



What Is Art?: Conversations with Joseph Beuys

Joseph Beuys, Volker Harlan

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“An intimate dialogue with Joseph Beuys ... takes us into the deeper motivations and understandings underlying ‘social sculpture’ and his expanded conception of art.” ?**Shelley Sacks**, artist and director of the Social Sculpture Research Unit, Oxford Brookes University

“It is arguable that Beuys was the first artist of the twenty-first century. Like Rudolf Steiner, he was passionately concerned with the history of ideas and the points of interface between manifestations of the arts and sciences as well as philosophy, religion, economics, and politics.” ?**Richard Demarco**, OBE, professor emeritus, European Cultural Studies, Kingston University, Surrey

“Joseph Beuys was one of the most important artists of the twentieth century. He was one of the first German artists to engage with his country's turbulent and destructive recent history. His art embraced processes of political renewal within society, the search for an appropriate spiritual approach in our times, and a belief in the creative potential in each individual.” ?**Sean Rainbird**, senior curator, Tate Collection

"The revolutionary artistic ideas and artwork of Joseph Beuys are still, decades later, one of the strongest influences on contemporary artists. His work bursts open the enclosed world of visual art to encompass political and social reform, environmentalism, education, economics, spiritual science, and the proposal that art is not properly an activity for ‘experts’ but for everyone.” ?**David Adams**, Ph.D., art history faculty, Sierra College, California.

“I know that from him [Rudolf Steiner] a mission was given to me to gradually remove people’s alienation and mistrust toward the supersensible through my means. In political thinking?the field I have to be working on daily?it is a matter of realizing the Threefold Social Order as quickly as possible.” ?**Joseph Beuys** (letter to Manfred Schrader, October 21, 1971)

Joseph Beuys’s work continues to influence and inspire artists and thinkers around the world?in areas from organizational learning, direct democracy, and new forms of money, to new methods of art education and the practice of “ecological art.”

Volker Harlan?a close colleague of Beuys?whose own work also explores substance and sacrament?talked with Beuys about the deeper motivations and insights behind “social sculpture” and his expanded view of art. These profound reflections, complemented by Harlan’s thoughtful essays, give a sense of the interconnected nature of all life forms and provide the basis for a path toward a future that is ecologically sustainable.

Features more than forty illustrations.

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