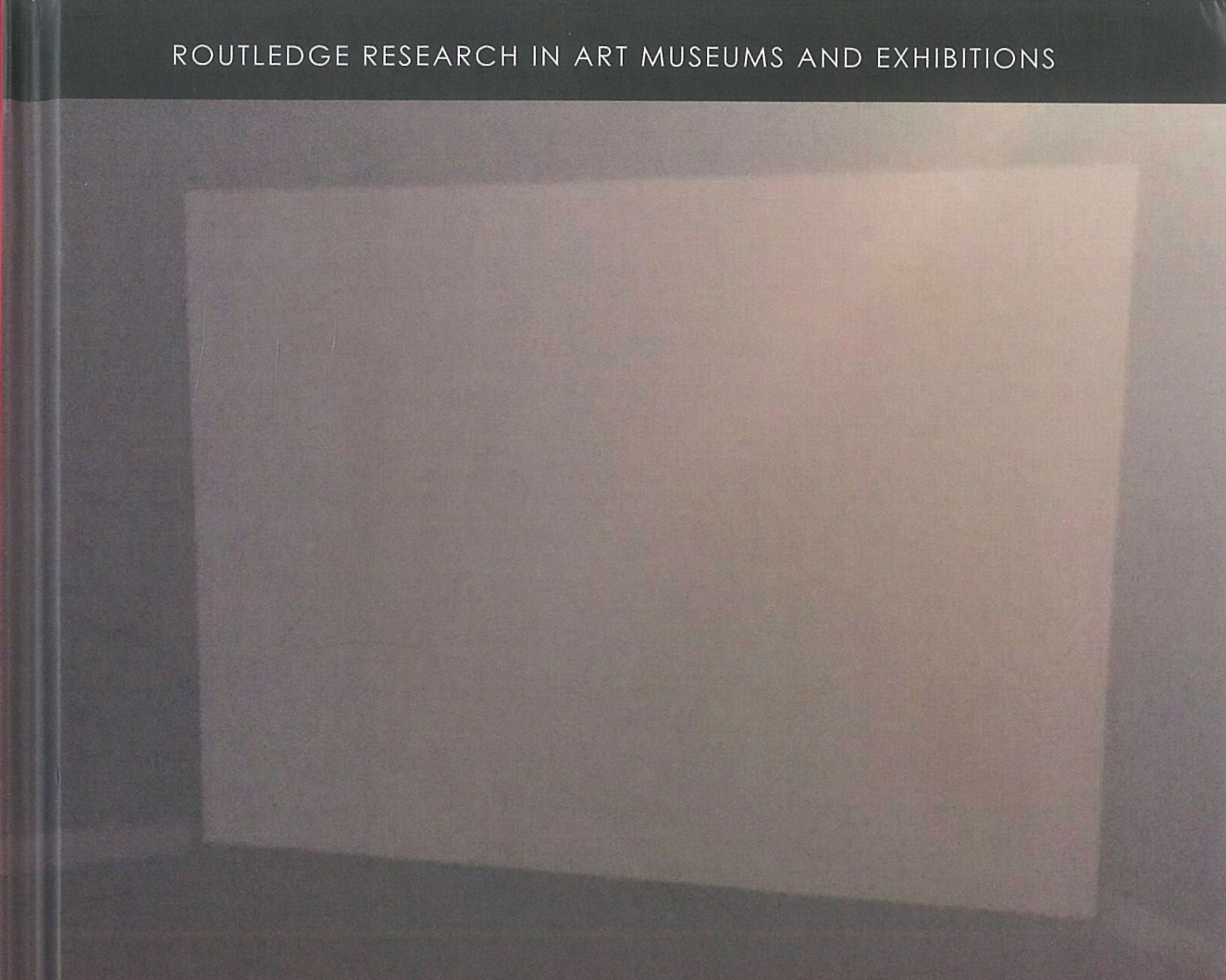




Absence and Difficult Knowledge in Contemporary Art Museums

MARGARET TALÍ

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Absence and Difficult Knowledge in Contemporary Art Museums analyses practices of collecting in European art museums from 1989 to the present, arguing that museums actualise absence both consciously and unconsciously, while misrepresentation is an outcome of the absent perspectives and voices of minority community members which are rarely considered in relation to contemporary art.

Drawing on social art history, museology, postcolonial theory and memory studies, Margaret Tali analyses the collections of four modern and contemporary art museums across Europe: the Hamburger Bahnhof in Berlin, the Ludwig Museum of Contemporary Art in Budapest, the Kiasma Museum in Helsinki, and the Kumu Museum in Tallinn.

Margaret Tali is a cultural theorist and art historian.

Cover image: Tartu Art Museum. View of the installation after Artur Zmijewski's controversial video work *Berek (Game of Tag)* (1999) was removed from display on the exhibition *My Poland. On Recalling and Forgetting* held in 2015 by its curator Rael Artel due to the resistance of Estonian Jewish community. Author's image.

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Margaret Tali

Art Museums of Latin America

Structuring Representation

Edited by Michele Greet and Gina McDaniel Tarver

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Margaret Tali

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To little Felix (2017) and
to the memory of those I have lost,
Vello Masik (1941–2015) and
Anna-Stina Treumund (1982–2017)

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Introduction

This book is about the importance of cultural difference, the way its presence is reflected in contemporary art and the way it relates to knowledge creation. This book is an attempt to trace and rationalise absence by focusing on the acts of its reproduction by archiving and exhibition making. It has had various beginnings. Growing up in the Soviet Union, I have been raised in the midst of a series of absences. There were people who had disappeared, memories that were never discussed because they were too painful and experiences that were systematically suppressed and silenced. I have carried many of these absences with me and gradually come to realise the ways in which erasure constituted an active part of my childhood. These present absences left a powerful influence on me and taught me to learn to notice voids and be attentive towards the reasons behind them. Although absences certainly exist in many families, in contexts with totalitarian past (and present) their amount is likely to be larger. More than ten years ago, while I was studying in Finland, I was invited to contribute an essay for the anthology *Contemporary Art and Nationalism* (2007)¹, which led to the essay "Why have there been no Russian artists in the contemporary Estonian art field?". I argued that despite the fact that one third of the society was Russian, there were no acknowledged Russian artists in Estonia at the time, and I sought cultural and institutional reasons for this marginalisation. Following this article I began to rethink the ways community relations affect knowledge production and the ways they influence the field of contemporary art. Another important beginning that shaped my thinking in substantial ways was my work at Kumu Museum's publishing house. It was during that year that I first consciously partook in dealing with the politics of difference in a museum as an everyday practice. At approximately the same time, together with Laura Pierantoni, I started a collaborative study focusing on the architecture of Eastern European art museums. When I continued my studies at Tallinn University and then at the Amsterdam School of Cultural Analysis at the University of Amsterdam, my interest in art history writing gradually brought me back to absence and the production of cultural difference.

Seeing museum collections as archives allows me to open up a series of new questions that I explore in various chapters. I argue that it is crucial to question whose memory is at stake when thinking about artistic practice. The difference in positions that this marks is embodied not only in the different phenomenological starting-points, but it also affects the ways that distinctions are made between communities, and the ways we and others are conceptualised, and the audience invited into the story.

4 *Absence and Difficult Knowledge*

Here, I introduce my objects and briefly embed them in the specific temporal and historical contexts of their creation that have been influential for knowledge creation processes in these museums. The Ludwig Museum was founded in the late-Soviet era in Hungary on the initiative of Aachen-based chocolate factory owner Peter Ludwig. Together with his wife Irene, they donated a collection to the Hungarian government. The gallery was meant to re-establish Hungary's close ties to Europe. The Soviet Union ceased to exist during its foundation process. The Ludwigs' collection provided the content for the new national gallery branch that first opened in 1993 in Budapest. After a decade of operating alongside the Hungarian National Gallery in the same building, the Ludwig Museum moved to its current location in the Palace of Arts in 2005.

The Hamburger Bahnhof opened as a branch of the Berlin National Gallery in 1996. The plan to house a new museum in the former Berlin central station was promoted by the city of West Berlin in order to keep the private collection of the local real-estate businessman Erich Marx in the city. The museum's involvement in the National Gallery structure was decided in the course of the subsequent political developments. During the course of preparing for its opening, Berlin became the capital of the re-united Germans. Subsequently, the Hamburger Bahnhof has broadened its exhibition spaces and collections by establishing close collaborations with other private collectors. This allows the museum to exhibit the work of international star artists, while becoming increasingly dependent on private collectors, which has precipitated several public debates in Germany over the values and ethics related to heritage. Some of these debates also serve as objects of analysis.

Kiasma opened in the centre of Helsinki in 1998. The preparations for this museum of contemporary art began in 1990 and its founding marked Finland's commitment to the redefined national self-representation of the country after the fall of the Soviet Union, while actively delinking previously strong ties with Soviet political and economic spheres. Following the plans of the government, the museum was based on the collection of art dating from the 1960s onwards held by the Finnish National Gallery. The design of the museum was an outcome of a government-organised international competition. Subsequently Kiasma's collection has expanded considerably through the wave of nationalisations of corporate, private and bank collections in the aftermath of the financial crises of the mid-1990s.

Kumu was opened on the outskirts of Tallinn in 2006. The idea for a representative building to display the collection of the Estonian National Gallery (Art Museum of Estonia) had been lobbied for since the re-establishment of state sovereignty after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. Like Kiasma, its building was commissioned and funded by the national government and its display celebrates a historicised perspective on the re-established nation state. Compared to the other museums the temporal period that Kumu presents is longer; the collection includes works created in the 16th and 17th centuries. A large amount of its collection is based on works that were nationalised under the Soviet Union and on private collections that remained unclaimed after the Second World War. For the sake of a comparative perspective, I focus mainly on its post-Second World War collection.

Contemporary art has a powerful ability to provoke thought both about the present as well as the past, make complex problems accessible to a broader public and contribute to the creation of a vocabulary in which to discuss them. I examine past traumas that inform museum narratives, community relations and artistic practices. While I often refer to present political differences in the course of my readings, I outline here

some of the crucial differences in these societies with relation to defining past events in respect to my foci. These countries all share the experience of the Holocaust: members of Jewish and Romani communities were sent to concentration camps from all four societies under discussion in this study. Finland gave out its Jewish community members to the Nazi government for deportation. Concentration camps and killing sites were located in Germany, Estonia, and Hungary, with Jewish community members brought there not only from local areas, but also from several other countries. As a part of the Soviet Union, Estonia was subject to the deportation of people to the Gulag forced labour camps. Hungary belonged to the Soviet Bloc and faced repressions that came from Moscow but were mostly imposed locally; however, they too had a harsh character and series of deportations to the Gulag took place in the 1940s. In both countries series of repressions, persecution and constant surveillance led numerous intellectuals to emigrate. In Hungary especially, important movements took place after the 1956 revolution. The dissolution of the Soviet Union signified a change and brought the abolishment of political censorship?. Finland remained geographically and politically close to the Soviet Union throughout the Cold War, with dissolution meaning a new geopolitical orientation for the country. In the divided Germany developments differed widely in East and West. Whereas East Germany was shaped by the developments in the Eastern Bloc, West Germany followed the path of Western capitalism. After 1989 it has been West Germany leading the discourse: it is sometimes said to have 'swallowed' East Germany, since economically West Germany profited in many regions. The unification left many industries in East Germany dying out, creating joblessness, poverty and insecurity among many people. Since 1989, historical migration as well as new waves of settlers are important characteristics shared by the four societies. In West Germany post-War migration is an outcome of the employment policy that led to many waves of people settling in cities. In Estonia post-War migration has been shaped by the employment politics of the Soviet Union. Hungary and Finland remained relatively closed; until the 1990s they pursued a protectionist politics towards migration. In Hungary since 2010, the Fidesz government has given considerable attention to the minority groups from Hungarian origin that live outside the state borders, who have also been granted a right to vote. Since 2016 in all of these countries an increasing number of people from the Middle-East and Africa have come from contexts of war or persecution, applying for temporary residence permits and often staying as refugees.

I have written most of this research while based in Amsterdam and thus while I have been physically outside all four societies, I have kept a keen eye on the public discussions and shifting perspectives on these societies from within and outside those societies. Research material from these four societies and museums was gathered from a variety of archival sources during the course of my enquiries from September 2009 to October 2013 and was spread over several field-study trips. In 2009, I gathered research material during a period of three weeks in Helsinki, in 2010 I spent four months in Berlin and in 2012 three weeks in Budapest. My regular stays in Estonia have been twice a year during these periods. Researching the material in the museums of my case studies has necessarily meant looking carefully at my objects, looking at them again, attentively and seeing them anew after becoming more knowledgeable about the social contexts in which these museums construct narratives, gather knowledge and collect artworks. In the course of this work I consulted archive material at the: Kiasma Museum Library, Central Art Archives of the Finnish National Gallery; Ludwig Museum Archive and Hungarian National Gallery Archive; Central Archive of the Staatliche Museen zu

Berlin and Preussische Kulturbesitz; and Archives of the Art Museum of Estonia. Besides local archives, I used the archives of the Aachen Ludwig Forum and the Ludwig Museum in Cologne to research the background of the Ludwig collection.

Numerous conversations with museum collection keepers, directors, curators and artists have added crucial sources to the analysis. Although interviewing visitors was beyond my scope and resources, the perspectives of curators, education staff and discourses of criticism enabled me to get an overview of the general reception of exhibitions I have analysed. The museums' practices of collecting and particular debates that I focus on in my book became interconnected through the concepts and my theoretical framework. They have influenced and informed each other along the way. The comparative perspective has added important insights and helped to establish new connections between the phenomena that I analyse. For instance, in my discussion on the growing role of private collections, understanding important historical ownership differences between Eastern and Western Europe proved to be crucial for setting into perspective the roles that donations have acquired in Eastern European art museums. However, comparisons occasionally also limited my choices in theorising specific moments, particularly with my ability to embed my objects historically and contextualise the political environments of the societies that I analyse in depth. Poststructuralist philosophy, social art history and cultural analysis define my approach to my objects of study; my disciplinary background in cultural theory, art history and sociology continue to inform my choices and engagements with them.

My first chapter concentrates on the figure of Joseph Beuys, whose display at the Hamburger Bahnhof first led me to questions about the relationships between museum collections, communities and museal narratives. By analysing Beuys' narrative, I ask: what kind of knowledge is constructed by exhibiting an artist's work in a museum? How does it transmit traditions and transgress them, when considering ways of narrating and agencies? In order to understand how Beuys' figure is narrated I draw a comparison between two retrospective exhibitions, *Die Revolution sind wir* (2008) and *Parallel Processes* (2010). I argue that these exhibitions transfer implicit messages about agencies involved in their creation. The example of Beuys also allows me to open up some of the crucial questions for my following readings about collections and their exhibition in Chapter 2 that focuses on neutralised tensions in community relations involved in narrating art. In this chapter I pursue the ways in which objects are used to display interrelationships between communities and articulate positions between them. Mieke Bal's work on museological narratives has been an important methodological source for analysing the creation of otherness in texts and images, and in articulating the occasional conflicts between images and texts. The different techniques of presencing (Bhabha) and absencing community relations in the four museums' narratives are the focus of my readings.

Chapter 3 looks at the spatial environments that museal knowledge creation involves. Here I provide an overview of the main agents involved in the processes of creating museum spaces. I distinguish between the state, the city, private collectors and corporations as the crucial agents of museal knowledge production. I argue that the role of collectors has grown in public museums and focus in further detail on the development of a new space within the museum—that which I call the collector's space—as an outcome of these shifted power positions.

Chapters 4 and 5 analyse the operation of museal discourse in relation to important changes in collecting practices that private collections have brought along with them.

How have collectors become such important players in what constitutes public heritage? In order to answer this question I first turn to the complex example of Peter Ludwig. There, I further analyse the processes behind creating museum collections and ways in which public heritage is generated through the example of his collection gift to Hungary. In Chapter 5, I make an important distinction between collecting as a process and collecting as a discourse and interrogate further the role of a cultural elite in the making of public heritage. In this chapter I also relate this distinction between discourse and practice to gender as one of the important facets of museal absence.

While analysing five artworks in Chapter 6, I focus on moments and events that disrupt the particular museal narratives that I have analysed in this book. The examples realised by Kiba Lumberg, Kristina Norman, Renata Stih and Frieder Schnock, Andrea Geyer, and Arno Breker disrupt the dominant narratives by resisting their premises and/or offering counter-images. In all of these examples art becomes very close to life. The five absent artworks and artistic positions that are missing from the collections, which I analyse, allow me to point out aspects in the construction of absence that museums do not articulate, but define through practice. Their examples lead me to argue that the representation of communities in museal practice is based on acts of creating absence by excluding works and identities that do not support the archival logic.

My last chapter or Afterword sets absence into a discussion with the notion of 'difficult knowledge', thinking through the dynamics of transforming the first into the latter. How is it that museums could continue to mediate between them, considering the absences their collections pose? In a context where museums are going through a period of radical change in respect to the ways communication and involvement are organised, I argue that there is an increasing need to adapt to demographic change and to use this to rethink what art museums represent and whom they represent in order to make the narratives and forms of memory touch upon these changes.

Lastly, although the creation of absence is a practice that characterises art museums' work generally, its nature is always specific and historical absences inform present absences in important ways. This is something that also needs to be considered when applying my argumentation in other contexts. Struggles with their particular power dynamics and the positions of cultural communities and memory that museums touch upon are always context specific.

Notes

- 1 *Contemporary Art and Nationalism, A Reader*. Edited by Minna L. Hendrikson and Sezgin Boynik. Kosovo: MM, 2007.
- 2 Although these discourses often disagree on the role of individual agency, I negotiate their contested understandings in my readings.
- 3 The so-called Vilna Project involved University of Toronto doctoral students and researchers investigating the testimonies of lived experiences of Vilnius' Jewish inhabitants between 1941–43, when this population was ghettoised and subject to systematic murder.
- 4 Hereafter, for the sake of brevity, I shall use an abbreviated form of these museums' names, such as the 'Ludwig Museum', the 'Hamburger Bahnhof', 'Kiasma' and 'Kumu'.

1 The Presence of Joseph Beuys and the Struggle Over his Legacy in Berlin

Many of the central questions I come to analyse in this study unfolded when I first visited the Hamburger Bahnhof Museum during the summer of 2009. The major exhibition on view at the time was a retrospective of Joseph Beuys' oeuvre. I later learned that it was actually the first official retrospective of the artist's work in Germany since his death in 1986.¹ The exhibition awarded an overwhelming presence to the artist through various displays of video installations, media documentation and voice recordings, which first caught my attention and had an unsettling effect. Beuys' figure—both literally and figuratively—filled almost half the museum. Why indeed would an exhibition of this scale and ambition be produced? Furthermore, why would one artist be rendered this magnitude of presence? These questions are particularly pertinent when installing the exhibition in a museum dedicated to presenting current artistic phenomena within the context of Berlin, a city that presents an increasing number of artistic voices and creative positions. This seems rather peculiar. The museum had the opportunity to select from a wide variety of artistic practices, especially given the city has now triggered international creative communities for over two decades and rightfully advertises itself as a vibrant centre of the ever-evolving European art world. But what then constitutes representation in museums? What is it about; how is it made; and by whom? With the eminence that Beuys' figure has acquired in the post-war narrative, it offers a particularly enlightening example that will assist me in exploring these questions on the contested terrain of museum storytelling, based on the legacy of one particular artist.

Beuys surfaced and became known in West Germany's cultural scene during the late 1960s and early 1970s. From the outset he intentionally turned his life story into a component of his art; exhibiting his roles such as teacher, politician and father. One can argue whether this was a reflection of capitalist individualism or a means for transmitting his messages to a wider audience. Nevertheless, it is the combination of his intellectual heritage and this openly displayed life story in the political context of the reunification of Germany that became his claim to fame.

Born in 1921, Beuys had been raised in a middle-class family in Kleve, a small town along the Rhine River, close to Germany's border with The Netherlands. Like many other local youths, he served in the Hitler Youth during his teenage years and later joined the Air Force as a volunteer. During the Second World War he participated in the Army of National Socialists from 1941 until 1945. Many years later, he constructed a much disputed mythology explaining his rescue from the chaos of war with a story of a tribe of Tatars finding him after a plane crash in the Crimea. According to the artist, the nomadic tribe cured him by wrapping his body in fat and felt, until he

was later taken to the military hospital. According to Hans Peter Riegel, this myth remained unchanged in the three editions of the book *Joseph Beuys: Lebenslauf, Werklauf* (Riegel 2013, 11). As a combination of his work and this narrative, Beuys came to enact multiple public personas such as a self-proclaimed healer, shaman and political activist, granting him a particular role in the cultural landscape, which he used in order to voice several important social and political concerns. I will return to discuss these concerns in depth later.

The dubious grounds of his story of a mythic rescue, recounted by the artist in numerous interviews and other coverage,² was only confirmed a decade after the artist's death by German journalists Frank Gieseke and Albert Markert in their biography *Flieger, Filz und Vaterland* (1996). They investigated Beuys' life story using various archives and convincingly argued that the British forces had in fact imprisoned Beuys for three months towards the end of the war. Gieseke and Markert complicated Beuys' romantic narrative of nomadic and rural Tatar tribes in Crimea by contextualising his mythical images and placing them among other minority groups during the war-torn years, which turned Beuys' account of his life story—ten years after his death—into a shameless myth (Gieseke and Markert 1996, 94–95).

Determined to become an artist, Beuys returned to the Rhine after the war and joined the Düsseldorf Arts Academy. After graduation in 1953 he suffered from a series of depressions, which led him to a rural residence where he continued his artistic practice. He overcame the depression only in the late 1950s. In 1959 he returned to Düsseldorf, where he lived most of his life, and married Eva Wurmbech [later, Eva Beuys], working from 1961 to 1972 as a professor of monumental sculpture at the Düsseldorf Arts Academy. Beuys continued to work actively as an artist and developed a distinct media image, which openly referred to his military past—wearing an army vest, often coupled with a felt hat. Gottfried Boehm later argued that it was through this self-image of the soldier that Beuys was able to address themes of guilt, horror and trauma, which enabled him to use them productively in his work (Boehm 2011, 322).

Beuys' involvement in politics since the 1970s was often considered controversial. He joined the Green party and used various public occasions for spreading his ideas about the interconnectedness of life and art. His expulsion from the Düsseldorf Arts Academy caused an uproar, in which Beuys advocated everyone's right to be able to participate in his lectures, denying the bureaucratic admission policies imposed by the education system. His artistic creations include an array of installations, performances, action art and political activism.

While his public persona was well known to German audiences during these decades, the first-hand memories of his life have gradually faded from public consciousness. His persona is actively shaped anew by museums, especially for younger generations and audiences from migrant backgrounds. With his objects turning into the main vessels for the transference of his artistic activity and narrating its impacts, new agencies are added to his narrative, which I discuss in detail through the Hamburger Bahnhof exhibition.

This chapter unfolds in three parts. I begin with an analysis of the exhibition of Beuys' work in the Hamburger Bahnhof's permanent collection (as presented during the summer of 2010). Secondly, I examine his installation "Tramstop. A Monument to the Future" (1976) as an example through which I further open commodification trajectories of his work and explore the importance of an active public reception. He created this artwork especially for the Venice Biennale of the same year. Its reception

in West Germany assists me in further contextualising the posthumous narrations of Beuys. Thirdly, I analyse the retrospective exhibition entitled *Joseph Beuys: Die Revolution sind wir* (2008–09), also presented in the Hamburger Bahnhof, which inspired my questions about museum narratives at the beginning of this study. I compare it with another recent retrospective, *Joseph Beuys: Parallel Processes* (2010), presented in Düsseldorf's Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen. While the Hamburger Bahnhof remains the focus of my analysis, the comparison with Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen supports me in outlining the crucial aspects of canonising the artist in Berlin. I argue that these two attempts at Beuys' canonisation act as competitors, and trace the crucial reasons behind this phenomenon.

Reanimating Beuys in the Hamburger Bahnhof

Contextualising Beuys' work within the Hamburger Bahnhof means to situate it within one of the largest contemporary art museums in Europe. When approaching the museum from the Central Station during the summer of 2013, one still had to make one's way through a series of construction sites. The building had been trapped during the Cold War years in the zone between East and West Berlin that marked the division of divided Germany. During the past decade this area has seen a building boom, which includes the erection of an impressive parliament complex and the Berlin Central Station, Hauptbahnhof (2006). The Hamburger Bahnhof was opened in 1996 as the newest branch of the Berlin National Gallery, after this former train station was renovated to function as a museum. Its location in Berlin Mitte (Centre) not only gives a sense of the reconfiguration of the city under neoliberal capitalism, but also reminds us about its recent history. This context is important in order to understand the narrations of Beuys' art and their attached meanings.

The history of the collection of the Hamburger Bahnhof—Museum für Gegenwart (Museum for Contemporary Art)—is equally complex. I will analyse it through different lenses during the course of the following three chapters. The museum was founded by the City of Berlin with the private collection of the real estate businessman Erich Marx (1921) acting as its founding basis. The museum opened its doors to the public in 1996, with a mission to introduce and collect art practices from the 1960s onwards. Joseph Beuys' heritage was considered to play a crucial role in the new museum from the outset. The director of the National Gallery at the time, Dieter Honisch wrote two years before the museum's opening that: "The West Wing will be dedicated entirely to Joseph Beuys. [...] His extended concept of art will define the overall presentation [of the art in the museum]" (Honisch 1994, 48). Much criticism targeted the central role that Marx's private collection acquired in the new museum. For instance, in his article *Das Marx-Mausoleum* the art critic Marius Babias expressed his disappointment about the withdrawal of the plan to include different Berlin-based private collections. He saw the reasons for Marx's success in his far-reaching networks and those of his art adviser Heiner Bastian.³

Beuys' work is displayed in a separate wing of the museum. When entering this wing, called the West wing and found by walking through the museum's bookstore, I first found myself (in 2010) within the dark-red environment that displayed works by members of the Fluxus movement and Viennese Actionism. These two movements functioned here as a technique to introduce Beuys in at least in two ways. Firstly, they established the context of his international Western contemporaries from the 1960s

and 1970s; secondly, they equipped the viewer with a visual apparatus for approaching Beuys' work in the following spaces.

In the space entitled *Happening & Fluxus: Art as space, space as environment, environment as happening, happening as art*, viewers encounter installations and various action relics of the Fluxus movement along with posters and invitations. This presentation features several collective artworks by members of the two movements, including works by Nam June Paik, Wolf Vostell, Dieter Roth, Otto Mühl and Günther Brus. Two works by Paik, *Robot K 456* (1964) and *TV Bra For Living Sculpture* (1965), are present here physically as well as virtually, with performance documentation screened on small televisions.

The main concepts that frame these practices are *play* and *happening*, both of which extend the borders of thinking about art from the 1960s onwards. Both Fluxus and Viennese Actionism aimed at transgressing the boundaries of modernist art and recycling ephemera as their object. These movements turned experience and interaction with the public into the heart of their practice. Most of the works on display originate from private collections, indicating that despite their active attempts to call attention to the processuality of their practice, their pieces had become an object of commodification.

As the visitor passes through dark-red painted halls and continues further into the museum wing she glimpses from afar Beuys' work in different formats within the confines of the white walls of the West wing. One of the first works presented is the video-performance *Soziale Plastik* (1963), which depicts a black-and-white close-up of Beuys' face with his deep penetrating gaze pointed directly at the viewer. Like *Soziale Plastik*, many of the displayed works in this wing present Beuys' practice as well as his figure, communicating a certain representation of Beuys himself.

While walking around this wing the viewer constantly finds herself in the midst of Beuys' work as well as spatially surrounded by his image. At the end of this long space one hears Beuys' voice in a sound performance *Ja ja ja ja ja, Ne ne ne ne ne* (1968), which echoes throughout half of the wing. Mediated and using different formats of the voice and image recordings, monumental works by the artist provide a supplementary bodily experience that facilitates engagement with Beuys' oeuvre.

Most of the thirty-five artworks displayed in this "wing of Beuys", as the museum staff informally call this space, originate from two sources—the private collection of Erich Marx and the Joseph Beuys Media Archive. The latter is a source of documents, audio and video recordings of the artist's public speeches and performances. Beuys Media Archive was started by Eugen Blume in 1993, with the aims of searching for new ways of articulating Beuys' work in public and "bringing Beuys' voice and figure back into the exhibition space".⁴ The Marx collection acts, according to Blume, as the *schwerpunkt* of the museum's display, or its gravitational point (Blume 2007a, 135). I unpack the reasons behind Beuys spatial dominance in this wing through focusing on three monumental installations.

The first is *The End of the 20th Century* (1983), which constitutes a series of relics from Beuys' action *7,000 Oaks* realised during Documenta 7 in Kassel in 1982. The installation consists of 21 large basalt-stone blocks. Beuys drilled holes in all of them, covered them with felt and clay and placed a smaller rock of the same shape onto the hole. According to his idea, the stones would be set next to oak trees planted in the city, an action that would be realised as a long-term collective venture that would eventually lead to the planting of 7,000 trees in the city. Although oak trees were