

PRESS RELEASE

Power Plant Block Beuys **14 February to 20 September 2020**

In April 1970, Joseph Beuys (1921-1986) installed over 200 of his works in seven rooms in the Hessisches Landesmuseum Darmstadt. In 2020, we are celebrating the 50th anniversary of his largest extent ensemble of works. Beuys created a fascinating artist's museum within the museum, a unique school of perception, discovery and questioning.

The scenario initially makes an arbitrary impression. Many have associations with an artist's studio, the centre of artistic production. It is as if Beuys has just left. The objects are obviously not set up in a conventional museum-like scholarly manner but intuitively. The small-scale storage display becomes a challenging physical experience. Comprehending mysteriousness as an invitation to further intuitive thinking, Beuys arranged his works here without labels. Experiencing was more important for him than explaining.

Universal in his aspirations, Beuys connected art, science and spirituality. As a pioneer of a political and environmentally aware art, he is more topical than ever. Beuys called his works vehicles that transported his ideas. The Darmstadt 'Block Beuys' is a storage facility in the sense of energy storage. In conjunction with the idea of the battery, Beuys stacked felt and copper as a reservoir of spiritual warmth and creativity. The works in the 'Block Beuys' have titles like 'Transmitter', 'Electrode (Fat-Felt)', 'Battery', 'Aggregate' or 'Fond'. Even the title 'Block Beuys' itself can be understood as a power plant.

Under Secretary Ayse Asar: "Block Beuys", the world's largest complex of works by Joseph Beuys in the Hessisches Landesmuseum Darmstadt, is of immense significance for the cultural heritage of the State of Hesse. Together with the Beuys collections in Kassel and Wiesbaden, Hesse is a key location for the work of this pioneering 20th-century artist. We can be very proud of this'.

By shedding light on the context of selected works and Beuys's performances, films, photographs and musical scores up to the 1970s, 'Power Plant Block Beuys' shows how he made use of the objects gathered together in the installation.

In 1963, Beuys, then a professor at the Kunstakademie Düsseldorf, organised a FESTUM FLUXORUM FLUXUS. In 1964, the press disseminated a photograph showing Beuys with a bloody nose after a tumult at the 'Festival of New Art' in Aachen. In 1965, he demonstrated at the Galerie Schmela in Düsseldorf 'How to Explain Pictures to a Dead Hare'. These were followed by 'Homogenous Infiltration for Grand Piano, The Greatest Contemporary Composer is the Contergan Child,' 'Felt TV' and 'MANRESA'. The exhibition then introduces 'Primary Current FLUXUS' 'EURASIA STAFF' from 1967 and finally 'Titus Andronicus / Iphigenia' from 1969.

'Block Beuys' is simultaneously a prime example for the birth of the West German art market of international significance. Through the intervention of Franz Dahlem and Heiner Friedrich, the Darmstadt industrial Karl Ströher acquired all the works from Joseph Beuys's 1967 exhibition at the new Museum Mönchengladbach. He secured an access to the further production and committed himself to publically exhibiting all of the works as a whole.

In 1968, Ströher acquired the extensive Pop Art collection of the New York insurance broker Leon Kraushar. Following a two-year exhibition tour, Ströher presented his collection as a long-term loan, making Darmstadt a significant venue of the avant-garde. In 1989, three years after Beuys's death, the Hessische Kulturstiftung with the assistance of the Kulturstiftung der Länder secured 'Block Beuys' for Darmstadt.

Eva Claudia Scholtz, managing director of the Hessische Kulturstiftung: 'Joseph Beuys's work does not stop polarising, does not stop posing questions or moving us. And we also do not stop: 'Block Beuys', which the Hessische Kulturstiftung acquired for Darmstadt in 1989 and Beuys's Ulysses drawings in 1996, 'The Pack' for Kassel in 1993 or the 'Boxing Match for Direct Democracy' vitrine for Frankfurt in 2018 – Beuys moves us. The current 'Power Plant Block Beuys' presents the Block as an energy storage unit and activation machine. I am very pleased that the exhibition in the Landesmuseum Darmstadt underscores the topicality of Joseph Beuys's work and hope that numerous visitors will risk the challenging 'Block Beuys' experience. The 'Power Plant Block Beuys' exhibition marking the 50th anniversary of its installation by the artist himself represents the promising opening measures of the Beuys centennial to be celebrated next year'.

On the occasion of this anniversary, contemporary documents trace the history, production and alterations of this singular artwork. The 'Small Power Plant', which was on show in Room 3 of 'Block Beuys' from 1984 to 1987, will be on view again as a loan in the HLMD.

Curator

Dr Gabriele Mackert

The Hessisches Landesmuseum Darmstadt is celebrating its 200th birthday in 2020! The anniversary year is under the patronage of German Federal President Dr Frank-Walter Steinmeier.

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<https://www.hlmd.de/presse/aktuelle-presstexte-bilder/detail/news/pressebilder-kraftwerk-block-beuys.html>

Exhibition film

This film by art beats, Berlin, provides a first impression of the exhibition:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TYUqI5yAtcc>

Press kontakt:

Yvonne Mielatz-Pohl
Head of press and public relations
Hessisches Landesmuseum Darmstadt
Friedensplatz 1
64283 Darmstadt
Phone : +49 (6151) 16-57 100
Email: yvonne.mielatz-pohl@hlmd.de