



Lucrezia De Domizio Durini

La biblioteca Paradise

The only revolutionary force is the force of human creativity.

(Joseph Beuys)

Joseph Beuys is one of the most emblematic and important figures in post-WWII world art history. With his life and work, he is the utmost representative of the centrifugal and anti-traditional energy generated by contemporary art in the latter decades of the 20th century: he managed to incorporate his own persona into art, and art into his persona.

This means a great deal more than the still-unstified idea of unity between Art and Life, because Beuys, placing himself within the work of art, intended to underscore the *anthropological* power of all art. He was first and foremost a man who loved mankind and “nature, our mother,” in which all men live.

He invented no method, but he dedicated his life, with a generous dose of humanity, to the pursuit of improving existing methods in the society he inhabited.

Beuysian philosophy is based on two concepts.

The first: all men on Earth of any profession or trade possess a “free” creative energy which, when put into action, produces good for oneself and fruitfully benefits **society**.

The second: his famous **Living Sculpture** made up of men of different origins and different economic, political and cultural statuses, united by a supportive and “free” form of collaboration. Always in pursuit of the Common Good.

To help people understand his noble art, Beuys employed **symbols** and **slogans** more than any other artist in the world. And this is why I call Beuys the

Sculptor of Forms and Sculptor of Souls.

As concerns this definition of mine, for his Social Sculpture – the *Living Sculpture* –, he made use of **invisible** materials like gestures, words, smells, noises, sounds, behaviours, even the mythology of his own persona, to generate a process of mutual collaboration among different men in keeping with the concepts of freedom and human creativity: *Unity in Diversity*.

Beuys SCULPTOR of FORMS

He also utilized **visible** materials in his works, like felt, grease, iron, plants, wood, animals, honey, oil, stone, chocolate, wine and paint, all of which are to be interpreted as “*substances*”, “*vehicles*” of his understanding of the energies that lend meaning and purpose to life.

So we can recognize that the materials used for his works, actions and discussions have nothing to do with those utilized by Arte Povera or by the strictly formal American minimalists. The materials Beuys employed went beyond pure representative process to interpret the flow of human energy in the natural, primitive sense, the flow of life and death, of man and social civilization in art.

In this context I feel the need to clarify what **photography** and the **signature** represented for the German Maestro.

Beuys was the artist who early on realized the importance of “*propagandizing*” his credo through his own image, using every possible means – I want to reiterate that –, even his own body and his own mythology.

An artist must see his own work as a photo, an open, unfinished, non-finite image

(Joseph Beuys)

Photography is a means to memorialize or symbolize a concept. Beuys made extensive use of it to express his metaphorical language.

He loved to have himself photographed as *an extension of his thoughts, and he felt the same way about his signature*. In fact, he signed any object that he was asked to sign, but he was also aware that after his death, this habit may have led to mystification and ambiguity in the art system. For this reason, every year, he had his works photographed and catalogued in publications, so as to differentiate them from his many *souvenirs*. Therefore, the only authenticated Joseph Beuys works are those catalogued in publications published prior to his premature death (January 23, 1986), while the others are simply mementos that we’ll call “souvenirs”, to which the law of supply and demand applies, but which do not pertain to the art market. Beuys was photographed by hundreds of people, and by great photographers, but the photographs by Buby Durini – who used microphotography for his scientific research – have a human and philological meaning, as they cover 15 years with Beuys in numerous countries around the world; they are unique historical documents.

Over the years I have created an extensive library of books on Beuys published in numerous languages by various publishers. I have always looked for them when traveling to other countries; some I have bought, others I have received from friends. Beuys, who knew about my collection, gave me many books that he had signed and inscribed to me and my husband, and a few rare cyclostyle-printed publications.

I had collected over 1000 volumes, cataloguing them year by year, which I jealously safeguarded on a large glass-shelved bookshelf along with my own 33 books published by various Italian publishers, some translated into English and German.

One day, looking at that large display, I had strange sensation ... the books were beautiful, but ... Mute! And so I decided to offer them to an Italian library so that they could serve their purpose. Since I knew Andrea Tomasetig – one of Italy's most prestigious librarians – who had edited a special photographic book about Beuys's *Difesa della Natura* operation (photos © BubyDurini), I asked him to check with Italian libraries, providing him with a detailed list of the books. It was a year of intense work for Tomasetig, who consulted more than 50 libraries without success. Then I suggested that he contact the most important German library, which immediately accepted the offer, specifying that my collection be sent to Dr. Jan Simane, director of the library of the Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz – Max-Planck-Institut.

Every time a book changes hands, every time someone runs his eyes down its pages, its spirit grows and strengthens.

Carlos Ruiz Zafón

Joseph Beuys is the artist who, more than any other, sought to and was able to embody the transcending of art, directing his efforts towards the utopian territory of natural energy and spiritual communication: reality as the phenomenological spectrum of human possibility.

Joseph Beuys's art is yet to be fully explored, interpreted and studied.

Lucrezia De Domizio Durini – Bolognano, Paris, May 2021