

May 24–November 9, 2014

Beuys Brock Vostell

Opening: Fri, May 23, 2014, 7 p.m.

Joseph Beuys, Bazon Brock and Wolf Vostell, the three most important German Action artists of postwar modernity, will be presented for the first time together in a large-scale group exhibition. The artists, all of whom were friends and who appeared together at important actions and exhibitions throughout the 1960s, evolved their own unique style-defining approaches, thereby pursuing the radical emancipation of the individual and the reform or revolution of life. A new perspective on performative arts is evolved by way of the joint presentations of these three different approaches to performativity, today courted in all museums of the world.

The acquisition of Wolf Vostell's work *Transmigración II* (1958) will also be presented at the exhibition – an acquisition made possible for the ZKM | Center for Art and Media Karlsruhe thanks to the generous support of the Kulturstiftung der Länder. *Transmigración II* is one of the first works of art which used a television as an integral part of a work, and hence became a model for numerous generations of artists in the artistic treatment of mass media. Hence, the acquisition represents a further historical milestone of media art for the collection of this internationally famous institution.

To date, art history has only separately treated the work Joseph Beuys, Bazon Brock and Wolf Vostell without reference to the respective national and international contexts. Not only were important individual aspects and achievements of each of the artist's personalities consequently overlooked: due to the lack of a contextual overview the importance of these three artists for the *performative turn* has also been lost. The artists, all of whom were friends, made joint appearances at important events during the 1960s, such as the *Festival der Neuen Kunst am 20. Juli 1964* in Aachen, the *Life Sendung* of the Second German Television Channel for the series *Die Drehscheibe* (1964) and the so-called *24 Stunden Happening* at Galerie Parnass in Wuppertal (1965). Through their collaborative work has been researched and comprehensively exhibited for the first time, new perspectives are opened up both on the artistic output of these three artists and the art of the post-war period.

The exhibition shows that, each in their own way, the three action artists created influential and formative stylistic approaches to performativity, and contributed to the formation of an augmented concept of the work

Press Information

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Press Contact

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– such as sculpture as action and the inclusion of the public. It becomes apparent, furthermore, that all three artists share a common thematic focal point in their critical assessment and treatment of the Second World War and its ramifications. A further aspect shared by Joseph Beuys, Bazon Brock and Wolf Vostell that becomes understandable in the exhibition, is the new definition of teaching. The three artists conceived of teaching as the art of performance the core of which was mediation and enlightenment, action and agitating as well as discourse and demonstration. Initiated by actions, images and discourse, a transformation of viewer consciousness is then achieved which leads to the radical emancipation of the individual. Accordingly, civil society and democracy constitute the core of Beuys', Brock's and Vostell's actions and demonstrations. Whereas artists of the 1950s attributed greater significance to the past, especially to the Holocaust, their common concerns during the 1960s were the conception of social utopias – even though their various approaches towards this mutual goal took very different forms.

With the exhibition *Beuys Brock Vostell*, the ZKM | Karlsruhe deepens its focus on performativity and participation. Following the presentation of works by the pioneers of performance art in the exhibition *Moments* (2012), and the critical examination of the augmented concept of the work, as in the exhibition *Franz Erhard Walther. Space by Action* (2012), three key German artists of postwar modernity Joseph Beuys, Bazon Brock and Wolf Vostell are now set to be presented for the first time in a large-scale show in 2014. These artists had already recognized the new tendencies of leading art out of the studio and into public space, and implemented these in artistic practices as early as the 1950s.

Curator: Peter Weibel

Co-curator: Eckhart Gillen

In cooperation with: Eva Beuys, Bazon Brock, Mercedes Vostell

Supporting Program

Beuys Brock Vostell. Early Approaches to Performativity

Symposium June 27–28, 2014

The symposium is dedicated to the performative aspect in the artistic productions of Joseph Beuys, Bazon Brock and Wolf Vostell, thereby outlining the way in which performance unfolds in the work of these three German postwar artists. What possibilities are there for the description, documentation, contextualization and museum presentation of these forms of performative expression? Contributions by Siegfried Zielinski, Ursula Frohne and Christian Katti, Sven Lindholm, Petra Maria Meyer, Monika Schmitz-Emans, Christoph Zeller, Ulf Jensen and many others, cast light on the actions of the three artists by drawing attention

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to common themes, thereby showing the parallels and differences in their works both with respect to artistic self-presentation and in the approaches to the viewers.

Publication

A comprehensive volume of sources and documentation, including numerous previously unpublished illustrations and text materials on the exhibition is scheduled for publication by Hatje Cantz. Edited by Peter Weibel, the 600 page publication will be distributed and sold throughout German-speaking countries.

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