervor of 1968 and the protests against the war in the years that followed were winding down, rather than continuing a trajectory as in West Germany.

Not only did Beuys seem to ignore the issues facing U.S. artists, but he appeared to pay little attention to broader political problems facing the country at large including the oil crisis and the recent resignation of President Richard Nixon over the Watergate scandal, and international crises like the recent CIA-backed military coup in Chile led by Augusto Pinochet. Beuys took on the role of the foreigner who was not willing to critique domestic politics:

> At the moment…I do not care about criticizing, I intended to present something positive… I think that, at the moment, a foreigner is not called upon to directly criticize a country in which he is only staying a couple of days… My job is to point to the situation in the Federal Republic [of Germany] and to furnish information about a principle that — as I always emphasize — is as unfit as the eastern communistic state of capitalism. I want to make clear that my ideas are principles that indeed are looking for a new way. Furthermore I would like to encourage as many groups as possible to contribute to these ideas, therefore to consider them as future cooperators.\(^69\)

Just as he intended his works of social sculpture to establish alternative institutional models, so too did he hope that his lectures would serve as an example for U.S. artists to find their own methods to change society. He did not serve as the mouthpiece for their issues, but rather gave them the conceptual tools to act on their own. This, as I argue in the following chapter, became an important inspiration for U.S. social practice. For although these artists were working in the United States in the 1980s and 1990s under quite different political, social, and economic circumstances than Beuys, they sought to enact social change through their work by empowering disadvantaged communities, generating educational initiatives, and

\(^{68}\) Willi Bongard, “Die Kunst ist nicht im Überbau: Gespräch mit Joseph Beuys nach seiner Rückkehr aus Amerika,” Die Welt (Hamburg, February 6, 1974), sec. Sport/Kultur. René Block has echoed this statement, stating that Beuys’ work has more meaning for Germans due to their own history and the development of art. René Block, interview by author, Berlin, January 29, 2016.

\(^{69}\) Staeck, “The Point, at which the Forms Arise,” 214.
drawing attention to politically charged issues.

Beuys’ trip was planned to take place one year after the U.S. ceasefire in Vietnam in January 1973.\textsuperscript{70} Due to the timing of the visit, in mid-January, most schools were still closed for the winter holiday, so the artist missed his prime audience.\textsuperscript{71} Furthermore, the beginning of the semester had been pushed back to early February after turmoil in the Middle East led to skyrocketing oil prices.\textsuperscript{72} Despite the difficulties that this caused for his travel plans, Beuys felt that early 1974 was a good moment to come to the United States. In particular, he thought that this was the right time to show the U.S. public that he was more interested in ideas than objects and in discussions rather than exhibitions.\textsuperscript{73} In an interview with Staeck following the trip, Beuys noted with relief, “I reached the very point where people became aware that I would never fulfill this same old request for traditional art exhibitions in America — exhibitions I have been asked for time and again for years. Some people in the USA have become rather interested in my ideas.”\textsuperscript{74}

Beuys’ public dialogues while in the United States demonstrate the simultaneous attraction and repulsion of U.S. artists to his concepts and practice in the early 1970s. On 11 January 1974, Beuys gave his first of many public discussions on the subject of social sculpture at the New School in front of a packed audience that included artists and critics such as Douglas Davis, Philip Glass, Al Hansen, Claes Oldenburg, Lil Picard, Willoughby Sharp, and Hannah Wilke, with several hundred more people crowding the doors waiting to get inside. Many had come because they had heard about a bit about his sculptures or performances, but were generally unfamiliar with the theories behind his work.\textsuperscript{75} Beuys delivered his dialogue from a large leather chair placed on stage, looking very regal in a large fur coat and his signature felt fedora. Following an extended discussion of social sculpture in clumsy English, with some

\textsuperscript{70} The trip initially included several other stops in addition to Feldman’s three chosen locations, such as the Institute of Contemporary Art in Boston. Loretta R Yarlow, “Cancellation Letter from the Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston,” December 31, 1973, JBA-B 017071, Joseph Beuys Archiv, Museum Schloß Moyland, Bedburg-Hau, Germany.
\textsuperscript{73} Klaus Staeck, “The Point, at which the Forms Arise,” 213.
\textsuperscript{74} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{75} Ak and Robinson, “Beuys: Art Encagé,” 77.
interpretation, the artist invited audience members to join him on stage to ask questions and engage in a conversation that lasted nearly three hours.

Film documentation of the event and transcripts published in *Avalanche Newspaper* (summer 1974) and Kuoni’s *Joseph Beuys in America* (1990) demonstrate that the audience was initially quite hostile to Beuys’ demeanor and his ideas.\(^7^6\) Tension was expressed quite early in the conversation by audience members who were annoyed that the artist had not considered how his theories were being transmitted to the public. The commotion from the crowd waiting to get in from outside the auditorium led several to question the format of the lecture and the credentials of those in attendance. (While billed as a free event open to the public on a first-come-first-served basis, seating was reserved for art world VIPs.)\(^7^7\)

If Beuys had larger social goals, why was he talking with New York’s “bourgeois elite” and not the “workers or the Blacks in Harlem?”\(^7^8\) Although he did not address it in his lecture, Beuys had considered both issues at some length. Due to his notoriety in Europe as an artist and as an educator recently dismissed from his position for his political ideas, Beuys had gained a large following in the West German media, which he often harnessed to disseminate his ideas to a larger public. Moreover, he was interested in satellite communications as a method to transmit images and ideas across the world (or at least to those with a television). He collaborated on several occasions with video artists Nam June Paik and Douglas Davis, including international satellite telecasts such as the broadcast at *documenta 6* (1977) and Paik’s *Good Morning, Mr. Orwell* (1984). Following his lecture, he sat down with Davis and Paik for a telecast interview at Feldman’s gallery, during which he discussed using television to erase issues of race and class and to reach an international audience.\(^7^9\) But Beuys deflected the question of the audience’s demographic. Of course non-art audiences were welcome, he said in his lecture, but their own sense of

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\(^7^7\) Jeremy Gilbert-Rolfe, “Public Dialogue with Joseph Beuys,” *Artforum* 12, no. 6 (March 1974): 69.


\(^7^9\) Joseph Beuys, Davis Douglas, and Nam June Paik, *A Conversation Joseph Beuys, Douglas Davis and Nam June Paik* (Electronic Arts Intermix, Inc., 1974).
Cultural alienation prevented them from being “aware of their own needs for mental nourishment.”

Critics Edit de Ak and Walter Robinson note that the conversation “marked the first coming of the artist-as-social-worker” through the artist’s use of dialogue to address social problems. Yet they considered the expansion of art into the field of social activism an act of “intellectual slumming.” Like artists in the United States, Beuys was experimenting with art-activism, but he was not seeking out diverse audiences (this was a later phenomenon). His failure to reach “real” people (i.e., non-art audiences) ultimately reveals the isolation of the artist, and the art world at large, from average citizens and the issues that affect them during the late 1960s and early 1970s. In his claim that “they will find it if they want to,” Beuys was effectively ignoring the racial and class divisions that prevented access to culture in the United States. He naively expected that if outsiders wanted to come to his lectures or performances, they would find the announcements (such as ads placed in the Village Voice, art magazines like Artforum, and posters in hung in universities) and take time away from their other commitments to attend. It was not until the late 1980s that artists in the United States regularly interacted with people outside of the art community. These artists tried to avoid the assumptions that prevented the public from engaging with their work by reaching out to established organizations like churches or recreation centers that could spread news about their projects by word of mouth and utilizing local media outlets.

One audience member said the people in the New School’s auditorium came to hear Beuys speak about his art (not his political activism), thus reinforcing the impression that he was a “prisoner of the art world.” The majority had come for aesthetic and not political reasons, and hoped to hear him talk about the formal development of his work and not his proposals for a new social reality. Although artists were interested in hearing about Beuys’ sculpture, when asked about it, Beuys echoed the response he made

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80 Ibid.
81 Ak and Robinson, “Beuys: Art Encagé,” 76.
83 This sentiment rings equally true for politically engaged artists who attended the lecture, such as artist Jon Hendricks, who had been active in the AWC and formed the Guerrilla Art Action Group with Jean Toche in 1971. Hendricks had never heard of Beuys’ political ideas. He went to hear Beuys speak because he was attracted to the “myth” of the artist, which had been circulating since the 1960s when artists began linking Beuys’ and Bob Morris’ use of felt. Jon Hendricks, interview by author, New York, NY, March 17, 2015.
in the Office of the Organization for Direct Democracy at *documenta* 5; his position was “aesthetics = human being.”84 A conversation about art was transformed into one about creativity and social transformation. U.S. artists were not impressed. One remarked, “I'm having a hard time dealing with what you have to say about art, because you've managed to make it so all-encompassing, so holistic that you haven't been able to define its boundaries.”85 Although he claimed to be interested in “destroying the narrow boundaries that come from a historical understanding of art,” Beuys offered no clear definition of what this understanding comprised. Thus, he was perceived as not being concrete enough to be comprehensible, even for political artists.86 His ideas were obscure, utopian, and his method was unclear.

The event received widespread negative criticism in the U.S. art media. Jeremy Gilbert-Rolfe, who reported on the public dialogue in *Artforum* (the first artist's talk to get a review), says that the discussion was more interesting for what it revealed about the New York art community than about the work and epistemological limits of Beuys' career and persona.87 While the artist claimed to want to expand the concept of art to include political and economic thinking, he placed no limits on its new parameters and was unable to consider the danger of his proposal — if art was to include politics, couldn't art be used as another form of repression?88 There was a possibility that artists like Beuys could also be used to organize society for the worse, as had been the case with National Socialism in the 1930s. Gilbert-Rolfe also notes what many in Europe had already observed: while billed as a dialogue, the event tended more toward monologue and re-affirmed Beuys' position as a cult leader or guru. In effect, his persona (and the reaction of the audience to it) inhibited any real discussion: “A cult of personality is the least liberating influence conceivable in a discussion of either art or politics, or both.”89 April Kingsley, in her review for *Kunstforum International*, was less delicate:

Beuys allegedly considers his direct dealings with “the people” a more important art activity than creating art objects. Considering the boring pedantry of his “Socratic” discussions with people here, I would guess that he is probably more effective at turning people off art than at inspiring them. His manner is didactic but he has no consistent program for, no solutions to, no productive ideas about the future he claims to be so concerned about. Setting himself up as a “modernist” messiah manipulating the media for some vague ideology concerning freedom, the only message

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84 Ibid., 34.
85 Ibid., 36.
88 Ibid.
89 Ibid.
he manages to get across is his face. Although I resent such a pretentious approach to art (artist as Christ-figure and savior), I am grateful for his ineffectiveness as a preacher and for the diminishing influence of his work on younger artists here.\footnote{April Kingsley, “New York Letter,” \\textit{Art International (Lugano)} 18, no. 3 (March 1974): 50.}

De Ak and Robinson also note that, “the audience regarded Beuys as more superstar than guiding light and his message as more circus than revelation.”\footnote{Ak and Robinson, “Beuys: Art Encagé,” 77.} This sentiment was reinforced by the promotional material for the artist, which included a 55 by 38 inch poster designed by Feldman's gallery featuring a black-and-white close-up image of the artist's face under which “Beuys” was written in large red block letters (Figure 3.6).

Feminist artists in particular were troubled by Beuys' display while in New York.\footnote{April Kingsley, “New York Letter,” \\textit{Art International (Lugano)} 18, no. 3 (March 1974): 50.} While he was on stage at the New School, artist Hannah Wilke asked about the diagrams Beuys had drawn on his blackboards, which illustrated the difference between plants (which either regenerate themselves or die) and man (who is conscious and has a soul).\footnote{Unlike many of Beuys' other blackboards, these were erased at the end of the dialogue. Hendricks, interview; Staeck, “The Point, at which the Forms Arise,” 7.} Wilke drew attention to the fact that Beuys had only included male consciousness, freedom, and spirituality by representing this concept with the drawing of a male figure with a phallus. For her, consciousness could only be achieved through male and female bodily interactions, not through democracy or socialism. Wilke interpreted the new form of social art that Beuys was proposing as an art form that brought people together and promoted happiness and physicality. The artist responded that his concept of social sculpture was broad enough to encompass feminist concerns such as gender inequality (which he had addressed through the Organization for Direct Democracy), but that feminism was not his primary issue.\footnote{Beuys had addressed feminist issues and the economic value of housework through the Organization for Direct Democracy, particularly at \textit{documenta 5} in 1972. See chapter two.} Two days later, his gallery organized a breakfast at his hotel with female artists and critics including Joan Jonas, Lucy Lippard, Cindy Nemser, Faith Ringgold, Dorothea Rockburne, Marcia Tucker, and Yoko Ono (Figure 3.7). Echoing the tension at his discussion at the New School, the women were outspokenly critical of his patriarchal demeanor and lack of interest in their work. While Beuys preached the ability of art to revolutionize society, for second-wave feminists, art had not altered their situation: they had fewer exhibitions and opportunities, their work...
sold for less, and female artists weren’t as prominent as their male counterparts.\textsuperscript{95}

Though he became better known for his authoritarian actions and charismatic persona as a result of this, these engagements, Beuys had a potentially valuable contribution that he attempted to convey to activist artists: the concept of interdisciplinary practice, summed up in the phrase, “all human activities have to become art, and they have to be organized by artists.”\textsuperscript{96} This was his “Energy Plan,” a concept of social sculpture that Beuys hoped to direct towards transforming society. In his conversations with the press, the artist suggested that if he were a U.S. citizen, he would set up information offices similar to the Organization for Direct Democracy and free schools where people could discuss creativity, self-determination, the democratic process, and economics.\textsuperscript{97} He proposed that his interdisciplinary school was “a model, independent of the government, independent from the institutions…an experiment to break down the principle that the government is the protector and ruler of the schools.”\textsuperscript{98} As I argue in the following chapter, U.S. artists later integrated outsider specialists into their own projects (for example, government officials, social scientists, and psychologists) as a method both to expand the scope of work and to attract wider audiences. For Beuys, interdisciplinarity was a way to harness the creative potential of people from different backgrounds and specializations toward correcting social problems like unemployment and the effects of migration. The fact that participants in his workshops came from different professions only served to widen their perspective on these issues and to consider them holistically.

Following his conversation in New York, Beuys received a letter from William Leicht, a professor in the Art Department at the City University of New York's Bronx Community College. Leicht was an artist

\textsuperscript{95} At a panel at the New School in New York from 6 April 1995, Camille Billops, Joan Jonas, Mary Miss, Dorothea Rockburne and Marcia Tucker reflected on their experience that morning. Though most had read about Beuys in the pages of \textit{Avalanche} magazine, none were familiar with his projects of social sculpture like the one at \textit{documenta} 5. However, they understood that he was interested in bridging the gap between radical feminist activities in the United States and the different situation that women faced in West Germany, where motherhood and the legalization of abortion were the feminists’ chief concern. “Panel on Beuys Relationship to Feminism during His 1974 Visit to New York,” cassette recording, April 6, 1995, NS070202-000007, The New School Archives, New York. See also Cara Jordan, “Joseph Beuys and Feminism in the United States: Social Sculpture vs. Consciousness-Raising,” in \textit{Social Sculpture after Beuys: A Critical Reevaluation} (presented at the College Art Association Annual Conference, Washington, DC, 2016).

\textsuperscript{96} Beuys, “Joseph Beuys in America,” 37.

\textsuperscript{97} Jonathan Price, “Listening to Joseph Beuys: A Parable of Dialogue,” \textit{ArtNews} 73, no. 6 (Summer 1974): 50.

\textsuperscript{98} Beuys quoted in Ibid.
who had been working with inner-city youth in the Bronx since the late 1960s, combining his skills as a teacher, psychologist, and as a community organizer. In his efforts to transform a street gang called the Ghetto Brothers into a viable community group, Leicht was already employing his own form of socially engaged art by the time he heard about Beuys’ ideas. He wrote to Beuys about his similar efforts to “create social structures that will help change the minds of people toward ‘right and beautiful action’” and to offer his advice for how Beuys' might better reach U.S. audiences. Leicht advises Beuys to tell his audiences that he was interested in engaging in an intellectual dialogue. Furthermore, since U.S. artists are “relativistic,” he suggests that, “they will not be prepared to regard art as having an ethical or social utilitarian value.” Thus, Beuys must make them aware that art objects are commodities that reflect the social structure. Finally, he recommends that Beuys appeal to pragmatists, “we like to see how to make an idea work,” so Beuys should “invite questions and dialogue applying [his] ideas to the life situation of an audience participant.” It is unclear whether Beuys received this letter, which was addressed to the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, before his subsequent speaking engagements. However, it shows that U.S. artists were interested in using aesthetics toward social change, but were unsure of how Beuys proposed to do so. His ideas were too opaque and his Steinerian ideas were too far-fetched for U.S. artists who were already dealing with real life issues.

On 14 January, the artist traveled to Chicago accompanied by his former student Blinky Palermo and Nam June Paik. He gave lectures, met with students at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago (SAIC), and visited tourist sights over the course of two days. The artist even participated in a student action, during which students tied his arms to his body with hemp ropes and a short wooden stick (Figure 3.8) and distributed fliers emblazoned with the word “surrender.” Although the meaning of their actions is unclear, such a gesture indicates how much more at ease he was in his interactions with students, as opposed to the distance he maintained with other professionals like those in New York. While in Chicago, Beuys gave two public dialogues. The first was a highly publicized evening engagement (Figure 3.9) that brought hundreds to the SAIC and the second was a daytime discussion for a smaller group of students.

100 Ibid.
101 Staeck, “The Point, at which the Forms Arise,” 7; Riegel, Beuys die Biographie, 412. Its unclear who enticed Beuys to participate in the action, nor their intended meaning.
During these lectures, he responded to the New York audience’s criticism of his eccentric behavior by making a general statement that one’s ego is developed for the benefit of society, not for that person’s self interest.\textsuperscript{102}

As in New York, during these lectures the artist stood alone on stage in front of a blackboard or a sheet of white butcher paper filled with his drawings. The audience was separated from the artist by several feet of empty space, which during the evening discussion was filled with cameras and illuminated spotlights. Despite this gap, Beuys had not learned from the restless crowd in New York; his dialogues at the SAIC were much more interactive, and according to Tisdall, focused more on his spiritual principles. Tisdall recalled, “Of all the lectures I heard him give in those years, in Europe or America, this was the one in which the relationship in Beuys’ thinking between the spiritual, social and natural worlds was clearest.”\textsuperscript{103} At the SAIC Beuys spoke for hours; the duration of these events was akin to his hours-long performances like \textit{The Chief} (1964), his generosity towards students following the 1964 Fluxus event in Aachen, and his marathon lectures across Europe in the 1970s. During the daytime discussion (Figure 3.10), the artist spoke so long that nearly all of the students had left by the time he finished. In an interview for the West German newspaper \textit{die Welt}, Beuys later commented that, “American youth appear much less aggressive and radicalized to me than, for example, German [youth]. Besides more civil, as a result considerably loosened and very open to new ideas.”\textsuperscript{104} Even so, Beuys found it frustrating that students were unable to make use of these ideas by producing quality work with the advanced technology in their studios. He had devised his theories and sculptural forms using the limited resources available at the Düsseldorf Academy just following the war and thus felt that these students were not using their privileged situation to their advantage.

Although the trip was billed as an opportunity for the artist to share his ideas and not his objects,

\textsuperscript{102} “The ego must be developed, not for its own sake, but because it is needed by society. If you are only interested in self-realization then you cannot make a good painting. To do this you have to have thought about forming, and about how ideas of forming stem from history.” Beuys quoted in Tisdall, “Beuys in America, or The Energy Plan for the Western Man,” 12.

\textsuperscript{103} Ibid., 10.

Beuys continued to create actions, multiples, and signed editions while he crossed the United States. This seems to contradict the artist's stated desire to escape the art world, and prompts the question as to whether the trip was in fact a promotional tour for his professional career. In Chicago, for example, Beuys performed an action based on the story of the infamous death of gangster John Dillinger, a bank robber of German descent who was shot while coming out of the Biograph movie theater in 1934 (Figure 3.11). In an effort to resurrect the negative energies of Dillinger's biography and, in Beuys' terms, “redirect them into a positive impulse,” the artist re-enacted the scene of the shooting by rushing out of the entrance of the theater, falling to the ground as if he had been shot, and running into the alley where Dillinger once lay dead. The action was caught on videotape and later transformed into one of sixteen multiples that Beuys created as souvenirs of his trip (Figure 3.12). Beuys also distributed an edition of blackboard erasers, entitled *Noiseless Blackboard Eraser* (Figure 3.13), which he had purchased in New York and stamped with the address of the Organization for Direct Democracy in Düsseldorf, and a set of large posters of the artist's face, designed by Feldman to equate the artist with a movie star. These were both signed and sold as art objects at his public lectures.

These editions and objects, all of which were sold to support his social sculpture projects, demonstrate the artist's inextricable link to the art market. They were not unlike the framed studies produced by Christo and Jeanne-Claude to fund their wrapped buildings and landscape interventions of the same period. The sale of multiples complimented other forms of support — government agencies, 

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105 *Dillinger* (1974), Jörg Schellmann, ed., *Joseph Beuys, the Multiples: Catalogue Raisonné of Multiples and Prints* (Cambridge, MA; Minneapolis; Munich; New York: Busch-Reisinger Museum, Harvard University Art Museums; Walker Art Center; Edition Schellmann, 1997), 157. Others include a poster with a taxonomic list of mammals entitled *A Political Party for Animals?*, a matchbook from the Stanhope hotel in New York over a photograph of piano keys entitled *George Jappe at the Piano*, a hotel room fire safety plan with a dollar bill inscribed with the name “John Dillinger” entitled *Notice to Guests*, and a poster entitled *DILLINGER. He was the gangster's gangster* with an image of the artist next to a movie-poster style sign marked with fake bullet holes.


107 Feldman erased the boards from his New School lecture the same evening because collectors were clamoring to purchase them during the lecture rather than listening to the artist speak. He wanted to honor Beuys’ desire for the lectures not to be commercialized, though he later regretted the decision. Ibid.
nonprofits, galleries, and collectors — without which these conceptual and participatory projects could not have been realized. Feldman recounts that while in Chicago, a student questioned the sale of these related works of art for profit. At first, Beuys responded that he had a family and that selling the boards helped to support them. However, acknowledging that the student was asking him about the value placed on such material objects compared with the artist's promotion of art as a social tool, Beuys asked the student whether he would like to erase the boards himself. The student, perhaps himself recognizing the inherent value of the boards, declined.\textsuperscript{108}

While his first trip to the United States was devoted to social sculpture, during Beuys' second and arguably better-known visit several months later in May, he performed \textit{I Like America and America Likes Me} (Figure 3.14) at the opening of the René Block Gallery (1974–1977) in Soho.\textsuperscript{109} Shown for only three days, the performance was seen by only a small group of young people and artists.\textsuperscript{110} The photographs and video documentation showing the felt-wrapped artist engaging with a coyote became emblematic of the playful, yet tense interactions Beuys had with U.S. audiences and critics. The artist had developed the idea for the performance while in Chicago earlier that year, when he experienced the icy barren landscapes of the Midwest. Beuys wanted to bring his spiritual principles to New York through the Native American symbol of the Western coyote, just as he had brought them to Germany through in the European hare (used in his earlier actions like \textit{Siberian Symphony}, \textit{The Chief}, and \textit{How to Explain Pictures to a Dead Hare}). Arriving in New York, the artist was immediately wrapped in insulating felt and transported to the gallery via ambulance (with a rust-colored cross emblazoned on its side to associate it with the Red Cross), where he lived for three days with a tame coyote named Little John, a stack of old issues of the \textit{Wall Street Journal}, and a heap of straw. In a continuous hourly cycle of movements, Beuys wrapped himself in felt and interacted with the animal by introducing elements from daily life (a flashlight, \textsuperscript{108} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{109} Though the gallery called it a “one week’s performance” from 21-25 May, 1974, the action took place for only three days from 23-25 May 1974. Schneede, \textit{Joseph Beuys, die Aktionen}, 330.  
\textsuperscript{110} Accounts of this action can be found in Caroline Tisdall, “Joseph Beuys,” in \textit{Joseph Beuys: We Go This Way}, original article published in The Guardian, 28 Feb 1972, p8. (London: Violette Editions, 1998), 168–168; Caroline Tisdall, \textit{Joseph Beuys, Coyote} (London: Thames & Hudson, 2008), 6–8; Schneede, \textit{Joseph Beuys, die Aktionen}, 330–353. Block claims that none of the VIP guests who were invited such as museum curators, critics, or even other dealers in Soho managed to attend. René Block, interview by author, Berlin, January 29, 2016.
gloves, a cane), which the animal unceremoniously either chewed or urinated on. At times he signaled the gallery to play amplified sound by playing a musical triangle attached to his fishing vest. As viewers watched from behind a caged partition, the two interacted with small gestures and movements, gradually growing accustomed to each other's presence. Eventually the artist departed the gallery just as he came, wrapped in felt and driven away in an ambulance to the airport.

He called his action *I Like America and America Likes Me* somewhat ironically, as U.S. audiences had been slow to warm to his principles of social sculpture earlier that year. While speaking with students in Chicago, he realized that audiences responded more positively to his ideas about spirituality, and hence he began to plan his “coyote action.” The action went nearly unnoticed in the press. Artists and critics in New York were still not convinced that Beuys was anything but a phony and a sham. There were even rumors that the artist left the animal behind to go out for drinks with his friends once the gallery closed for the evening. Such criticism did not wane in the years that followed. A review of the London exhibition *Art into Society* by Susan Heinemann later that year emphasized Beuys' naïveté in thinking that all people could be trusted with creative freedom and the ineffectiveness of his dialogues (which tended to emphasize the artist's ideas over those of anyone else present). The Free International University conference at *documenta 6* was described as a “jejune and insipid analysis of economics,” by critic David Shapiro, “at best a utopian sculpture in speech and at worst a disastrous escape from the task of individual execution.” His actions were identified as authoritarian, and his past was thrust into question: as a Nazi pilot, was he culpable in the Holocaust? Was his work just another form of expiation? Anxiety

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111 An account of the cycle is found in Roberta Smith, “Joseph Beuys,” *Artforum* 13, no. 1 (September 1974): 75.
112 The action was discussed several months later in Ak and Robinson, “Beuys: Art Encagé,” 75; Joseph Dreiss, “Joseph Beuys,” *Arts Magazine*, September 1974; Smith, “Joseph Beuys.” Smith praises it as “good” and “professional,” but not as abstract or psychological as performances being produced in the United States. Dreiss was perplexed by the performance, calling it “irregular” and “strange.” Both remarked that the performance dealt with Beuys' own individualized language as a means of interpretation.
114 While this continues to be a rumor, retold by artists like Jon Hendricks, Feldman confirms that this was, in fact, true. The coyote's trainer, who lived in New Jersey, did not know that the animal was taking part in a performance. When he came to check on him in the evening, Beuys would leave the gallery so the two were never seen together. Ronald Feldman, interview by author, New York, NY, April 15, 2015.
about the essential “German-ness” of his actions would prevail until the artist's following visit for the
installation and opening of a large exhibition of his work at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New
York in late 1979.

Solo Exhibition at the Guggenheim, 1979–1980

Though Beuys had expressed his affinity for the United States following his 1974 lecture tour and
performance, his packed exhibition and lecturing schedule prevented him from returning until he and
Tisdall began planning a solo exhibition in New York. The two came to New York in May 1976, when the
location of the exhibition was still undecided.117 The Museum of Modern Art had expressed interest in
Beuys since curator Kynaston McShine invited him to participate in the exhibition Information in 1970 but
the artist declined. The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum was also interested, having included Beuys in
the traveling exhibition Amsterdam – Paris – Düsseldorf from 1972 to 1973. By the fall of 1976, director
Thomas Messer was able to entice the artist to show at the Guggenheim, much to the chagrin of the
MoMA.118 The exhibition, which ran from 2 November 1979 to 2 January 1980, was (and continues to be)
one of the largest one-person shows devoted to Beuys. It did more to introduce the artist to the U.S.
public than either his lectures or press coverage had done in the previous ten years, however, the
negative reception that the artist had received several years earlier from artists and critics was replicated
in response to his sculptures and drawings.

Messer first encountered Beuys' large-scale installation of felt-loaded sleds emerging from the rear
doors of a VW van entitled The Pack (das Rude).119 He was unnerved by the “deeply troubling and very

117 Tisdall and Beuys wanted to have a dual show of Beuys' drawings in one museum and sculptures and
environments in the other. They planned the visit to see which location was better and to negotiate with
museum administrators. Caroline Tisdall, “Letter to Joseph Beuys,” April 15, 1976, JBA-B 005007,
Joseph Beuys Archiv, Museum Schloß Moyland, Bedburg-Hau, Germany.
118 Ronald Feldman claims that the Guggenheim was chosen by Beuys, but that Messer had a large role
in persuading him. Ronald Feldman, interview by author, New York, NY, April 15, 2015. However, a letter
from Tisdall to Beuys in spring 1976 shows that MoMA had stepped on Beuys' toes in their attempt to
solicit loans from the Karl Ströher collection in Darmstadt for an exhibition of Beuys' drawings in 1975.
Tisdall was afraid that the Guggenheim's spiral was not an ideal location for an exhibition of his
environments, but they had expressed interest in purchasing one of his works. The Beuys Archiv also
contains many letters from MoMA expressing their dismay at losing the show. See Bernice Rose, “Letter
to Joseph Beuys,” October 7, 1976, JBA-B 005254, Joseph Beuys Archiv, Museum Schloß Moyland,
Bedburg-Hau, Germany.
119 In an interview conducted in 1987, Messer claimed that he saw this work at documenta around the
difficult" nature of Beuys' work, which he thought had obvious ties to the Second World War and Beuys' "coming to terms" with German history. Though he didn't entirely agree with the artist's theories, he invited Beuys to plan and execute an exhibition with the assistance of Tisdall and Beuys' secretary, dealer Heiner Bastian. The complex nature and motivation for the work demanded more involvement than the Museum usually accorded an artist. Beuys was given the freedom to select and install the work (along with the help of Bastian and six Free International University members outfitted in red jumpsuits), while Associate Curator Linda Shearer served as the institutional contact, offering administrative and logistical support. Tisdall (who only partially fulfilled the role of a guest curator), mediated between the two by corresponding from her base in London, where she also wrote the extensive catalogue essay.

The exhibition (Figure 3.15) was arranged in twenty-four "stations," a concept developed by Beuys to organize his numerous sculptures and drawings thematically. Though the show has often been called a retrospective, Beuys avoided such wording. Messer claimed that the artist was not interested in tracing his own formal or stylistic evolution. Nevertheless, the works were grouped roughly chronologically in order to be more accessible to audiences unfamiliar with his entire body of work. Drawings ran along the walls, while the bays were filled with free-standing sculptures or vitrines — all arranged by the artist, just as he had done for the Karl Ströher collection at the Hessischen Landesmuseum in Darmstadt in 1970 (called the Block Beuys). Winding down the ramps and culminating in the atrium, where two of his largest sculptures, Tallow (1977) and Tram Stop (1976), were installed, each station centered around a canonic work in the artist's oeuvre: from Bathtub (1960), to Fat Chair and Felt Corner (1964), The Pack (1969), to a small exhibition of photographs related to the Free International University and the Honey Pump (1977). The works wrapped around Frank Lloyd Wright's same time Beuys was “boxing for democracy” (1972). However, the work was not shown at documenta 5. At that time the work was in a private collection and was shown in Edinburgh (1970), Stockholm (1971), Basel (1971), and twice in Munich (1972, 1973). The piece was permanently installed at the Neue Galerie in Kassel in 1976. Therefore, Messer may have been mistaken about which year he saw it. Judith Claus, email correspondence with the author, August 25, 2016.


Beuys argued that naming them "stations" was a subtle reference to the Stations of the Cross: "I work not against this idea. Okay, I would say I am always identified with Christ.” Jerry Tallmer, "Neither Clown nor Gangster," New York Post (New York, NY, November 3, 1979).


This permanent installation is entitled Block Beuys.
curved architecture, jutting into the viewer's space and inviting encounters with the artist's relics. None of
Beuys' "environments" were included (e.g., Block Beuys, Lightning with Stag in its Glare), as they were
much too large, and representations of his performances and political activities were limited to the
catalogue.\footnote{124}

As Beuys had done with his European exhibitions of the seventies, he also gave lectures: a small
public dialogue at The Kitchen in Soho just after the opening, an academic panel at the Guggenheim to
mark the closing of the exhibition, and a large public dialogue at the Cooper Union downtown.\footnote{125} By this
time, his English was a bit stronger and he was able to communicate his ideas with clarity. Although the
artist was better received than in 1974, audience members were still skeptical about his persona. At the
Museum, Beuys sat amongst colleagues of his own choosing: sociologist Dr. Ingrid Burgbacher-Krupka
(who served as the moderator), economist Dr. Eugen Löbl, and Thomas Messer. The aim of the event
was to "explore the far-reaching nature of Beuys' oeuvre by focusing on the extra-aesthetic aspects of his
art."\footnote{126} On this occasion, as in his previous lectures, he focused on his theories rather than providing any
sort of pragmatic program. Critic Brooks Adams, who attended the panel discussion, observed that the
event was "prolonging the agony of an idea whose time is passing."\footnote{127} The panelists, who were all
European, spoke about a variety of topics related to economics and art theory. For Adams, as for
countless others, this panel reprised the arguments made in 1974, which were considered stale for post-
1968 activists. It was "hard to stomach for pragmatists who had come to see if Beuys could cut it in
person."\footnote{128} While Löbl offered an outline for his alternative to Marxism and capitalism, Beuys used familiar
catchphrases and reiterated his oft-repeated statements about creativity and freedom, working himself

\footnote{124} Artist and film director John Halpern captured the installation of all the work by Beuys, Tisdall, the Free
International University team, and Guggenheim staff in his film \textit{Joseph Beuys: Transformer} (1980). Beuys
himself narrated the film based about his thoughts on the work and the show itself. Halpern also
interviewed those involved with the exhibition including Bastian, Feldman, Messer, and Tisdall in a
\footnote{125} Beuys spoke on 4 November 1979 at the Kitchen, 2 January 1980 at the Guggenheim, and 7 January
1980 at the Cooper Union.
\footnote{126} "Press Release for Beuys Panel Discussion at the Guggenheim on 2 Jan 1980," n.d.; Exhibition
records, A0003, box 1267, folder 10C, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum Archives, New York, NY. Video
recordings of the panel were unavailable at the time of this writing.
\footnote{127} Brooks Adams, "Panel Discussion with Joseph Beuys, Guggenheim Museum," \textit{Artforum}, March 1980,
72.
\footnote{128} Ibid.
into what Adams describes as a “megalomaniacal tailspin.”\(^{129}\) When an audience member asked, “Why is this so boring?,” Beuys retorted, “more than a panel discussion is necessary to achieve social change.”\(^{130}\)

As the panel took place at the beginning of his involvement with the Green Party, it would have been more useful had he outlined their plans, or at the very least described how his theories on art fit in with the party's platform.

Beuys' larger discussion at the Cooper Union, however, showed how far he had progressed in terms of his reception amongst artists since the early 1970s. The focus of this discussion was social sculpture and his idea that art should meet the needs of all people by addressing social questions.\(^{131}\) He talked about how he had applied these principles to the founding of the German Student Party and the Free International University, and explained that although he was the subject of a solo exhibition at the Guggenheim, his work had nothing to do with art. Of course, his plan had \textit{everything} to do with art. He meant this in reaction to the market-oriented parts of the art world that in his mind did not aspire to achieve social change through art.\(^{132}\) He claimed that his ideas were much more applicable to artists who were involved with making art that had power in terms of the entire social body. In order to turn politics into art, Beuys explained:

\begin{quote}
\ldots you need to create an alternative to the existing structure. You need new structures. You need new interactions with the community. Like the housing problem on the bigger scale. As long as the people believe they can't organize and only politicians can, then they can't transform politics into art. Self organization means that the problem of art is the problem of creativity. Creation implies the idea of freedom.\(^{133}\)
\end{quote}

These ideas resonated with artists who were returning to or who were just igniting their political engagement, including the young Keith Haring.\(^{134}\) Further, Beuys connected with an emerging community art and public art movement by explaining that art should do more than just speak to a specialized audience with knowledge of institutional systems: “We are at the end of modern art — it cannot solve the

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\(^{129}\) Ibid.

\(^{130}\) Ibid., 72–73.

\(^{131}\) This talk took place on 7 January 1980 in the Great Hall of the Cooper Union. Gianfranco Mantegna, \textit{Joseph Beuys: Dialogue with the Audience}, color, b/w, sound (Cooper Union, New York, NY, 1980).


\(^{133}\) Ibid.

\(^{134}\) Haring heard Beuys speak at the Cooper Union and the two attended Colab's \textit{Real Estate Show} at 125 Delancey Street the next day. They went on to both design t-shirts for a store organized by Stefan Eins at \textit{documenta 7} in 1982. Keith Haring, \textit{Keith Haring Journals} (New York: Viking, 1996), 65.
basic problems of humankind. Now art begins. Now art can be related to people, and it can be anthropological. We can now discuss how to overcome modern art.\textsuperscript{135} As opposed to his critics in 1974, here he was much more in line with the thinking of his interlocutors, who were especially captivated by the parallel that he drew between his own expanded view of art and the energy encapsulated in Jackson Pollock’s paintings.

Preceding the opening of the exhibition, Messer anticipated the public response to Beuys’ exhibition. Despite his enthusiasm for the artist, he was aware that the controversy surrounding Beuys had not disappeared since his 1974 visit, which might be disastrous. In the month before the show opened, he sent letters to each of the members of the Guggenheim board of trustees warning that he anticipated a low visitor turnout. “Beuys,” Messer said, “is likely to cause turbulence and give offense to visitors who will find it…impossible to relate to his art today…Beuys is [a radical] and his appearance in full strength at the Guggenheim is more likely to be remembered — perhaps painfully at first and proudly only in retrospect — than any number of agreeable shows…\textsuperscript{136} He advances similar notions in his preface to the exhibition catalogue, in which he concedes that the artist was controversial and that the show would “challenge the capacities of visitors.”\textsuperscript{137} While he thought that the exhibition would be rewarding for those versed in postwar European art movements, he did not have faith that those without prior knowledge of Beuys or his work would understand the materials and shamanistic tone of his theories.

The public reaction to the exhibition anticipated by Messer in his letters to the Trustees did not disappoint. People complained about the odor of the fat, the chilly temperature of the galleries (necessary to prevent it from melting), and not least about the content of the work itself. One man was seen violently kicking one of the works at the exhibition opening.\textsuperscript{138} Several asked for their money back.\textsuperscript{139} Messer contended that such viewers were not so much assaulted by the mediums or style of the works on

\textsuperscript{135} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{138} Halpern, “Joseph Beuys: Transformer.”
\textsuperscript{139} Konheim, “Thomas M. Messer on Joseph Beuys, 1979,” 11.
display, but rather, “the underlying theory that the artist has proposed and the means he has employed in its implementation. Among such notions are his insistence that thought itself and the spoken word which conveys it, are sculptural formations and, as such, admissible within a plastic vocabulary.”  

While such reactions had been anticipated, both Messer and Feldman expected that the most important audience for the show would be artists and students — because, in Feldman’s words, they were more “receptive.” While many may have attended the exhibition, their lack of response demonstrates that they were not as impressed as the two men had hoped.

Tisdall’s comprehensive 284-page exhibition catalogue, which continues to serve as a reference point for English language scholarship on the artist, had a large impact on the press and Beuys’ critical reception. In it, she traces Beuys’ biographic, stylistic, and philosophic narrative, drawing on the stations used by the artist to organize the exhibition. Framed by key texts by the artist, *Life Course/Work Course* (1974) and *An Appeal for An Alternative* (1979), the text follows the chronology of Beuys’ life from his birth at Station 1 (Bathtub) to his concept of art (Fat Chair and felt objects), and finally his theory of social sculpture and the Free International University at Station 24 (Honey Pump). Interwoven are archival photographs of Beuys and his performances as well as a small section dedicated to his “permanent conference” (lectures). In a contemporary filmed interview with John Halpern, a New York artist affiliated with the Free International University (as the Art Corporation of America Incorporated), Tisdall acknowledged that her goal with such a catalogue was to “de-mythify” Beuys’ negative image as a cult figure in the United States. Her intent was to make Beuys’ work more accessible to a wider audience by narrating the artist's own words in clear and direct language. The catalogue made Tisdall’s writings integral to Beuys’ reception for years to come, not least of which was the rehearsal of the crash story and the therapeutic use of fat and felt, which appeared in the extensive press coverage of the exhibition.

While the artist was still installing his works at the Guggenheim, Feldman was asked by the editors of *Artforum* for an image for the cover of their January 1980 issue. The artist contributed a photograph of

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several notecards with his handwriting and rubber stamps in addition to two spreads that he designed with the word “Blutwurst” (blood sausage) atop photographs of dried sausage links (Figure 3.16), which were published the following month. This particular issue also contained an incendiary article by the prominent German art historian Benjamin H.D. Buchloh entitled “Beuys: The Twilight of the Idol, Preliminary Notes for a Critique.”143 Though Beuys laughed off Buchloh’s criticism by telling Feldman, “He always thinks I’m shit,” the article has remained an important touchpoint for U.S. art historical scholarship on Beuys’ rhetoric and persona to the present day.144

In his critique, Buchloh presents two main points: first, that by employing a fictionalized version of his autobiography and esoteric symbolism, the artist was retreating from Germany’s traumatic past; second, that his refusal to acknowledge Duchamp was proof that he was attempting to bypass the institutions that frame and produce meaning for art. He begins by unpacking Beuys’ mythology, claiming that the artist had by that point reached a status that precluded him from being placed within a historical perspective. The artist, he asserts, was using the mythic story of the plane crash in Crimea to reconcile his participation in the war by portraying himself as a victim, thereby exonerating himself and the German people for their responsibility in the Holocaust.145 The “weathered” aesthetic of his drawings and sculptures signals that the artist was attempting to evoke universal or “archetypal memories” rather than directly addressing Nazi atrocities.146 Furthermore, Buchloh is enraged by Beuys’ seeming dismissal of external readings of his work by removing his work from its historical context and a relevant aesthetic discourse, and instead asking viewers to demand meaning from its materials and processes that were not inherent to the work itself. While his work is formally similar to that of his contemporaries in the United States, especially Robert Morris, Richard Serra, Bruce Nauman, and Carl Andre, his objects and performances are metaphysical — outside of such constructed meaning in linguistic or visual signs — and therefore impossible to address through art historical analysis based in critical theory. Beuys posed a

144 Buchloh and the artist apparently did not know each other personally, though both had taught at the Düsseldorf Academy. Ronald Feldman, interview by author, New York, NY, April 15, 2015.
145 Ibid., 36.
146 This has since been disproven, as discussed in chapter one, with particular reference to the Auschwitz memorial proposed by Beuys in 1958 (now part of the work Auschwitz Demonstration 1956–1964). See Gene Ray, “Joseph Beuys and the After-Auschwitz Sublime,” in Joseph Beuys, Mapping the Legacy (New York; Sarasota, FL: D.A.P.; John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art, 2001), 55–74.
problem for Buchloh, for he was not as easy to categorize.\textsuperscript{147} This was a confrontational gesture for an art historian whose career was built upon analyzing forms. However, Buchloh was justified in pointing out the inconsistency between the artist's intentions for his work and his viewers' reception of them. Beuys did not control the meaning of his work for his audience. Indeed, it can be nearly impossible for a viewer to understand Beuys' works in the way that he intended without a detailed description of the application of his philosophy to his sculptures.

More pertinent to a discussion of social sculpture, Buchloh's article also addresses what he calls Beuys' "politically retrograde" attitudes and his "misconception that politics could become a matter of esthetics."\textsuperscript{148} Buchloh claims that the artist had neutralized and aestheticized the radical student politics of the 1960s by founding his own student group (which he derides as a public relations move) and explains that the Free International University must be interpreted as "simple-minded utopian drivel lacking elementary political and educational practicality."\textsuperscript{149} Like the U.S. critics who reviewed Beuys' lectures in 1974, Buchloh also argues that his status as a cult figure was akin to "crypto-fascism," elucidated by his comparison of Beuys and Wagner, the nineteenth century German composer known for his Gesamtkunstwerk approach to opera and his anti-Semitism.\textsuperscript{150} Beuys' totalized concept of art was seen to echo the visions of the Italian Futurists, for in his desire to replace politics with art, Beuys merely reified it as a totalizing force. Buchloh's frustration with artists' lack of attention to German history had been building since his student days in West Berlin in the late 1960s.\textsuperscript{151} Therefore, he may have felt a duty to expose the artist's conflation of historical fact with his own mythology.\textsuperscript{152} Unlike in Germany, where such

\textsuperscript{147} This interpretation was further promoted in another article on the exhibition that appeared in the spring 1980 issue of the journal \textit{October}, which he co-authored with Rosalind Krauss and Annette Michelson (both of whom admittedly had little prior experience with Beuys' work). Krauss suggests that part of Beuys' appeal for Germans is that he presents a mythic rebirth that, "considers the past without having to consider it as one's own past, never in relationship to an immediate past or any specific present." Rosalind Krauss, Annette Michelson, and Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, "Joseph Beuys at the Guggenheim," \textit{October} 12 (Spring 1980): 11.

\textsuperscript{148} Ibid., 43.

\textsuperscript{149} Ibid., 36.

\textsuperscript{150} This was in response to an open letter published by Marcel Broothaers to Beuys in 1972 in which the artist compared him to Wagner. Wagner's compositions were used by the Nazis as propaganda. Buchloh, "Joseph Beuys: The Twilight of the Idol, Preliminary Notes for a Critique," 35.


\textsuperscript{152} Importantly, Buchloh's article also appeared at a time in German history when the memory of the war
views were considered taboo, in the United States the renowned art historian was free to decry Beuys and his politics as fascist. Even so, in his heavy-handed assessment of Beuys' work as fascist, he refutes any possible value in Beuys' utopian project. Buchloh's claims were not new, but his forceful delivery negatively impacted Beuys' U.S. reception.

Other contemporary reviews of Beuys' exhibition were moralistically concerned with the past and did not engage with his concept of social sculpture. Critic Kim Levin, for instance, excoriates the artist in the pages of Arts magazine by concentrating on his references to the Nazi past. She questions his motives in claiming that art could have therapeutic powers by equating his calls for the transformation of society to Hitler's demands for a new Germanic race. Donald Kuspit's more positive interpretation in Art in America, on the other hand, counters Buchloh's assertion that Beuys' was rejecting art historical precedent and instead argues that he was continuing the spiritual and utopian ideals of the early twentieth century avant-garde. He highlights that one of the key goals of social sculpture — to link an artistic revolution with a social one — was shared by the German Expressionists. However, he negates value of such a quest by concluding that the artist's forcefulness in proclaiming his vision was too close to fascism for the comfort of U.S. audiences.

In a 1998 symposium on Beuys at the John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art in Sarasota, Florida, entitled Joseph Beuys: Mapping the Legacy, Buchloh reflected on his earlier position and acknowledged the rift he had caused with regard to the artist's reputation in both the United States and in Germany. He recognized that Beuys played an important role as a German artist reflecting on recent historical events and more specifically in dealing with the Holocaust. Unlike other European modernists whose practice continued seemingly uninterrupted by the caesura caused by the war, Beuys drew attention to how meaning was created following the Holocaust — specifically in terms of how the artist related to society at large. He accepted that Beuys was the "first, if not the only, artist of the 1950s and

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154 Kuspit, “Beuys: Fat, Felt and Alchemy.”
1960s in Germany, if not in Europe, to actually have addressed the conditions of cultural production after the Holocaust. But in so doing, he noted his own reluctance to accept the wide range of the artist's practice (including his political activities, ecological concerns, activism, reflections on culture, and mnemonic art), which in comparison leaves the work of other artists he had long championed (particularly in the United States) to appear to be "about nothing," or at the least restricted to the discourse of their particular medium. From this, Buchloh deduced that Beuys had presented one strategy for how an artist could present him- or herself to the public. But of course, by 1998 U.S. artists including those involved with the AWC, feminists, a growing community of AIDS activists, and those aligned with civil rights and other movements had already been considering this for some time.

The critical reaction to the exhibition of Beuys' work did little to mitigate the criticism that the artist had received following his lecture tour in the United States in 1974. Although he gained more traction within the U.S. art media, Buchloh's assessment had long-lasting consequences. Rather than elucidating the artist's work, his forceful characterization of the artist carried weight due to Buchloh's own German heritage. Given the dearth of information on Beuys available in English at that time, the result of his assessment was a lack of artistic and curatorial interest in Beuys for years to come. Beuys was gaining traction in the media in West Germany during the same period for his participation in the founding of the Green movement; unfortunately, his application of these ideas to the political system in his home country remained obscured by his impenetrable rhetoric. Rather than elucidating his ideas for the public, the exhibition and its related lectures only served to further mask the artist in mystery.

**Social Sculpture in the Reagan Years and Beyond**

The year of Beuys' Guggenheim exhibition (1980) was a decisive election year in the United States — the presidential race between the incumbent Democratic President Jimmy Carter and the Republican Governor of California, Ronald Reagan. Throughout the previous decade, the nation had experienced low economic growth, rising unemployment, high inflation, and an energy crisis. Reagan, labeled by Carter as a right-wing radical, promised a new era of economic growth and ran on a steadfast Republican platform.

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156 Ibid., 78.
157 Ibid., 79.
of lower taxes, small government, states rights, and national defense. The former film star won by a landslide, ushering in an era of right-wing conservatism. It was during his two-term presidency (1980–1984 and 1985–1989) that a number of artists returned to Beuys' healing principles and spiritual concerns in their own work in order to address growing social problems caused or exacerbated by the U.S. government.

Only two weeks into his first term, Reagan announced what was later known as the “Reagan Revolution”: a cutback in government spending that drastically affected federally funded agencies and an emphasis on supply-side economics. Programs that helped the poor, disabled, and elderly — such as Social Security, food stamps and Medicaid — were reduced, leaving many in worse situations than before. “Reaganomics,” which included a tax cut intended to stimulate the economy and reduce the deficit, was criticized for favoring the rich.\textsuperscript{158} During his second term, banking was deregulated and federal agencies such as the Civil Rights Commission, Environmental Protection Agency, and the Equal Opportunity Employment Opportunity Commission saw massive budget cuts as well as the appointment of conservative administrators whose views were at odds with the missions of their organizations. Moreover, when Reagan came to power, he brought with him a small elite group of neoconservatives who used their energy and power to reverse welfare state initiatives, to call for increased national defense and anti-Communist strategy in foreign policy, to advocate less government intervention in economic markets, and to emphasize their belief that social problems could be solved through culture rather than politics.\textsuperscript{159}

This resulted in the concentration of wealth and power among companies and a group of elite individuals, an increase in inequality between social and economic classes (and between racial groups), and the exacerbation of social crises such as homelessness. Without access to state funding and infrastructure, these problems could not be solved by the people's will alone.

Though the economic prosperity of the wealthy lent the era a markedly consumerist and materialist character, Reagan's administration also had widespread impact on the arts through what is


now known as the “culture wars.” Though by no means unique to this period in U.S. history, radical conflict over moral and cultural issues raged between conservative and liberal politicians during his time as president, which sociologist James Davison Hunter asserts was an expression of the struggle for domination between two competing views on cultural and moral authority. Such opposing views originated in the growing Christian Evangelical movement, which sought to protect traditional values interpreted in terms of orthodox or conservative religious beliefs against the infusion of 1960s radicalism and postmodernity, which was defined as progressive and liberal. The battle concerned the definition of national identity and a realignment of public culture through the control of cultural institutions (such as education and the arts) and the shaping of political policy. The resulting culture wars drew attention to the philosophical and legal definition of art and the question of freedom of expression. Yet it was not until the late 1980s that the visual and performing arts came under the scrutiny of the right, when the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) was accused of spending tax dollars on work that neoconservatives considered obscene and indecent. In response to such accusations, the NEA restricted grants only to artists who agreed to make work that conformed to conservative moral standards, which many decried as an act of official censorship. In terms of policy, the right attacked all manner of liberal causes, including, most prominently, issues relating to the family, health (e.g., the AIDS crisis), education, popular media, law, and electoral politics. Such debates, expressed primarily through cultural and political elites, raged throughout the 1980s (and still exist today), setting a critical mood for artists that built upon the energies of 1960s and 1970s radicalism and those who were adamant defenders of issues related to social justice such as feminists and civil rights activists.

At the same time that Reagan and his neoconservative cohort were gaining power in the United States, Beuys was becoming more active with the Greens in West Germany, demonstrating the quite different role that an artist might play in relationship to opposing a political system. In October 1980, just one month prior to the U.S. presidential election, Beuys was the leading candidate for the Greens in the parliamentary election in his own state of North Rhine-Westphalia, but he did not secure enough votes to

161 Ibid., 43–46.
162 Ibid., 231–232.
163 Ibid., 173.
get a seat. However, his loss did not dissuade him from further supporting their agenda. He participated in televised debates, party events, and supported Green campaigns.\textsuperscript{164} While he actively participated in politics, he was also an important part of smaller grassroots movements. That same fall, drawing on his own history of occupying institutions like the Düsseldorf Academy in the early 1970s, he took part in the occupation of a radio station in Cologne that refused to advertise Green candidates.

Beuys was quite vocal about his disapproval of U.S. politics and military strategy during the early eighties, especially the buildup of intermediate-range nuclear weapons in West Germany in response to rising Cold War tensions between the United States and the Soviet Union. In June 1982, just before President Reagan's scheduled visit to the West German capital city of Bonn, the artist took part in several protests against violence in both the East and West (Figure 3.17). He even appeared as a singer for the popular West German band BAP, performing the song \textit{Sonne statt Reagan} (the title literally translates to “sun instead of Reagan;” Reagan is a homonym for the German word for rain). The song, which was later produced into an album and performed on German television, was another vehicle that Beuys used to express his political ideas to a wider public.\textsuperscript{165} Beuys used his power within the media, the charisma and cult status that he was so often criticized for in the United States, to focus on political issues.

By the mid-1980s, the materialism that characterized Reagan's presidency had taken hold in both the U.S. and West German art markets. In New York, prices of works by Neo-Expressionist artists such as Julian Schnabel and David Salle and Neo-Conceptualists like Jeff Koons were skyrocketing. Painters such as Georg Baselitz, Sigmar Polke, and Gerhard Richter (the latter two were Beuys' younger colleagues at the Düsseldorf Academy), and Jörg Immendorff, Anselm Kiefer, and Imi Knoebel (among other of Beuys' students) were gaining more prominence in West Germany.\textsuperscript{166} As opposed to Beuys' calls to overthrow capitalism and for art in service to the greater good, most of the U.S. artists in particular

\textsuperscript{166} According to Kim Levin, in 1983 Beuys claimed that these students “didn't really understand [his goals].” Levin, “Introduction,” 4.
were accumulating power and prestige. At the same time, however, there was a growing number of artists that opposed conservative-supported materialism using various means such as dematerialized, overtly political, and public art. While there were artists who landed elsewhere along the spectrum, it was due to this binary (materialism–dematerialism) that Beuys’ ideas were able to take hold in the United States during Reagan’s presidency. The extreme conservatism of the right activated left-leaning artists to seek out alternative sponsorship, experiment with new mediums, and respond to the lack of social support systems and inadequate infrastructure in areas such as healthcare, housing, and the environment. These artists, like Beuys, were operating in a neoliberal capitalist environment though their work was a conscious rejection of its ideological tenets and negative consequences of its implementation.

Though Beuys had a continuous presence in the European media during the 1980s, his reception in the United States was lukewarm following his exhibition at the Guggenheim, arguably because of Buchloh’s assessment. A lack of U.S. collectors and institutional interest resulted in few opportunities for his work to be seen by the public. The artist had sporadic exhibitions in the United States outside of Ronald Feldman’s gallery during this period, where his sculptures, vitrines, blackboards, and installations were shown in 1982, 1986, and again in 1989. During this time, the reputation of his 1974 coyote action also grew, arguably because it was restaged (albeit without the artist present) by Feldman twice more during the artist’s lifetime. Critical reception often repeated the arguments that had come before, including skepticism about the artist’s outsized persona, rather than focusing on areas of his practice that had been under-examined such as social sculpture. Reviews in the U.S. art press of his shows in Germany, including *The End of the 20th Century* at Galerie Schmela in Düsseldorf in May 1983, focused on the material of his sculptures rather than his political or environmental activism. He was described as a “loner” of the older generation,” “intensely individualistic,” and accused of “playing God,” all of which ran

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counter to his intentions. Furthermore his ideas no longer seemed radical, even for those involved in political causes — the artist had been rehashing the same story for more than two decades and was considered a “classic” German artist rather than a revolutionary figure.

The utopian imperative of his project appeared to devolve into a “still life” following Beuys’ death in 1986, when the artist was no longer present to lecture or speak with audiences about his ideas. During the Cold War, Beuys’ mission had been to combat dominant ideologies through a total work of art; however, the urgency of his project lost steam by the late 1980s. The Free International University officially dissolved in 1988, though several of his students resurrected it in different forms in the years that followed; his former student Johannes Stüttgen began the Omnibus für direkt Demokratie, a traveling bus used to advocate direct democracy, in 1987; the Green movement in Germany became one of Europe’s most important political parties, particularly after German re-unification in 1990. None of these projects had a strong presence in the United States during the artist’s lifetime, and it wasn’t until the mid-1990s that his 7,000 Oaks was revived in New York and across the Midwest (discussed below).

In the late 1990s, critic Kim Levin, who had echoed Buchloh’s vitriolic critique in her review of the Guggenheim exhibition nearly twenty years prior, disputed the artist’s influence in contemporary art. Her essay, included in the proceedings for the 1998 symposium Joseph Beuys: Mapping the Legacy, notes that tracking Beuys’ resonance is akin to questioning his uniqueness and originality — an impossible task. Levin claims that Beuys’ control over the interpretation and reproduction of his own work prevented artists, critics, and scholars from understanding his oeuvre. This led to distortions and omissions, she argues, particularly when considering his self-mythology. Although Beuys considered the story of the plane crash in Crimea as germinal to for his concept of art (see chapter one), critics such as

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171 Critic Wolfgang Max Faust remarked that even in the months following the artist’s death in January 1986, Beuys was in danger of being “stylized into a museum and art market artist who is assigned the inconsequentiality of the classic.” Wolfgang Max Faust, “Cologne: Joseph Beuys, Galerie Zwirner,” Artforum, December 1986, 130.

172 Wallach, “Two Who Turned the Material into the Mystical.”


174 Ibid.
Levin and Buchloh were still deeply invested in the veracity of the story itself, as if they were out to prove that he was, indeed, a charlatan. There was little attention paid to Beuys' philosophy or his concept of social sculpture until the mid-1980s, when artists and critics began reacting to the hypertrophied art market.

In her book Has Modernism Failed? (1984), Suzi Gablik, an artist who turned to criticism in the late 1970s, argues that the social and spiritual ideals of modernism had, by the 1980s, completely disappeared from the market-driven, insular art world. Her dismissal of modernism reflected the prevailing postmodern attitude of the eighties, which was observed not only in artistic styles but also in cultural attitudes. The book is a reaction to one of the “negative” side effects of postmodernism — the success of artists who remixed styles from past generations but did nothing to change social structures, exemplified by Neo-Expressionism. On the other hand, postmodernism also promoted inclusion of others (particularly women and people of color) and called for the end of white male hegemony, a tendency that was championed by art critics Hal Foster and Craig Owens. This strain of postmodernism rejected a system of unifying beliefs and systems of explanation, like those promoted by Beuys, in favor of a chaotic, de-centered society made up of many voices, ideas, and perspectives. Mass media and technologic advances brought people into close contact with the images and voices of others, de-centering the self in a similar fashion to society at large. Identity, in other words, was better understood as a social construct and relative to one's context. Gablik argues that the advent of postmodernism did not offer more opportunities for creative freedom, but rather that it established a false sense of complexity that covered up its lack of meaning. She posits that the two positions held by modernism — “art as the expression of the individual or as the fulfillment of social needs” — now defined the dilemma of contemporary art. In her call to arms, she implores artists to regain their moral compass and recommit themselves to a social purpose.

Gablik proposes Beuys as an example of an artist who re-invests art with ancient values as a

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176 Collins, Transforming America, 148.
177 Gablik, Has Modernism Failed?, 21–22.
178 Ibid., 35.
means of communicating with the spiritual world and connecting with creative energies. Unlike postmodern artists, he had built bridges between the material and spiritual worlds and between art and society. She uses his fat and felt sculptures as well as his coyote performance as examples of how he put this into action. Additionally, he educated other his students to be socially aware and engaged in society by making meaningful connections between art and peoples' lives. In so doing, she establishes Beuys as a model for how society might "maximize personal autonomy and social relatedness at the same time" by merging traditional and modern values. Further, she advocates art that serves as a model of cultural resistance by producing a counter consciousness to the prevailing conformist mindset. Since museums and galleries were already embedded in a market system of producing and communicating meaning, artists needed to seek out other venues to express their ideas: namely, by engaging directly with the public and disavowing the rewards of money and prestige. While not mentioned specifically by title in her book (she may not have been aware of their existence given the limited amount of material available on them at this time), Beuys' three projects of social sculpture are examples of an artist directly engaging with the public with anti-capitalist intentions.

Gablik's book anticipated a major debate about art in the public realm spurred by controversy surrounding projects such as Richard Serra's *Tilted Arc* (1981–1989, Figure 3.18), a 120-foot-long and 12-foot-tall core-ten steel sculpture that was installed in Federal Plaza in downtown New York in 1981. The sculpture was eventually removed in 1989, four years after a three-day debate featuring the artist and art professionals who testified in favor of its artistic quality pit against neighboring workers who condemned it as alienating. The controversy marked a shift in the conception of public art, which up until that point had been defined as a work of art, particularly modernist sculpture placed in outdoor or urban environments as a means to humanize the environment (disparagingly called "plop art"). This model originated from the establishment of the NEA's Art in Public Places Program in 1967 and the General Services Administration's Art in Architecture (1972) and nationwide percent-for-art programs. By the

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179 Ibid., 134.
180 Ibid., 136.
mid-1980s, an increase in crises such as crime and homelessness in urban areas stirred a public distrust for art that did not directly address social issues or represent the residents' visions of their own communities, leading to attacks on the content, use, and funding sources of public art. Consequently, community members were increasingly included in the planning and execution of proposed public art projects and artists gained more skills in mediation, interdisciplinary dialogue, and arts education. Art was now expected to do more than be aesthetically pleasing — it should also be participatory and communicative. Hence the field became harder to define, including both temporary and permanent works, monuments and memorials, performance, political activism, earthworks, street furniture, community art, and the emerging field known as social practice.  

An important aspect of federally funded public art projects since the late-1970s was their site specificity. The genealogy of this concept, which has been theorized by art historian Miwon Kwon, has its roots in the 1960s, when artists incorporated the conditions of a physical location into the production, presentation, and reception of their works of art. The site was initially conceived as a precise location in which the viewer could spatially and temporally experience the work through their bodily presence. Beuys' fat sculptures, such as the *Fat Corner* (Figure 1.10), were often site specific in terms of the artist's process and the resulting form, which was determined by the surrounding space. However, the exact location of the walls was not paramount to understanding the work itself (they could be installed elsewhere with the same effect). The artist never created a sculpture intended to be displayed in a public context, although in 1977 he was commissioned by Skulptur Projekte Münster to cast a fat sculpture, *Tallow* (Figure 3.19), from the empty space underneath a pedestrian walkway (the resulting sculpture was displayed indoors). Nor can he be categorized alongside site-specific artists that critiqued the cultural frame of the art institution by revealing its inner operations, as exemplified by Beuys' contemporaries Michael Asher, Daniel Buren, and Hans Haacke. Beuys' projects of social sculpture were more than just

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185 Ibid., 11.
critical, he intended to ameliorate social problems. His work relates more to site-specific practice that extends beyond art-delineated spaces and into the real world in order to address pressing social issues. Although there were earlier examples, this tendency emerged in earnest following the debate over *Tilted Arc* and was adopted by public art in the 1990s. The “discursively determined site,” one of Kwon's paradigms of site specificity, is located in functional social spaces (e.g., hospitals, schools, housing projects, newspapers), informed by a range of disciplines (e.g., anthropology, sociology, psychology, education, history, urbanism, ecology), and integrated into popular discourse. The site of this work, like Beuys’ projects of social sculpture, is a field of knowledge, intellectual exchange, or cultural debate.

Kwon locates the discursive site in artists’ works of the early 1990s, particularly those associated with the Whitney Independent Study Program in New York (where Buchloh was a teacher in the 1980s) such as Mark Dion, Andrea Fraser, Renée Green, and Christian Philipp Müller, many of whom have identified Beuys’ precedent. These artists come from a lineage of institutional critique, but instead engage with a field of knowledge or a cultural debate. These artists were an important connection between Beuys’ ideas and U.S. practice, for not only were they traveling to Germany regularly during this period for exhibitions (their practice tends to be itinerary), which provided them with access to Beuys’ ideas and works in a German context, but they also began to grasp the means by which Beuys used art as a way to engage in larger social issues. Dion, for example, who was introduced to Beuys' work while visiting Germany in the early 1990s, incorporated vitrines and blackboards into his own installations as homages to Beuys' work. Beuys’ example set a precedent for Dion, who at the beginning of his career was searching for his own way to merge his art practice and ecological commitments. For example, in the early 1990s, when Dion traveled through the rainforests of Central and South America collecting natural specimens for display in projects such as *On Tropical Nature* (1990, Figure 3.20), Beuys was a touchstone for how he might play with his artistic role through images. From Beuys’ activities with the Free International University, Dion learned that art can be connected to other areas of life, and that these

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188 Ibid.
189 Mark Dion, interview with author, Charlottesville, VA February 4, 2016.
activities were not restricted to arts professionals. As a result, his work often incorporates interdisciplinary research that borrows from fields such as ecology, evolutionary biology, and archaeology; he also applies his artistic skills to analyze scientific phenomena and natural forms, his knowledge of which has allowed him to address the ways that nature has been represented in museums and in popular culture. Incorporating these elements of Beuys' practice has allowed him to critique larger discourses such as the representation of nature and the environmental crisis.

Beuys' work also had relevance to the emerging practice of community-based (or community-specific) art that exploded in the wake of the controversy surrounding *Titled Arc* in the mid-1980s. Kwon compares Serra's sculpture with those of John Ahearn, a white artist who was chosen by a selection panel that included non-art representatives to install three figurative sculptures in front of a police station in the South Bronx neighborhood of New York that represented members of the surrounding community (the majority of whom were poor African Americans and Hispanics).\(^{190}\) His sculpted bronze portraits of local residents (Figure 3.21) — Raymond, Tobey, Daleesha, and Corey — were installed in 1991. Although the artist had connections to the area and sought continuity between his work and its social life, they were removed after public outcry that they promoted negative stereotypes of the residents and hence they were deemed inappropriate for the site.\(^{191}\) Kwon argues that his project falls under that rubric of "do-good community-based public art" that was symptomatic of the early 1990s when identity politics and political correctness were characteristic of the broader cultural climate in the United States.\(^{192}\) She is critical of artists like Ahearn who purport to make work "of and for a 'community'" fall into a trap when the meaning or value of their work resides in the artist's ability to integrate with and speak on behalf of a given community, who in turn can recognize and affirm themselves through their participation in the work.\(^{193}\) Rather than providing a space for critical reflection, their works of art instead reassure audiences with something that is familiar, for they participated in determining the theme of the work and in some cases its formal manifestation. She critiques these works of art for affirming participants' world view by protecting it from socially alienating or destructive conditions that might exclude, marginalize, contradict,

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\(^{190}\) Ibid., 83–99.
\(^{192}\) Kwon, *One Place after Another*, 92.
\(^{193}\) Ibid., 95.
or otherwise unsettle their sense of identity.\textsuperscript{194} They are therefore imagined to be politically empowered by their participation in the work of art, which provides them with the capacity and opportunity for self-expression. While Beuys did not seek to protect the participants in his projects from outright conflict as community-based public art in the United States during the 1990s, his desire to represent the views of the general public through his projects of social sculpture was a powerful precursor for this branch of artistic practice. He sought to spiritually empower the participants in his projects rather than rupturing their worldview, which had already happened during the war. Rather than using critique as a means to challenge the contradictions of public space, Beuys and these artists were using art to reverse or ameliorate social fissures. Artists in the United States redirected his use of art as a healing method towards specific communities that were marginalized, underrepresented, and underserved as a means of voicing their concerns and integrating them into the social whole.

As outlined in Suzanne Lacy's 1995 book \textit{Mapping the Terrain: New Genre Public Art}, community-based site specificity has a long history linked to participatory practice, public art, and art activism that was dissociated from the public art of the 1970s and 1980s. Rather than emerging from this movement, as curator Mary Jane Jacobs argues, it merely achieved greater acceptance during the early 1990s.\textsuperscript{195} Artists of previous generations including Allan Kaprow, the AWC, and Judy Chicago were using participation and dialogue as a means to engage marginalized communities in the late 1960s and 1970s. Already in its second or third generation during the Reagan era, these artists were also drawing on their experience and skills in community organizing learned either through directly participating (or learning from teachers who had participated) in counter-cultural activity of the 1960s and 1970s including civil rights, feminist, and anti-war movements. Like Beuys, these artists were interested in merging art and life by incorporating new mediums into their practice and drawing from their political activities. They also wanted to make the process of production a visible part of the work itself, as seen in Beuys’ fat sculptures or the planting of trees in Kassel. For example, artist Leslie Labowitz-Starus, who spent time at the Düsseldorf Academy immediately after Beuys’ dismissal, collaborated with Lacy on politically charged performances protesting violence against women in Los Angeles the late 1970s. Stylized after guerrilla

\textsuperscript{194} Ibid., 97.
\textsuperscript{195} Lacy, \textit{Mapping the Terrain}, 30.
theater performed in public spaces, the two called public news conferences and mobilized audiences in their actions. For In Mourning and In Rage (1977, Figure 3.22), Labowitz and Lacy organized a demonstration to counter the sensationalized media coverage of the Hillside Stranger, a serial rapist and murderer terrorizing Los Angeles. Alongside collaborators from the city council and rape support groups, the artists marched on the steps of City Hall in tall black mourning robes, addressing newspaper journalists and TV broadcasters on the forms of violence against women and empowering women to fight back. Labowitz and Lacy’s collaboration exemplifies this activist strain of public art in its use of the local media and public spaces, its generation of interdisciplinary dialogue, and intent to draw attention to the portrayal of women. While Lacy and others have tried to separate themselves from a historical notion of public sculpture, their performances may still be considered public art because they occurred in a place accessible to the public, concerned an issue of public interest, and were intended to encourage public participation.196

Projects like these, which are socially responsible alternatives to object-oriented “plop” art, were documented in feminist art critic Arlene Raven’s anthology Art in the Public Interest, published in 1989.197 Raven, along with the other contributors to the book, recognizes the legacy of these artists not only to social protest movements of the 1960s but also the experimental approaches taught to them in art schools in the 1970s.198 She traces these new movements in public art to the anti-institutionalism of artists like those involved in the AWC, who created artist-run organizations and coalition groups dedicated to gender- or ethnic-specific causes in the 1970s.199 By the 1980s, with the postmodernist tendency to embrace a multitude of voices, it was understood that artists needed to experiment with nontraditional mediums for addressing issues of public interest and that art should serve to expose and heal social and ecological injustice. Marginalized artists in particular were “called to action” during this time, Lacy argues, by four factors: increased racial discrimination and violence; political conservatism that attempted to

196 Cameron Cartiere and Shelly Willis have defined public art as art outside museums and galleries that fits one of the following qualifications: it is located in a place accessible or visible to the public; it is concerned with or affecting the community or individuals; it is maintained for or used by the community or individuals; and it is paid for by the public. Cartiere, "Coming in from the Cold: A Public Art History," 15.
199 Ibid., 18–22.
circumscribe the gains of previous social movements (particularly feminist concerns); the climate of cultural censorship directed at women, ethnic, and homosexual artists; and deepening health and ecological crises including the AIDS epidemic and environmental destruction. Their work, which took place outside of galleries and museums, was a convergence of conceptual, performance, activist, public, and site-specific art. Social practice was one method of creating communities around these issues, using dialogue as a medium to “imagine beyond the limits of fixed identities, official discourse, and the perceived inevitability of partisan political conflict,” in the words of art historian Grant Kester. Although, as Kwon has pointed out, there are numerous inconsistencies and contradictions in terms the varying types of processes and exchanges within this field of art — for example, how a community or issue is chosen, how it is approached and represented, what is the nature of the collaboration, what are its consequences, and on what criteria its success is judged. Where Beuys' projects were united under his aesthetic theories (and how they related to his personal history), these projects are so varied that it is hard to identify these artists as a group other than by their purported goal to address social issues from an activist-artist perspective. Using the site-specific public art exhibition Culture in Action (1992–1993) in Chicago as an example, Kwon categorizes four different types of interactions: the creation of a “mythic” community that erases diversity in support of a cause (exemplified by Lacy’s project Full Circle), “sited” communities that work from an existing group with a pre-existing identity, and two types of invented communities — those that are temporarily created for the project and those that result in a sustained engagement.

I conceive of Beuys as a precursor to social practice because these artists are united with Beuys in their optimistic thinking that art can play a role in shaping society for the better, despite their differing approaches. Like Beuys, they were convinced that art could be used to empower individual creativity, and therefore change society from within. Kim Levin has convincingly argued that the most influential part of Beuys’ practice was his therapeutic use of art. Her interpretation links his practice to a growing interest

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200 Lacy, Mapping the Terrain, 28–29.
202 Kwon, One Place after Another, 116–117.
203 Ibid., 118–135.
in therapeutic culture in the United States (particularly on the West Coast) since the late 1960s, which is on the self as an organizing and healing principle and can be seen as a conscious rejection of materialism. Levin specifically references Beuys’ practice of Steinerian homeopathy, which is based on the principle of healing “like with like,” a phrase that Beuys often invoked when speaking of the metaphoric principles of his own work. Homeopathic treatments, which are derived from substances found in nature, trigger the body’s own defenses in a process akin to vaccination. Levin claims that Beuys' references to the Third Reich were a conscious parody intended for homeopathic healing and as a critical revision of Nazi history and ideology. Although I do not agree with her contentions — for example, the Auschwitz Vitrine and felt sculptures do not rise to the level of parody — the artist was intent on healing social crisis using homeopathic means, as also promoted by Steiner. He did this through his works of social sculpture, which were at this point still unknown to monolingual artists, critics, and art historians. In contrast to the critical tendency in art that stood at a distance from social problems, Beuys’ brand of homeopathy attempted to use art as a means for social change by holistically addressing problems from a number of disciplines. In the following chapter, I examine artists that, consciously or not, used similar acts of homeopathy to heal social ills created by the deficits in social and economic infrastructure in U.S. cities during the presidencies of Reagan and his equally conservative successor George H.W. Bush (1989–1993).

It wasn’t until Bush’s term in the early 1990s that there was a concerted effort by critics to rehabilitate Beuys’ reputation and artists began to claim him as a precedent in their work. At this time many of his texts began to appear in English, initially through the volume Joseph Beuys in America: Energy Plan for the Western Man (1991) edited by Swiss art critic Carin Kuoni. Though all of the texts had appeared in print prior to its publication, this book served as a reference for those interested in

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205 This movement is characterized by what historian Robert M. Collins calls “expressive individualism,” or the focus on individual feelings and expressions over communal resources. Psychologists such as Martin E.P. Seligman noted that this rise in individualism, often marked by an anti-materialism and a drive toward self-reflection, coincided with a loss of faith in social institutions. Collins, Transforming America, 152–153.


207 Kuoni, Joseph Beuys in America: Energy Plan for the Western Man: Writings by and Interviews with the Artist. Though she would later go on to direct the Vera List Center for Arts and Politics at the New School, at the time Kuoni was director of the Swiss Institute in New York and writing art criticism for Swiss-German publications.
Beuys' theories. In 1991, in another attempt to counter Buchloh's earlier claims, Donald Kuspit used a psychoanalytic approach to argue that Beuys' art and his self-mythology was "a kind of compensatory acting out of his childhood feelings of personal hurt." Though Kuspit's claims are weakened by a lack of factual evidence to support his identification of childhood trauma, his analysis led the way for further inquiry into how Beuys' work could be used as a metaphor for social healing. The same year, curator Mary Jane Jacob established Beuys as an important precedent for site-specific public art projects through exhibitions such as *Places with a Past* in Charleston (1990) and *Culture in Action* that featured artists making their own works of social sculpture. Artists including Lacy, Daniel Joseph Martinez, and Dion created temporary projects that engaged different communities as participants in projects centered on issues such as female representation, the HIV/AIDS crisis, urban ecology, and Latino identity. Museum exhibitions and conferences dedicated to the artist's legacy, which began in the mid-to-late-1990s, brought further awareness to Beuys' work and supported his connection with the interests of U.S. artists during this period.

Beuys' impact was particularly felt by artists who were combining their conceptual and performance practice with their pedagogic activities and a direct engagement with audiences, moving outside of galleries and museums to present their work. He represented the convergence of institutionally accepted art practice and community-based site-specific art with what up until that time had been considered by many to be peripheral to their artistic practice — namely teaching and a commitment to political causes. He not only provided a genus for their work with the term "social sculpture," but alongside other central figures in the U.S., gave them tools for engaging diverse publics about a range of issues.

Beuys became a reference for artists as they conceptualized their own multi-layered practice, particularly as government de-funding of the arts pushed them to experiment with materials and seek out new audiences in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Prompted by decreased funding in the arts by sources

209 Mary Jane Jacob, Michael Brenson, and Eva M. Olson, *Culture in Action: A Public Art Program of Sculpture Chicago* (Seattle: Bay Press, 1995).
210 This includes the exhibition *Joseph Beuys Multiples* at the Walker Center for the Arts (1997-1998) and three symposia: "Joseph Beuys Behind the Mask: His Travels in America" (12 Dec 1994) and "Considering Joseph Beuys" (5-7 Apr 1995) at the New School for Social Research in New York; and "Joseph Beuys: Mapping the Legacy" (4-6 Dec 1998) at the Ringling Museum of Art alongside the above exhibition.
such as the NEA, in 1992 artist Dorit Cypis employed Beuys' concept of social sculpture in her interactions with homeless teens at Project OffStreets; in this outreach center in Minneapolis, she set up Kulture Klub Collaborative (Figure 3.23), a program that fosters relationships between the youth and artists, social service providers, arts organizations, and funding institutions. Kulture Klub offers access to art studios, theaters, and exhibitions; hosts artist residents; and organizes programs for the teens to present their own work. Her notion of authorship is more derivative of feminist precedents, as Cypis does not consider this as her work of art but rather a collaborative effort (this is highlighted by her rare presence in photos of their activities). Nonetheless, Kulture Klub nurtures the participants' creativity and gives them a voice within their community. It also incorporates two-way dialogue (one of Beuys' pedagogic principles) to guide individual development, which Cypis has continued as a professional mediator. The relationships and dialogue encouraged by these interactions are intended to empower the participants and develop creative potential. Cypis has acknowledged Beuys as a formative influence on her practice, particularly at the stage when she was experimenting with engaging audiences, incorporating pedagogy, and raising awareness for political causes.

During the early 1990s, Beuys also emerged as a reference for those interested in a radical notion of ecology applied to both social and natural systems, as evidenced by his connection to Dion and other "discursively determined" site specific artists who had the opportunity to see his works first hand. 7,000 Oaks remained virtually absent from English-language literature on the artist until the late 1990s when several iterations of the project appeared across the United States. The best known among these line West 22nd Street in one of New York's most popular arts districts, Chelsea, which were planted by the Dia Art Foundation in 1988 and 1995 (Figure 3.24). From 1997 to 1999, a similar grouping of 7,000

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212 Cypis learned about Beuys during art school in Nova Scotia and Los Angeles in the 1970s and claimed the term "social sculpture" to describe her own work following graduate school at CalArts, when she began to integrate her own works of art, which focused on her interior experience, with her public persona as an educator and administrator. Dorit Cypis, telephone conversation with the author, December 22, 2015.
213 Ibid.
214 Funded by the Dia Art Foundation (which originally financed the project at documenta 7 in 1982), the trees expanded from an original set of five planted in front of 548 West 22nd Street (the Dia exhibition
Oaks trees was planted by curator Todd Bockley with the support of the Walker Center for the Arts in Minneapolis, Minnesota, in conjunction with the traveling exhibition Joseph Beuys Multiples. Alongside the single tree and basalt stone at the Minneapolis Sculpture Garden, the project had six iterations in the Midwest, including 1,041 indigenous trees planted with the Native American community in the Cass Lake region of Minnesota; 18 trees planted by a school group in their neighborhood in St. Paul; and another three trees planted at the dedication of the Martin Luther King Cornerstone Memorial in Omaha, Nebraska. Beginning in fall 2000, the Joseph Beuys Tree Partnership project at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County art gallery sponsored the planting of more than 200 trees in Baltimore public parks and another 30 trees and steles in a “sacred space” on campus. A commemorative tree was also planted on the campus of Middlebury College in Vermont in 1998. These examples demonstrate that Beuys’ project has arguably had more resonance in the United States than in any other country outside of Germany.

Beuys’ participation in the Greens and his views on ecology and environmentalism were noted by similarly minded artists throughout the Reagan and Bush years. Art historian David Adams states that Beuys was a “pioneer investigator of the role of art in forging radical ecological paradigms for the relationship between human beings and the natural environment.” Such ideas coincided with artists in the United States whose political projects were increasingly research based, site specific, and contextual, and those who were interested in merging their environmental concerns and political activism with artistic practice. In addition to Dion, another artist who acknowledged Beuys as a precedent is Mel Chin, who

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215 *Joseph Beuys Multiples* (21 September 1997-4 January 1998), curated by Joan Rothfuss, traveled to Omaha, Nebraska; San Jose, California; Sarasota, Florida; Dublin and London.

216 Todd Bockley, “Tree Planting Project History,” c. 1999-2000, Todd Bockley Archives, Minneapolis, MN.

217 The U.S. adaptations of 7,000 Oaks have been explored in Addy Smith Reiman, “The Art of Urban Nature: Curating the City with the Work of Joseph Beuys” (MLA/MRP, Landscape Architecture and City Planning, Cornell University, 2011).


219 This movement grew out of artists in the Whitney Program and at SVA in the early 1990s who followed
staged a mock lecture in the style of one of Beuys' public dialogues in 1998 in which he drew attention to his interest in Beuys' materials, self-mythology, and mysticism.\textsuperscript{220} Besides referencing his lectures, performances, and sculptures, Chin's \textit{Revival Field} (begun 1991, Figure 3.25) demonstrates his link to Beuys' concept of ecology. The project is a collaborative effort to "sculpt," in Chin's words, the ecology of a former landfill in Minnesota in conjunction with scientific researchers in a similar effort to Beuys' proposed project for Hamburg in 1983.\textsuperscript{221} Like Dion, his work has multiple layers of site, its critique extends to larger ecological discourses, and it involves interdisciplinary research; however, Chin does not involve community input and his project is not intended to transform the structural causes of environmental damage (like the Green Party, for example). Beuys has also been an important referent for eco-feminists such as Mierle Laderman Ukeles, who was awarded a Percent-for-Art commission to be the artist at the Freshkills Landfill in Staten Island as the site was detoxified and redesigned as a park in 1989 (Figure 3.26). She considers her project (called \textit{LANDING}) the "ultimate embodiment of social sculpture," as her plans involve the participation of more than one million people, each of whom will donate an item to be permanently embedded at the site.\textsuperscript{222} This act will connect their personal stories with the history of the landfill, and further with the ecological system of the city. Her project, which is composed of several landscape elements including a cantilevered walkway, is intended to "flood our environmental infrastructure with creativity," a goal that she shares with Beuys.\textsuperscript{223} However, she is primarily concerned with sculpting the land rather than social or economic structures, and hence this work relates more to public artists of the early 1980s who were commissioned to create amenities like parks, landscape design, or functional furniture for urban spaces along the lines of sculptor Scott Burton (which led to the problems brought up by Serra's \textit{Tilted Arc}).

Beuys also became more significant as socially active artists considered their own role as performers within their projects. His life was increasingly considered a "total work of art" through the use of

\textsuperscript{221} Ibid., 128–129.
of similar materials in his actions, his recognizable costume of the felt hat and fishing vest, his ubiquitous presence in documentary photographs of his projects of social sculpture, and his masterful use of the media to generate an awareness of both his art and his political cause. In the 1970s, his face became as recognizable as his fat and felt sculptures (underscored by the posters featuring the artist's face instead of his work, as was typical for other artists). He pushed artists to consider how to navigate the divide between their public persona and their private lives, and how to maintain their artistic practice while promoting activist causes. Beuys also proved that the image of the artist was a material to be played with, just as images of objects could show different facets of a painting or sculpture. For artists whose work was more conceptual or performative, their own presence became a unifying element of their practice, reinforced by the media's penchant for showing the artist at work.

For U.S. artists whose practice came to fruition in the mid-1980s and 1990s, Beuys' message of promoting art as a means to enact social change had dissipated into a theoretical backdrop for new forms of engagement. However, his political ideals, attention to audience participation, and educational goals still resonated for those who had been politically re-ignited during the Reagan-Bush years. Artists had long been using materials from everyday life and methods that drew from feminism and political activism, and were moving beyond the gallery into unconventional places to exhibit and perform their work. Performance was a more literal way to engage viewers than more traditional mediums such as painting and sculpture, and artists were still exploring how audiences might be further prompted into action. Accessing and addressing the concerns of lesser-served or underrepresented communities was of great concern to many artists including Dorit Cypis, Suzanne Lacy, and Rick Lowe. By Lacy's own account, as early as 1980 "[artists'] ideas revolved around the relationship between artist and audience; work strategies that had both political and formal implications, such as collaboration; the use of everyday objects or actions; local community and media context; the effect of art on viewers; and social change." Their projects were often located in poor, racially segregated, or underserved neighborhoods in order to

224 Mark Dion, interview with author, Charlottesville, VA February 4, 2016. Dion mentioned this as an inspiration for his jungle explorations of the early 1990s, where the artist collected items from the forest and sent them back to his gallery in New York for exhibition. He used Beuys as a model for how an artist might be present even at a geographic distance.

seek out audiences that might be served by their work. Critic Michael Brenson, who wrote about participatory art in the catalogue for *Culture in Action*, says that for artists of the 1980s, socially engaged projects responded to the political climate by “building human and social infrastructure.”

Although Beuys had a common interest with U.S. artists in using art as a means of social change starting in the late 1960s, little was known of Beuys' political projects in the United States while he was alive. Critical attention remained focused on his sculptures and performances, despite the fact that the artist lectured about social sculpture during his trip to New York, Chicago, and Minnesota in 1974. Instead of absorbing his ideas, artists and critics perceived him as a pedagogue and scrutinized the darker aspects of his personal history. His first large-scale museum exhibition at the Guggenheim Museum New York did little to remedy his negative reception, which was propagated in art historical circles by Benjamin Buchloh. It was not until the late 1980s and early 1990s that artists renewed their attention to Beuys' participatory projects, inspired by exhibitions of his multiples and scholarly symposia. Although U.S. artists had been combining their activism and art practice for some time, Beuys emerged as an important precedent for artists who were dealing with social crises brought on by the neoliberal policies of a conservative government. His brand of spiritualism employed art as a homeopathic healing method, which was in line with U.S. artists’ desire to combat the overzealous market tendencies exemplified by Neo-Expressionism while attending directly to people’s needs. Although by no means the only U.S. artists to be influenced by Beuys' ideas and work, the artists presented in the following chapter serve as models for the reception and evolution of his ideas in U.S. public art. Far from the isolated world of galleries and museums, their works are known for their temporality, bilateral educational initiatives, and multi-layered engagement that crosses boundaries of race, sex, and economic status. Like Beuys, these artists hope to prompt participants to enact change on a larger scale by fostering creativity through dialogue.

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226 Michael Brenson, "Healing in Time," in *Culture in Action: A Public Art Program of Sculpture Chicago*, ed. Mary Jane Jacob, Michael Brenson, and Eva M. Olson (Seattle: Bay Press, 1995), 29. For certain critics such as Miwon Kwon, the “discursively determined” sites used by artists (such as Lacy and others involved in *Culture in Action*) to engage communities are akin to social services. Miwon Kwon, *One Place after Another: Site-Specific Art and Locational Identity* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002), 100-137.
Chapter Four

Social Sculpture as Social Practice in the United States

Today identified by artists and critics alike as "social practice," among a score of other terms, a new form of socially engaged public art developed in the United States in the late 1980s and early 1990s.¹ Focused on the direct interaction between artists and audiences, this work is characterized by artists' attention to disadvantaged communities, pedagogic initiatives such as mentorship of youth by community leaders, and interest in politically charged issues such as economic disparity, gender, and racial discrimination. Incorporating the influence of U.S. artists such as Allan Kaprow and Judy Chicago, as well as participation in social movements including feminism and civil rights, artists engaged in this genre employ a wide range of methods: performance, community organizing, exhibition-making, land renewal. They also utilize levels of audience engagement that range from temporary projects lasting several months to semi-permanent organizations that have been in existence for decades. This chapter argues for the centrality of Beuys' concept of social sculpture to social practice in the United States, even though the artists whose practice exemplifies elements of his theory extend it to address specific domestic political issues including sexism, racism, abuse of the environment, violence, and immigration. It is my contention that the misinterpretation of Beuys' concept of social sculpture led to this development during the Reagan-Bush period in the late 1980s and 1990s.

I analyze the interpretation of Beuys' ideas by two key figures in U.S. art of the 1990s: artists Suzanne Lacy (b. 1945) and Rick Lowe (b. 1961), each of whom has experienced the impact of Beuys' legacy through their interactions with his students and colleagues or theoretical writings. Lacy, a California-based artist whose work is indebted to performance artist Allan Kaprow and feminist artist Judy Chicago, is known for her feminist media interventions (first staged in the 1970s), which in the 1980s and 1990s took the form of bringing together diverse groups to discuss issues such as female representation, race, and youth violence. In 1992, Lowe became involved with a poor, African-American neighborhood in Houston, Texas, called the Third Ward, which he has revitalized socially and economically using art and dialogue through a long-term collaboration called Project Row Houses. While not a method exclusive to

¹ These are umbrella categories for art that consist primarily of dialogue, collaboration, and participation. See introduction.
² The exhibition Living as Form, curated by Nato Thompson, 24 Sept – 16 Oct 2011, Essex Street Market,
these artists, the work of Lacy and Lowe offers two models for the confluence of social sculpture and community-based activist artistic practice in the United States in terms of how these artists address the needs of their audience, how they reveal Beuys' shifting critical reception, and in the breadth of the dissemination of his ideas. Their method of constructing communities — which Lowe initially defined through geography, class, and race (though the participants in his project are increasingly more diverse) and Lacy establishes around a non-partisan issue such as teen violence or aging — allowed people to share resources and exchange ideas, thereby mitigating the negative effects of Reagan and Bush's neoliberal policies on their daily lives.

The field of social practice has grown substantially since the 1990s. The past ten years alone have seen a veritable explosion of exhibitions, conferences, and the creation of MFA programs that focus on social participation, political activism, and community development, which have helped to promote the recognition of this tendency within the international art community. The artists discussed in this chapter have taken a leading role in the evolution and promotion of this type of practice through their own high-profile projects. Their work has been featured in exhibitions such as Creative Time's *Living as Form: Socially Engaged Art from 1991–2011* (curated by Nato Thompson, 2011–2014); they participated in symposia and conferences including A Lived Practice in Chicago (2014) or Open Engagement (annually since 2007); they received awards such as Lowe's 2014 MacArthur “Genius” Fellowship and the Leonore Annenberg Prize for Art and Social Change; and they hold positions in social practice MFA programs. They have also been the subject of numerous publications, including monographs and scholarly articles, and have written their own theoretical texts; in addition to their inclusion in more generalized art historical scholarship on socially engaged practice (some of which are discussed in the introduction to this dissertation).

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2 The exhibition *Living as Form*, curated by Nato Thompson, 24 Sept – 16 Oct 2011, Essex Street Market, New York. See Nato Thompson, *Living as Form: Socially Engaged Art from 1991–2011* (New York: Creative Time Books, 2012). A Lived Practice, symposium, 6–8 Nov 2014, School of the Art Institute of Chicago. This was complemented by three exhibitions curated by Mary Jane Jacob and Kate Zeller, one of which focused on the blackboard created during his lecture at the SAIC in 1974 entitled *Sun State*. The Open Engagement conference has gained momentum since 2010, when artists such as Mark Dion, Michael Rakowitz, and Mierle Laderman Ukeles began to be “featured presenters.” See “Open Engagement Archive,” *Open Engagement*, accessed January 10, 2016, http://openengagement.info/archive/. Lacy is currently the dean of the MFA in Public Practice at the Otis College of Art and Design, Los Angeles, and Lowe has lectured widely, including visiting positions at numerous universities nationwide.
Lacy and Lowe consider Beuys to be a central figure in the legacy of social practice. However, their relationship with him varies: they have connections with those who directly experience with his work, in addition to learning about his practice posthumously through exhibitions like his 1979 Guggenheim “retrospective” and publications of the artist’s writings.\(^3\) It is also important to note the power of Beuys’ students who, following their time at the Düsseldorf Academy, promoted his ideas as visiting artists at U.S. institutions and in their own collaborations with U.S. artists. Blinky Palermo, Ulrike Rosenbach, and Katharina Sieverding were key disseminators of his ideas in the United States through their own work, university positions, and lectures.\(^4\) Unlike these students, however, none of the artists in this chapter directly studied with Beuys at the Academy and therefore they had limited exposure to his ideas and practice of social sculpture.\(^5\) They experienced his projects only second hand from others who had visited exhibitions like *documenta*. As Lacy has noted, in the United States Beuys was among a constellation of important figures in the field of conceptual and performance art in the 1970s and 1980s, and alongside domestic mentors, helped direct artists working in this vein like herself toward new methods of public engagement.\(^6\) This holds equally true for artists who transitioned from traditional mediums to socially engaged practice by working directly with communities about issues that affected them, like Lowe, who began his career as a painter. These artists were inspired by Beuys’ example but did not directly emulate his method. Instead, they employed tactics learned from domestic mentors such as John Biggers, Chicago, and Kaprow, and through their participation in movements devoted to social causes like feminism and civil rights.

Part of the goal of this dissertation is to help differentiate the work of these artists from other socially engaged artists by tracing their connection with the legacy of Beuys’ concept of social sculpture. As has been pointed out to me in my conversations with these artists, the impact of the term “social sculpture” cannot be underestimated. Dorit Cypis, for example, found this term while searching for ways

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\(^3\) This includes Carin Kuoni, *Joseph Beuys in America: Energy Plan for the Western Man: Writings by and Interviews with the Artist* (New York: Four Walls Eight Windows, 1990).

\(^4\) The content of their lectures and the nature of their collaborations with U.S. artists are projects for further study.

\(^5\) Though Leslie Labowitz-Starus attended the Düsseldorf Academy during her Fulbright, she arrived just after Beuys was dismissed in fall 1972, and therefore did not complete studies with the artist.

\(^6\) Suzanne Lacy, interview by author, Los Angeles, CA, April 2, 2015.
to describe her work to others.\textsuperscript{7} Though she had been exposed to Beuys' ideas early in her art education, she only began using “social sculpture” to identify her own practice following graduate school in the late 1970s and early 1980s. While her work did not fit into the common lexicon of conceptual art at the time, its “immersiveness,” “pedagogic feel,” “emphasis on socio-political themes,” and location in public places fit well with Beuys' words.\textsuperscript{8} Using “social sculpture” linked her work with the German artist, thereby placing her within a hierarchy of accepted artists, though she admits that she does not practice social sculpture as Beuys defined it. Her version of social practice, like Lacy's and Lowe's, builds on Beuys' model, but is not a copy of it. Although neither Lacy nor Lowe describe themselves as “social sculptors” (the media, on the other hand, often uses this term for Lowe), Cypis and Lowe have used the term “social sculpture” alongside other words to describe what they do. They have also adopted some of Beuys' catchphrases, such as “everyone is an artist,” though this phrase is often evoked to level the hierarchy between the artist and project participants, rather than in the sense that Beuys used it to describe the potential of all people to transform society. I contend that some artists, particularly those who were emerging when they began to apply Beuys' terminology to their work, have used it precisely for the same reason as Cypis in the late 1970s: Beuys' name lends an air of legitimacy to their work and connects them to the canon, but not for the reasons Beuys intended. It has provided them with a vocabulary to speak and write about their own work, which can be quite helpful, especially when writing grant applications (a necessary skill for artists who do not usually sell objects in galleries). In connecting back to a concept of aesthetics that is politicized, Beuys' term is one way that these artists navigate the complex relationship between art and activism described in the introduction to this dissertation.

Although many of these artists use the term “social sculpture” and their work shares affinities with Beuys' concepts and method, the works of art in this chapter differ from Beuys' projects first and foremost because of their U.S. context. Beuys used spirituality and energy principles to address the aftermath of the Second World War in West Germany, fusing them with issues such as direct democracy, education reform, and ecological concerns. He used his personal experience after the plane crash as a metaphor for healing what he saw as broken social structures. The U.S. artists discussed below had different life...  

\textsuperscript{7} Dorit Cypis, telephone conversation with the author, December 22, 2015.  
\textsuperscript{8} Ibid.
experiences. Lacy participated in student and activist movements in the 1960s, but as a student rather than a teacher, as she was a generation younger. Furthermore, U.S. artists were dealing with a different political structure with its own set of problems and social issues such as sexism, racism, ageism, and environmental destruction, among others. Many artists were initially repelled by his work in the early 1970s, either because they did not understand his aims or references, or because they could not apply his methods to their own situation. As discussed in the previous chapter, it was not until the early 1990s that Beuys became a more accepted referent for socially engaged artists as a result of conferences, publications, and exhibitions dedicated to his work and legacy. Artists in the United States began to apply the principles of social sculpture to the crumbling infrastructure that appeared during the Reagan and Bush administrations. For them, art was still a vehicle through which politics could be approached aesthetically.

Just like these projects, much of Beuys' legacy has been transmitted orally through conversations between artists, curators, critics, and art historians. Therefore, the research for this chapter has relied on the recollections of Lacy and Lowe, each of whom has shared their personal experiences through interviews, correspondence, and archival documents. As Claire Bishop has noted, because participatory art is often ephemeral and its associated visual material is often resistant to visual analysis, I have relied on my own first-hand experience of the projects and artists' accounts of their activities to reconstruct this history.\(^9\) It has been essential for me to participate in or observe a number of artists at work — including documenting audience response at Lacy's *Between the Door and the Street* (2013) and several visits to Project Row Houses in Houston. These first hand experiences allowed me to see the artists at work and take note of both the positive impact as well as the drawbacks of their projects.

Though there are countless examples of artists who name Beuys as a precedent in their work, Lacy and Lowe are the focus of this chapter because they share characteristics with Beuys' concept of social sculpture — most prominently the use of art as a means of social transformation through individual creative empowerment.\(^10\) Second, both artists' work has its roots in conceptual and performance art,

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\(^10\) There are also artists that cite his influence in more performance- or object-based practice. See Dirk Luckow, *Joseph Beuys und die amerikanische Anti Form-Kunst: Einfluss und Wechselwirkung zwischen*
because their early mentors were pioneers in these fields and because they were practitioners themselves before turning toward social practice. Third, both artists work primarily in the public realm, often directly engaging with specific communities about issues that are relevant to them and activating people from a wide variety of backgrounds, ages, and professions as collaborators and participants. While both have had museum and gallery exhibitions, these locations are rarely the primary site for their work, nor is the audience restricted to those typically connected to “high art” such as curators, critics, art historians, and other artists. Fifth, these artists are both connected to education through their professional activities and in the pedagogic methods employed in their work. Like Beuys, they are often committed to two-way dialogue over the traditional teacher–student hierarchy, thus favoring discussion groups, workshops, and mentoring over lecturing at a podium (although Beuys did this as well). Finally, these artists are both dedicated to a political cause and use an aesthetic conception of social engagement as a way to transform society. Their work demonstrates the breadth of his impact across the United States and how his ideas have been interpreted in numerous ways.

**Suzanne Lacy: Temporary Engagement**

On a crisp afternoon in October 2013, several hundred women (and a few men) from a wide variety of ethnic backgrounds, professions, ages, and opinions gathered on a residential block in Prospect Heights, Brooklyn, to hold a public discussion about issues central to their lives (Figure 4.1). Assembled by local activist organizations and clad in dark clothing with bright yellow scarves, the women spilled down the street in formation, taking their seats on the grand stoops of picturesque early twentieth-century brownstones. Carrying a short list of questions they had developed themselves, they prepared to sit for just over an hour, discussing domestic violence, aging, immigration, mothering, sex work, homelessness, work, and LGBTQ issues in English, Spanish, Chinese, Korean, and Arabic. The performers began to talk as the public — the audience — flooded the street, milling around and pausing to listen to the discussion groups. The women were taking part in Suzanne Lacy’s project *Between the Beuys und Morris, Hesse, Nauman, Serra* (Berlin: Gebr. Mann Verlag, 1998). and the dissertation currently being written by fellow City University of New York PhD candidate Alison Weaver. Lacy plays with theater terminology in her own work, using the word “performer” and “audience” to describe those active in her “sets.” These performers have varying levels of engagement with the project.
Door and the Street, organized by the artist, her long-time collaborator Unique Holland, the Brooklyn Museum of Art and the public art organization Creative Time, a team of young community organizers, as well as a myriad of professionals including stage managers and photographers. This two-hour event is an example of the model of public art developed by Lacy since the early 1980s: based on her months-to-years-long interaction with a specific community that includes pedagogic initiatives such as workshops and lectures, the artist then stages a temporary event to draw attention to political issues such as sexism, ageism, and domestic violence.

Lacy is a well-known figure within feminist art and social practice, and her work ranges from intimate performances using her own body to large-scale public interventions like Between the Door and the Street. She has written extensively about her own practice, a compilation of which appears in the 2010 publication Leaving Art: Writings on Performance, Politics, and Publics 1974–2007, and theorized the emerging field of social practice with Mapping the Terrain: New Genre Public Art (1995). Though she has received reviews in publications such as Artforum, Art in America, and major U.S. periodicals such as the New York Times, critical writing about the artist tends to focus on her feminism. Her work has been included in major anthologies on feminist art and in exhibitions around the same topic. The only monograph to appear on the artist was published in 2010 by art and architectural historian Sharon Irish, entitled Suzanne Lacy: Spaces Between. Using a “network model,” Irish assesses Lacy's work in terms of what she calls “positionality” (feminism, essentialism, embodied art), performance (performing identity, coalition building, and the importance of place), and participation. As such, she provides a nuanced analysis of Lacy's work, which resides in the spaces between contexts, relationships, and approaches. I

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12 Suzanne Lacy, Between the Door and the Street, 19 Oct 2013, Prospect Heights, Brooklyn, New York. I followed the planning process of the project by participating in internal meetings with the organizers, events with local organizations lead by Lacy, and recording audience response at the event. The results of my interviews with performers, organizers, and audience members are now part of the archive on the project at Creative Time and with the artist.


15 See Sharon Irish, Suzanne Lacy: Spaces Between (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010).
examine her work from both an aesthetic and an activist point of view, arguing that despite the fact that beginning in the 1990s Lacy claimed to eschew art in favor of a practice-oriented approach, her work is linked with Beuys' precisely because it operates within an aesthetic discourse.

Beginning with an introduction to her formative influences, this section focuses on Lacy's short-term projects of the 1980s and early 1990s, most of which occurred around Los Angeles, where she trained as an artist, and in the Bay Area, where she was based from 1987 to 2002. These workshops, discussions, and events were produced in collaboration with existing communities or created communities around non-partisan political issues such as age discrimination, teen violence, and gender inequality. Using a model developed in her feminist performances and collaborations with Leslie Labowitz-Starus (b. 1946, née Labowitz) in the 1970s, Lacy collaborated with women and disadvantaged teens, resulting in staged temporary events, including *The Crystal Quilt* (1985–1987), *The Roof is on Fire* (1994), and *Code 33: Emergency Clear the Air!* (1999).{16} While recognizing the formative influence of her mentors Judy Chicago (b. 1939) and Allan Kaprow (1927–2006), this section proposes that her engagement with youth mentorship and governmental agencies during the early 1990s aligns her method closely to that of the educational initiatives and idea of direct democracy used by Beuys in his projects of social sculpture. Although she has long been associated with feminism, by this period, her work was not explicitly ideological and instead incorporated many different viewpoints. Lacy's temporary projects provide one model for the diffusion of Beuysian ideals in U.S. social practice. As she absorbed the influences of her peers, particularly those who had been in West Germany in the 1970s, her highly symbolic gallery performances transformed into public actions that employed conversation to heal social problems.

Joseph Beuys was one of a constellation of influential conceptual and performance artists practicing during Lacy's early years as an artist in Los Angeles. However, it is my contention that her work has commonality with Beuys' practice, because she does not recognize his role in her development. The German artist did not visit the West Coast to lecture on his concept of social sculpture while on tour in the United States in 1974 and therefore Lacy did not learn about his theories directly. Rather, she

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{16} Lacy said the goal of her projects produced in the 1990s, particularly those with the teen collaborative group TEAM, was to "increase positive outcomes for young people in city and county government, the legal system, health care institutions, and schools." Ibid., 149.
encountered his work through his Fluxus connections, former students Ulrike Rosenbach and Katharina Sieverding, and through the catalogue for his Guggenheim exhibition.\textsuperscript{17} During this time, as I will argue below, she absorbed his idea indirectly through these sources. She was initially interested in his use of the media as well as his use of art to critique social and political structures.\textsuperscript{18} It was only in retrospect with the publication of \textit{Mapping the Terrain} that she promoted his role in the emergence of social practice in the United States.\textsuperscript{19} This book introduced what Lacy termed “new genre public art,” located between public art and community activism, and identified artists like Beuys who used art as a tool to heal and transform society. It is my own assertion that Lacy approaches politics through aesthetics in a manner that is similar to Beuys’ concept of social sculpture.

Lacy ties her own work more closely to her background in community activism and to other feminist and performance artists in California in the late 1960s and early 1970s, including her mentors Chicago and Kaprow at the California Institute of the Arts (CalArts). Her performance pieces in the early seventies, informed by her political activism and Kaprow’s aesthetic theories, made way for her large scale interventions within the public sphere during the 1980s. While there is no denying that Kaprow and Chicago influenced her work, Lacy’s use of art as an agent of social change, emphasis on pedagogy as a means to transform communities, and incorporation of non-art collaborators and audiences nevertheless connect her practice to social sculpture. Although Lacy does not recognize Beuys as one of the key figures in her evolution as an artist, there is a significant link between his activities and her collaboration with Labowitz-Starus, which began in 1977 shortly after Labowitz-Starus returned from West Germany, where she had spent time at the Düsseldorf Academy and made the acquaintance of many of Beuys’ students. From this point forward, Lacy’s pieces, which often took place in public locations such as city parks and the grounds of municipal buildings, can be characterized by their use of social networks, media theory and critique, and by her engagement of marginalized groups such as rape victims, the elderly, and minority teenagers.

\textsuperscript{17} Suzanne Lacy, interview by author, Los Angeles, CA, April 2, 2015.
\textsuperscript{18} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{19} An image of \textit{I Like America and America Likes Me} (1974) was included in her introduction and the German artist was also featured in the appendix of socially engaged artists compiled by the book’s contributors. Lacy, \textit{Mapping the Terrain}, 18, 203–204.
Before Lacy began to produce large-scale participatory performances that focused on empowering individuals, she was exposed to a multitude of influences that contributed to their form and content. While her personal and artistic development has several connections to the German artist, much of this was coincidental. Without much awareness of Beuys until the later 1970s, her practice must thus be seen through the lens of other artistic and activist movements operating in Southern California while she was an emerging artist. During this period, Lacy made highly symbolic performance art pieces involving animal corpses and her own body to address feminist issues; it was only after her encounter with Leslie Labowitz-Starus in 1977 when she began using conversation as a healing tool that her work can be analyzed in relation to social sculpture.

Lacy comes from the small town of Wasco, California, and was the first of her family to attend college, where (like Beuys) her intended career was medicine. Despite interests in philosophy, art, and dance, she graduated in 1968 with a degree in zoology and chemistry. In 1968, when Beuys was organizing student groups in Düsseldorf, Lacy's interest in social justice was being developed through her work with the Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA). During this time, she was exposed to Gandhi and the non-violent protest movement, the Latino activist movement and the United Farm Workers (formed by Cesar Chavez and Dolores Huerta in 1962 as the National Farm Workers Association in California), Saul Alinsky's community organizing strategies, and George Gerbner's activist media theory, all of which contributed to her later practice as an artist. In 1969, she began graduate studies in psychology at Fresno State University (now California State University, Fresno), where she organized a feminist psychology course for undergraduates, coordinated an off-campus consciousness-raising group, and co-taught a class on Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* (translated in to English in 1953) with fellow graduate student Faith Wilding.

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20 Ibid., 23. Lacy attended Bakersfield Community College and later the University of California at Santa Barbara.
Lacy contributed her community organizing skills towards women’s empowerment as she began to practice art in the early 1970s. An important figure in her early artistic education was Judy Chicago (born Judith Cohen), who came to Fresno State to teach in 1970, during Lacy’s second year. Like Beuys, Chicago was energetic and charismatic, and was also influenced by the student movements of the late sixties. Chicago envisioned the creation of a women’s program within the art department, later called the Feminist Art Program (FAP, 1970–1971), which Lacy eagerly joined. The group met in a building that they renovated themselves, which allowed them some autonomy as well as a break from the curriculum and structure of what they considered was a patriarchal university system. By 1969, Lacy was part of the burgeoning second wave feminist movement in the United States, which advocated women’s equality, rights, and opportunity; it consisted of primarily college-educated middle-class white women from the baby boom generation who galvanized against systems of gender oppression.

Lacy is often identified with feminist art, which is another important precursor to socially engaged and participatory art in the United States. Like many other artists who were involved in activist causes during this time period, feminist artists used aesthetic strategies to amplify their ideological concerns by deliberately uniting their social politics with their art, guided by consciousness-raising models in which their personal experiences could be used to analyze larger social and political structures. Like Beuys, they used the self as a microcosm of larger social structures — personal experience and development could help create social change. However, unlike patriarchal conceptions of the self in which the

become Women's Studies programs in the U.S. academy: women from a variety of departments coming together to discuss topics from a woman’s perspective. Irish, Suzanne Lacy: Spaces Between, 24; Myra Marx Ferree and Beth B Hess, Controversy and Coalition: The New Feminist Movement across Three Decades of Change (New York: Routledge, 2000), 74.


By the time Lacy arrived in Fresno, she was already engaged in the nascent feminist movement, associating the forms of her abstract, “finish fetish” paintings with feminine body imagery (what she called “central core imagery”). She felt that her work, which already by that time spanned a variety of media, was overlooked due to sexism in the art world, inspiring her to re-name herself after the city of her birth and seek out a supportive female environment. Irish, Suzanne Lacy: Spaces Between, 25.


Norma Broude and Mary D Garrard, eds., The Power of Feminist Art: The American Movement of the 1970s, History and Impact (New York: H.N. Abrams, 1994), 21. They were connected to the self-discovery movement of the 1970s and 1980s during which women were examining their bodies, relationships, careers, and personal experience while at the same time asserting a new position for women within the insular art world.
individual is empowered (as Beuys advocated), second-wave feminists conceived of the self as socially constructed, and thus could be understood in terms of collective circumstances rather than individual expression. They explored this relationship between individual and society by examining the construction of the female voice and body, as well as the spiritual practices of ancient cultures. Feminists particularly investigated pre-Abrahamic religious practices and the concept of Mother Nature because they privileged a female perspective. In comparison, Beuys used ancient ritual and evoked universal experience through his shamanistic performances because his form of spirituality was derived from Steiner’s concept of anthroposophy.

Both the feminists and Beuys privileged the use of participatory dialogue in their art, but for different reasons. Following Steiner, Beuys promoted dialogue as the tangible expression of spiritual thought through social sculpture; however, feminist artists in the United States during the 1970s explored how their voices could be used subversively to explore the root of female oppression. In order to address a new audience, they focused on forms of dialogue that did not privilege any one interlocutor, employed the media to publicize their issues, and used discursive strategies in their art-making such as conversation, exchange, and networking. Their interactions were much more in line with Beuys’ teaching method, where the artist encouraged a two-way dialogue with students, rather than his public dialogues, during which the artist tended to monopolize the debate in order to express his theories. In the classroom, Beuys stressed the importance of developing Steinerian concepts of imagination, intuition, and inspiration (which are ungendered and without a relationship to social equality) through this form of instruction, while Chicago empowered the students in the FAP to be assertive in reaction to traditional patriarchal teaching methods. In order to confront manifestations of power, students were forced to confront their “fears, desires, ambitions, and repressions.” Their discussions and work were based on consciousness-raising sessions related to personal experiences such as work, sexuality, or violence, which were then analyzed

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27 Ibid., 22.
28 Wilding said, “She felt that women students were either ignored or coddled by most male professors and that we needed to learn to be assertive, to express our anger, to make demands on ourselves and others, and to identify and ask for what we needed. The group process made fundamental demands on us to analyze and change our traditional gender roles, which often caused psychological turmoil, and emotional explosions.” Broude, Garrard, and Wilding, “The Power of Feminist Art,” 35.
29 Ibid.
in terms of the social and political mechanics of oppression and then formulated into response-based art. Like the revolutionary praxis of Marxist-oriented pedagogues of the same period, the feminists anticipated that the supportive environment of the consciousness-raising group could be a space where women could engage in reflexive activity while expressing themselves to others, thereby creating a new form of collective consciousness. Lacy's large public performances such as The Crystal Quilt and Code (discussed below), which employed both intimate conversations and interdisciplinary dialogue, were an attempt to transcend the individual through their connection with local institutions, communities, and public policy.

Although gender equality was part of Beuys' political agenda, particularly through the Organization for Direct Democracy (see chapter two), many U.S. feminists considered him problematic because of his patriarchal demeanor. Judy Chicago turned down Labowitz-Starus' request for a recommendation letter to study with him at the Düsseldorf Academy in 1971. At the time, Labowitz-Starus was producing work that was influenced by feminism, such as Menstruation Wait (Figure 4.2, 1971), a performance piece in which the artist confronted the social stigma associated with this female experience by expressing the physical and emotional effects she felt while literally waiting for her period. She went to West Germany anyway, but was unable to work with Beuys, who had just been fired from the

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30 Some of the work revolved around Chicago's concept of “central core imagery,” or images of female sexual organs, while others were experimentations with non-traditional art media and methods of production. For example, in Wilding's account, in order to “explode the hierarchies of materials and high/low art practices,” the FAP used materials as various as tampons, artificial flowers, makeup, glitter, blood, and animal organs, while their collective and collaborative way of producing work undermined the modernist legacy of the individual artist genius. Ibid.


32 See Cara Jordan, "Joseph Beuys and Feminism in the United States: Social Sculpture vs. Consciousness-Raising,” in Social Sculpture after Beuys: A Critical Reevaluation (presented at the College Art Association Annual Conference, Washington, DC, 2016). To feminists, such as those who convened at a breakfast meeting while he was visiting New York in January 1974, Beuys seemed closer to a Messianic, Christ-like figure than an ally, and to trivialize the concerns of women (see chapter three). They were trying to stake their claim outside of the modernist avant-garde by turning away from the “artist as isolated genius” trope espoused by Beuys and other male artists. His pedantic tone and inability to collaborate with other artists confirmed his position in the upper echelons of the art world, where feminist artists of equal bravado like Chicago were excluded.

33 Leslie Labowitz-Starus, telephone conversation with the author, February 18, 2015.
He attended her re-staging of the performance in Düsseldorf and motivated her to consider how art could be used to initiate social change as well as the implication that her feminist art could be a conduit to the spiritual world, including the video group she formed with Beuys’ former students Ulrike Rosenbach and Katharina Sieverding, and the performances on which she collaborated in the streets of Bonn in the mid-1970s.

Like other artists in the U.S. who were hearing about Beuys for the first time in the early 1970s, Labowitz-Starus was interested in the de-materialized, conceptual, performative, and shamanistic aspects of his work, and even suggested he open a Women Artists Center as a part of the Free International University. However, her feminist background was irreconcilable with the cultural context in West Germany, where feminist artists still received little support and traditional notions of the family with the mother staying at home prevailed. In West Germany, Labowitz-Starus became more politically aware and studied Marxism and socialism, but separated herself from the male-dominated New Left movement, as both U.S. and West German feminist movements had done in the late 1960s. Instead, she focused her

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34 She wrote to Beuys to express her own interest in teaching and to invite him to lecture and produce work in Los Angeles. Beuys declined her invitation, but he supported her work nonetheless, so he wrote her a recommendation for a Fulbright Grant at the Düsseldorf Academy in 1972. Leslie Labowitz-Starus, “Letter to Joseph Beuys,” August 10, 1971, JBA-B 027291, Joseph Beuys Archiv, Museum Schloß Moyland, Bedburg-Hau, Germany.


36 Feminism in West Germany unfolded at a different pace than in the United States during the postwar period. Historian Myra Marx Ferree explains that the movement began as a result of female engagement with the New Left, but quickly separated itself under the motto of “autonomy” — political independence, self-determination, gender solidarity, and resistance to the state. The movement grew from a small group of mothers dedicated to the cause of the student movement who were unable to participate as leaders due to childcare obligations. These women conceived of their problem as emblematic of more widespread problems facing mothers everywhere, and the transformation of mothers’ lives as key to the transformation of society. Hence, the West German movement developed based on motherhood as a source of women's empowerment rather than as a justification for subordination. As opposed to the New Left, these women believed that the subjection of women was not secondary to class relations, but that it deserved its own analysis. Thus, around 1970, women began to create their own forums to discuss issues, develop their own consciousness-raising techniques, and as a space separate from men. Such groups defined themselves according to gender and began to make important steps to collectively advocate their own interests. They borrowed from U.S. feminist groups, who had already been using consciousness-raising techniques to analyze social structures using women's personal experiences, and created their own networks and spaces such as women's centers, newsletters, and bookstores. The examination of the family structure, including child-rearing and family management, as well as sexual self-exploration were important topics for feminists in West Germany. Myra Marx Ferree, Varieties of Feminism German Gender Politics in Global Perspective (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2012), 215.
energies on demonstrating in support of the legalization of abortion and actions that emphasized the role of women in the economy. She was particularly struck by Beuys’ ability to attract large crowds and media attention, tactics she would later use in her own performance art pieces.

In autumn 1971, the FAP moved from Fresno to the recently opened (1970) CalArts in Valencia, California, when Chicago teamed up with Miriam Schapiro (1923–2015), a New York-based artist. Lacy followed the program to CalArts, where she transferred into the Social Design program (not the FAP, which thereafter organized the exhibition/installation Womanhouse in early 1972). Inspired by civil rights, this program combined elements of sociology, design, and psychology to examine the relationship between humans and the built environment. While she would continue to engage with students in the FAP, she also began as a teaching assistant for Sheila Levrant de Brettville (b. 1940), a graphic designer and theorist who was then teaching in her department.

Inspired by feminism and her background in zoology, Lacy’s work during this time was focused on the living body — both animal and human. She used her own body as well as dead animal corpses and entrails to explore the physical relationship to pain and to death, an interest in which derived from Leo Tolstoy’s musings on the void of death. Like Beuys, she used the bodies and organs as symbols; however, her organs were intended to connect visceral bodily experiences with the psychic unknown rather to exemplify a shamanistic quest for spirituality. An early example is the collaborative performance piece Ablutions (1972, Figure 4.3) on the subject of rape. In the year preceding the performance, Lacy and Chicago gathered recordings of women giving accounts of their rapes in order to draw attention to their unknown stories. These stories were then played as an audio environment in the studio where the performance took place, which contained three steel tubs filled with egg, blood, and clay, as well as broken eggshells, piles of rope and chain, and animal kidneys strewn about the floor. Two nude women bathed in the tubs sequentially encrusting their bodies with eggs, blood, and clay and were wrapped in sheets while another seated nude female was covered in bandages. At the same time, Lacy nailed 50

55–59.
37 Labowitz-Starus, telephone conversation with author. Labowitz-Starus took part in protests alongside West German feminists in defense of the legalization of abortion and the reform of §218 of the West German constitution.
38 Irish, Suzanne Lacy: Spaces Between, 30.
39 Ibid., 32.
kidneys to the wall. The performance concluded with Lacy and Jan Lester laying a net of ropes across the set, entrapping the wrapped performers while the sounds drone on, ending sharply with the words “I felt so helpless, all I could do was just lie there.” The ritualized performance was intended as an act of mourning as well as an act of healing. As Sharon Irish notes, the ritualization provided distance from the violent act by breaking it down into smaller parts and helping them assimilate it through repetition.40 By validating the stories of the raped women and providing a visual expression of their trauma, Irish says, the performance “gave meaning to the aftermath of sexual violence” by connecting the experience of assault to larger social structures that contributed to violence.41 Lacy's kidneys were thus symbols of the externalization of the women's painful personal stories.

Lacy continued to use animal parts in her performances throughout the early 1970s, including *Net Construction* (1973), in which beef kidneys attached to a rope net connected to her nude body with the audience (Figure 4.4), and *Lamb Construction* (1973), during which the artist reconstructed a lamb's carcass from its separated parts while a cross-dressing man made sausages. Corpses and animal organs also took a leading role in her *Anatomy Lessons* series (1974–1977), during which the artist layered various mediums (photography, text, projected images, performance, and sound). The animal bodies were used as conduits between the personal and the social, internal and external. In Lacy's words, these performances demonstrate “a direct relationship between the gendered, visceral body and the social realm.”42 Beuys, on the other hand, was using them as conduits to the spiritual realm, which he thought was beyond reach in a materialist-driven age. In his shamanistic performances like *How to Explain Pictures to a Dead Hare* (1965), he demonstrated this principle with a hare corpse. His use of animals coincided with the emergence of his thoughts about how art should function in the social realm, which opened new possibilities for artistic experimentation. For Lacy, it was a symbolic exchange with her audience, informed by her work with Allan Kaprow.

CalArts at that time was run by painter Paul Brach with the assistance of Kaprow, an artist primarily known for his multi-disciplinary participatory performances called “Happenings,” who

40 Ibid., 34.
41 Ibid., 35.
42 Lacy quoted in Ibid., 44.
encouraged the school's interdisciplinary and experimental atmosphere. Through her time at CalArts, Lacy was influenced not only by Kaprow's Happenings (he taught a class on the topic there), but also by her interactions with artists associated with Fluxus such as Alison Knowles, and Emmett and Ann Williams, many of whom had participated in Fluxus events in West Germany alongside Beuys in the early 1960s, and with choreographer Simone Forti. Beuys' former students Rosenbach and Sieverding also brought his ideas on conceptual and performance art to CalArts when they came to lecture and produce pieces there during 1974–1977. These formative relationships provided her with a model for her further explorations in feminist art and performance by framing everyday activities in a way that challenged public culture.

By the time Kaprow arrived in California in 1969, he had already begun to simplify the staged nature of his earlier Happenings in favor of open-ended actions that focused on the participant's experience. Informed by Zen philosophy and the pragmatist educational reforms of John Dewey, he began to call what he did "un-art," suggesting that his work had become life itself and hence rejecting the professionalization and specialization of the arts. In 1968, he started a program with University of California education professor Herbert Kohl called Project Other Ways in Berkeley, California. The program, which operated out of a storefront, sought to introduce interdisciplinary arts as a means to enliven traditional curricula by introducing artists into secondary schools as teachers, training teachers through workshops, and working with classes to produce art projects that developed skills in areas like reading and math (in one example, a group of illiterate students were encouraged to tell stories by producing graffiti). Kaprow organized several Happenings with students while at Project Other Ways, in order to introduce improvisational play into traditional education, such as cleaning used clothing and

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45 Lacy, interview; Ibid., 39. Rosenbach performed a piece during the “Performance!” festival at CalArts in March 1974, while Sieverding lectured there between 1976-1977.
47 Kelley, *Childsplay*, 143.
returning it to the store from which it was originally purchased (Charity, 1969). He also collaborated with neighborhood residents in nearby Oakland to turn empty lots into parks, while Marxist activist Kohl focused on radicalizing the education system through lectures that were in line with the revolutionary activities already happening throughout the city (the escalation of which led to Kaprow's departure from the program one year later).

Kaprow's activities did not resemble art and were not enacted in art spaces; however, he intended them to produce extraordinary experiences for the participants. Inspired by his readings of pragmatist John Dewey, who believed in a continuity between art and experience, as well as his own training with painter Hans Hofmann and composer John Cage, his Happenings were sequenced so that the participants became aware of their own playful actions as experiences, rather than as parts of a performance. In his manifesto of 1966, Kaprow stated that, "as art becomes less art, it takes on philosophy's early role as critique of life...Precisely because art can be confused with life, it forces attention upon the aim of its ambiguities, to 'reveal' experience." Beuys had thought the opposite — that art should be the organizing force under which all other things (politics, education) should follow. Therefore, he enacted ritual investigations into how art could be used as a transformative force; first, through his performances, and later through his concept of social sculpture. Beuys also asserted his role as an artist and made clear that his actions should not be confused with politics, for example. Kaprow, on the other hand, thought that by making art more like life, it would reveal much more about human interactions with the world. He thought that contemporary art, with its use of multiple, overlapping, and hybrid mediums, had become a more effective means of communication because it had the ability to

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50 This action was part of Kaprow's Six Ordinary Happenings, all of which took place in the streets of Berkeley from 7 March to 23 May 1969. Kelley, Childsplay, 144–145.
51 Ibid., 145. Kaprow's focus on art as an experience is foregrounded in Dewey's aesthetic theories found in John Dewey, Art as Experience (New York: Minton, Balch & Company, 1934). Dewey believed that the experience of a work of art was not found solely in the object, but rather in the experience of the art process as a whole.
52 In her in-progress dissertation at the City University of New York Graduate Center, "Teaching=Doing: Communication Pedagogy in California, 1966-1974," Hallie Scott has demonstrated that Dewey was interested in the continuity between everyday experiences and art through quotidian moments that inspire wonder and engage the senses. However, they must also be activated through investigation and processing.
parallel human thought better than words or symbolism. These investigations continued in his role as a professor of performance at CalArts, where he taught Lacy about performance art.

French philosopher Géraldine Gourbe argues that Kaprow's pedagogic experiments were in line with Chicago's at the FAP, for both were interested in eliminating the hierarchy between teachers and students as a means to empower the critical thinking skills of oppressed people, as pioneered by Brazilian educational reformist Paulo Freire in his book Pedagogy of the Oppressed (translated into English in 1970). Though he questioned the feminist artists' zealous utopian agenda and the gendering of everyday actions in their performances (as opposed to merely using them as playful gestures), Kaprow was interested in their exploration of the links between art and society and their efforts to question the nature of the creative process. He took part in a consciousness-raising session with Chicago and her students in 1972, which Gourbe argues helped him find a way to mitigate the mythologization of his Happenings and their reputation as a negative byproduct of counter-culture. He also found ways to incorporate feminist discourse into his work by attending to equality in role playing and adopting follow-up sessions in which participants orally recounted their experience of the work.

One aspect that Lacy did not glean from her interactions with Kaprow, however, was her belief that art can play a part in changing society. Kaprow eschewed an ideological position in his work, and despite Project Other Ways, downplayed its ability to produce social change, one of the key goals of Marxist pedagogues like Freire, feminists like Chicago, and artists like Beuys during the same period. He recognized the novelty of the feminist approach and its ethical necessity in his own process; however, the responses collected from participants and documentary recordings of his Happenings were used for empirical purposes, rather than their ability to critique social structures. Nonetheless, the feminists at CalArts, and Lacy in particular, found a formal model for their performance-based public art practice in

54 Ibid., 83.
55 Gourbe, "The Pedagogy of Art as Agency: Or the Influence of a West Coast Feminist Art Program on an East Coast Pioneering Reflection on Performance Art," 6. Lacy has cited Freire's book as a formative influence, although Augusto Boal's Theater of the Oppressed might also be called upon in relation to her work. See Bishop, Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship, 122–126.
56 Kelley, Childsplay, 154.
58 In these sessions, the artist, participants, and audience would share their experience of the work, but Kaprow did not encourage a discussion of its social and political implications. Ibid., 155.
Kaprow’s work. As Kaprow’s biographer Jeff Kelley asserts, “it was assumed by many activist artists that Happenings, if scaled to the ideological proportions of feminism, might change society.” If art collapsed into the time and space of real life, then political art could be more than symbolic, and become actual action.

While Lacy’s political platform was inspired by community organizing and second-wave feminism, Kaprow taught her how art could reframe real life actions and experiences. He emphasized that the process of art could be its final product and that art should address multiple audiences. He was also instrumental in establishing the parameters by which art can be distinguished from politics (he thought that the identity of his projects as art should be ambiguous) and by defining a platform for critical reflection through his writings. “By extending what could be called art, who made it, and where art could occur,” Lacy states, “Allan’s ideas, meant originally to challenge the art establishment, were mined by activist artists to challenge public culture.” These thoughts were clearly articulated in her performances of the later 1970s such as *Three Weeks in May* (Figure 4.5, 4.6), during which the artist charted the locations of police-reported rapes in Los Angeles over a three-week period in May 1977. While her earlier solo and group actions within the gallery space incorporated animal bodies as symbolic of the connection between internal experience and social structures, *Three Weeks in May* employed data visualization, participation of the audience, and speaking out as means to address the social constructions that resulted in rape. Originally conceived as a gallery installation that mapped the sites of the violence, the project was eventually situated in a public shopping center and expanded to contain a number of “acts” including a second map locating acts of resistance, performances by other artists, interdisciplinary conversations, dinners, and media interventions in the streets of Los Angeles. Irish argues that this was the first of many large-scale “performance structures” that Lacy intended to be places where participants could listen to

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60 Kelley, *Childsplay*, 154.
one another, make those conversations visible, and focus the dialogue on action. However, it was also an important step in incorporating interdisciplinary voices as well as establishing multiple platforms for engagement, including educational components and numerous performance events. In addition to her own contributions, Lacy curated more than thirty other artist's contributions to *Three Weeks in May*, which were produced in collaboration with public officials, local organizations dedicated to violence prevention, and artists such as Barbara Cohen, Melissa Hoffman, Jill Soderholm, and Labowitz-Starus.

Labowitz-Starus met Lacy when she returned from West Germany to work in the Women's Building at CalArts earlier that year. They collaborated on several politically charged performances protesting violence against women in the late 1970s, stylized after guerrilla theater and performed in public spaces, similar to both Lacy's *Three Weeks* and Labowitz-Starus' works while still in West Germany. The two called their own news conferences and employed their audiences as participants in their actions. In addition to hearing about Beuys' work through colleagues at CalArts, Labowitz-Starus was Lacy's closest encounter with the German artist during her emerging career — she was arguably indirectly influenced by Labowitz-Starus' incorporation of Beuys' media tactics in their collaborative performances. For *In Mourning and in Rage* (1977, Figure 3.21), Labowitz-Starus and Lacy collaborated on a demonstration to bring attention to the sensationalized media coverage a serial rapist and murderer in Los Angeles. Alongside a large group of interdisciplinary supporters including other artists and activists, the artists rallied in front of City Hall in mourning robes to address members of the local media about violence against women and empower women to fight back.

While Beuys did not always stage performances at his press conferences (an exception is his

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65 For *Three Weeks in May*, Labowitz-Starus performed four “acts” in the form of faux media events related to rape that were inspired by her time in West Germany and readings of Brecht, Benjamin, and Bürger and included the hooded figures that would be used in Lacy and Labowitz-Starus' collaborative works. Leslie Labowitz-Starus, telephone conversation with the author. One of these performances, *Myths of Rape*, was re-staged by artists Audrey Chan and Elana Mann for the Getty's *Pacific Standard Time* exhibition in Los Angeles in 2012. Audrey Chan, Elana Mann, and Alexandra Grant, “Rupture and Continuity in Feminist Re-Performance,” *Afterall* 33 (Summer 2013), accessed April 15, 2015, http://www.afterall.org/journal/issue.33/rupture-and-continuity-in-feminist-re-performance.
66 Labowitz-Starus was involved in several performance pieces related to feminist themes while based in Bonn in the early 1970s, including participation in protests in defense of the legalization of abortion, in which she and other performers wore hooded costumes resembling those used in holy week rituals in Seville, and performances to re-enforce the value of female labor, during which she performed household chores. Leslie Labowitz-Starus, interview by author, Los Angeles, April 7, 2015.
performance during *documenta* 7 where he molded a hare and sphere out of gold), Labowitz-Starus incorporated his ability to attract cameras, reporters, and a large crowd to broadcast his ideas.  

However, rather than using the conference to draw attention to their own image or brand, the two women used the media as a means to gather a critical mass about rape. Lacy and Labowitz-Starus continued their relationship through *Ariadne: A Social Art Network*, a coalition of artists, activists, reporters, and politicians designed to structure their activism, provide a power base to approach the media, and to apply for funding. The group was conceived as a conceptual project, similar to Beuys' projects of social sculpture in the 1970s in that they provided the space for others to explore ideas in addition to presenting their own work. As with the Organization for Direct Democracy, the group reached out to like-minded individuals and sought to educate the public on a variety of political topics through workshops, classes, and lectures. However, they functioned more collaboratively than Beuys' projects by including the writings, suggestions, and performances of other members in their activities.

During the mid-1970s, Lacy also took an active interest in media theory, in particular the writings of George Gerbner, the founder of cultivation theory. She was interested in the relationship between pop culture and education, as well as in situating the media within a broader political context, which Gerbner had examined by tracing how our perceptions of the world are shaped by images and ideological messages transmitted through television. Lacy examined images in the media as an aspect of education,

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67 Labowitz-Starus notes that Beuys' ability to attract the media was one of the things that struck her about him the most. Leslie Labowitz-Starus, interview by author, Los Angeles, April 7, 2015.
68 Lacy's website states: Activities were organized under three concepts: Education, including classes at the Woman's Building in political performance and media workshops and lectures; Vision and Theory, composed of member's writings on political art and violence, open forums on relevant topics, and special events of a critical or theoretical nature; and the Projects themselves, both Lacy and Labowitz' and those of other artists in the community. *Ariadne* was viable between 1977 and 1980, sponsoring several community dialogues—including a well publicized screening of the movie “Hardcore” at Columbia Studios, co-sponsored by California Advocates for Trollops, where feminists could express their perceptions and analysis of the film to reporters. An apprenticeship class at the Feminist Studio Workshop created the Take Back the Night Float for the San Francisco March National Perspectives on Pornography conference. Projects and exhibitions, including the Incest Awareness Project by Labowitz, Bia Lowe, Terry Wolverton, Paula Lombardi, and women from the Women's Building, and Issue, an exhibition by Lucy Lippard at the ICA in London, continued under the auspices of *Ariadne* until the end of the decade. Suzanne Lacy, “Early Works: *Ariadne*,” *Suzanne Lacy*, accessed July 15, 2016, http://www.suzannelacy.com/early-works/.
69 Lacy, interview. Gerber's project, entitled *Cultural Indicators*, determined that the perceptions of those with long-term exposure to television are “cultivated” into standardized roles and behaviors. See George Gerbner and Michael Morgan, *Against the Mainstream: The Selected Works of George Gerbner* (New York: P. Lang, 2002).
arguing that if we are able to critically analyze these sources, then we will have access to a portrait of society that image-makers promote as desirable.\textsuperscript{70} To counter the manipulation of the media, she argued that artists should make complex, optimistic images that break down stereotypes, provide alternative options, and open the possibility of collective action.\textsuperscript{71} Above all, artists should counter the dominant media discourse by following the revolutionary intent of feminist consciousness-raising and radical pedagogy and by teaching the struggle for equality and liberation through images that are accessible to a broader public.\textsuperscript{72}

Lacy was interested in how an artist might enter the system of mass communication in order to subvert and transform it. She recognized that artists in the United States such as Kaprow and even Warhol had reached some fame with their work, but had never permeated culture in the same manner as Beuys, who had a ubiquitous presence in the West German media.\textsuperscript{73} Labowitzy-Starus recalls that Beuys' celebrity was one of his most impressive qualities — whatever he was involved in was covered in the news, which was unusual for an avant-garde artist. As she was participating in West German protests and creating work on violence against women, Labowitz-Starus also considered how one's public persona might be part of their art and how it might be used to generate an artist's brand.\textsuperscript{74} In addition to her knowledge of early twentieth century German and Russian literature and art, most importantly Bertolt Brecht and the Constructivists, Beuys provided another model for the engaged artist, allowing her to combine her background in conceptual art and second-wave feminism. Eschewing theatrical methods, she opted to incorporate graphics, writing, and symbols of protest into her publicly staged performances.\textsuperscript{75} Henceforth, her projects also included elements of the mass media, including press conferences to coordinate and attract the popular media attention that came naturally to Beuys.

Through her collaboration with Labowitz-Starus, Lacy established a working model that she employed in her short-term socially engaged projects of the 1980s including Freeze Frame: Room for

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{71} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{72} Ibid., 80.
\textsuperscript{73} Lacy, interview.
\textsuperscript{74} Leslie Labowitz-Starus, telephone conversation with the author.
\textsuperscript{75} Irish, Suzanne Lacy: Spaces Between, 70.
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Living Room (1982), Immigrants and Survivors (1983), Whisper, the Waves, the Wind (1984), and Whisper Minnesota (1987).\textsuperscript{76} Inspired by Happenings and feminist consciousness-raising, Lacy reframed small group discussions as art intended to address larger social issues such as aging and immigration. These issues were examined using a series of educational workshops, classes, and screenings over a period of several months prior to the production of a culminating performance. The performance events were staged with the help of paid staff, volunteers, and performers — women from a broad range of races, ethnicities, ages, and abilities — with whom relationships were forged through their participation in the classes and through social gatherings such as dinners. Lacy also began to deal with media theory more closely by teaching workshops that addressed issues of representation and by incorporating film, video, audio, printed documents, and press conferences into her performances. While her audience was already quite large, these mediums further expanded her constituency and attracted media coverage.

A pertinent example of this model is the well-known piece The Crystal Quilt (Figure 4.7), a performance that was part of her Whisper Minnesota Project (1985–1987) in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Over the course of three years, Lacy directed a series of events and classes, including a lecture series, film screenings, and a mass media campaign in collaboration with almost two-dozen artists, scores of volunteers and with the support of local public agencies, universities, and private organizations. Its focus was the representation of aging women in the United States.\textsuperscript{77} Her research process culminated in a large-scale performance on Mother's Day (10 May 1987) in the atrium of a Philip Johnson-designed shopping center, where 430 black-clad women, organized around tables with red and yellow tablecloths

\textsuperscript{76} By 1979, Labowitz-Starus abandoned these radical interventions to reflect on her family's experience in the Holocaust. Instead, she incorporated sprout farming into her performance practice. For her, growing the plants was a metaphor for spiritual renewal akin to Beuys' own use of natural forms as a reference to healing, nurturing, and growth. She established Sproutime, a company she continues to operate with the help of other artists, to grow and supply sprouts to local markets. Paul Ciotti, “Sprout Sensation: Shifting Her Focus from Confrontational Works, Performance Artist Leslie Labowitz-Starus Turns to Farming,” Los Angeles Times, July 10, 1992, accessed January 4, 2016, http://articles.latimes.com/1992-07-10/news/va-1669_1_performance-art.

\textsuperscript{77} Participating artists include Nancy Dennis, Sharon Anderson, Phyllis Jane Rose, Phyllis Salzberg and Judy Kepes. Quilt design by Miriam Shapiro, scarves by Julie A, soundtrack by Susan Stone, choreography by Sage Cowles, and PBS live broadcast produced by Emily Goldberg. The event was supported by the Minnesota Board on Aging, the Minneapolis College of Art and Design, the Hubert H. Humphrey Institute, and the feminist theater At the Foot of the Mountain. Moira Roth, “Suzanne Lacy: Social Reformer and Witch,” in Art in the Public Interest, ed. Arlene Raven (New York: Da Capo Press, 1993), 162.
in a large quadratic area to form the pattern of a quilt, performed synchronized movements to pre-
recorded sounds (stories told by the women mixed with commentary about the potential of the elderly) for
an audience of several thousand. While there is no denying that Chicago, Schapiro (one of her
collaborators), and Kaprow influenced Lacy in the form and content of this piece — particularly in the
stage direction, quilt motif of the final performance, and feminist topic — her pedagogic approach and
collaboration with governmental agencies and non-profits aligns her method closely to Beuys'.

A comparison can be drawn between this temporary, staged event and the workshops installed
by Beuys at the 1977 documenta 6 exhibition in Kassel as part of the Free International University, which
brought together artists, scholars, and practitioners from a variety of backgrounds to address world issues
(as discussed in chapter two). Documenta audiences were able to listen to a number of groups
concerning topics such as nuclear energy, the manipulation of the media, urban decay, violence, and
labor. Beuys' focus on interdisciplinarity also relates to Lacy, who relied on the skills of collaborators
outside of her own discipline (e.g., television producers, social organizers, choreographers) to both attract
participants and aid with the practical implementation of her ideas. Both artists intended their projects to
serve as models for other issues, and their actions to have repercussions beyond the event itself — aided
by Lacy's production of documentary video and Beuys' multiples.78 However, Beuys' workshops differ
from Lacy's performance in many respects as well. Lacy's use of voices and sound relates much more to
her Fluxus precursors than to Beuys, who used the voice as a means to express Steinerian spiritual
thought, and her events are much more theatrical than any of Beuys' projects of social sculpture. Lacy
attends to the formal aesthetic concerns of her work much more than Beuys' did in his classrooms,
lectures, and through organizations like the Organization for Direct Democracy or the Free International
University. Nonetheless, both artists were using art as a means to bring people together in conversation
about political issues pertinent to their historical and geographic context.

Art historian Moira Roth has discussed the Lacy's contribution to art as a form of witchcraft,
recasting the male shaman figure (often played by Beuys) as a symbol of female power.79 She references

78 These are two of the three criteria used by Lacy to measure the success of her work. The third is the
quality of the performance experience for participants and audience, which was less of a concern for
Beuys. Ibid., 160–161.
79 Roth, “Suzanne Lacy: Social Reformer and Witch.” Originally printed in The Drama Review 32, no. 1
Lacy’s performances of the early 1970s, during which the artist used animal carcasses and entrails to express violent and uncensored images of personal experience. In his own actions, Beuys used both dead and live animals such as the hare and coyote to evoke mythic spiritualism, a shamanistic ritual to connect the spiritual with the material.\textsuperscript{30} Roth suggests that Lacy’s use of the bodies, as well as her belief that women’s spirituality is a physical expression, are “essential underpinnings and metaphoric substructures within her [late 1980s] pageant work.”\textsuperscript{31} She contends that the archetypal connections between organs and social life in her earlier work were both conscious and subconscious references to ancient feminine imagery and ritual (such as the haggardly crone goddess, matriarchal ceremonies that employed blood, and the white, red, and black colors associated with the female trinity), which were later supplanted by her interest in the experiences of older women.\textsuperscript{32} As in Beuys’ workshops, the symbolism in projects like Lacy’s \textit{The Crystal Quilt} was expressed through dialogue rather than through more literal actions or performances, which both artists tended to enact inside the space of the gallery rather than in public. By the early 1980s, the raw animal body parts that Lacy once used were replaced by the expression of at times painful personal experiences through the intimate exchange of words, creation of communities, and large public spectacles.\textsuperscript{33} Rather than literally spilling guts, the artist was now encouraging others to divulge their secrets in public. Roth contends that these stories, in addition to the relationships formed by their telling, are the medium by which the women spiritually transcend their bodies to become one with each other. Roth’s claim, though far-fetched, explains how Lacy translated the healing symbolism evident in her early performances into the very different format of her later conversations-as-performance. For Roth, Lacy’s spectacles recast the shaman as a witch, who is able to heal with female power.\textsuperscript{34} From this point forward, Lacy’s work more clearly embodied the principles of social sculpture, particularly because she focused on the spiritual empowerment of her project participants.

(Spring 1988).

\textsuperscript{30} For example, \textit{The Anatomy Lessons} (1973-1976), \textit{She Who Would Fly} during \textit{Three Weeks in May} (1977), \textit{From Reverence to Rape to Respect} with Leslie Labowitz-Starus (1978), and \textit{The Lady and the Lamb or the Goad and the Hag} (1978).

\textsuperscript{31} Ibid., 164.
\textsuperscript{32} Ibid., 164–165.
\textsuperscript{33} Ibid., 169.
\textsuperscript{34} Ibid., 171.
“New Genre Public Art” and Lacy's Work as Social Sculpture

In the early 1990s, Lacy began to distinguish between her own activist form of public art and more traditional conceptions of art in public places (such as sculpture) by writing essays, convening a national conference, and publishing her seminal book *Mapping the Terrain*.

In her introductory essay, “Cultural Pilgrimages and Metaphoric Journeys,” she traces the origins of “new genre” artistic practices like her own and identifies artists whose work falls under her new category. While she does not discuss Beuys' work directly (he was included in an appendix of artists compiled by the book's other contributors), she pairs her essay with an image of his 1974 performance *I Like America and America Likes Me* (Figure 3.14) at the René Block Gallery in New York.

This piece, which paved the way for Beuys' reception by U.S. artists in the 1980s, can be seen as an entry point for Lacy's practice during the same period. A temporary event staged with the help of many individuals, Beuys' encounter with a coyote inside the gallery space acknowledges the breakdown or lack of a shared spiritual authority at a time of great social struggle in the United States. Lacy, like Beuys, used performance as a tool for healing and transformation, creating relationships in order to access the spiritual depths of individuals facing an environment characterized by violence, racism, and discrimination in the United States. However, as with her earlier staged conversations with women, Lacy intended these performances as aesthetic experiences for her participants and audiences, as opposed to Beuys, whose art was found in the creative development process. Through these projects, Lacy helped theorize the “art-in-the-public-interest model” of public art, through which artists address social issues and engage communities as participants or collaborators in their work.

Following her relocation to Oakland, California, in 1987, Lacy claims she “left” art to engage directly with local communities. During this time, she began a ten-year series of projects in collaboration with local youth, artists, and activists within education, criminal justice, health, and governance that

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85 See Lacy's introduction to her own theoretical writings of the 1990s. Lacy, “The Name of the Game,” 160.
86 Lacy, *Mapping the Terrain*, 18. Instead, his work was included in the compendium of artists' works compiled by the book's contributing authors because he had established a language to speak about his work, concern with social issues, scope of his audience, and communication strategies.
helped her learn about “the alignment of political forces around/against race and class.” Known for its intellectual activity and social change advocacy as well as its racial diversity and high unemployment, Oakland during this period was beset with violent crime and gun homicides involving youth. Lacy used her skills as an artist to intervene, just as Kaprow had in the late 1960s with Project Other Ways, in the hopes that she could help ameliorate the situation. In 1991, while dean of the School of Fine Arts at the California College of Arts and Crafts (CCAC), Lacy worked with Chris Johnson, an African-American photographer also at CCAC, to connect with minority youth from nearby Oakland Technical High School. The artists taught a seminar on media theory during which African-American and Latino teenagers discussed stereotypes and racial profiling, which was subsequently replicated in other schools. Joining their efforts with artist-activist Annice Jacoby, they formed an “arts-in-community organization” called TEAM (Teens + Educators + Artists + Media Makers, active 1993–2000). The group's objective was to make alliances with city and county entities to encourage more positive outcomes for youth (particularly those of color) in local government, the legal system, health care institutions, and schools by offering opportunities for the kids to represent themselves through audio and video, organize speak-outs, and participate in city hall meetings.

In addition to offering classes, training workshops, and screenings, TEAM produced several temporary site-specific events with Lacy including Teenage Living Room (1992), The Roof is on Fire (1994), No Blood/No Foul (1996), and Code 33: Emergency Clear the Air! (1999), all of which share similarities in strategy and production. Using a coalition system forged in the founding of Ariadne with Labowitz-Starus, Lacy began with several months of planning, during which TEAM members met with community members, led workshops and conversations, and collaborated with various stakeholders and community leaders. The result of these preparations was a televised event that usually took place in a nearby parking garage, where spectators viewed, listened, and interacted with participants. Participants,

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90 Ibid., 149.
91 Ibid., 149–150.
in the role of the actors, conversed with each other about a mutually selected topic, often related to politically charged issues within their community or school, as audience members and journalists walked around witnessing the event.

An emblematic example is *Code 33: Clear the Air*, the last project produced by Lacy (who served as artistic director), TEAM member Unique Holland, and Julio Morales over the course of three years from 1998 to 2000. It consisted of leadership and media workshops, meetings with neighborhood crime prevention groups, and televised conversations between 150 local youth and 100 uniformed police officers. The title, *Code 33*, which refers to the code police officers use to clear the airwaves unless the case is an emergency, was a testament to the state of affairs between these two groups. It also suggests that dialogue and mentoring were urgent needs for teens living in Oakland at this time due to the increasing volatility of their relationship with law enforcement, which needed immediate attention. The goal of the project was to “reduce police hostility toward youth, provide youth with a set of skills to participate in their communities, and generate a more profound understanding of youth needs.” Thus, during the five weeks prior to the event, organizational meetings were held so that the officers and youth could convene to learn how to ask appropriate questions of each other that might benefit a group discussion. As with her other Oakland projects, the teens were also offered classes, mentorship, leadership training, paid jobs, and video training.

On the night of 7 October 1999, the teens and police gathered in small groups (Figure 4.8), surrounded by car headlights and television cameras (the event was covered by a local NBC affiliate), on

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92 Lacy met Holland in 1994 when she was a member of the leadership team for *The Roof is on Fire* and the two have continued to work together on public art projects since including *Between the Door and the Street* in Brooklyn in 2013. Ibid., 152. It is unclear what Morales' role was in the performance.
95 The youth were divided into two groups: the Youth Planning Team, a paid group of 13 students that met weekly and led discussions, engaged with the police and other civic bodies, and organized media projects; and the Artist's Team that led art classes and offered apprenticeships with professional artists in preparation for the performance. TEAM, “Code 33 Planning Document & Objectives,” c. 1998-1999, Suzanne Lacy Archive, Los Angeles, CA.
the top of a local parking garage (Figure 4.9) where *The Roof is on Fire* had been held several years prior (plans for an automobile procession earlier in the evening were cancelled due to a hostile protest across the street). Nearly one thousand audience members milled around, listening to the conversations and looking at monitors that displayed portraits of young people created by their peers. The first “act” ended when a helicopter landed on the roof of the garage, marking the transition to a group dance performance (Figure 4.10), with the finale held on separate levels of the garage. In the last “act,” 50 neighborhood residents responded to the discussions they had just witnessed within the confines of several small picket-fenced areas meant to simulate neighborly conversations. There was also a place for youth to sign up for mentoring, computers for collecting audience feedback, and video equipment for the teens to document responses (Figure 4.11). In her account of *Code 33*, Roth suggested that the transition from conversation to documentation over the course of the performance was “deliberately designed to move from a stylized and focused image into ‘real life’ with its more chaotic shapes.”

Although this project can be seen as an intricate network of institutional and community relationships, the performance realized the much-needed interaction and dialogue between the authorities and youth in the Bay Area. Through *Code 33* and her other collaborations with TEAM, Lacy and her student teams overcame the conflict between those with power and those without, combining their creative forces to transform mentalities. At the same time, by asking each other questions, the conversants were able to gain a deeper understanding of their respective positions in what Lacy recognized as a problematic power struggle. Their creative energies, when combined in dialogue, were meant to be productive: the open conversation and frank answers could carry forward into the lives of the participants and their peers, whether on the police force or outside the classroom in their local community. Just as important as the teens and cops were the audience members, who came from quite diverse backgrounds. Following the conversations between the youth and police, they developed their own discussion groups on a lower level of the garage, which provided them with the opportunity to comment on and learn from the issues raised earlier in the evening. These people, whether community

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96 The protest was in support of Mumia Abu-Jamal, a Black Panther activist who had been sentenced to death in the killing a police officer whose appeal had been denied in October 1999.
98 Ibid., 59.
members, parents, or outsiders, could form their own positions about youth, crime, and the legal system in the Bay Area.

The dynamic and temporary nature of Lacy’s performances means there is little demonstrable evidence of the impact on these audiences beyond the event itself. However, the teens and police force continued their interactions for the next several years. This began with a debriefing meeting with the students in which they discussed their experiences of the event and their own “success indicators,” which ranged from the ability of the project to increase the number of youth who felt “empowered, challenged and engaged in community leadership” to “increasing the success rate of juveniles on probation.” In the months following the performance, the students continued to engage with the project through a video production class that made a documentary film, as well as a second performance in May 2000 entitled *Eye 2 Eye* that replicated the format of *Code 33* with conversations between students, teachers, and staff at a public high school. The local police chief instated his own Chief’s Youth Advisory Team as a result and a truancy prevention program was founded in 2002. However, Irish notes that the event had negative repercussions as well: not only was the media critical that the event was a weak apology for police brutality, but in March 2000 California voters also passed the Gang Violence and Juvenile Crime Prevention Act, which toughened laws for young criminals and increased penalties for gang activity. Since the project is a work of art and not social work, staff was not hired to gather metrics or conduct an audience response. Therefore, it is impossible to know whether the performance improved relationships between youth and police or led to a reduction in crime, aside from anecdotal evidence.

In the 1980s, Lacy developed three criteria by which she measured the success of her work, immediately distancing herself from Beuys, who never reflected on such matters directly. First, she examines the quality of the performance and the experience it generated for the participants and the

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99 There was a debriefing meeting with the students immediately following the event, during which they discussed “success indicators,” sorted through images of the event, edited film footage, and wrote for publication. Suzanne Lacy, “Workplan Code 33,” July 17, 1998, Suzanne Lacy Archive, Los Angeles, CA; “Code 33: Background and Goals,” 5.
102 Ibid.
audience, based mostly on her own perceptions and the reactions of those involved — an assessment that she admits is flawed because both the artist and her collaborators have their own personal goals and the experiences of the performers and the audience are subjective. Therefore, it is not surprising that although the technical aspects of her performances (such as the ability to see or hear participants) and the style of her work have garnered criticism, Lacy, Roth, and others overwhelmingly laud the impact of its “poetic” and “passionate” qualities, as well as its ability to offer powerful visions of women's experience. Second, she evaluates the efficacy of the work as a model that could be applied to other issues or for future actions by other artists, an aspect that may be a “cop-out” with regard to the demonstrable effects of her performances, but which was nonetheless also an important consideration for Beuys. Lacy proposes that her “networking performances” could be useful because they encompass a variety of strategies that motivate and organize participation, establish a platform for engaging the media, and create consensus through communal experience, even if only temporarily. These are the skills that she seeks to hone in the students enrolled in her master's program in Public Practice at Otis. However, her tactics only work for topics that are not divisive and can encompass a wide range of views, for example aging women in The Crystal Quilt or youth violence in Code 33, rather than specific political issues like abortion that elicit polarized responses. This dilutes the political efficacy of her projects towards any specific ends and renders them, at times, to appear as loudspeakers for a variety of liberal opinions rather than as a means toward social change. Finally, she considers both the immediate and longer-lasting consequences of the processes that she set in motion by the performance, which includes emotional support for those who opened up about their experiences during the performance as well as the myriad of other ways that the energy of the project is directed following the event. By her own admission, the communities forged by her performances have not been sustained beyond their initial iterations. Lacy considers this a failure, since she is not able to engage with communities in any long-term

104 Lacy, “Beneath the Seams,” 140.
105 Ibid., 141.
capacity. Much like Beuys, whose social sculpture projects failed to garner widespread support following his death, Lacy's artistic vision, charisma, and leadership abilities are essential to her work, and without this, others have been unable to generate a theme of equal interest or establish a widespread network that included other cities.

When all of her criteria are taken into account, it appears that Lacy is even skeptical of her own success as a social practice artist. Roth and many other feminist critics are more positive about her skills in bringing together diverse audiences, the symbolic resonance of the performances, and their ability to inspire audiences about feminist issues. This would be fine if they were Lacy's stated goals; however, she expects that the work empowers participants, raises consciousness about women's shared experience, and generates a sense of belonging. These qualities are abstract and impossible to quantify, and are based less on the artistic merits of the work than its ability to produce social change. Nonetheless, Lacy is still quite cognizant of the aesthetic aspects of her work — for example, the use of costuming and formal staging of works like Code 33 and Between the Door and the Street. Although her performances consistently employ the same format, she also considers the months-to-years-long process of its production to be part of the work, including planning meetings, workshops, and social networking, which are not normally analyzed using the same methods or terminology as art. It is clear that Lacy attempts to balance her politics with her aesthetics in her social practice projects, which implies that she believes in the co-existence of art and social change. However, she consistently challenges how we judge such projects as either aesthetic or political activism.

Defining these projects as works of art, as Beuys did, distinguishes them from non-art activities such as pure activism or social work. Kaprow endeavored to preserve the ambiguity of his projects as not-quite-art yet not-quite-real-life in order to avoid being pigeon-holed within either discourse, hence diverting the question as to whether it was necessary to track tangible outcomes of projects. Lacy's claim that she "left" art in the 1990s and the title of her 2010 book of collected writings, Leaving Art, suggest that she felt the same way. Nonetheless, both artists are canonized within art historical scholarship and authorship of their social projects is often attributed to them alone, thereby keeping them tethered to an}

107 Ibid., 143.
108 For example, Ibid., 161.
109 Lacy, "The Name of the Game."
art (versus anthropological or sociological) discourse. This points to one of the issues with social practice — although artists claim that their work is not art, it is still framed within an art context and artists still receive recognition from the art world. Although Lacy may have left art, her work is still conceived of as art by critics, curators, and art historians. Furthermore, Lacy neither completely abandoned her own professionalization as an artist, nor has she discontinued teaching other artists to build careers in the specialized field of social practice.\textsuperscript{110} Retreating from the art world, therefore, had no effect on how her projects have been received. If we conceive of her work as Beuys did his — as art, rather than politics — then it would make no difference whether her projects had a demonstrable outcome or not.

By pulling back from art, Lacy has also attempted to re-cast her performances as collaborations in an effort to decenter her notion of authorship. This is a widespread issue in contemporary social practice as artists seek to retreat from the art world and toward other areas of “practice” that have more real world consequences such as law or medicine. However, the issue of authorship in Lacy’s case is a result of her conception of collaboration, which draws on her feminist background. As opposed to the patriarchal concept of the artistic genius, she prefers to think of herself as a director or manager that organizes temporary events like Code 33, which involve a multitude of collaborators. Irish argues that she “has always controlled the performance structure (to the extent possible) and persisted in realizing her artistic vision, while welcoming contributions of content, strategies, networks, and funds.”\textsuperscript{111} The performances are the result of participation and collaboration, but Lacy emerges as a leader because they are still attributed to her alone. Consciously or not, this is a statement of self-assertion also seen in the work of feminist figures like Chicago. Lacy has admitted that she is not always sensitive to the issues that come with collaboration and that she finds it problematic that she often retains full authorship (though

\textsuperscript{110} She has continued to win grants as an artist including the Guggenheim Foundation, The Henry Moore Foundation, and The National Endowment for the Arts; her work is exhibited and collected by museums such as the Tate Modern (who acquired elements of The Crystal Quilt in 2012), The Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles, the Whitney Museum, the New Museum and P.S. 1 in New York, and The Bilbao Museum in Spain; and she has taught widely including positions at CCAC and at Otis; Several of her iconic works have been restaged, both solidifying her legacy and allowing new audiences to experience whatever radical essence they may still contain, including Silver Action (a re-thinking of The Crystal Quilt) at the Tanks at the Tate Modern in 2013; and Three Weeks in May was commissioned for the Getty's Pacific Standard Time Performance Festival (2012) and again for the Museo Pecci in Milan, Italy (2014).

\textsuperscript{111} Irish, Suzanne Lacy: Spaces Between, 141.
such a task would be impossible given the necessity of authorship in the art world).\textsuperscript{112} She has attempted to reclaim their role by acknowledging their contributions in her publications, though with little success in terms of their more widespread recognition and association with her work.\textsuperscript{113} Although interdisciplinary conversations inform her working style and add to the complexity of each work, like Beuys, her name is still associated with a successful art career and therefore it builds a presence in the art media. This recognition is not confused with an intent to self-market, as was the case with Beuys, since Lacy does not sell objects or multiples, nor is she represented by a gallery (her projects are funded by grants, which also require an author). Using the art world as a platform, both artists intend their projects to gain traction in other areas, thereby inspiring others to carry out the ideas contained in their work or discussed during a workshop or performance.

The primary link between Lacy’s projects in the early 1990s and the work of Beuys is her symbolic emphasis on individual creativity as the force behind social change. The participants in Lacy’s projects are engaged creatively throughout the process of production and presentation of the performance, which aims to empower them and create a sense of ownership of the creation and evolution of the project. Over the course of several months or years, the youth involved with TEAM learned about her complex performance model, worked with other artists on their own projects, and took part in the performances. For Code 33, for example, teens on the Planning Team took part in weekly art workshops with professional artists in photography and video; participants in a local probation program were mentored by CCAC students; many more contributed to the performance through conversation,

\textsuperscript{112} Suzanne Lacy, interview by author, Los Angeles, CA, April 2, 2015. Her name is often associated from the beginning in promotional material distributed prior to performances, and if her collaborators are named, they often appear so anonymously (also due to their large number). Two examples: first, although her name did not appear on the cover of the program for The Crystal Quilt (1987), the program notes on the first page immediately identify her as its spearhead; second, though her TEAM collaborators are mentioned in all of their material, Lacy’s name takes a prominent position lending emphasis to her role as artistic director. “The Crystal Quilt Program,” 1987, Suzanne Lacy Archive, Los Angeles, CA; “Teenage Living Room Proposal,” December 12, 1993, Suzanne Lacy Archive, Los Angeles, CA; “The Roof Is on Fire Flier,” c. 1994, Suzanne Lacy Archive, Los Angeles, CA.

\textsuperscript{113} Suzanne Lacy, interview by author, Los Angeles, CA, April 2, 2015. She argues that those from other fields, such as her TEAM collaborator Unique Holland who now works in education, receive professional validation for their participation outside of the art world. This is unsubstantiated, as even Holland’s online resumé does not include her participation in TEAM or any of Lacy’s other subsequent projects. “Unique Holland, LinkedIn Profile,” LinkedIn, accessed May 18, 2016, https://www.linkedin.com/in/unique-holland-1bab0367.
choreography, set design, stage management, and video documentation. In addition, Lacy does not limit creative production to the field of art. Instead, she incorporates many voices, experiences, and fields of training into her productions. Her coalition building efforts result in the input of many individuals from a variety of disciplines, who both connect her to the community in which she is working and strategize different methods so that her work might have a greater, or longer-lasting, impact. While her practice has connections to other artists whose work delves more into the spectacle of performance, there is also an individual relationship created between the performers and the audience that bridges the gap between participatory and staged performance models. Her work is about dialogue that breaks down barriers of communication and understanding, which might eventually lead to social change. Yet, for the conversations to have impact in the real world, they must lead to actions that occur outside of the frame of the work of art. Lacy's performances merely provide the initial seed for this to happen by establishing relationships based around a common activist issue — she does not provide a model for the action in itself. Beuys, on the other hand, intended his projects to be models for how art could have more impact on areas including labor, environmental issues, and education reform.

Like many artists of the Reagan-Bush era, Lacy has also used art to directly address political issues, rather than just to represent them through traditional mediums. At least superficially this relates to Beuys, whose politics-as-performance was intended to be a model that could be used to create and initiate change in a number of areas, feminist issues and racial discrimination among them. Lacy, on the other hand, focuses on one community and produces collaborative projects that reflect on their specific experience. While Beuys' major works took place in the art academy or in large exhibitions such as documenta, Lacy brought her performance to non-art audiences both by incorporating them in the work and choosing a public location in their neighborhood to give them access. Site specific in their attention to the problems of this audience, Lacy's work identifies African-American and Latino youth as groups facing obstacles at home, in school, and in urban areas, which often result in negative portrayals in the media, tense interpersonal relationships, drug use, and violence. Her method of building social relationships in order to foster self-improvement on the individual level allowed young participants not to see themselves as victimized or stereotyped, but as creative beings who could contribute to a high profile public art

114 “Code 33 Workshops,” September 1999, Suzanne Lacy Archive, Los Angeles, CA.
project. Leadership training and mentoring opportunities are also fundamental community organizing strategies that promote self-empowerment and can be used to counter an authority deemed oppressive. Further, Lacy uses interactions with local policy-makers, civic agencies, and law enforcement in order to help establish the framework for longer-lasting effects, since her short-term engagement negates her ability to do so herself. The police who took part in Code 33, for example, set up their own truancy-prevention program. Just as Beuys aspired to affect the way citizens interact with government, Lacy has used art to inspire others to do the same, albeit on a smaller (and more manageable) scale.

Lacy considers education to be a vital part of expanding the impact of her projects beyond the small communities she works with, a point of commonality she shares with Beuys as well as Chicago, Kaprow, and other artists from the 1970s. As a university professor in the arts, she plays a role similar to her precursors. While they experimented with educational reform through projects located within the university space, however, she has separated her interactions with art students from her community-organizing and activist-inspired education methods in the public. Inspired by community activists who wanted to make traditional school curricula more engaged and by reading the radical pedagogic theory of Augusto Boal, Paulo Freire, and later Henry Giroux (a leading proponent of critical pedagogy in the 1980s), her involvement with TEAM is focused on developing skills like visual literacy, writing, and team-building by directly engaging them as participants and co-authors of her work. Lacy organized steering committees and asked the teens to participate in retreats and workshops aimed at developing skills such as leadership and media literacy. She also included mentorship as part of her educational initiatives, breaking down the hierarchy between teachers and students, and transforming education into a peer-level dialogue, all values that Beuys instilled in his classroom interactions, albeit his intent was to develop creative faculties like intuition. In Lacy’s case, this is particularly evident in her own mentorship-turned-collaboration with Holland, which began in 1994 when she participated in The Roof is on Fire and has continued with numerous events across the United States and worldwide to the present day (their relationship finds its counterpart in Beuys and Stüttgen). Taking her work one step further than Beuys,

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115 Suzanne Lacy, interview by author, Los Angeles, CA, April 2, 2015.
116 For her project Under Construction (15 June 1997) in Vancouver, British Columbia, Lacy set up a steering committee of adults, and asked the teenage girls involved in the performance to participate in a retreat, two-week workshop, and a college-level class on public art. Ibid., 132–133.
Lacy was involved in an educator-based service-learning initiative while in Oakland, which brought teachers and students into the community to put their skills into practice. The program was state mandated in California, forcing Lacy to discover ways that the teens could interact with various public entities while gaining skills that could contribute to their formal education. In this she was much more successful than Beuys, whose pedagogic theory never made a strong impact outside of his classroom and the Free International University. These methods were more practical and accessible to the public than art theory, while at the same time they provided her with a platform to continue her examination of power structures. Furthermore, these activities expand the scope of her project beyond the initial site of contact between herself and the participants in her works by affecting other areas of their lives, including providing them with transferable skills such as mediating between groups of people, managing complex projects, public speaking, and using video equipment. By filling the gap she found in conventional education institutions, Lacy provided young people with a creative alternative to build character, career skills, and social networks.

While Lacy's performances of the 1970s incorporated more literal symbolism through the artist's use of her own body and animal parts, following her interactions with Labowitz-Starus, she began to apply her ideas to larger social constructs including media representation and violence. She did this by establishing social networks, building awareness through lectures and workshops, and the spectacle of the performance itself. In *Mapping the New Terrain*, Lacy created the term “new genre public art” for her practice, which she defined as “visual art that uses both traditional and non-traditional mediums to communicate and interact with a broad and diversified audience about issues directly relevant to their lives.” Her expanded view of public art included developing a connection between the artist and audience, “a relationship that may itself become the artwork.” Beginning in the 1980s, her large-scale performances embody this dictum while conceptually linking her to Beuys’ idea that dialogue and interdisciplinary collaboration could constitute a work of art. Beuys united conceptual, performance, and

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119 Ibid., 20. Italics in the original.
political art by identifying conversation as a powerful tool to defy political ideology and to address some of the world's pressing issues, a theme that Lacy has carried forward in her own feminist and activist-inspired work.

Through her use of the same ideas espoused by the term "social sculpture," Lacy's relationship with her audience has a more clearly defined position within the artistic canon. However, her connection with Beuys' theories and practice does not resolve the struggle to evaluate her work, nor to define her position as both an artist and a community activist. Her work is participatory, temporary, constantly evolving, and located outside of the gallery or arts institution, and balances between formal considerations and activist techniques. At the same time, the complex relationships involved in her presentations — which include workshops, dinners, and lectures — evade aesthetic characterization. According to Beuys' conception of aesthetics as a changing principle, the art is contained within the dialogues themselves; however, for Lacy, who must build bridges between her projects and other activist movements and governmental agencies, practical concerns are also paramount. The complexity of her authorial role is also a persistent issue when evaluating her work, for although she relies on collaboration, her leadership position within her projects has resulted in her singular recognition. While she depends on the art world as a platform through which she receives funding and voices her artistic and social accomplishments, she promotes its ability to transcend social, political, and economic barriers among those without access to the resources of traditional institutions. By creating what Kwon might call a "mythic community" that erases difference in order to create social bonds, Lacy seeks to empower her audiences to further action. Although she may not have solved the problem of the representation of older women or the troubled relationship between teens and police officers, the relationships formed during her performances, the transferrable skills that participants learned in workshops, and the experiences her audiences have during the performances subtly contribute to a shift in social consciousness, which should not be overlooked.

Rick Lowe: Ongoing Residency

Narrow, one-story houses line the streets in an area just southeast of downtown Houston, Texas,

120 Kwon, One Place after Another, 118–120.
called the Third Ward (Figure 4.12). Row after row, their once-pristine white paint has now chipped and faded, revealing dilapidated clapboard siding in various stages of decay. Broken porches, boarded up windows, and neon-colored spray-painted tags warn visitors to “Keep Out,” while unkempt grasses and trees reclaim the cracked sidewalks and front lawns. There are few signs of life between the empty lots and foreclosed businesses — a homeless man camping in a public park, a pile of used toys and household goods waiting to be claimed on a street corner, and loud music coming from the cars speeding toward the nearby highway. With little access to public transportation, the streets empty after dark, leaving the area deserted, unwelcoming, and even dangerous. Make a turn onto Holman Street, however, and you’ll find two dramatically different blocks lined with pristine white homes with manicured yards, pieces of public art being examined by out of town visitors, and children engaging in after-school art classes. This is Project Row Houses (PRH), a public art project begun in the early 1990s that continues to operate today (Figure 4.13).

In 1985, a young African-American artist named Rick Lowe relocated from Mississippi to Houston, where he discovered this area in much worse condition than one finds it today. Where many saw hopelessness in the abject poverty of this area, Lowe found an opportunity to put his own form of social sculpture into practice. Along with six other African-American artists, he founded PRH in 1993 to establish a “positive presence” (as opposed to the rampant violence, drug use, and prostitution), transform the neighborhood, and preserve its African-American heritage by harnessing the creativity of its current residents. Harking back to the positive images of African Americans found in the paintings and murals by local African-American artist Dr. John Biggers (1924–2001), these artists used the architecture of the home as a symbol of renewal and developed a project to culturally enrich the area. These two blocks are now an oasis for both the art world and neighborhood residents in the midst of poverty, which they have developed into an aesthetic experience by harnessing creative activities and classes, resource-sharing, and display of art within the repeating architecture of the row houses. However, in recent years their success has also attracted new residents with money who are transforming the surrounding area, forcing them to negotiate their role in gentrification.

Since 1993, when Lowe renovated twenty-two dilapidated “shotgun” homes (so named because a bullet shot from the front door could exit the other side without obstruction) with help from neighborhood
volunteers and funding from the National Endowment for the Arts, PRH has grown to more than sixty properties. Fifteen are reserved for art exhibitions and residencies, seven house single mothers as they complete their education, and many more are dedicated to low-income residential and communal spaces, including the Eldorado Ballroom, a historic concert venue.\textsuperscript{121} The community is still arranged around the original block purchased by the organization, which includes an office and community center, seven shotgun houses dedicated to rotating artist's projects, the homes for the Young Mothers Residential Program (YMRP), and low-income duplex housing units built in collaboration with architecture students from Rice University (see map, Figure 4.14). These physical spaces frame the multiple ways that the community interacts with the organization through after-school activities, performances, community markets, and games of dominoes. By bringing in a roster of emerging and high-profile artists such as Julie Mehretu and Sam Durant to help rebuild the community's infrastructure, gaining political traction through educational programs, and serving as a resource for residents who wish to empower themselves, Lowe has helped restore pride in this once-forgotten area.

PRH has received numerous accolades in both the mainstream press and the art media, which have overshadowed scholarly attention. The overwhelmingly positive media attention is bolstered by Lowe, who lectures widely about PRH and his spin-off projects in other U.S. cities. Critical writings have focused on the project's place in the evolution of social practice art. Former public art administrator Tom Finkelpearl included interviews with Lowe and PRH residents in two of his compilations about socially engaged art, \textit{Dialogues in Public Art} (2000) and \textit{What We Made: Conversations on Art and Social Cooperation} (2013), which track the history of the organization in the artists’ and participants' own words.\textsuperscript{122} Recently, art historian Grant Kester analyzed the PRH's role in the gentrification of Houston in \textit{The One and the Many: Contemporary Collaborative Art in a Global Context} (2011) and Ben Davis lambasted its social justice goals (and social practice projects in general) using a Marxist critique.\textsuperscript{123}

\textsuperscript{121} Ryan Dennis, email correspondence with author, June 3, 2016. PRH currently has 64 buildings consisting of 71 residential units, three commercial buildings, and 15 program houses.
This section focuses on this long-term collaborative project, which serves as one distinct model for the confluence of social sculpture and community-based artistic practice. In addition to Biggers, who was its primary link to artist-activism in the area, since the late 1990s Lowe has cited Joseph Beuys as the inspirational force behind PRH. He found a common thread between his own work with the community and the German artist's practice, which was focused on dialogue instead of object-making. Through social sculpture, Lowe combined his volunteer service in the neighborhood with his politically charged art. Working with a network of artists, arts administrators, community activists, and civil servants, he has nonetheless retained his authorial role as an artist. As a social sculpture-inspired work, PRH also harnesses the creative energy of its residents, both through art-making and interdisciplinary dialogue, in order to empower them and enrich their lives. Although Lowe has retained Beuys’ commitment to education and individual empowerment, his method differs in its concentration on architecture, collaboration with other artists and local community leaders, and efforts to combat racial and class discrimination.

Project Row Houses and Community Activism

During the early years of the organization in the early 1990s, Lowe and the growing staff at PRH were involved with building the physical and organizational infrastructure of the non-profit. Lowe's commitment to working with the community meant that there was little time to reflect on the theory behind his practice or situate himself within the art historical cannon. At this time, artist John Biggers was actively involved with the artistic direction of PRH and his name was often associated with the symbolism of the row house. It was not until years later that Beuys' name appeared in mission statements or accounts of the organization's history. In its attention to local issues and community specificity, use of architecture, and art-centric focus, PRH had much more in common with Biggers’ ideas about the history of Houston and how its African-American culture might be revived than with Beuys’ concept of social sculpture. Nonetheless, a comparison with Beuys, even during the early years of the organization, demonstrates how PRH negotiated its relationship with aesthetic and activist concerns.

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124 Beuys' name is first brought up by Lowe in a statement in 1995, although he admitted that he was just starting to investigate other artists who had a non-object based practice. Rick Lowe, “Statement for the Bridge Residency,” December 29, 1995, Project Row Houses Archive, Houston, Texas.
Though it has fallen into disrepair, the Third Ward has a rich history that is often evoked by Lowe and the PRH staff on tours of its surrounding neighborhood. Established as one of the six original sections of the city of Houston when it was founded in 1836, this area is characterized by a large northern area filled with rows of small, wood-frame houses called “shotgun shacks” or “row houses,” which were once owned by the servants who worked in a second community further south, which is lined with two-story brick homes built by the city’s prominent Jewish families in the early twentieth century.\(^{125}\) Shotgun houses are one room wide, one story tall, and are usually no bigger than 600 square feet. Originating from the tribal dwellings of the Yoruba in West Africa and introduced to the United States by way of freed Haitians who settled in the South in the early nineteenth century, this type of architecture proliferated after the Civil War until the 1920s.\(^{126}\) An efficient use of space, and built with a bare minimum of materials, these houses are typically found in African-American neighborhoods across the United States (e.g., Chicago, Louisville, New Orleans, St. Louis) where there is a high population density.\(^{127}\)

In the mid-twentieth century, the 35-block area known as the Row House District was a central hub for Houston’s African-American community, featuring two public schools, several churches, a hospital, and historic performance spaces like the Eldorado, where celebrities like Ray Charles, Etta James, and B.B. King played beginning in the 1930s.\(^{128}\) However, following desegregation in the mid-1960s, these facilities slid into disrepair and the local economy suffered. Although the neighborhood had at one time been quite ethnically diverse and the shotgun homes were filled with people from various economic classes, by the 1970s the homes had become a symbol of the area’s poverty. When Lowe arrived in the 1980s, the area had been in decline for many years and suffered from deteriorated infrastructure, insurance-based arson, a dearth of green space and other civic amenities, and the median income was $14,200.\(^{129}\) The population declined by nearly 40 percent following the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which provided more job opportunities for people of color, and the growth of Houston’s suburbs,

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\(^{129}\) “History & Context” (Project Row Houses, c. 2010), Project Row Houses Archive, Houston, Texas.
which gave them the option to live elsewhere. Initially inspired by Biggers, Lowe, along with a small group of fellow African-American artists, established PRH in order to have a positive impact on the community and to restore its heritage to black culture.

Lowe, one of 11 children, was born to a sharecropping family in Southeastern Alabama. He entered Columbus College in Georgia on a basketball scholarship, but began studying landscape painting in his second year. By the time he moved to Houston by way of Mississippi in 1985, he was already experimenting with content that was relevant to a poor African-American community. He gave up painting soon thereafter to get more involved with that community and promote social justice. By 1990, he was creating installations with billboard-size paintings and cutouts dealing with issues like police brutality while organizing a union for artists to protect against censorship in response to recent debates about NEA funding. According to Lowe, he had a moment of revelation when a group of high school students visited his studio. One of them pointed out that instead of representing the problems of the community, he should use his skills as an artist to help find a solution, so he began looking for ways to do just that. At the same time, he was taking part in regular meetings with other local African-American artists including James Bettison, Bert Long, Jr., Jesse Lott, Floyd Newsum, Bert Samples, and George Smith, who wanted to use their skills as artists to have a positive impact on the community. He began volunteering in the Third Ward as a member of the SHAPE (Self-Help for African People through Education) Community Center, a service organization devoted to strengthening African-American neighborhoods and families, which in the early 1990s was surveying the neighborhood to remove unsafe buildings. As part of an initiative to help revitalize the neighborhood, Lowe, with the help of SHAPE, identified twenty-two abandoned row houses from the 1930s within one and a half blocks on Holman

130 Ibid.
134 While Lowe has referred to this story in recent years (i.e., since its publication in Michael Kimmelmann’s 2006 article in the New York Times), it did not appear in early interviews about his work, including Finkelpearl’s interview, prompting the question as to whether this story was “invented” as a myth of origin for his ideas.
Street that were in desperate need of repair (Figure 4.15).\textsuperscript{136}

Lowe saw a common thread between the formal presence of these houses and the art of Biggers, his teacher at Texas Southern University, who produced paintings, lithographs, and murals in public places in Houston from the 1940s until the end of his life that drew on the life and history of African Americans.\textsuperscript{137} He found the repetitive images of row houses in Biggers' paintings like \textit{Shotguns} (1987, Figure 4.16) and \textit{Shotgun, Third Ward #1} (1966, Figure 4.17), and in the murals found on the Texas Southern campus to be positive symbols for community. As art historian Grant Kester has noted, Biggers' paintings are nostalgic, yet capture the social effects of segregation in African-American communities in the Jim Crow era.\textsuperscript{138} Biggers' works reveal that this area was once tight-knit and self-sufficient; his imagery links the architecture of the homes to the social and spiritual lives of those who lived there. The homes seen in these paintings represent the strength of the African-American family and an emotional commitment to one's neighbors, facilitated by the interactions that take place on the front porch. Lowe endeavored to make the positive images in Biggers' paintings a reality by using the actual architecture of the house as a symbol for the renewal of the area.

Biggers also encouraged Lowe to think of these spaces holistically. Utilizing the creative drive of the residents, which had once expressed itself out of necessity, he decided that the row house community could be revitalized by strengthening its tradition of mutual support and social safety nets, fostering a respect for education, reinvigorating its culture of music and storytelling, and by rebuilding its economic sustainability through locally owned businesses and service providers.\textsuperscript{139} This encouraged Lowe to find an area with historical significance that he and the group of artists could “bring back to life.”\textsuperscript{140} The decision to work with these homes was in the first place an aesthetic one; they appeared to him as

\textsuperscript{136} They were initially interested in purchasing only 10 houses on the block, but the owner would only sell these homes if the other 12 on the block were purchased as a group. Rick Lowe, interview with author, Houston, TX, 24 Jan 2014.

\textsuperscript{137} Finkelpearl, “Interview: Rick Lowe on Designing Project Row Houses,” 244. Lowe recalls that when he first saw the homes that would eventually become PRH, that he was thrilled: “I thought they were ideal because they were so much like a John Biggers painting. I was visualizing what these houses were like when there was a lot of activity in the past, and what could happen in the future. It was the perfect place to create the form that I was looking for, to bring a lot of different artists to work here in the community.”

\textsuperscript{138} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{139} Ibid., 215.

\textsuperscript{140} Finkelpearl, “Interview: Rick Lowe on Designing Project Row Houses,” 244.
“sculptures” or “found objects” that could become a long-term project for the community. The row houses were the physical expression of ideas of freedom and liberty that linked to their use by Africans, freed slaves, and as communal spaces. The shotguns also link the physical landscape of PRH to the history of racial discrimination that the neighborhood has faced since the nineteenth century. Embodied in the repeating forms of the houses, Lowe, like Biggers before him, found an aesthetic connection to black experience that went beyond the billboard-size paintings that he previously made in protest against violence toward African Americans. The homes themselves became an aesthetic experience for Third Ward residents because they symbolized not only the transformation of the area, but also its connection to African-American culture and the relationships formed within and outside of their walls. In addition, the project was intended to reinvigorate the area through artists-in-residence, exhibitions, and workshops to tap into the creative potential of community members, establishing it as a cultural center for the area.

With funding from the National Endowment for the Arts’ Art in Public Places Program and other foundations, Lowe and the other artists purchased the twenty-two homes and incorporated into a nonprofit organization in 1993. They renovated the first ten with the help of Lowe’s studio mates, Dean Ruck and Nestor Topchy, as well as neighbors and volunteers from Houston arts organizations such as DiverseWorks and the Menil Collection, and local religious organizations (Figure 4.18). These homes, the first of which was completed in March of the following year, became the first “Art Houses” dedicated to PRH’s Arts Program. Each of the artists used their skill sets to move the organization forward; for instance, Lowe employed his knowledge of carpentry (which he also used to support himself financially during this period). They “intuitively” found other ways for the community to get involved by fitting their interests into the project, hence giving them a stake in its evolution. Led by Lowe, who was named the founding director, and Deborah Grotfeldt, the former assistant director of DiverseWorks who became

141 Ibid., 244-245.
142 Valerie Loupe Olsen, *Rick Lowe: Toward Social Sculpture* (Houston: Glassell School of Art of the Museum of Fine Arts, 2005), 12–13; Tucker, “Roots: Reinvigorating the African-American Shotgun House,” 67. DiverseWorks Art Space, an alternative space where Lowe was a board member, supported their NEA application. Other funders included the Elizabeth Firestone Graham Foundation, the Cultural Arts Council of Houston/Harris County, and The Brown Foundation. Collaborators included artists Jesse Lott, Bert Long, Floyd Newsum, George Smith, James Bettison, and Bert Samples.
143 “Project Row Houses Informational and Membership Brochure” (Project Row Houses, c 2012).
PRH's first managing director (1993–2004), a team comprising artists, architects, social workers, and community members gathered together to develop a master plan for the rest of the site. The next 12 homes were renovated with the support of Amoco Oil, which also sent employees to volunteer at the site. They were aided by Sheryl Tucker, assistant professor of architecture at the University of Houston, who brought in her students to help with the overall design. Next, Chevron organized a volunteer day for its staff to prepare the site for its opening. Two homes were used for offices, eight for artists' studios, seven were destined to become homes for single teenage mothers, and the remaining five offered a range of services including a day-care center. The corporations, alongside local art and community organizations, churches, and individual donors were approached to sponsor the art homes.

With renovations on the twenty-two houses complete, PRH opened to the public on 15 October 1994 with its first round of artist installations, featuring eight African-American artists from Texas (several of whom were among the organization's founding members) who created works in response to the neighborhood and its residents. Houston artist Tierney Malone, for example, preserved the interior of one of the houses for the installation *The Hope Apothecary*, which he stocked with cures for physical, societal, and social ills, while Third Ward resident Jesse Lott created a white-cube space called *The Drawing Room* where he both exhibited his own works and invited neighborhood residents to participate in drawing salons. At this time, PRH identified itself as "a public art project linking artists to issues of neighborhood revitalization, historic preservation, community service, and cultural education...providing a place for the creation of art work that both engages the community in the creative process and celebrates African-American history and culture." Utilizing the row house as a symbol for renewal, Lowe sought to transform the neighborhood through education, arts, and community development in an ongoing project.

145 Ibid., 68.
147 They also renovated one house. “Project Row Houses History” (Project Row Houses, 1997), Project Row Houses Archive, Houston, Texas.
148 Round 1 included artists Colette Veasey-Cullors, Steve Jones, Annette Lawrence, Jesse Lott, Floyd Newsum / David McGee, Tierney Malone, Vicki Meek, 15 October 1994 – 12 March 1995. One house was also devoted to the written and spoken word, “The Spoken Word House,” which was coordinated by The Roots Collective. Similar programs were run out of this house until 1999.
collaboration with local residents, who continue to act as both participants and as audience members in its numerous offerings. Through their interaction with PRH, they are offered new opportunities including higher education and business ventures, while benefitting from the symbolic value of more traditional art forms such as painting and classical music.

PRH has three long-standing programs that demonstrate its commitment to neighborhood renewal: public art including artist residencies and incubation, youth arts education, and the YMRP, all of which were conceived with the founding of the organization and continue to be offered today. The first two of these programs — the creation and exhibition of works of art, and art education — demonstrate PRH’s link to a traditional concept of aesthetics by enriching the community culturally, while the YMRP attempts to move beyond symbolism to affect the real lives of residents. The public art component, which began at the project’s inception in 1994, was created to provide opportunities for artists and artist collectives to work directly with the residents, neighborhood institutions, and the environment of a low-income neighborhood and to create site-specific installations in seven of the houses (Figure 4.19) or in public spaces that rotate biannually with “Artist Rounds.”

Offered as a way for nationally and internationally recognized artists to experiment and work outside the studio, the resulting site-specific works of art are intended to situate each artist’s “authentic” experience of interacting with residents and learning the history of the area within a larger socio-historical context and within the contemporary art discourse.

Residents of the Third Ward have presented work here; however, their main role is as spectators for the installed works. The homes provide a space for them to experience art and to be inspired by creative activity. The installations also attract the attention of the art world elite, who often come to openings and other special events on site. Their emphasis on the plastic arts differs from Beuys, who emphasized that creativity could be expressed in many different fields, and hence his projects were interdisciplinary and not focused on the development of artistic skills.

One of the key ways that PRH has promoted art’s role in transforming the neighborhood is by inviting professional artists to create works of art and engage directly with the community. Their resulting

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150 The exhibitions are free and open to the public, and youth from the education programs are often employed as docents. “Public Art,” Project Row Houses, accessed April 26, 2016, http://projectrowhouses.org/public-art/.
151 Ibid.
projects have made use of a range of mediums, from painting and sculpture to video, performance, photography, textiles, and found objects and often treat subjects related to the area's history or in celebration of various aspects of black culture such as spirituality, storytelling, and activism. The programs have cultivated the existing community of artists in the area, while serving as an incubator for Houston-based artists as well as artists of color. They also attract some renowned names in the commercial art world and those known for socially engaged projects, such as Edgar Arceneaux, Andrea Bowers, Coco Fusco, Charles Gaines, Julie Mehretu, Rirkrit Tiravanija, Nari Ward, and Fred Wilson. In 1995, for Round 3, for example, Whitfield Lovell painted life-size figures of impoverished African Americans directly on the wall in one of his first installations, entitled Echo (Figure 4.20). One of the more visually recognizable pieces, a blue light box with the words “We are the People” written in protest placard-like script by Sam Durant, was defiantly placed on the façade of one of the houses in 2003 (Figure 4.21). In tandem with their projects, the artists are encouraged to develop relationships with residents and offer educational opportunities including workshops like those associated with Lott’s installation in 1994. However, unlike Beuys’ workshops, which encouraged dialogue about a variety of political topics, PRH’s classes often result in the creation of artistic work, such as the mosaics seen around its campus.

The works of these artists are intended both to address the real-world concerns of the neighborhood while providing residents creative inspiration, a more specific variation on the exhibitions and guest lecture series planned for Beuys’ Free International University. However, unlike Beuys project, which incorporated professionals from a variety of fields, PRH typically only invites artists or other creative professionals for its collaborations. The artists chosen to work at PRH come from various geographic locations, cultural origins, and artistic backgrounds, although the overwhelming majority are African American. However, all are asked to create works that respond to the specific history, culture, and architecture of the Third Ward. They are invited to contribute to an established model for artistic engagement with a community, rather than generating a model that might be used in other areas. In recent years, the public art program has expanded beyond the seven original homes to include several

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152 These artists have varying degrees of engagement with PRH. Some merely lent works to group exhibitions while others have spent time there as artist residents.
well-known artist residency programs and institutional partnerships, each of which is designed so that artists can engage directly with the residents by responding, involving, and reflecting the community. PRH continually offers long-term affordable studio spaces for neighborhood artists in addition to a small number of summer studios for local art students (est. 2005) and ongoing residency programs for established and emerging artists from outside of Houston.\textsuperscript{153} These programs further expand the site of PRH beyond the boundaries of the Third Ward and increase awareness of their programs to other cities, where these artists also work and perform. However, these artists' attention to issues that affect the residents of the Third Ward make PRH much more geographically localized than any of Beuys' projects.

The physical landscape also bears the traces of permanent public art projects, some of which were funded by PRH and others created by its artist residents, which make the area visually distinct from the rest of the neighborhood (Figures 4.22, 4.23).\textsuperscript{154} Though many of these projects are not officially part of its campus, PRH has an inclusive policy that embraces the creativity of all of its residents — signaling that they believe in multiple meanings of Beuys' phrase "everyone is an artist." Not only is creative potential valued here, but also the physical expression of that creativity through permanent works of art.

\textsuperscript{153} Other programs have been developed in partnership with other organizations, including the one-to-two-year Glassell Core Fellow Artist Residency for emerging artists (2004–2013), the Visual Arts Network Residency for under-recognized artists (est. 2010), and an interchange between Houston and Chicago artists co-organized by the Hyde Park Art Center (est. 2015). Furthermore, there are commissions available for artists who work with more ephemeral media. In spring 2016, the first work created for Performing the Neighborhood, a five-year partnership with the University of Houston's Cynthia Woods Mitchell Center for the Arts to commission and present performances in the Third Ward, was presented by pianist Jason Moran; and a community radio station, OJBKFM, run by Otobenga Jones & Associates streamed stories about neighborhood history and culture out of a pink Cadillac as part of a new commission-based temporary public art program called Project/Site.

\textsuperscript{154} "Project Row Houses/Row House CDC Walking Map," Project Row Houses, 2013. In the courtyard behind the seven original homes, one can find child-size shotgun-style houses constructed by artist Carter Ernst in 1999, which were painted by Shy Morris with images of women reminiscent of a Biggers mural. Colorful tiles dot the yard in which Karen Atkinson's mosaic bench (2004) and Graciela Hasper's concrete sculptures (2002) sit, not far from the paintings that adorn the partition that divides the older row houses from newer construction on the other side of the block (constructed in 2006, painted 2007). Further down, near the main drag of Dowling Street, Ernst and youth in the education programs installed mosaic steps resembling an award platform nearby murals painted by Esther Mahlangu (2005). Just around the corner, situated across the street from Carl Hampton Memorial Park, stands a bus stop that is dedicated to the late blues musician Sam “Lightnin'” Hopkins complete with a bench and brightly colored sign designed by Third Ward artist Robert Hodge in 2010. Field of Vision (2002), an outdoor installation consisting of multicolored concrete pedestals of various styles that support sculpted eyes by PRH founding artist Bert Long, was relocated from the Fifth Ward to a site near the Eldorado Ballroom in 2006. Until recently, one block away was the home of Cleveland Turner, known affectionately as “Flower Man,” a folk artist who transformed his home into a brightly colored assemblage of used toys and junk scavenged from around the neighborhood. All of these landmarks are located on PRH's Walking Map.
Furthermore, the emphasis on craft and participation of the community in creating many of these works (though mosaic classes and after school programs) demonstrates that PRH does not just value “high” art as can be found further downtown in Houston's galleries and museums. The seemingly hodgepodge mix of folk art and design give the area a unique and lively character, leaving aesthetic unity to be found in the architecture of the homes.

The second area of programming, education activities, embodies Beuys’ emphasis on the development of creative faculties, although here the focus is on training artistic skills. Established in 1995, the education program provides neighborhood children ages five to twelve a range of classes in visual, performing, literary and musical arts taught by professionals so that they may learn both academic and life skills. The participants include both the children from the YMRP and others from elsewhere in the area. PRH offers after school and summer programs where the children create and experience the arts both onsite through classes in writing, dance, photography, and individual tutoring; and at other non-profit organizations in Houston such as the Houston Grand Opera and Glassell School of Art. Through these activities, which are absent in public school education, youth gain knowledge of the cultural achievements and history of African Americans, which PRH promotes as “an essential foundation for building self-confidence and preparing youth to conceptualize creative solutions to society's problems.” PRH emphasizes the ability of such programs to develop problem solving skills in children as well as confidence, self-empowerment, creativity, and communication, and that the excursions to arts venues address the geographic and cultural isolation of the impoverished families that use their services.

Although similar in their belief that children can learn other skills through creative activities, their method is different from Rudolf Steiner's Waldorf School method, in that they are tied to African-American culture rather than taking a broader worldview, and they do not promote any form of spirituality (although they have collaborated with Christian churches in the area, they do not promote their doctrine). Their offerings

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155 Children’s educational offerings were part of PRH's mission since its early requests for funding in 1993. Charles Drayden, “Grant Funding Request,” September 20, 1993, Project Row Houses Archive, Houston, Texas.
156 These are not intended as mentorship programs; the after school activities have 40–50 students, while the summer programs have 60–90 students.
157 “Project Row Houses History and Programs” (Project Row Houses, 1997), Project Row Houses Archive, Houston, Texas.
158 Ibid.; “History & Context.”

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change depending on the skills of artist residents, funding and institutional partnerships, and adherence
to a variety of thematic areas, which encourages diversity and creativity.\textsuperscript{159}

Like the social values espoused in Biggers' row house paintings, PRH dedicates part of its
mission to establishing strong social safety nets for its residents by supporting their personal development
and offering good, sustainable housing. Such practical support was never part of Beuys' projects, but is in
keeping with his belief that individuals have the power to shape the world around them with the help of
experienced guides. As noted by Finkelpearl, PRH took on the role of a service provider in order to
address social issues directly (as opposed to purely symbolically).\textsuperscript{160} One of the first areas that they
sought to remedy was the cycle of poverty set in motion by weak family structures, and in particular the
difficulties that single mothers faced when finishing their education or developing professional skills. The
YMARP was founded by Grotfeldt in 1996 to help young, single, low-income mothers between the ages of
18 and 26 to better their circumstances by offering one to two years of subsidized housing in a
refurbished row house (Figure 4.24), workshops and mentoring, counseling, and a community network in
exchange for continuing their education and working part time.\textsuperscript{161} Their progress is tracked by a program
coordinator as well as their mentor "mom" (who lives on site) and other healthcare professionals.

Assata Richards (previously known as Shakur), a graduate of the YMRP, has become a
spokesperson for the program, often making appearances to promote PRH's ability to change lives.\textsuperscript{162}

\textsuperscript{159} During the summer of 2014, the programs followed the theme “Exploring Diversity in Our Community,”
which introduced students to Latin-American as well as African-American culture through creative writing,
Latin percussion and singing, creative movement and dance, cuisine, language classes, trips to the
library, and visual arts. “Project Row Houses Summer Program” (Project Row Houses, 2014), Project
Row Houses Archive, Houston, Texas. PRH also currently offers a media center for older children and a
college bound program to encourage and equip teenagers for further education. Adult education classes
are also occasionally offered by visiting artists in the form of workshops or classes.
\textsuperscript{160} Finkelpearl, \textit{Dialogues in Public Art}, 259.
\textsuperscript{161} The women participate in required parenting programs, individual and group counseling, career and
other life skill classes, as well as other PRH programs and events. They are also mandated to care for
their own children, abide by a curfew, only invite visitors during certain hours, maintain their home,
perform community service, follow a budget, and abstain from harmful substances or risks of pregnancy.
Residents are also required to sign an honor code. “Project Row Houses Young Mothers Residential
Program Standards and Guidelines” (Project Row Houses, 1996), Project Row Houses Archive, Houston,
Texas.
\textsuperscript{162} See Tom Finkelpearl, “Interview: Assata Shakur on Living in Project Row Houses,” in \textit{Dialogues in
Houston, Art Is Where the Home Is,” \textit{The New York Times} (New York, December 17, 2006); Kelly
She and her son were among the first group to move into the houses in 1996, and following her graduation she went on to receive a graduate degree before returning to work at PRH. She has said that the YMRP offered her a loving, communal support system that helped usher her out of poverty. Despite her personal success, though, the program is not without problems. Some of the mothers have voluntarily left the program or were removed because they were unable to comply with the requirements. As Richards recounted to Finkelppearl, when she was living in the row houses, she and the other mothers also felt at times as if they were “on display,” and therefore they shielded themselves from some of the more public aspects of the project such as the art exhibitions. One of the challenges of such a program is to maintain the privacy of the participants while exposing them to the public aspects of the program that aid in personal growth, including the art installations and artist residents.

Paradoxically, although she lamented being objectified as a participant, Richards was happy to claim that she was an “artist” while in the program. While she had no initial interest in art, Richards began to see herself as part of Lowe’s work of art and as a creative being. Loosely following Beuys’ dictum, he encouraged the women to consider their academic pursuits and daily rituals as an artistic medium. Richards does not consider an artist’s use of human lives as a working material to be a dangerous proposition; instead she is grateful that Lowe’s creative effort was invested in programs that aided in her success. However, her story begs the question: what exactly is the art here? Are the people the work of art or is the whole environment the work of art? As is addressed below, such projects straddle many different mediums including conceptual and performance (which also use people as material). Dialogue

May 5, 2016, http://glasstire.com/2013/10/05/civics-lessons-an-interview-with-assata-richards/. Richards earned her bachelor’s at the University of Houston and a doctorate in sociology at Pennsylvania State University, then taught at the University of Pittsburgh before returning to PRH to direct the YMRP program (2011–2015) and serve as its community liaison. Since June 2015, she has directed the Sankofa Research Institute, which uses community-based participatory research to facilitate partnerships between community members and academic researchers, located beneath the Eldorado Ballroom near PRH.

Kwon, One Place after Another, 118–135.

Ibid., 264.

Ibid., 259.

Richards commented on the role of art at PRH: “I had heard Rick was an artist when I got there, but I thought, what kind of art does he do? Then I realized we were his art. We came into these houses, and they did something to us. This became a place of transformation. That’s what art does. It transforms you. And Rick also treated us like artists. He would ask, ‘What’s your vision for yourself?’ You understood that you were supposed to be making something new, and that something was yourself.” Michael Kimmelman, “In Houston, Art Is Where the Home Is,” The New York Times (New York, December 17, 2006).

and the spiritual empowerment of the participants have also been lauded as art by many, including Beuys. Nonetheless, there are ethical implications for those artists who receive economic and social benefits as a result of their work with poor, disenfranchised people of color, even if the participants reject the idea that there is any manipulation. The organization remedies this through services such as the YMRP that aid the community in more practical ways while also employing people of various racial and ethnic backgrounds. Unlike Lacy, who needs to publicly recognize her role as a white woman working with African Americans, Lowe needs no justification in his quest to better the situation for others of his own race. That he comes from a different part of the United States also has little bearing for them, since the work he does helps to enrich the culture of the area. They are proud of the work that is being done here, and rightfully so: the community has had a hand in helping others out of poverty, supported them while getting an education, and given their children a chance for a better future.

The organization also plays a key role in neighborhood revitalization by providing quality low-income housing, which further transformed the landscape of the area. In 1997, PRH teamed up with Rice University’s Building Workshop to design and build affordable and innovative homes on four recently purchased lots behind the YMRP site.¹⁶⁹ In 1999, the students completed two-story single-family home (a first for the neighborhood) based on the simplified architectural features of a shotgun including wood siding, a peaked roof, and porches on either end. Following the success of this project, PRH purchased lots elsewhere in the neighborhood, where many of the historic shotgun houses were being replaced by suburban-style homes or vertical townhouses built by local developers. The Rice Building Workshop continued their collaboration in partnership with the Row House Community Development Corporation (CDC), which was established in 2003 to provide housing for low and middle income families in the Northern Third Ward such as graduates of the Young Mothers program, older residents in the community, and local artists.¹⁷⁰ The site is now characterized by restored structures such as the YMRP row houses and new constructions that are inspired by the historic architectural features of the neighborhood, such as

¹⁶⁹ The Rice Building Workshop (est. 1996) is a part of the university’s architecture program. Students of all levels participate in a seminar where they build projects throughout Houston, where they are challenged with real-life experiences such as client interactions, budgeting, and construction.
¹⁷⁰ Together they completed four duplex houses in 2004, eight more in 2008, six single and duplex homes in 2010, and another 11 duplex and triplexes in 2013, the same year the CDC separated from PRH. Row House CDC, “Community Background: Row House Community Development Corporation,” 2013, accessed May 4, 2016, http://www.rowhousecdc.org/about/background/.
the ultramodern homes that run on solar energy (Figures 4.25, 4.26).\textsuperscript{171} This institutional partnership, as well as the funding sources that accompanies it, has resulted in a long-lasting engagement with the community with practical implications for its residents, which would have been unimaginable in Beuys’ projects. The homes both preserve the historic character of the Third Ward and provide an opportunity for the predominantly low-income African-American and Latino population to remain in the neighborhood rather than succumbing to increasing rents and encroaching development from surrounding areas.

In 2000, Lowe received the American Architectural Foundation's Keystone Award for using architecture to “elevate and enrich the human experience.”\textsuperscript{172} However, for him, it wasn't about the structures themselves but what they represented for the community. In his eyes, the project is about more than just offering housing and developing the built environment; it is a way to foster dialogue about creativity and culture through communal activities such as performances, art classes and professional development workshops, and artist's rounds. The homes offer spaces for this to happen, particularly through their cultural offerings. However, by cleaning up the neighborhood and offering access to the arts, they are also unwittingly playing a part in the gentrification of the area. Lowe recognized that as the community has changed, it has attracted attention from outsiders seeking to profit from the improvements generated by the project, a side effect that he has claimed was inevitable due to the proximity of the area to downtown Houston.\textsuperscript{173} While he labored to preserve and revitalize the shotgun houses, developers began buying up lots nearby in the hopes that the artistic activity fostered by PRH would invite residents with higher incomes.\textsuperscript{174} If left unattended, increasing housing costs could force the current population of working class residents out of the area.

For Kester, the birth of the CDC was key moment in the history of the organization, as it reflected their strategic understanding of the forces at work in urban redevelopment.\textsuperscript{175} Instead of cowering to the threat of change, the CDC allows the community to evolve and transform at its own pace and through its

\textsuperscript{171} The Rice Building Workshop developed the ModPod (2011–present), a prefabricated unit containing electrical, plumbing, and HVAC systems that is retrofitted to existing row houses; the XS house (2000–2003) built for one to two people on a $25,000 budget; and the ultra-modern ZeRow house (2007–2010) that incorporates solar energy technology.
\textsuperscript{172} Jessica Dheere, “Profile: Rick Lowe,” \textit{Architectural Record}, February 2000.
\textsuperscript{173} Kester, \textit{The One and the Many}, 217.
\textsuperscript{174} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{175} Ibid., 218.
own efforts. It recognizes the power struggle between those with the means to change their own situation versus those who wish to better themselves and their neighborhood through education and economic development. Lowe has navigated this struggle by advocating the economic empowerment of those who live already live in the Third Ward, such as the young mothers, and by offering them resources. He maintains that such measures enhance the neighborhood’s diversity. This issue is complicated by the fact that the area was once racially segregated but was economically diverse, and is now economically separate from the rest of the city but is increasingly becoming racially mixed as the area gentrifies. Diversity today must now be understood on two levels — racial and economic. Thus, along with increasing pressure to improve the economic class of its residents, the area should also be considered racially and ethnically mixed. The homes built by the CDC provide the opportunity for low-income African Americans to co-exist among the more affluent white and Hispanic homebuyers gentrifying the neighborhood.

PRH has evolved to serve the cultural and economic needs of its traditionally low-income residents as a means to prevent further segregation by the increased pressure of gentrification. In addition to regularly hosting community markets, several of the homes and storefronts owned by PRH are designated “incubation” spaces — business ventures, community service organizations, and art studios — that community members and artists use to experiment and bring their own ideas to fruition. Recent incubation spaces have included a food co-op, a store with local crafts and souvenirs, and a radio station. The craft market format was replicated by Lowe for his project as an artist-in-residence at the Nasher Sculpture Center in Dallas, Trans.lation (2013–2014), during which the artist organized a series of pop-up markets for local artists in a diverse neighborhood of the city called Vickery Meadow. These endeavors are intended not only to allow sellers to proffer their wares, but also so that they can get to know their neighbors and visitors to the area. The social interactions break down boundaries between race, economic class, and between professional skill sets and encourage residents of a city to get to know each other personally and hopefully form long-lasting relationships. However, they also act as methods of resistance to the threat of gentrification, for they empower residents economically and help to diversify the area in terms of class, for example by starting businesses in PRH’s incubation spaces. Kester argues that

176 Ibid., 219.
such cultivated efforts appear to replicate the entrepreneurial spirit of neoliberal capitalism rather than using activist resistance methods to combat the broader system of exploitation and inequality in Houston and beyond.\(^{177}\) Kester admits that such an examination misunderstands the limits of dialogic and collaborative work like PRH, since the organization functions within a particular cultural and historical context.

While I agree with Kester (and with Ben Davis, discussed below) that PRH does little to resist the widespread effects of neoliberalism nor to alter the inherent structure of capitalism, I do believe that they are valuable on a smaller scale — at least within this limited area of the Northern Third Ward, if not in Houston. Lowe is not attempting to bring about larger governmental or economic changes with his project. Instead, he is trying to better the lives of the people in the Third Ward and change it into a place where they will want to stay and help to thrive. Unlike Beuys, who advocated widespread structural changes to be brought about through social sculpture with no clear plan for how to do so, Lowe’s highly organized project has had considerable impact on this small neighborhood in Houston. I affirm Kester’s assessment that the project is valuable in that it “discloses new possibilities, new modes of political and cultural transformation, while at the same time coming to terms with the existing forces and historical preconditions of the place.”\(^{178}\)

For Lowe, the word “change” must always have an objective: social justice. This term’s origins can be found in Aristotelian philosophy and the writings of Karl Marx, and means the fair distribution of social benefits, privileges, and wealth in a society; a project might fight for social justice by increasing the opportunities for an individual to attain social and economic mobility, and creating social safety nets.\(^{179}\) As an art project, PRH is not utopian: Lowe and the staff know that they are unable to transform the Third Ward into an area where all of its residents are fed, sheltered, and economically sufficient; nor can they hope to resuscitate the cultural offerings that once made the area thrive. However, with its limited means, PRH has made a significant impact by resisting the cultural and economic pressures of gentrification and

\(^{177}\) Ibid., 220.
\(^{178}\) Ibid., 221.
by offering residents a collective identity through their reclamation of space.\textsuperscript{180} Lowe has stated that PRH promotes social justice by “honoring a place for what it is…[giving] it a sense of dignity, so it can sustain itself and continue to perpetuate the honor that it deserves and put itself in a place where it can have a fair relationship within the broader context.”\textsuperscript{181} As opposed to short-term projects like Lacy’s where the artist responds to the community and then leaves, Lowe believes that in order to realize change, an artist must engage with a community in the long-term.\textsuperscript{182} Only over the course of time can one understand the historical conditions that led to the present cultural context of a place, and provide opportunities for the area to transform through its own creative potential. The Row Houses are an experiment, or a laboratory, to start something that will be self-perpetuating yet respectful of its cultural heritage. Lowe has stated, “What I think PRH does, and what I try to do in my own way, is to try to…illustrate a path through which people can find their own way. If they can find their dignity, then that sets them on a path in which they’ll get the justice that they deserve.”\textsuperscript{183}

Project Row Houses as Social Sculpture

Lowe’s first encounter with Beuys coincided with his volunteer work in the Northern Third Ward in the early 1990s, when he first discovered the row houses that would become PRH. He was given a copy of Carin Kuoni’s edited volume, \textit{Energy Plan for the Western Man: Joseph Beuys in America} (1990), containing writings and interviews with the artist.\textsuperscript{184} Titled after Beuys’ U.S. lecture tour, the book introduced Lowe to the artist’s theory that creativity could be used to shape society and that artists could use dialogue as a medium. However, he did not begin to incorporate the ideas it contained until years later. Despite Biggers’ role in defining the organization’s early mission to revive African-American culture in the area, Beuys’ ideas established the framework through which Lowe later considered his interactions

\textsuperscript{180} Ibid. Although the focus of PRH is the reclamation of black identity, more recently Latino culture has been integrated into its programming.


\textsuperscript{182} Nevertheless, he has lent his skills to the creation of other projects, both temporary and long-lasting, such as the Watts House Project in Los Angeles (1996, now run by PRH round artist Edgar Arceneaux), \textit{Transforma} project in New Orleans (2005–2010), and \textit{Consumption: A Project on Pearl Street} in Philadelphia’s Chinatown district (2014). Like PRH, these projects are site specific and collaborative; however, Lowe normally works in tandem with local artists and community leaders to conceptualize and implement the project.

\textsuperscript{183} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{184} Rick Lowe, interview with author, New York, NY, 1 May 2013.
Lowe began to evoke Beuys' theory of social sculpture in his personal statements in the late 1990s as he endeavored to find links between his practice and that of other artists whose work was primarily social.\(^{185}\) His efforts were aided by two of PRH's former executive directors who had intimate connections with Beuys' philosophy: Deborah Grotfeldt (executive director from 1993–2004) is a member of the Free International University in Amsterdam and Linda Shearer (2009–2015) was an associate curator at the Guggenheim Museum during Beuys' 1979 solo exhibition. By the time Lowe was interviewed by Finkelporl for his book *Dialogues in Public Art* (2000), he recognized Beuys as a primary model for his practice and in the founding of PRH.\(^{186}\) Since this point in time, Beuys has been consistently acknowledged in lectures, interviews, and conversations regarding the history of the organization. The German artist is quoted in all of the organization's current informational material such as their website and brochures, membership appeals, and appearances in the popular press.\(^{187}\) These materials acknowledge Beuys' precedent and his concept of social sculpture as a creative force used to shape society; the slogan "everyone is an artist" is often used to equate the creative activities at PRH with the transformational powers of art. The lines are often blurred as to whether the participants in the project understand Beuys' intentions; however, whether or not they consider themselves as artists does not

\(^{185}\) Rick Lowe, “Statement for the Bridge Residency,” December 29, 1995, Project Row Houses Archive, Houston, Texas. In late 1995, Lowe began to recognize the importance of understanding his intuitive and emotional process as one rooted in a history of non-traditional art forms that engage social activity in order to feel less isolated from the "mainstream" arts community. Only when he began to investigate his connection to other artists for whom object-making was not a central part of the creative process, did he begin to recognize Beuys as a precedent in his work. Nonetheless, the organization's dedication to fostering creativity, building strong social relationships, and incorporation of educational initiatives had a clear connection to Beuys' concept of social sculpture from the outset, exemplified by its programming. As discussed in the previous chapter, by this point in time, Beuys' ideas had a welcome reception among artists working in socially and politically engaged art in the United States.

\(^{186}\) Lowe cites Beuys in his interviews with Finkelporl from 1995 and 1998. Finkelporl, “Interview: Rick Lowe on Designing Project Row Houses,” 255. By the time he and Grotfeldt wrote their statement for *New/Land/Marks*, an exhibition installed in spring 2001, Beuys' theories were acknowledged as one of the primary inspirations for their work. Rick Lowe and Deborah Grotfeldt, “Statement for 'New/Land/Marks,'” c. 2000-2001, Project Row Houses Archive, Houston, Texas.

\(^{187}\) A selection from the book *Energy Plan for the Western Man*, was included in a display in one of the public art houses during PRH's 20th anniversary celebration in 2014, with sections highlighted on the concept of social sculpture and its homeopathic intentions. Beuys' texts included the introduction to his 1979 Guggenheim catalogue, “I am searching for a field character” (1973), a section of his public dialogue at the New School in 1974, and several parts of interviews, each with pertinent sections highlighted.
obscure the fact that they are contributing to PRH's direction and benefitting from its programs. After 2000, the project also shifted from referring to itself as a "community-based public art project" to an "intersect[ion] of public art and social practice" (as it identified in 2010).\textsuperscript{188}

In her essay "Rick Lowe — Toward Social Sculpture," in the catalogue for the eponymous exhibition at The Glassell School of Art of the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, in 2005, Valerie Loupe Olsen notes that Lowe found an affinity for Beuys' concept of social sculpture — which for her denotes art as a social activity and the sculpting of thought and speech — and his idea that every person has creative potential.\textsuperscript{189} Beuys conceived of social sculpture as a social process, and PRH embodies this concept through the relationships established as a result of its community outreach, residencies, and educational and art programs. Lowe has built upon the idea of social sculpture through a large-scale public art project by moving away from object-based practice and towards dialogue as a function of artistic creativity. However, it is not just dialogue that links him with Beuys. As with Lacy's temporary projects, PRH embodies Beuys' emphasis on the individual as the force behind social change. Lowe does not promote the idea that the work of art accomplishes this on its own. Instead, he has embraced a strategy that allows the community to evolve and transform through its own efforts, which is in line with Beuys' promotion of direct democracy as a tool to shape society. As Lowe puts it, he created the platform for others to do meaningful work.\textsuperscript{190} Others have contributed in a myriad of ways, through professional and amateur art and using various skills that Beuys would have linked to the wider concept of creativity, including landscape design, city planning, and professional coaching. Nonetheless, PRH gathers these professionals together and curates its own host of programs, rather than giving everything over to the public to use how they wish.

Olsen also connects Lowe's interest in social sculpture to "his own interests in serving underprivileged, urban, and ethnic communities that want to affect change through art."\textsuperscript{191} PRH allowed Lowe to combine his interest in social activism, community development, and education with his training

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\textsuperscript{188} “Project Row Houses History” (Project Row Houses, 1997), Project Row Houses Archive, Houston, Texas; “History & Context” (Project Row Houses, c 2010), Project Row Houses Archive, Houston, Texas. Given the fractured nature of the PRH archives, it is hard to track when the organization first began to identify as social practice.
\textsuperscript{189} Olsen, \textit{Rick Lowe: Toward Social Sculpture}, 10.
\textsuperscript{190} Lowe, "Panel 1: Mark Bradford, Theaster Gates, Rick Lowe."
\textsuperscript{191} Ibid., 11.
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as an artist. He has stated: “Change depends on people who know, live, and stay in a community; it has to come from the inside…and starts with an artist's mind-set.”

This effort begins with the local residents, the young mothers who live in the row houses, and a small, dedicated team that runs PRH from a small office on site. Shearer, who served as executive director until 2015 (she was succeeded by Eureka Gilkey); Richards, who coordinated the Young Mothers Program until 2015; and Ryan Dennis, the public art director, took charge of daily operations from the Third Ward while Lowe traveled between his other projects, such as *Trans.lation*, and speaking engagements. Their direction is aided by the artist residents, who stay anywhere from one week to five months working on projects that creatively engage the community. The core of their activities usually revolves around conversations and interaction with the residents, who, like Richards, consider themselves part of the project. Each of these people is considered a collaborator on the work, as he or she has a voice in its direction and has the ability to create or discontinue programs depending on their popularity or success. This means that Lowe is not the sole contributor, but has let others shape it into the organization that one finds today.

Like Lacy's temporary performances, Lowe's work also complicates the notion of collective versus singular authorship associated with social practice. His project resembles Beuys' in that he did not intend it to be a solo venture, but rather a process involving an ever-expanding network of people and organizations. In his nearly 30 years in Houston, the artist has met and interacted with a wide range of people. Along with the artists and residents that live in the homes or work in studios at PRH, his network includes local churches, schools, arts institutions, community groups and foundations, who offer their own services on site. Without his long-term commitment to the area, their involvement would be fleeting and unsustainable, as seen in the wake of Lacy's temporary performances. PRH’s grassroots social network allows the project to evolve to fit the needs of its constituents, which include single mothers, the unemployed, and even former convicts. Thus, PRH combines Lowe's interests and those of the community. His network of artists, architects, community service providers, and large institutions has given the residents a vision for how their efforts might transform the neighborhood. At the same time, however, he has had to relinquish control. In order to incorporate others' visions into the project, he has

192 Kimmelman, “In Houston, Art Is Where the Home Is.”
accepted that a certain amount of failure is part of the process. Although he has achieved fame within the art world for his efforts and still lives in the neighborhood, the needs of the community guide PRH's programming rather than his personal artistic vision.

As with Beuys and his projects of social sculpture, however, Lowe's name is evoked in tandem with PRH so often that one might assume he has full control of their activities. Indeed, he invested more time, particularly in the early years, to seeing the project to completion and has remained involved despite his other professional pursuits. The efforts of others, including Grotfeldt, the six other founding artists (who often appear anonymously in print), and the PRH staff is often downplayed, particularly Grotfeldt, who stepped down in 2004. This is an unfortunate consequence of Lowe's visibility, prompting the difficult question as to whether his role has usurped those of women and other people of color who have done important work at PRH. Lowe's authorial input was weakened at an early stage when PRH became a non-profit organization in 1993, complete with a board of trustees to oversee its programs. In 1996, he quoted Mel Chin in an interview with Finkelpearl: "artists need to create a form or forum and step away from it, let it go and do its own thing." By force or by choice, in the late 1990s Lowe began to envision himself as a volunteer in the community, akin to the artists who are invited to live and work in the Third Ward. He traveled between his other projects, completed residencies, and had speaking engagements, which allowed him to bring new resources back to Houston. During this time, he considered himself as the "manifestation of the organization," serving as its spokesperson and receiving awards on behalf of PRH, but not identifying as its sole creative or controlling force. (However, this did not decrease his presence in the media, where his image is often associated with the row houses.) He has only recently returned his attention to PRH, reflected in his being reappointed as founding director in spring 2015.

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194 Grotfeldt left her position in 2004 and is not currently involved in any of PRH's activities.
196 Ibid.
When he is in town (he currently lives in one of the larger brick homes on the south side), Lowe can often be found playing dominoes with other Third Ward residents in the communal area of the PRH office building (Figure 4.27) or giving tours of its grounds. Like Beuys, whose works of social sculpture necessitated his perpetual presence, Lowe makes his process visible by being extremely generous with his time. This sets him apart from many emerging figures in the field, who Lowe points out are “career” social practice artists who interact with a group of people merely to propel their reputation.200 His presence solidifies his connection to the area and its people, a quality that was lacking in Beuys' works that were itinerant and loosely organized, and is difficult to build during temporary projects like Lacy's.

Like Beuys, Lowe promotes education as a method to both empower his participants and broaden the impact of the project beyond the Third Ward. Although he is not an educator himself, he has promoted educational programs for single mothers, school-age children, and classes for adults to increase career opportunities through his work at PRH in addition to his numerous lecture engagements at museums and academic institutions.201 Such events allow him to engage new audiences and spread the word about the work he has done in the Third Ward. Lowe states that the classes at PRH allow the residents to understand and value themselves.202 The mentorship programs offered by PRH are key to this shift, because they break down the traditional hierarchy between teachers and students into a peer-level dialogue. Mending the holes found in conventional educational institutions and in social service providers, the organization provides a creative and holistic alternative that builds character, career skills, and social networks. This focus on individual empowerment and self-transformation through education expands the intentions of the project beyond the relationship between the art and viewers, or in the case of socially engaged art, between the artist and participants. However, the goal of this education is not to inspire revolution or structural change. Instead, it challenges participants to consider their roles within the local community and the importance of their cultural legacy. This occurs by both learning about historical precedent and engaging creatively, not necessarily by addressing the types of political topics that Lowe at one time used as inspiration for paintings (although topics such as violence and racism are unavoidable

201 Lowe has given visiting lectures at the University of California, the University of Oregon, Harvard, Carnegie Mellon, and Auburn University, among others.
given their impact on the community and its residents). These issues are also regularly debated using the works of art in the public art houses as a means for critical engagement with current affairs.

One of the lesser-addressed aspects of PRH’s educational offerings is the skills that the Rice University architecture students learn while designing and constructing the homes in the neighborhood. Although this is a collaboration with the university, which has its own pedagogic standards, their activities might be viewed in relationship to the service-learning initiative that was introduced in California while Lacy was working with teens in Oakland around the same time that PRH began. The young architects not only learn-by-doing, but also build relationships within their own community using creativity as a means to address the latter’s needs. As architect Patrick Peters puts it, their collaboration teaches the students to be responsible citizens, not just trained architects — something that is not typically addressed in architectural education programs.

When they become agents of change on a small scale, they experience that incremental change is valuable to preserving culture and a sense of place, aspects that do not appear to be valuable to land developers and architects of the new high-rise buildings that are taking over the area. Though these students may not slow down gentrification in the Third Ward, they may take these ideas with them when they establish careers in other cities.

As Lowe has pointed out, social sculpture attempts to find new solutions to problems using methods that benefit the community, rather than merely drawing attention to issues that local residents already recognize as problematic. Like Lacy and many artists in the 1990s, Lowe and the other artists who founded PRH used their skills as artists to address issues of race, urban development, and gender. Following a history of civil rights activism in Houston and in the United States more broadly since the 1960s, racism and racial discrimination were particularly pertinent themes when Lowe began working in the Third Ward (and continue to persist). In addition to local events that inspired his earlier paintings, the construction of black identity and racially motivated violence were key topics for U.S. artists in the 1990s, such as Glenn Ligon, Kara Walker, and Carrie Mae Weems, especially in the wake of the Rodney King beating in Los Angeles in 1991 and the subsequent race riots that occurred in cities nationwide. Lowe employed his own form of social sculpture to initiate change in response to these problems. Rather than

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taking a critical viewpoint, however, Lowe used socially engaged art as a means to ameliorate the systemic inequality that resulted from U.S. neoliberalism during this period. Instead of dividing people, as was the tendency following governmental policy, Lowe created a long-lasting community that united the area in resistance and empowered people based on their economic and racial marginalization.

Together with his team of collaborators, and Grotfeldt in particular, Lowe recognized that African-American youth and women were facing serious obstacles at home and in school that hindered their ability to better their social and economic status, so they developed programs especially tailored to provide them with a safe environment. For the women in PRH's Young Mothers Program it was an opportunity to better their situation and find a community with shared experiences, while the children get individual attention and the chance to express themselves through the arts. Lowe's method of building social relationships in order to foster self-improvement allowed young participants not to see themselves as victimized by society, but as emancipated through creative means. His project is "successful" in motivating residents because they are able to see themselves in the issues addressed by the project's art and programming.

As a project focused on empowering participants, PRH can be classified as community-based public art according to Miwon Kwon's terminology of site-specific art. Kwon is critical of projects like PRH in which the artist purports to speak on behalf of and make work that represents the community in an effort to reaffirm their world view, rather than reinforcing their social alienation as works like Serra's *Tilted Arc* (to use her example) did in the 1980s. Unlike Beuys, who expressed his expanded concept of art through temporary projects that involved a variety of specialists from around the world, Lowe's social practice is physically embodied in the people that work and live at PRH, who have taken part in and directed the creation of its offerings. His project expands on Beuys' concept of social sculpture in its establishment of a community based on difference. Lowe's work is therefore quite local in scale in comparison with Beuys' projects of social sculpture. However, it also confirms Kwon's belief that such work empowers participants — which she sees as negative — by providing them with opportunities and assuming they have the innate capacity for their own presentation. In this, Lowe was in accordance

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204 Kwon, *One Place after Another*, 94–96.
205 Ibid., 97.
with Beuys’ belief that art could be used as a holistic healing method to shape society. Although its positive recognition in local press attests to the public approval of PRH's efforts, there are still concerns about how the project addresses social issues differently than social service organizations (e.g., churches, activist groups, schools). PRH has done this by creating an aesthetic experience though the architecture of the row house, works of public art, artist residencies, and rotating artist exhibitions.

Lowe has lamented the fact that the neighborhood has been subject to increasing threats of gentrification, which have placed PRH at the nexus of a growing discourse on “creative placemaking,” by which the arts are leveraged by cities in order to promote larger urban development projects. Rather than contributing to the transformation of the neighborhood into a fashionable, wealthier, urban setting, Lowe and others are committed to preserving its history by restoring its architectural past. As an ideal place for conversation, the porch of the house has long served to unify the neighborhood into a community based on solidarity, cooperation, and inclusion. Black studies and cultural historian George Lipsitz asserts that by combining art and the built environment, PRH has “created a public space guided by a Black spatial imaginary, promoting an understanding of urban life that challenged the defensive localism and hostile privatism that prevailed historically in the rest of the city.” PRH enriches the area’s cultural offerings, preserves the community’s African-American history, and initiates programs to rehabilitate and retain residents, although paradoxically, these very same offerings — such as the low-income housing, which is more or less contained to a few block radius — continue the cycle of separation that the area’s poor, black residents have experienced for decades. However, in purchasing lots elsewhere in the neighborhood PRH is making provisions for future expansion and integration into other areas. In anticipating further corporate development and establishing a method to resist it, PRH helps residents become more socially and economically mobile.

Like Beuys’ 7,000 Oaks project, Lowe has transformed the physical landscape of the area and

206 The NEA defines it thus, “In creative placemaking, partners from public, private, non-profit, and community sectors strategically shape the physical and social character of a neighborhood, town, city, or region around arts and cultural activities. Creative placemaking animates public and private spaces, rejuvenates structures and streetscapes, improves local business viability and public safety, and brings diverse people together to celebrate, inspire, and be inspired.” Ann Markusen and Anne Gadwa, “Creative Placemaking” (National Endowment for the Arts, 2010), accessed May 14, 2016, https://www.arts.gov/sites/default/files/CreativePlacemaking-Paper.pdf.


208 Ibid., 160.
infused it with creativity, in addition to offering the community a service. Although Beuys was more concerned with environmental causes and his trees and stones were planted during a specific five-year timespan, both artists have involved the participation of citizens from all walks of life into their expansive projects using a combination of interdisciplinary dialogue, educational training, and physical effort. Lowe has relied on Third Ward residents since the beginning of PRH to rebuild the row houses, sign up their children for after-school art classes, and attend performances; Beuys was dependent on the locals in Kassel to support his project by engaging with a variety of professionals, proposing sites, and planting the trees. Both used the landscape as a symbol for spiritual transformation — Lowe through the architecture of the row house and Beuys using the oaks and basalt stones. Additionally, the row houses are used to house site-specific art by other artists. This distinguishes PRH from Beuys, many of whose projects were itinerant (at least within Germany), as with 7,000 Oaks. Their physical presence in the work, one temporary and one longer-lasting, have made the artistic process visible through the process of establishing social relationships and stimulating conversation. What differentiates the U.S. artist from Beuys, whose major works often took place in art academies or at large exhibitions such as documenta, is his active involvement of both art and non-art audiences in the direction of his project (not just its content). Although its partnerships with other local arts organizations like the Menil Collection and DiverseWorks helped foster its development, the intended audience and participants for the project are the community members themselves rather than curators, critics, and gallerists. Further, his emphasis on collaboration and diverse social networks allows PRH to bring in audiences from various walks of life — many of whom may have never had the desire to enter an art museum. By involving participants in the process of art making, Lowe develops audiences who have an equal stake in the completion or evolution of the work. For example, one reason some neighborhood residents have continued their involvement with PRH to the present day is because they helped rehab the row houses at the beginning of the project.

Art historians and critics of social practice often question what happens after an artist finishes a project, and how much responsibility the artist should take for the lives of those with whom they work. Since Lowe is accountable not only to the residents of the Third Ward but also to the PRH board of trustees and its funders, he has struggled with conceptualizing his own accountability. The project both provides services and is considered a work of art, and therefore is only partially subject to the same
methods of evaluation as a social welfare program, for example. He contends that the weight of responsibility can hinder a project's development; unlike social workers, whose value is tracked by metrics, an artist has the ability to take a step back and let the art resonate without demonstrable measures of impact. In this way, the participants as a whole take responsibility for the resonance of the work as well as for changes within the community at large. Kwon argued that the empowerment of participants sets this genre of public art apart from the traditional avant-garde, which sought to politicize people using aesthetics. While the project provides symbolic value for the participants and serves as a beacon for those in other blighted areas, Lowe and the staff of PRH claim that the project does more than just enrich the area with creativity by providing social services and touting their effectiveness in transforming lives. At the same time, by insisting that the work of artists inspires others to action, they are disavowing their own responsibility for bringing about social change.

Lowe and PRH have been continuously attacked by the left for not solving social issues such as homelessness or Houston's shortage of low-income housing. As Ben Davis critiqued in 2013, social practice projects (like PRH) that resemble activism distract us from seeing the true extent of social problems such as housing rather than serving as a starting point for addressing them. He contends that although these projects are defined by their politics (rather than their form), their politics are not radical because they are too vague. Applying a Marxist critique, he argues that although social practice artists purport to be critical of neoliberal capitalist values (in part by escaping the commercial art world), they are doomed to represent its future development, for they are not able to change its structural conditions. Social practice seems to Davis, "like little more than aestheticized spin on typical non-profit work," since it has replaced the structural needs caused by neoliberal policies with social service art. The organization is complicit in its choice of multinational conglomerations and banks as funders (Chevron, Ikea, Bank of America) and its staff has filled a gap where public agencies have failed, which is hard to argue against. However, I contend that PRH has provided residents and visitors of the Third Ward with an aesthetic

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209 Lowe was criticized for renovating the row houses for a work of art and not to provide the homeless with shelter. Susan Chadwick, “The Art Ward,” The Houston Post (Houston, Texas, October 7, 1993), sec. Art, D2; Davis, “A Critique of Social Practice Art.”
210 Ibid. Davis makes a false claim that PRH was established to address housing conditions in Houston.
211 PRH is complicit in this by allowing funders such as Chevron, Ikea, and Bank of America associate their name with the project.
212 Ibid.
experience for which Davis does not take into account. Walking into PRH is like entering another world — one that is far away spiritually and culturally from the rest of the neighborhood (and arguably from the rest of Houston). One can sense the pride that the people have in the homes, in the art displayed there, and for their ability to touch people through creative means. The project is about much more than providing housing — it is about using creativity as a means to empower people, which is a valuable aspect to enacting the large-scale change that Davis seeks. As early as 1993, Lowe responded to this criticism himself by stating that as an artist, he was “not involved in the housing business” and that art can inspire people to re-build their own lives in a more permanent way than merely providing temporary shelter.213 In his response to Davis’ criticism that PRH does not solve the housing crisis, Lowe suggests that, “the symbolic quality of the project has generated dialogue within our community and others about the value of [an] existing community context when developing.”214 He therefore privileges the moral value of his idea over its consequences in the real world, emphasizing that this is an aesthetic contextualization of the housing problem. While PRH may stand in for deficits in the system created by a neoliberal vacuum, its value extends beyond economics in that it provides people with inspiration through art.

Nonetheless, PRH provides the community with services such as counseling, day care, and professional classes on topics like computer literacy that do not typically fall under the umbrella of art. An aesthetic characterization of these aspects of the project is problematic because it straddles many different mediums including performance, visual arts, music, pedagogy, and social services, many of which have their own established methods of evaluation. Under the auspices of the research organization that she directs, former YMRP graduate Richards has suggested that socially engaged artists should use outcomes to evaluate their work in the community, above all by considering whether the art is relevant to the community’s needs; respectful; bridges gaps of understanding, trust, and knowledge; takes into account the full context of an individual; and empowers and provides opportunities of control for those who usually do not have control over their own representation.215 The problem with such an evaluation is that each of her measures is dependent on a subjective experience of the work (who is to say whether

213 Chadwick, “The Art Ward.”
the work is respectful?). Although she has encouraged artists to let the community identify its own needs, it is unclear how she intends these needs to be fulfilled. Artists like both Lacy and Lowe are unskilled in these kinds of research methods and often lack the resources to track them.\textsuperscript{216} Funders, meanwhile, increasingly request that artists fulfill standards and report back with metrics that quantify results both quantitatively and qualitatively.\textsuperscript{217} If artists identify their projects as works of art and not as social work, however, why should regulated evaluation standards even be taken into account?

Lowe’s connection with Beuys grounds his project in an aesthetic theory, providing it with an art historical precedent that is both well-known and (at least by other U.S. artists) respected. In 2014, Lowe contended that his discovery of the German artist was a revelation in his practice, for his concept of social sculpture was the first articulation of how an artist might apply his or her skills to changing a community.\textsuperscript{218} Beuys argued that aesthetic value could be found within the social interactions themselves — creativity is the medium that the artist molds through action, thought, and dialogue. However, for Lowe, who relies on experience and action, value is also placed on efficacy, translatability, and performative engagement. In other words, his work must go one step beyond Beuys by activating participants in meaningful ways. While Lowe depends on the art world as a platform through which he receives funding and voices his artistic and social accomplishments, PRH transcends social, political, and economic barriers among those without access to the resources of traditional institutions. By reaching these diverse audiences, engaging them through creativity, and educating them in art and career skills, PRH gives the area the opportunity for self-betterment, while at the same time, by framing the project as art Lowe has relieved his and the organization’s responsibility to actually enact this change on its own.

\textsuperscript{216} The only exception to this is the YMRP, which has trained specialists that conduct participant surveys annually to track the progression of participants.

\textsuperscript{217} Elizabeth Grady, program director for the funding agency A Blade of Grass, has offered several options for how these projects can gather metrics, including “Collaborative Action Research, Participatory Action Research, the methodology endorsed and described most eloquently on the Animating Democracy website, in addition to ethnographic and sociological approaches long in use (see for example Dwight Conquergood). These approaches, when taken together, encompass self-evaluation and evaluation by outside professionals. They consider the aesthetic as well as social impacts.” “What Is the Effectiveness of Socially Engaged Art?,” A Blade of Grass, Growing Dialogue, September 18, 2013, accessed August 27, 2016, http://www.abladeofgrass.org/blog/ablog/2013/sep/18/growing-dialogue-what-effectiveness-socially-engag/.

Rick Lowe remains at the forefront of socially engaged art methods used by artists worldwide, as evidenced by his appointment to the National Council on the Arts by President Obama in 2013, his 2014 MacArthur Foundation “Genius” Grant, and honorary doctorate from Otis College of Art and Design in 2016. He has developed PRH into a self-sustaining organization with a trained staff that run its public art, education, and mentorship programs. Although he was initially inspired by Biggers' aestheticization of the Third Ward to revive the area's connection to African-American history in Houston through the architecture of the row house, he later employed Beuys as a means to legitimize his approach on a national (and increasingly international) level. There are many ways that Lowe's work already embodied aspects of social sculpture before he began to reference the German artist in his statements and history of the organization despite its clearer link to Biggers. Its promotion of art as a tool for social change and as a means for shaping an urban environment, incorporation of pedagogic methods that develop creativity over hard skills, and empowerment of individuals to further action. However, PRH still emphasizes artistic expression (e.g., painting, mosaic, public sculpture) and attracts high-profile artists. This contrasts with Beuys' anthroposophic concept of creativity that includes more generalized faculties such as imagination, inspiration, and intuition, as well as his involvement of professionals from non-art fields in his social sculpture projects. The sequence of Beuys' projects demonstrates his increasing desire that social sculpture be employed on a more global scale, whereas PRH only functions within this particular community. Thus, while aspects of PRH resemble social sculpture, it might be said that Beuys' link to the project was only an act of hindsight that legitimizes PRH and the other projects that Lowe has worked on. As social practice projects are increasingly scrutinized based on their inability to fit either aesthetic nor activist criteria, Beuys' conception that art could subsume politics while retaining an aesthetic link to his other work provides Lowe (and other social practice artists) with justification that their work need not have demonstrable effects on the community in which he works. Instead it can provide participants with an aesthetic experience that in itself can be political.

This chapter analyzed two artists whose practice has links to Beuys' concept of social sculpture in order to differentiate this form of social practice from other relational or dialogic art forms. While each has developed a model of social practice that is quite distinct from both Beuys and one another, both embody some of the key elements that Beuys promoted through his own work of the 1970s and 1980s that can be...
used to characterize this trend. While neither Lacy nor Lowe consider themselves social sculptors (Lacy even going so far as to deny the link between her practice and Beuys'), both artists use art to empower participants in their projects, which is accomplished through dialogue and the development of creativity. However, they conceive of creative potential in different terms than Beuys, who referenced Steiner's anthroposophy, by emphasizing artistic skills over more generalized creative processes. These artists have also used two-way dialogue and mentorship in their work, though again for different ends. Whereas Beuys employed this pedagogic method to guide his students as they forged connections with a Steinerian spiritual realm, Lacy, Lowe, and their collaborators have used lectures, workshops, and one-on-one mentoring to attract participants for their projects and provide them with professional training that might be applied to other life experiences.

Lacy and Lowe come from different historical, social, and racial backgrounds, and received different forms of artistic training, which has wider implications in their work. Beuys' utopian project had a greater impact within postwar West Germany because people there were searching for alternatives that would not result in further war, death, and destruction; the U.S. artists have taken a more practical approach using tactics such as community organizing and providing services. Lacy and Lowe are two of the main figures in socially engaged art, and therefore are key to an understanding of how art might be conceived as a tool for social change or social justice within a U.S. context. Emerging from a convergence of public art and art-activism beginning in the late 1960s, these artists have used art to address social problems that are connected to their own activism — Lacy drawing on her feminist background and Lowe on racial discrimination. Although their work might be more pragmatic than Beuys' in terms of its application, they are nonetheless exemplary of artists who are using conversation, education, as well as other traditional forms of art to address these issues. Beuys may not have been able to relate to contemporary social practice projects like Lacy's or Lowe's as his issues were not the same, however, his concept of social sculpture is still important in analyzing these projects as works of art.
Conclusion

In the years since his death in 1986, Joseph Beuys has not ceased to cause controversy both within Germany and abroad. This has overshadowed the significance of his anti-authoritarian opinions as well as his concept of social sculpture.¹ The artist's political practice is seldom discussed in the United States, where scholarship has remained focused on his sculptures and performance art. As this dissertation has demonstrated, in the United States his artistic practice has largely been seen as independent from his activist concerns, which resulted in a misunderstanding of his concept of social sculpture. Art historians condemned his ideas as naive and impractical, while artists did not begin to accept Beuys' theories until many years after his death. It was only in the late 1980s and early 1990s that his ideas became more relevant for U.S. artists who were dealing with their own broken social system — neoliberal capitalism ushered in by President Ronald Reagan — through what would later be called "social practice." In order to explore the relevance of Beuys to the history of social practice, this dissertation contextualized his theories on art in the social and historical conditions of postwar West Germany, where the artist is often celebrated as a radical and a revolutionary for his efforts to combine his pedagogic theories, political activism, and artistic practice. I have examined the foundation of Beuys' belief, informed by the teachings of Rudolf Steiner and Friedrich Schiller, that the creative potential of all people could be used to transform society and its implications for those invested in social and political causes.

Between the late 1960s and his death, Beuys applied his concepts to collaborative projects that engaged the general public in issues pertaining to direct democracy, education, and environmentalism, which continue to be inaccessible to U.S. audiences due to the lack of literature on social sculpture in English. This dissertation has clarified Beuys' ideas through an exploration of the projects that best exemplify his mission. Beginning with the formation of the German Student Party in 1967, Beuys created alternative institutions including the Organization for Direct Democracy (est. 1970) and the Free International University (est. 1973), worked with the German green movement and created 7,000 Oaks (1981–1987). These projects of social sculpture were his attempt to heal the social and political structures

¹ On the one side, his connection with former Nazi collectors and the fictional account of his rescue from a plane crash while serving in the German military in 1944 continue to generate headlines. On the other, the artist's zealous students and followers continue to tout him as a “radical” and a “revolutionary.”
that he perceived to be broken during the war, including the democratic process, education system, and man's relationship to the natural world. The art historical merit of these works can be found in his development of a new theory of art to explain how he intended art to enact social change that was not based on sociology or anthropology. Instead, his argument that art could transform society through its very plasticity was tied to a long tradition of art. The Organization for Direct Democracy and the Free International University were experiments in putting these ideas into practice, and demonstrate how the artist merged his political and aesthetic interests. Not only did they advocate issues that were pertinent to society (e.g., disarmament, environmentalism, feminism), but they also exemplify how art could have a role in shaping larger social structures. Furthermore, by entering into a dialogue with the artist (or listening to one of his diatribes), participants could feel that they were part of something larger than themselves — a transfer of energy that began with the artist's mindset — which retained a link to the aesthetic experience of one of his shamanistic performances. Beuys is referenced by socially engaged artists because he presented a form of pedagogic activity that was politically engaged, counter-institutional, and centered on the empowerment of individuals through creative development. His way of integrating interdisciplinary voices into his projects and method of collaboration were models for how an artist could retain his or her authorial voice while still attending to issues outside of the field of art. Moreover, he attempted to translate these values into a global movement.

In 1995, critic Michael Brenson noted that Beuys was an important precedent for socially engaged artists in the United States, for he showed them how art could be used to heal a traumatized and divided society through his concept of social sculpture.² This was particularly important for artists during the Reagan and Bush administrations (1980–1993) who deployed their skills as artists to address deficits in social welfare initiatives as well as the inequality between classes, races, and genders. Beuys proposed that artists need not make objects to be marketed to the elite, but that they might use experimental mediums (e.g., sound, video, satellite technologies), apply their skills to city administration or finding solutions to social crises, and be politically active while attending to formal concerns. His projects were influential to generations of artists who either experienced or were brought up on 1960s

idealism whose work is conceptual, performative, political, and employs pedagogic methods including Dorit Cypis, Mark Dion, Daniel Joseph Martinez, and Rick Lowe. Beuys provided a genus for their work with the term “social sculpture” and gave them tools for engaging diverse publics about a range of issues, including racial, gender, and class inequality; housing shortages; environmentalism; and ecology. Their projects, which focus on the direct interaction between the artist and a community and in some cases physically shape the landscape, recall Beuys’ concentration on individual empowerment through art and the role of the environment in this transformation.

This dissertation examined two models for the reception of Beuys’ ideas in the United States: Suzanne Lacy and Rick Lowe. Their link to Beuys was made particularly clear following the paradigm shift in public art in the late 1980s, during which artists began to consider how community members (variously defined) might be involved as participants in their art. Unlike earlier models of site-specific public art that include modernist sculptures and urban design projects in public spaces, their work is community specific in its attention to the residents of a particular place and issues pertinent to their needs. More than just involving non-art audiences in the selection of the work, these artists enter into a dialogue with their audience that results in a collaboratively produced works of art. Although each has interpreted the nature and form of that collaboration in their own way, they both have used art as a means to combat dominant ideologies, just as Beuys aspired to do with social sculpture. Their work empowers marginalized groups through various forms of pedagogy (such as workshops and classes), creative expression in a performance and the creation of works of art, and by addressing political topics such as racism, sexism, and ageism. Beuys was never able to sustain his projects because he lacked the practical skills to do so; however, these artists have created long-standing relationships with those with whom they work in order to sustain the evolution of their projects after they are no longer involved.

Lacy and Lowe can also be considered in terms of their generational distance from the German artist: Lacy was among the first generation of artists who were working when Beuys came to the United States for the first time, while Lowe comes from a later second generation whose practice developed following the artist’s death. Such a differentiation helps to trace the effect of Beuys’ shifting critical paradigms.

These paradigms are described by Kwon in Miwon Kwon, One Place After Another: Site-Specific Art and Locational Identity (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002), 56–99.
reception and a growing awareness of his ideas in the United States. Lacy's contact with the artist was limited due to the lack of published material on his work in the United States during the 1970s and therefore she learned about his work by word-of-mouth from those who worked directly with him, while Lowe was able to access materials about the artist's thought when he began to investigate him in the late 1990s. In this period of time, Beuys' contribution to art was acknowledged in the United States (and this time for more than just his cryptic spiritualism), and social practice artists began to draw directly from his concept of social sculpture.

This dissertation has examined these artists in terms of their relationship to Beuys' concept of social sculpture in order to differentiate their practices from other forms of socially engaged art that developed in Europe and the United States since the 1980s. However, there are other ways that Beuys' practice and ideas were influential in other forms of art during the same period. For example, the field of institutional critique, which overlaps with social practice in many ways, also has ties to Beuys. As examined in chapter three, several “second generation” institutional critique artists, including Mark Dion and Christian Philipp Müller, who were practicing in New York during the 1990s cite their relationship to Beuys. These artists used institutions and interdisciplinary discourse in ways that are quite different from the German artist, although his method of engaging audiences, self-presentation, and aspects of his visual vocabulary (the vitrine, for example) were often used by institutional critique artists in their own work. The impact of Beuys' performance and gallery practice in the United States also deserves further scholarship.

My use of social sculpture as a tool for analyzing U.S. artists prompts a discussion of how the form of social practice informed by social sculpture differs from other forms of socially engaged art that emerged during the same period. I contend that these artists are aligned with Beuys because they work outside of conventional arts institutions and employ radical pedagogy to empower non-art audiences to consider the possibility of and hopefully enact social change. As discussed in the introduction to this dissertation, this type of work differs from relational aesthetics, which developed in Europe in the early 1990s and was theorized by Nicolas Bourriaud and Claire Bishop, in terms of the artists' intentions and methods of engaging with audiences. As opposed to artists using their own form of social sculpture, those associated with relational aesthetics created fictitious communities of art world insiders; furthermore, they
do not intend their work to enact social change or heal society. Their works of art were often housed in
galleries or museums without serving as alternatives to these institutions, as Beuys had once done with
his projects of social sculpture. Social sculpture-informed social practice also differs from more recent
calls for “strike art,” which art historian Yates McKee describes as emerging from the Occupy movement
in New York in 2011.⁴ This type of work amplifies existing protest movements and claims to resist the
neoliberal capitalist art market through collaborative artistic production and the anti-establishment issues
it addresses. Perhaps because this work is so closely linked with activist causes, the audiences for “strike
art” appear to come from the activist community (or those attuned to the issues they address) rather than
the art world. Beuys and the artists described in this dissertation redefine how an artist engages with
politics by contextualizing issues within the frame of art, not the other way around (as did artists allied
with the Occupy movement), neither do these artists employ demonstrations, protests, strikes, or any of
their associated strategies (e.g., placards, puppets, banners) to enact social change. Finally, the field of
social practice described in this dissertation is separate from other forms of socially engaged practice that
use strategies other than a pedagogic model, including those related to restaurants and food trucks,
which I see as more related to the need of these artists to be a part of the market economy.⁵ While Beuys
may have engaged in practices employed by these other types of socially engaged art, such as
participating in demonstrations or doing work in a museum, the forms of social practice that he inspired in
the United States expands from his theories rather than his particular practice of them (for example, these
artists are not simply reiterating Beuys’ calls for direct democracy, as he did with the ODD).

To return to my introduction, it may be helpful to examine the terminology used by many of these
artists in to explore the conflation of social practice and social sculpture as well as its many differences.
Social practice differs from social sculpture in its terminology and navigation between aesthetics and
politics. Beuys adhered to the word “sculpture” in order to emphasize the role of art in social
transformation, even though his projects of social sculpture were made up of dialogue rather than
physical materials. Although the artist made multiples and expressed his ideas concurrently using his

⁵ This is not to say that food is not involved in works of art informed by social sculpture. Meals certainly
play a large role in establishing communities around issues, such as in preparation for Lacy’s
performances or in gatherings at Project Row Houses.
characteristic mediums of fat and felt, Beuys viewed the conversations, ideas, and relationships as part of his work of art. He also subsumed politics and economics under his expanded concept of art, envisioning that these structures could also be shaped by creative forces. Social practice artists, on the other hand, tend to highlight the connection between their work and other forms of practice in order to distance themselves from market-based activities and the use of traditional techniques and materials. Unlike their predecessors in the United States who expressed political beliefs through forms and actions, social practice artists like Lacy and Lowe have a conception of aesthetics that departed from Beuys' idea of social sculpture while still espousing some of its ideals. Their work no longer just represented politics, but incorporated many viewpoints and established alternatives to what they saw as failing social structures. Like Beuys, they used conversation to empower individuals to enact that change. However, their form of empowerment was intended to unify communities as a form of resistance against the hegemonic neoliberal ideology rather than accessing spiritual depths.

Miwon Kwon is critical of projects like Project Row Houses and Lacy's performances that empower audiences because they recognize themselves through their participation (she categorizes this type of work under the rubric of "do-good community-based public art"). Rather than providing a space for critical reflection or challenging their world view, Kwon claims that their works of art instead reassure audiences with something that is familiar. Artists like Lacy, who coined the term "new genre public art" for work that includes participation and new media, further promote the ability of their projects to democratize art by accessing people outside of the art world and addressing issues that are important to them in an easy-to-digest manner. This type of empowerment might be contrasted with Beuys, who did not protect his students or the participants in his projects from conflict, nor was he immune from it himself. Neither was he intent on creating unity through collective identity like many artists described above — in fact, he stirred the dissent that had already been percolating in West Germany for some time. Unlike many community-based artists, he had specific reasons for so doing: namely, his promotion of the ideals set forth by his precursors such as Steiner. Steiner thought that social shifts were catalyzed by the self-empowerment of individuals using their own creative faculties. Beuys followed his directive by using dialogue as a method to spiritually empower participants through art, under which he grouped a variety of

6 Kwon, One Place after Another, 95.
political issues such as direct democracy, education reform, and environmental destruction. Further, his projects were not tied to a specific community or group. He had no stake in countering the exclusion or marginalization of certain groups by giving them visibility; instead, his projects of social sculpture were directed at all individuals so that society might be changed on a grander scale. Instead of establishing a mode of resistance as the U.S. artists did, Beuys hoped that art could serve as an alternative system of social organization.

This distinction reveals the deeper problem of how art historians evaluate the quality of projects that are dialogical, participatory, and collaborative. In her book *Artificial Hells*, Claire Bishop argues against sociological approaches for evaluation and contends that qualitative value judgments are necessary to clarify shared values at a specific moment in history. However, it is difficult to find criteria to judge work when its aesthetic form is ill defined or lacking (i.e., it resides in the act of speaking or another intangible form). If, as Beuys asserted, art can be found in the dialogues themselves, then how should one take them into account? Can we make value judgments about the content of the discussion? And to whom should these judgments be attributed — the artist or the participants? Although his theories were at times vague, metaphysical, and even eccentric, Beuys had physical manifestations to complement his conceptual work — multiples and photographs — which could be examined by scholars and sold on the market. The U.S. artists’ projects, on the other hand, can only be experienced first-hand or through documentary photographs, videos, and archival material, which, as Bishop has noted, are inadequate to understand, much less to visually analyze, their processes of production (and further are not intended to be works in themselves). Nonetheless, aesthetics are certainly a part of their practice — Lacy considers the choreography, costuming, and documentation of her performances, while the shotgun houses are a unifying visual element of Project Row Houses, which also includes outsider and high art among their offerings. Their work has also been included in exhibitions — for example, Lacy’s *Crystal Quilt* was represented by a video, documentary, framed quilt, photographs, and a sound piece when installed at the Tate Modern in London in 2012 and Lowe showed lightboxes with photographs taken around the Third...

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Ward at the Contemporary Arts Museum Houston in 2009. These visual elements help to institutionally validate these artists' work and preserve them; however, we might also look to performance and theater as models to judge their actions and participants' experiences.

Their lack of consumable objects is often taken to be a rejection of the market-driven art world, which is used to support the artists' claims that participatory art is more democratic and hence operates in opposition to the hegemonic neoliberal economic system. It has therefore become increasingly popular to valorize participatory art works by virtue of that opposition, no matter what type of politics artists propose as a counter-measure. One of the ways this has manifested is in the ethical discourse of collective versus individual authorship. Kwon pointed out that already by the early 1990s projects were increasingly judged on the basis of hard-to-define criteria such as “artistic authenticity” and the “ethical fitness” of an artist's interactions with a community, which suggests that one form of interaction is inherently more “authentic” than another, or that there are “good” and “bad” methods of engaging people in the creation of a work of art. In her book Artificial Hells, Bishop clarified this “ethical turn” in the evaluation of participatory art: since artists have a hard time describing the artistic merit of their projects, they resort to defending collaboration in terms of ethics. Singular authorship is vilified for its connection to the commercial art system, whereas collaborative practice, which suggests an alternate form of social unity, is valued regardless of its actual outcome. Along these lines, Beuys might be criticized for his market activities, while Lacy and Lowe could be lauded for their (semi-)refusal to make, exhibit, or sell objects; further, Lacy and Lowe might be compared to one another in terms of the value placed on their ability to represent or identify with participants in their work. The problem with such moral judgments is that they are insular to the art world, rather than comparisons with other projects taking place outside of the field of art, and further that they do not take aesthetics into account. Beuys and the artists described in the fourth chapter of this dissertation complicate this notion of collaborative authorship, for although their projects are conceived and produced with the aid of many collaborators, they are often solely attributed to one name

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10 Kwon, One Place after Another, 95.
11 Bishop, Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship, 12.
Bishop also states that since “participatory art is perceived to channel art’s symbolic capital towards constructive social change,” all practices are now perceived to be “equally important artistic gestures of resistance” given the urgency among contemporary artists to make art a more vital part of life. She argues that this is a dangerous proposition, for it suggests that there is no way to evaluate these works because all purport to heal social bonds, which is inherently seen as good. Her argument here relates to the debate in moral philosophy between deontological (or Kantian) and consequentialist ethics. Put simply, the former prioritizes one’s adherence to moral norms (the idea is more important than its result), while the latter holds that acts can be morally assessed based on their outcome (they produce the most good). If we take the deontological point of view and say that the artist’s idea is more important than the outcome, then it makes no difference if Beuys, Lacy, or Lowe were actually able to make a valuable contribution to society — their work is seen as just because it promotes a concept that society holds is good. However, this has not been the case for Beuys, nor for the other artists described in this dissertation, whose work has not been unanimously praised for its attempt to heal society. Lacy was criticized for Between the Door and the Street, to use one example, for reproducing the devaluation of female labor since she did not pay wages to participants. When considered from a consequentialist standpoint, however, their projects equally do not have merit. Beuys was unable to put the “third way” into action and Lowe has received backlash from activists because Project Row Houses has not solved problems in Houston such as the lack of affordable housing. In recent years, their claims to transform social and political structures have been sufficiently criticized that Lowe has even begun using words such as “justice” in place of “change” to avoid the need for quantifiable outcomes. Instead, artists tend to emphasize the symbolic value of their art, which takes us back to a discussion of aesthetics.

Whereas Bishop has established a platform that these works of art be judged solely on their aesthetic merits, I have argued throughout this dissertation that their relationship to the aesthetic regime — to use Rancière’s term — is much more complex. Just as Beuys proposed that art and politics were inherently linked, I have established that artists have used art as a means to shape the political

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12 Ibid., 13.
consciousness of their audiences. By bringing this conversation into the real world (not just the art world), these artists have created a new type of commons. Their work has established a new paradigm for which art might be seen as a way to shape our political conscious — not through the expression of one person's ideas but through collaboration, participation, and sharing. Their work creates a place for this to happen and opens a dialogue that is distinct from those in academia, local political forums, religious organizations, and special interest groups. Unlike the works of art promoted by Bishop, which are intended to shock and disturb participants to recognize a new form of reality, the form of social practice performed by Lacy and Lowe has perceptibly altered consciousness by forging bonds between people, establishing a place for them to pool resources, and unifying their voices. During times of political, social, and economic struggle (like those experienced during the Reagan-Bush period), these are important to preserving solidarity and remaining committed to social justice for all people.

As I conclude this dissertation, a new wave of right-wing conservatives is gaining power in both Europe and the United States. With the recent election of Donald Trump, the United States is on the brink of yet another period of crisis where civil liberties hang in the balance and the democratic system is being challenged. Like Beuys, many U.S. artists are facing a renewed call to action: they must find an aesthetic response to oppose a regime that will not address the needs of the public. Just as Beuys’ concept of social sculpture was a touchstone during the Reagan presidency, I propose that his methods of engagement might be called upon again as artists begin to imagine an alternative future — one in which creative practitioners take a leading role. His unconventional approach was a challenge to the system and therefore was an invaluable model for progress, for only with an unequivocal commitment like Beuys’ can one hope to intervene in the status quo. His practice was also not limited by the art world and its movements; propelled by his notoriety, he used his artwork as a launching pad to directly engage in social issues. Joseph Beuys is a model for artistic activism, whose relevance is continually revealed at moments of social disharmony. His work, as well as that of Lacy, Lowe, and countless other U.S. artists inspired by his model, is a constant reminder that artists are an important part of the struggle for a new society.
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Parteien-Wahlverweigerung

und Organisation der Verweigerer zu einer
nicht mehr an parteipolitischer Praxis interessierten Mehrheit zum Zwecke freier Information
Laßt euch nicht zum Stimmvieh machen
Macht Schluß mit der Scheindemokratie

Alle Staatsgewalt geht vom Volke aus Grundgesetz Art. 20/2

Gebt diese Wahlberechtigung am Wahltag 14. 6. 1970 an der Arbeits- und Informationstelle Düsseldorf, Andreasstraße 25 (Altstadt, gegenüber Kunsthalle) um durch diesen Akt alle Menschen über die Möglichkeit echter politischer Mitbestimmung jedes Einzelnen zu informieren (Selbstbestimmung des Volkes)

Gebraucht endlich eure Macht, die ihr habt durch das Recht auf Selbstbestimmung des Volkes
fordet Volksabstimmung über Grundrechte
Freiheitsrechte Bildung
Rüstung
Eigentumsverhältnisse
Produktionsmittel
Grund und Boden
Wohnung
Alters- und Krankenversicherung
Aufhebung des Beamtenstandes
Gleichberechtigung von Männern und Frauen
Entgeltung von Erde, Wasser, Luft

fordet gleichberechtigte unzensierte Information für die echte Opposition. Befreit die Massenmedien von ihrer Machtstruktur. Das ist die Erfüllung des Grundgesetzes auf freie Information.

laßt euch als Mehrheit nicht länger von einer Minderheit von Interessengruppen verregieren von Parteien, die von den in Wirklichkeit Herrschenden in Industrie und Wirtschaft finanziert werden

Wählt nie wieder Parteien als in dieser Weise Abhängige

Wählt nie wieder Parteien. Denn Parteien sind die Interessenhüter der wirtschaftlich Mächtigen Ausbeuter der Produktivkraft der Mehrheit
der Staat seid ihr selbst Alle! Jeder!

Macht Gebrauch von eurer Macht, die ihr habt durch das Recht auf Selbstbestimmung
Regiert euch selbst
Gewaltlosigkeit

Joseph Beuys
Jonas Hafner
Johannes Stüttgen

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<td>Prinzipien und Aufgabe der Free University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.-7. Juli</td>
<td>Atomenergie und alternative Energieformen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.-14. Juli</td>
<td>Stadt - Kommune - Gemeinschaftsbildung</td>
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<tr>
<td>15.-22. Juli</td>
<td>Medien und Manipulation</td>
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<tr>
<td>23.-31. Juli</td>
<td>Medien - Alternativen zur Manipulation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30.7.-7. August</td>
<td>Der Achberger Jahreskongreß - Die Kontroverse um die Menschenrechte</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.-13. August</td>
<td>Der Verfall der Städte: alternative Entwicklungen</td>
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<td>14.-21. August</td>
<td>Das Problem der Fremdarbeiter</td>
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<td>22.-31. August</td>
<td>Nordirland</td>
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<td>1.-7. September</td>
<td>Soziale Weltprobleme</td>
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<tr>
<td>8.-15. September</td>
<td>Gewalt und soziales Verhalten</td>
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<tr>
<td>16.-25. September</td>
<td>Arbeit und Arbeitslosigkeit</td>
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An economic life without of human beings will only be achieved by changing the nature of our development. Thus you have to deal with the whole range of human education from the earliest basis, in order to produce an economic system which serves all the people, instead of just benefiting a minority. And you have to have been both a teacher, in order to enable everyone to realize their full human potential. Because in the doing everyone would approach the conditions of an artist, so that one has political would become critical a matter of ethical decisions, ethical concerns. You also have to consider your means of communication — in my opinion, what is displayed here at Documenta 5 is totally uninteresting, totally unamusing for 90, 95% of the population. Of course, as an artist you have to grasp the fact that most people don’t understand anything about physics either. Unless we are dealing comprehensively with scientific disciplines, in science and in art, I would assume that one would choose a means of communication which can be understood by those one wishes to address. And I have the impression that much of what happens in the art world is quite the opposite. Of course there’s also a lot of plain simplifying. According to popular notions, most artists aren’t even normal beings, they are totally capitilistic. And there are of course artists who are not interested in business…. But the notion that the artist is human, that everything is art, that everyone is an artist, is very important. At that point the concept of the artist becomes superfluous. No, I don’t mean the artist himself becomes superfluous. The professional artist, that’s something else again. I have said that there are two ways in which one can consider a person an artist. First of all, in terms of his general creativity, which should be promoted from the boy he is throughout the whole school system, when art is like life. It’s only at a later stage that the specialist will become from the main cause of education whose general character should be artists; one person will then study, let’s say, physics, another medicine, a third will become an electrician. People who will specialize in art aren’t able to become specialists, that’s quite clear. I am not against that, but I am just as interested in the general creativity as in the specialized stuff. There’s a distinction one has to make very acutely, between the artist as a specialist and the general artistic potential of the community. But when effective political power is not exerted in the artistic-subjects as such, but in the creative potential of the people, I believe that everyone could be an artist, because everyone has the freedom to determine his own existence. I don’t know if this freedom can be attained through specialization, because that is itself a sign that I differentiate myself from the general public, that I can achieve

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