

SOCIAL SCULPTURE AS ANARCHIST PEDAGOGY OR PEDAGOGY OF (R)EVOLUTION

(Research paper presentation)

Aims

The purpose of this paper is to present an arts-based research project aiming to construct a philosophically consistent grounding for Joseph Beuys' concept of *Social Sculpture*. The focus is on scrutinizing the importance of an arts-based method in theorizing Beuys' thinking. In addition, the paper will introduce the key arguments of the research asserting that *Social Sculpture* is fundamentally a pedagogical project. After all, Beuys regarded pedagogy as the most important means to mold the society – the ultimate artwork: “*To be a teacher is my greatest work of art.*” This relates to what Beuys calls *an extended (expanded, enhanced) understanding (concept) of art* – what we could also call “a (r)evolution of thoughts”.

Methodology

Composing a coherent philosophical grounding for Beuys' thinking is a complicated task. In the research project at hand this is done by scrutinizing various kinds of Beuys-literature and reflecting the emerging elementary ideas against both Beuys' artworks and researcher's own artworks that have been inspired by Beuys' oeuvre. Reflections are subjected to a phenomenological rigor in order to offer them a philosophically solid grounding.

The artistic process described in this paper consists mainly of preparation of an exhibition that will take place in Nokia in April 2016. The exhibition is called “Freedom relations” and consists of sculptures and installations. Through the exhibited works the aim is to scrutiny the concept of freedom as a relation and its significance for *Social Sculpture*.

Framework

The research is ontologically grounded on phenomenology and especially its connections to artistic practices. It relies mainly on Merleau-Ponty, but partly also on Heidegger because of his special interest on sculpture. For Beuys, freedom is an essential concept that recurs throughout his writings and public appearances. In this research, freedom is considered a relation: one can be only free in relation to something. This standing point makes it relevant to contemplate the special meaning of a sculpture in regard to *Social Sculpture*. Existing in *space* by its character, a sculpture always demands a relation with the spectator – or even a passer-by.

Relationship to the call

From the mid 1960's until his death in 1986, Joseph Beuys' career turned more and more into the politics, and so did his artworks, too. By his own words, Beuys gradually lost his interest in making visually interesting art, instead he loaded his massive works with meanings that were more or less hidden in materials and forms. He regarded the actual artworks as process waste with some value as historical documentations, the true artwork being the change in the society that he might have sparked. To put it simply, for Beuys, being an active and responsible member of a community was to be an artist, but it is challenging to swiftly turn his thinking and *Social Sculpture* into a pedagogical form – although the pedagogy is in there. This paper is about making that pedagogy explicit through arts-based research, aiming to bring about a (r)evolution of thought within communities.

References

- Adams, D. (1992) "Joseph Beuys. A Pioneer of Radical Ecology." *Art Journal*, Summer 92: 51(2). College Art Association.
- Antliff, A. (2014) *Joseph Beuys*. Phaidon Press Limited, London.
- Anttila, P. (2006) *Tutkiva toiminta ja ilmaisu, teos, tekeminen*. Akatiimi Oy, Hamina.
- Barone, T. (2008) "Arts-Based Research" in Given, L.M. (2008) *The Sage Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Methods*. (pp. 29–33). SAGE Publications, Inc., Thousand Oaks, CA.
- Beuys, J. (1983a) "How to explain pictures to a dead hare." Excerpts from a TV-discussion 'Club 2' (27.1.1983).
[URL https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mo47lqk_QH0 ; checked 15.2.2016.]
- (1983b) "Art for me is the science of freedom." Interview with William Furlong and Michael Newman at the Victoria Albert Museum.
[URL <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IT5DZCWNxWg> ; checked 15.2.2016.]
- (1990) *Joseph Beuys in America: Energy Plan for the Western Man. Writings by and Interviews with the Artist*. Compiled by Carin Kuoni. Four Walls Eight Windows, New York, N.Y.
- (2004) *What is Art? Conversation with Joseph Beuys*. [Was ist Kunst?, Werkstattgespräch mit Beuys (1986). English] Edited with essays by Volker Harlan. Translated by Matthew Barton and Shelley Sacks. Clairview Books, Forest Row.
- (2007) *Joseph Beuys : the reader*. Edited and translated by Claudia Mesch and Viola Michely. MIT Press, Cambridge, MA.
- Biddle, E. (2014) "Re-Animating Joseph Beuys' "Social Sculpture": Artistic Interventions and the Occupy Movement." *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies*, 11(1), 25–33. Routledge, London.
- Carnell, S. (2010) *Hare*. Reaktion Books Ltd, London.
- Duve, T. de (2012) *Sewn in the Sweatshops of Marx : Beuys, Warhol, Klein, Duchamp. [Cousus de fil d'or: Beuys, Warhol, Klein, Duchamp (1990). English]* Translated by Rosalind E. Krauss. The University of Chicago Press, Chicago & London.
- Domizio Durini, L. De (2011) *Beuys Voice*. Kunsthaus Zürich & Mondadori Electa S.p.A., Milan.
- Eliasson, O. (2016) "Why Art Has the Power to Change the World" *The Huffington Post and The World Economic Forum*. A blog posting (speech), 23.1.2016.
[URL http://www.huffingtonpost.com/olafur-eliasson/why-art-has-the-power-to-change-the-world_b_9054158.html ; checked 18.2.2016.]
- Gadamer, H-G. (2003) *Truth and method*. 2nd rev. ed., translation revised by Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall. Continuum, London.
- (2004) *Hermeneutiikka. Ymmärtäminen tieteissä ja filosofiassa*. Selected and translated by Ismo Nikander. Vastapaino, Tampere.
- Goethe, J.W. von (2006) *Theory of Colours*. [Zur Farbenlehre (1810). English] Translated with notes by C.L. Eastlake. (Republication of Goethe's Theory of Colours, John Murray, London, 1840.) Dover Publications, Inc., Mineola, N.Y.
- Hannula, M. & Suoranta, J. & Vadén, T. (2003) *Otsikko uusiksi. Taiteellisen tutkimuksen suuntaviivat*. 23^o45, Tampere.
- Heidegger, M. (1972) "Art and Space." [Die Kunst und der Raum (1969). English] In Seibert C.H. (1972) *On Being and Space in Heidegger's Thinking*. (A doctoral dissertation.) Loras College.
[URL <http://pdflibrary.files.wordpress.com/2008/02/art-and-space.pdf> ; checked 15.2.2016.]
- Heikkinen, V. (2007) *Kielen voima*. Gaudeamus, Helsinki.

- Jones, J. (1999) "The man who fell to earth." *The Guardian*. 19.7.1999.
[URL <http://www.theguardian.com/culture/1999/jul/19/artsfeatures2> ; checked 18.2.2016.]
- Merleau-Ponty, M. (1962) *Phenomenology of perception*. [Phénoménologie de la perception (1945). English] Translated by Colin Smith. Routledge & Kegan Paul, London.
- (2012) *Filosofisia kirjoituksia*. Edited and translated by Miika Luoto and Tarja Roinila. Kustannusosakeyhtiö Nemo, Helsinki.
- Miettinen, T. & Pulkkinen, S. & Taipale, J. (eds.) (2010) *Fenomenologian ydinkysymyksiä*. Gaudeamus, Helsinki.
- Mitchell, A.J. (2010) *Heidegger Among the Sculptors: Body, Space, and the Art of Dwelling*. Stanford University Press.
- Ottman, K. (2002) "Spiritual Materiality: Contemporary Sculpture and the Responsibility of Forms." in *Sculpture*, April 2002, 21(3). International Sculpture Center, Hamilton, NJ.
[URL <http://www.sculpture.org/documents/scmag02/april02/ottoman/otto.shtml> ; checked 15.2.2016.]
- Robbins, B.D. (2005) "New Organs of Perception: Goethean Science as a Cultural Therapeutics." *Janus Head*, 8(1), 113–126. Trivium Publications, Amherst, NY.
- Roesch, U. (2013) *We are the Revolution! Rudolf Steiner, Joseph Beuys and the Threefold Social Impulse*. Temple Lodge Publishing, Forest Row.
- Rosenthal, M. (2004) *Joseph Beuys: Actions, Vitrines, Environments*. Tate Publishing, London.
- Seamon, D. & Zajonc, A. (eds.) (1998) *Goethe's Way of Science : A Phenomenology of Nature*. State University of New York Press, Albany, N.Y.
- Siukonen, J. (2011) *Vasara ja hiljaisuus. Lyhyt johdatus työkalujen filosofiaan*. Kuvataideakatemia, Helsinki.
- Spector, N. (2006) *All in the Present Must Be Transformed: Matthew Barney and Joseph Beuys*. The Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, New York, N.Y.
- Staeck, K. & Steidl, G. (2012) *Beuys Book*. Steidl, Göttingen.
- Svenungsson, J. (2007) *An Artist's Text Book*. Kuvataideakatemia, Helsinki.
- Taylor, M.C. (2012) *Refiguring the Spiritual : Beuys, Barney, Turrell, Goldsworthy*. Columbia University Press, New York.
- Ulmer, G.L. (1985) *Applied Grammatology. Post(e)-Pedagogy from Jacques Derrida to Joseph Beuys*. The Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, Maryland.
- Wilson, C. & Flicker, S. (2014) "Arts-Based Action Research" in Coghlan, D. & Brydon-Miller, M. (2014) *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Action Research*. (pp. 59–63.) SAGE Publications Ltd, London.
- Zumdick, W. (2013) *Death Keeps Me Awake. Joseph Beuys and Rudolf Steiner – Foundations of their Thought*. [Über das Denken bei Joseph Beuys und Rudolf Steiner (1995). English] Translated by Shelley Sacks. Spurbuchverlag, Baunach.