

Conference

Renaissance of Modernity: Duchamp, Leonardo, Beuys
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Staatliches Museum Schwerin
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Abstracts and biographies of the speakers

Keynote speaker: Prof Dr Gottfried Boehm

The Magic of Beginnings. Leonardo – Duchamp – Beuys

Some might think the sequence of three artists' names could be replaced with others. Why not, for example, Titian – Cézanne – Mondrian? This kind of objection calls for arguments designed to support the understanding of Leonardo – Duchamp – Beuys as a very special constellation. What draws them together – amongst other things – is the inclusion of scientific and above all self-reflexive forms of expression and their willingness to recast the potentialities of artistic creation. In particular, they shared an intellectual dissatisfaction over whether the received means of artistically presenting the world could still be seen as adequate. They not only pushed their oeuvre ahead, but also examined it deeply – subjecting their own actions to a perpetual crisis. What distinguishes them is not only their ability to recalibrate the scope of the pictorial, but above all to discover new beginnings, to rethink and reshape the work of art. In this 'beginningness' of their actions, there is still today an enduring magic – and an intellectual challenge.

"A 'love of painting' brought me to art history. At the same time, I cultivated a strong inclination towards theory in a study of philosophy. In those days (1961-1968) this combination received little attention and even less support and I am deeply thankful above all for the tutelage of the philosophical hermeneutics of Hans-Georg Gadamer, that enabled the two apparently disparate paths to be combined. Investigating the proximity of 'eye and spirit' – that was the topic of an art history postdoctoral work (Heidelberg, 1974), which later appeared under the title *Bildnis und Individuum*. There followed professorships in Bochum (1975-79), which led to the inspiring years with Max Imdahl amongst others, in Giessen (1979-86) and finally, from 1986, in Basel. Fascination by the visible, by the particular image, guided my turning back to the conditions and premises of representation. This attitude determined my academic work in many forms. It was thematic amongst other things to an early contribution to *Hermeneutik des Bildes* (1978) and then of course in the anthology *Was ist ein Bild?* (1994). The intensification of the debates and discourses about visual forms of representation led to talk of the 'iconic turn'. Its academic monetisation is based – against the background of the tradition of pictorial history – on two key events: the digital image with its new communicative and epistemological potentialities, and contemporary art. It changed the face of the iconic in a hitherto unknown way, in their laboratories 'pictures' took on completely new guises, their boundaries and their implications were subjected to 'corrosive samples' (Duchamp). The unforeseeable permutation of the visual and its ongoing social role were finally also the actuating motives for the NFS project *Bildkritik*. It combines fundamental work with a view to an 'Enlightenment', which goes far beyond the academic world to address the image-using (producing and consuming) public of today."

(https://eikones.ch/nc/personen/detail/person/65/Gottfried_Boehm/, 3.8.2017)

Prof Dr Eugen Blume

Joseph Beuys: The Foundation of a New Universality

The unique aspect of the endeavours of the artist Joseph Beuys is his attempt, in the second half of the 20th Century, to establish a new universality on the basis of his expanded concept of art. Driven by multiple wounds which he suffered during the war and as a result of a severe depression in the mid-1950s, Beuys developed proposals for the restructuring of society as a whole in his *Projekt Westmensch*. Starting from the anthroposophical world view of Rudolf Steiner and his concept of a tripartite society as a social organism, Beuys extended Steiner's teachings with his social sculpture theory, which formed the basis of his expanded concept of art. For Beuys, the sole way out from the almost utterly destroyed relationship between people and nature lay in the radical restructuring of the economic, spiritual and legal way of life, in which every human being became an artist of social sculptures.

This lecture attempts to present what are the principles behind this universality for which Beuys strived. At the heart of his ideas was the question about the subject and how people can become a subject through thinking. "The goal is to maintain a non-conformity with that which constantly adapts us. Thought is put to the test by conformity, and only the universal releases it – in an uninterrupted labour, an imaginative passage through this test." (Alain Badiou)

Born in Bitterfeld on 14th March 1951. Studied art history at the Humboldt University in Berlin from 1976 to 1981. Research assistant at the Kupferstichkabinett of the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin from 1981. Worked at the German National Gallery from 1995. From 2001 to August 2016 head of the National Gallery at the Hamburger Bahnhof Museum für Gegenwart, Berlin. Numerous exhibitions and publications on art in the second half of the 20th Century.

Dr Deborah Bürgel

Secrets of circulation. A comparative experiment

Dynamics of the circulation of blood and water, mechanisms of unfulfilled desire, transformations of the social – Leonardo da Vinci, Marcel Duchamp and Joseph Beuys all worked with the motif of circulation in their pictorial works, each in extremely different ways, in order to investigate, present and convey the energies and processes of humans, society and art.

This comparative lecture attempts to draw parallels and identify differences between the various themes and pictures of the circulation as an epistemological model within each of their universalistic endeavours to fathom the principles of life.

Deborah Bürgel completed her studies of art history, philosophy and German studies in 2015 with a doctorate on fictional artists and Marcel Duchamp's creation Rose Sélavy at the University of Cologne. Since August 2016 she has been undertaking a traineeship at the Duchamp Research Center and in the Kupferstichkabinett print collection of the Staatliches Museum Schwerin.

Prof Dr Frank Fehrenbach

The Renaissance of Energy

As a fundamental category of the perception of nature, art and society, "energy" has undergone significant metamorphoses since ancient times. In the aesthetic discourse of the Italian Renaissance, energy became a criterion of artistic progress and a standard for comparison in the struggle for supremacy of the arts. For Leonardo da Vinci, physical strength gave mobile bodies the appearance of life; at the same time, the appearance of life is the ultimate objective of the artistic effect. Marcel Duchamp and Joseph Beuys also referred to energy, although their semantics had fundamentally changed owing to the "energetic turn" (Rabinbach) of the 19th Century. My contribution examines the continuities and discontinuities of the aesthetic and natural dynamics in the works of the protagonists of our symposium.

Born in Oberndorf on the Neckar in 1963. Studied art history in Tübingen and Basel. 1996-2001 Assistant at the Art History Institute Florence. Guest professorships in Berlin (Humboldt University) and Jena. 2005-13 senior professor at Harvard University. Has led the *Images of Nature* research unit at the University of Hamburg (Alexander von Humboldt professor) since 2013. Has published books on Leonardo da Vinci, Roman Baroque fountains and Medieval religious sculpture, amongst others. Numerous essays on "vitality" in art.

Dr Paul B. Franklin

“No more painting, you get a job”: Marcel Duchamp and the Bibliothèque Sainte-Geneviève

Anyone interested in the life and work of Marcel Duchamp knows that he spent a period of time beginning in 1913 as a librarian at the Bibliothèque Sainte-Geneviève in Paris. This biographical anecdote is regularly cited in the literature devoted to the artist and has taken on mythical proportions over the years, mainly due to the fact that it precipitated a major turning point in his artistic project. Duchamp himself often mentioned this episode during interviews late in his life, but only vaguely. Furthermore, few scholars have succeeded in uncovering specific information concerning Duchamp’s time at the Bibliothèque Sainte-Geneviève, and numerous factual errors continue to circulate. In this lecture, I will reconstruct the historical details of Duchamp’s tenure at the Bibliothèque Sainte-Geneviève based on recently discovered archival documents and otherwise overlooked material. Within this context, I will then examine some of the publications in the library’s collection devoted to Leonardo da Vinci and their possible impact on Duchamp’s intellectual and creative development.

Dr Paul B. Franklin obtained his doctorate in art history from Harvard University. He is an independent scholar, specialist on Marcel Duchamp, and editor in chief of *Étant donné Marcel Duchamp*, a scholarly journal devoted to the life and work of the artist.

Dr Gerhard Graulich

From the Mona Lisa to Giocondologie: on aspects of a generative mythology by Leonardo, Duchamp and Beuys

This lecture looks at aspects of the genesis of significance of the Mona Lisa painting by Leonardo da Vinci (1452-1519), and therefore at one of the most famous paintings in art history, which Marcel Duchamp frivolously reshaped in 1919 by adding a moustache and goatee to a published print. Duchamp called his version a DADA portrait. His intervention, which he titled with the letters *L.H.O.O.Q.*, targeted the public cult or already existing myth of the picture. Duchamp recognised that a painting could not only have a historic and aesthetic significance, but also fashionable image, an idea that has implications even today. For his part, Joseph Beuys tackled the by then mythical significance of the picture in the concept he developed into *Giocondologie*. In particular, in 1959 with Eva Wurmbach, whom he later married, he investigated the paintings of Leonardo in order to depict the connection in the backgrounds of pictures between the spheres of human environment and those of the natural world. Beuys also began to conceive of landscape, and even the world of things as a mirror of the human soul. He saw *Giocondologie* as a creative process that unites scientific, imaginary and random forms of significance and puts them in a mythological context.

After studying art history, German literature and Philosophy at the Ruhr University Bochum, volunteering as assistant curator at the Wilhelm-Lehmbruck-Museum in Duisburg and the Westfälischen Landesmuseum in Münster, and working as curator at the Staatsgalerie Moderne Kunst in Munich, Dr. Graulich was a curator at the Staatliches Museum Schwerin in charge of 19th to 21st Century art from 1994. Since 2001 he has headed the Painting Department and is the deputy director of the museum. Dr. Graulich has been curator of the Marcel Duchamp collection since 1996. Together with Dr. Kornelia Röder he has built up the Marcel Duchamp Research Center since 2009 and is co-publisher of the *Poiesis* series.

Dr Magdalena Holzhey

Technology as defined by Leonardo? On Beuys' concept of an "organic mechanics"

Leonardo da Vinci played a crucial part in the development of Joseph Beuys' concept of expanded art and science, as a figure with whom he identified and as a role model. This lecture takes Beuys' concept of "organic mechanics" as its starting point for an analysis of the drawings published in 1975 in relation to Leonardo's *Madrid Codices* and examines how, in dialogue with his historic model, Beuys was able to refine his own position. Looking at Beuys' complex reference to Leonardo's world view reveals how the artist endeavoured to fundamentally rethink the relationship between nature and technology. The technically and philosophically relevant concept of "organic mechanics" can be traced in his work from early drawings through to *Honey pump in the Workplace* and also into a social dimension.

Magdalena Holzhey (born in Berlin in 1974) studied art history, musicology and Romance studies in Berlin, Pisa and Erlangen. She has been custodian of the collection and curator of the Kunstmuseen Krefeld since 2014, having previously worked as curator for the Kunsthalle Düsseldorf and as research assistant for the Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen, amongst others. Numerous exhibitions and publications on the art of the 20th and 21st centuries, incl. *Werkverzeichnis der Installationen, Objekte und Konzeptarbeiten von Reiner Ruthenbeck* (Cologne 2008); *Joseph Beuys – Zeichnungen 1945-1986: Die Sammlung Klüser* (Munich 2012, with Dieter Koepplin); *Eating the Universe. Vom Essen in der Kunst* (Kunsthalle Düsseldorf 2009); *Living with Pop. Eine Reproduktion des Kapitalistischen Realismus* (Kunsthalle Düsseldorf 2013, with Elodie Evers and Gregor Jansen); *Die Kräfte hinter den Formen. Erdgeschichte, Materie, Prozess in der zeitgenössischen Kunst* (Kunstmuseen Krefeld 2016); *Elmgreen & Dragset. Die Zugezogenen* (Kunstmuseen Krefeld 2017). Her dissertation *Im Labor des Zeichners. Joseph Beuys und die Naturwissenschaften* was awarded the Deubner prize by the Verbandes Deutscher Kunsthistoriker in 2011.

Prof Dr Herbert Molderings

“Until the last hundred years all painting has been literary or religious”. Duchamp’s Chronofereces

Fra Angelico, Cranach, Leonardo, “the religious painters of the Renaissance” were the painters that Duchamp referred to in order to set himself apart from the concept of “painting for painting’s sake”, which he detected in Parisian Cubism. At the centre of his project to “restore [the visual arts] to the service of the spirit”, were investigations into the visual depiction of the four-dimensional hyperspace which recent geometry had postulated existed. The lecture deals with the rehabilitation and revision of the unidimensional perspective process of representation, which Duchamp developed during an intense period of study of the classic treatises on perspective in the collection of the Bibliothèque Sainte-Geneviève in Paris between 1913 and 1915. The ideas from this became the heart of innovative perspectives – respectively four-dimensional and non-Euclidian – and their visualisation in the *Large Glass* and in the oil painting *Tu m’*. The term “chronoferece” recently introduced to the art history debate by the Düsseldorf historian Achim Landwehr is used to describe a historical moment, without deteriorating into the reductionism of the dichotomous thinking in the pattern of past and present, tradition and modern.

Studied art history, philosophy and sociology at the universities of Bonn and Bochum. PhD in 1973 under Prof. Dr. Max Imdahl with the dissertation *Marcel Duchamp. Problem und Rezeption* at the Ruhr-Universität Bochum and qualified for a teaching career in higher education in 1995 with the research *Umbo (Otto Umbehr). Vom Bauhaus zum Bildjournalismus* at the same university’s Department of History. In 2004 appointed adjunct professor of medieval and modern art history at the Ruhr-Universität Bochum. Made professor emeritus in 2013.

Books on the work of Marcel Duchamp:

Marcel Duchamp. Parawissenschaft, das Ephemere und der Skeptizismus, 1983 (1987², 1997³); *Kunst und Experiment. Marcel Duchamps “3 Kunststopf-Normalmaße”*, 2006; *Die nackte Wahrheit. Zum Spätwerk von Marcel Duchamp*, 2012; *Marcel Duchamp im Alter von 85 Jahren. Eine Inkunabel der konzeptuellen Fotografie*, 2013; *Duchamp traversé. Essais 1975-2012*, 2014.

Notes and Notation

Artistic forms of articulation between thinking and image in Duchamp, Leonardo and Beuys

All three artists used images and language to develop their ideas. Their inspirational symbioses gave rise to a unique method of knowledge generation in the process of appropriation of the world. Leonardo da Vinci usually provided his sketches and design drawings as well as his anatomical studies with notes, comments, observations and reflections. His working method could be described as either drawing research or researching drawing. Duchamp published the notes, sketches, concept outlines created in relation to the *Large Glass* in 1934 in the *Boîte Verte (Green Box)* and in 1966 in *In the Infinitive (À l'infinitif) (The White Box)* as independent works of art. They functioned as a toolkit for developing the ideas of his most important work. His investigations into perspective, optics, colour and space have direct parallels with Leonardo. For Joseph Beuys too, the articulation of his thoughts on the expanded concept of art was closely related to writing. During his lectures he wrote and drew his ideas on blackboards. This transcription was a direct means of conveying his thoughts and made it possible for observers and listeners to comprehend the flow of ideas. As can be seen in the sketchbooks of Leonardo or the boxes of Duchamp, for Beuys too the combination of writing and sketches was an inspiring field of experimentation. The means and the insight actually gained by him from words and images are still to be established. Furthermore there is the question of how both forms of articulation enhanced or – as the theory would have it – even enabled his processes of thinking, visualising, communicating and reflecting. Comprehension of thinking and visualisation – in words and images – as a synthesis, is one of the innovations and distinguishes the quality of the methods for appropriation of the world developed by Duchamp, Leonardo and Beuys.

Born in Rostock. Studied art history at the Humboldt University in Berlin from 1978 to 1983. Worked as curator at the Staatliches Museum Schwerin/Ludwigslust/Güstrow since 1983. PhD in 2006 at the University of Bremen. Since 2009 curator for classic modern and contemporary art, with responsibility for the Kupferstichkabinett print collection. Also since 2009 has headed the Duchamp Research Center together with Dr. Gerhard Graulich. Exhibitions curated: *Mail Art – Osteuropa im internationalen Netzwerk der Mail Art* (1996) with international congress (1997), *Sommergäste. Von Arp bis Werefkin. Klassische Moderne in Mecklenburg und Pommern* (2011), *Connected by Art. Zeitgenössische Kunst aus dem Ostseeraum* (together with Dr. Antonia Napp, 2012) and *Außer Kontrolle! Farbige Grafik & Mail Art in der DDR* (together with Christina Katharina May, 2015).

Chess and boxing. Agonal forces in Beuys and Duchamp

As male lone wolves, Joseph Beuys and Marcel Duchamp placed themselves in duel situations that were as playful as they were existential, Beuys in boxing matches and Duchamp in games of chess. Concentrated interaction with an opponent is also presented at times of excessive liberation from the norms as an ambiguous consent to the regularities of the strictly-limited and in both cases quadratic field of play.

In Joseph Beuys' 'Boxkampf für direkte Demokratie', which took place on the final day of Documenta 5 in 1972, the established post-war artist beat the young Kassel art student Abraham David Christian on points. It is not necessary to go back to Michelangelo's broken nose to recognise – as well as the ostensible political message – the tradition of the contest of the artists, which brought the younger man to the attention of the media, and, at the same time, without diverting to sublimated processes, showed him his limits through muscle power.

Duchamp's intense engagement with chess, which was initially dealt with by research by conceptualising it as the antithesis to his art, generated far more wide-ranging transferences relating to the concept of play in all phases of creation. Yet for Beuys too, even if not reaching Duchamp's levels of professionalism, use of utensils of boxing in other actions and multiples from 1965 on offered an indication of further appropriation of boxing might as a vital, formative act and an intensified basic pattern for the sculptural. In order to root his chess-playing in the artistic, Duchamp described the chess board as a matrix, which repeatedly produces sculptural works, which however remain bound to the transitory constellation of the figures, but unfold forces that range from vortex-like to violent into the surrounding space. The recourse of the two artists to the two types of sport – chess and boxing – which can be described as diametrically opposed, also reveals their unbridgeable differences, and viewed together they represent the resumption of opposing positions from Leonardo's time: whether art is a material or a mental practice.

Since September 2016 doctoral scholarship from the Hanseatic City of Hamburg at the Zentralinstitut für Kunstgeschichte in Munich, doctorate on the subject of athletic artistry in contemporary art (mentor Prof. Dr. Frank Fehrenbach); 2008-2016 studied cultural, media and art studies and art history in Oldenburg, Santiago de Chile and Hamburg, thesis in 2016 on the subject of *Intermedialität im Fotobuch 'Los últimos Días de Franco vistos en TVE'* (1975). 2012 curatorial assistance at Edith-Russ-Haus für Medienkunst in Oldenburg