



Press Release / Pressemitteilung

Art = Human

Joseph Beuys in Krefeld

Kaiser Wilhelm Museum, Krefeld | März 28 – August 1, 2021

In conjunction with the Beuys Year 2021, the Kunstmuseen Krefeld are presenting the exhibition *Art = Human. Joseph Beuys in Krefeld*. In addition to the artist rooms in the Kaiser Wilhelm Museum which Beuys installed himself, the show focuses on works and documents relating to the lecture “Art = Human,” which Beuys gave at the Kaiser Wilhelm Museum on the occasion of the acquisition of his major work *Barraque D’Dull Odde*, and which he later declared an action.

The fact that Joseph Beuys, who was born in Krefeld one hundred years ago, remained connected to his native city from the late 1940s until his death in early 1986 is primarily due to his close relationship with the Kunstmuseen Krefeld—above all to the commitment of the museum director Paul Wember, who supported Beuys at a very early stage and intensively followed his artistic career. Beginning in 1967, with the support of the collectors Helga and Walther Lauffs, Wember was able to assemble the outstanding ensemble of works around the large sculpture *Barraque D’Dull Odde* (1961–67). Beuys himself selected the works and installed them in their present location. “This makes the ensemble the only one of its kind in North Rhine-Westphalia that has been preserved in the form determined by the artist himself,” explains museum director Katia Baudin. “We are taking the Beuys Year as an opportunity to focus on this unique context of works created for the site.”

With selected works, photographs, audio recordings, and documents from the collection of the Kunstmuseen Krefeld, the exhibition provides insight into the artist’s longstanding intensive relationship with the city. The focus is on the history of the ensemble in the Kaiser Wilhelm Museum. The unusual stainless-steel sculpture *Brunnen* (Fountain, 1952), a commissioned work mediated by Wember, entered the collection as early as the 1950s. On the occasion of the purchase of the sculpture *Barraque D’Dull Odde*, a discussion event was held at the Kaiser Wilhelm Museum on December 15, 1971. The lecture, which was announced under the title “Art = Human” and which Beuys later declared to be an action, forms another focal point of the exhibition. In front of a packed audience, the artist explained his expanded concept of art. Diagram drawings, photographs, the audio recording of the lecture, and press reports bear witness to the passionate and controversial discussion between the artist and the audience, which did not stop at verbal attacks on Beuys and the removal of Paul Wember as moderator of the discussion.

Kunstmuseen Krefeld

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In 1977, the Krefeld ensemble was completed with the purchase of *Fond IV/4*, but Beuys's work on it was not. This new acquisition was the occasion for offering Beuys a permanent space in the Kaiser Wilhelm Museum in which he could install all the works in context with one another. Especially the relocation of the sculpture *Barraque D'Dull Odde*, comprising more than 600 individual parts, was very complex and is documented in impressive photographs. The Beuys rooms took on their final form in 1984, when the artist integrated *Brunnen*, which had been installed in the courtyard of the Kaiser Wilhelm Museum from 1969 to 1979, into the ensemble of rooms. With the orange water hose, early and later works combine to form a common energy cycle.

Beuys was also involved since 1948 in numerous exhibitions at the Kaiser Wilhelm Museum, as well as at Haus Lange and Haus Esters. Particular attention is paid to the comprehensive retrospective of Beuys's drawings in 1974, of which an audio recording of the artist's opening speech provides revealing impressions. Finally, the print series *Bonzenbunker* (Bonze Bunker, 1981), which Beuys created to support the FIU Krefeld, is an important example of his political commitment. "The presentation thus reflects the artist's development and diversity in condensed form," emphasizes curator Magdalena Holzhey. "It ranges from the early work via the genesis of works and spaces to the culture of discussion and political engagement as a component of the expanded concept of art."

On the occasion of the exhibition, a film was made with interviews with contemporary witnesses who shed light on Beuys's relationship to Krefeld from various perspectives.

The opening day on March 28, 2021 is also the official opening of the Beuys Year in Krefeld and will be accompanied by digital greetings from Mayor Frank Meyer, director Katia Baudin, and curator Magdalena Holzhey, as well as a 3D tour of the exhibition.

The exhibition is being presented in conjunction with *beuys 2021. 100 years of joseph beuys*, a project of the Ministry of Culture and Science of the State of North Rhine-Westphalia in cooperation with the Heinrich Heine University Düsseldorf under the direction of Eugen Blume and Catherine Nichols.

Visit

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Tue–Sun 11 am – 5 pm

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