

Rhapsody of Northern Art

Rhapsody of Northern Art

By

Peter Hupfauf

Cambridge
Scholars
Publishing



Rhapsody of Northern Art

By Peter Hupfauf

This book first published 2019

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

Lady Stephenson Library, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 2PA, UK

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Copyright © 2019 by Peter Hupfauf

All rights for this book reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of the copyright owner.

ISBN (10): 1-5275-2391-8

ISBN (13): 978-1-5275-2391-3

CONTENTS

Preface	viii
Introduction	1
Northern Antiquity versus Modern/Contemporary Art William Morris's appreciation of Nordic beauty	
Chapter One.....	6
Art of the 20th Century Joan Miró Mario Merz Joseph Beuys The artist as shaman Ai Weiwei	
Chapter Two	21
Art or Artefact? The Lunula from Grevinge Søllested horse collars	
Chapter Three	28
Birth of the Animal Style The Scythians The Scandinavian Animal Style The gilded buckle from Galsted Gilt silver belt buckles from Ejsbøl Mose The fibula from Gummersmark The brooch from Nørre Sandegård Vest The gilt-bronze harness mount from Vallstenarum The bear plaque from the Urals The silver beaker from Jelling The breast ornament from Lousgård The ceremonial axe from Mammen The gilt-bronze weather-vane from Källunge Franz Marc The historical link between the Scandinavian Animal Styles and Scythian animal images	

Chapter Four.....	56
Work on Stones	
The Tanum petroglyphs	
Rune stones	
The stone from Røk	
The rune stones from Jelling	
The Gorm-stone	
The stone from Gök	
20th century stone monuments	
Chapter Five.....	81
Bronze Age Cosmology	
The Sky Disc from Nebra	
The Golden Hat of Berlin	
The Sun Chariot from Solvognen	
The Cult Wagen from Strettweg	
The helmet from Agris	
The mirror from Desborough	
The boat from Brighter	
The golden boats from Nors	
Chapter Six.....	105
Carved Surfaces	
The Bamberg Casket	
Urnes Stave Church	
The Oseberg Ship	
The bone sleeve from Årnes	
Chapter Seven.....	119
Metal Work	
The lurs from Brudevælte	
The Deskford carnyx	
The Gundestrup Cauldron	
The Tara Brooch	
Golden Horns from Gallehus	
Bracteates	
Guldgubber	

Chapter Eight.....	135
The Sámi Culture	
Curtain made from reindeer skulls	
Conclusion.....	141
Identification of Art	
Epilogue.....	149
References	151
Picture Credits	155
Index.....	160

PREFACE

As a young man, for economical reasons I worked for several years as a designer. This has proved helpful to understand the field of applied arts. My interest in painting, and exhibitions of my work in public and commercial galleries, however, introduced me to the world of abstract art and offered many conversations about this theme. Discussions with my wife Uta Herzog, an outstanding psychologist, with a great interest in photography, often resulted in the field of perception and comprehension which provided me with a certain understanding of the processes in human minds.

As an artist I was searching for a cultural identity. As important as Mediterranean cultural history generally is, and as much as it has influenced central Europe, being born in Germany I felt a strong cultural belonging to the regions north of the Alps, and I wanted to investigate this heritage, which appeared to be undertaken best by researching Scandinavian culture, as Christianity was introduced there much later than in southern and central Europe. The guidance I received from Klaus Düwel, at the Georg-August-University of Göttingen, and particularly from Margaret Clunies Ross, Professor at the University of Sydney, who was my supervisor when I undertook research for my Ph.D., as well as from Rudy Simek, Professor of Scandinavian Studies at the University of Bonn, helped me tremendously to understand social roots that are the fertile ground for the arts in Northern Europe.

Conversations with colleagues with great knowledge of Old Norse culture, such as Anders Andrén, Geraldine Barns, Carole Cusack, Beatrice La Farge, Lotte Hedeager, Tarrin Wills, and others, have influenced and widened my perspective on northern European culture of the Migration Period and the early Middle Ages.

As a result, this book is an amalgamation of art and history. In the making, Gabrielle Singleton, as proof reader with a very keen eye, transformed my very Germanised language into proper English. My wife Uta Herzog has taken some beautiful photographs of Iceland, Sirpa Aalto welcomed me at the University of Oulu in Finland. There, at the Centre for Sámi Studies, I

was introduced to the historical and cultural background of the Sámi people before travelling farther up north to Inari, where Siida, a museum for Sámi culture, and Sajos, the cultural centre and seat of the Finnish Sámi parliament, are located.

I am grateful to the following Museums who supported this book by contributing images and giving permission to reprint them without charge:

The Historical Museum, Oslo, Norway

Das Landesamt für Denkmalpflege und Archäologie Sachsen-Anhalt (Landesmuseum für Vorgeschichte), Halle (Saale), Germany

The National Museum of Denmark, Copenhagen, Denmark

The State Hermitage Museum, Saint Petersburg, Russia

The Swedish History Museum, Stockholm, Sweden

The Universalmuseum Joanneum, Schloss Eggberg, Graz, Austria

The Viking Ship Museum, Oslo, Norway.

The Vitlycke museum, Vitlycke, Tanumshede, Sweden

INTRODUCTION

NORTHERN ANTIQUITY VERSUS MODERN/CONTEMPORARY ART

This book introduces to the reader the timeless beauty of artefacts created in Northern Europe between the Bronze Age and the Early Middle Ages.

Here are objects found in Austria, Denmark, England, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Norway, and Sweden, the oldest made during the Bronze Age, about 3,000 years ago, and the latest created just at the beginning of the Romanesque period, about 1,000 AD.

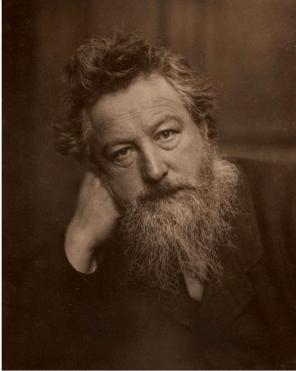
In approximately 460 BC, when the Greek Artemision Bronze idealised the human figure and its movement in lifelike form, Pre-Romanesque northern European art expressed images very differently and not very realistically.

Not that Mediterranean artists were superior to their northern colleagues. After the Romanesque period, Central and Northern European Art also developed a realistic approach to express figures and landscape. This naturalistic approach was applied until the end of the nineteenth century. The French impressionists, according to most art and art history literature, were the first to experiment to some degree with abstraction – painting the light. Abstraction developed at a fast pace during the early twentieth century. Marcel Duchamp was one of the first artists to use ‘ready-made’ materials in his artwork. *Roue de bicyclette* was one of his well-known experimental works, applying materials not commonly used by artists. Aiming to represent the essence, or the soul of a concept an installation was created that was completely abstract, rather than a mere copy of the object’s outer shell.

As Paul Klee once stated: “The object of art is not to reflect the visible but to make visible.” Aware of this, I hypothesise that early Northern European artists used art in a way similar to how contemporary artists

approach art today, where focus is on the essence of an object or concept, not necessarily on its outer form.

William Morris's appreciation of Nordic beauty



In the 19th century, **William Morris**, the English artist, designer, author, and socialist, preferred the art of the Middle Ages to the mass-production of his industrialised society. Through long visits to Iceland, the study of the Old Icelandic (Norse) language, and reading and translating Old Icelandic Sagas, Morris became such an expert in early Nordic culture that his legacy is still valuable as a bridge to understanding and appreciating the artworks presented here.

Born on 24 March 1834, in Walthamstow, Essex, not far from London, Morris left behind an overwhelming amount of influential work when he died at Kelmscott House in Hammersmith on 3 October 1896. His contribution to British textile art and design was considerable. A designer, he was deeply engaged with the 'Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood' and the 'Arts and Crafts Movement'. His work in literature was important, as he contributed substantially to the renewal of the fantasy genre. During his lifetime, Morris's written work gave him his great reputation and made him well known. Morris also enthusiastically supported an early socialist movement in England.

Studies at Oxford University awoke his keen interest in the Middle Ages. Later he was trained as an architect. He married Jane Burden and developed a close friendship with the 'Pre-Raphaelites' whose 'muse' and artists' model she was. Edward Burne-Jones, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, and Philip Webb were artists in this group. Together with Webb, Morris designed the 'Red House', his family home in Kent where he lived for several years before relocating to Bloomsbury in London.

In 1861 Morris, together with Burne-Jones, Rossetti, Webb, and others, founded the firm, Morris, Marshall, Faulkner, & Company that produced and successfully sold objects of decorative art. Morris created tapestries, wallpapers, fabrics, and leadlights, colourful lead glass windows. During

the Victorian period, these objects were well appreciated and generally influenced the style of the time. In 1875 Morris took sole control of the firm and re-named it Morris & Co.



During the 1860s Morris wrote his epic poem *The Earthly Paradise* which brought him fame. It described the horror of industrialisation and the destruction of nature because of uncontrolled fabrication methods. Morris warned about polluted waterways and poisoned air.

Morris's marriage ended when Jane left him for Dante Gabriel Rossetti. At this point, in 1871, Morris travelled to Reykjavik in Iceland for the first time, together with three friends, one of whom was the Icelandic scholar Eiríkr Magnússon.



The three friends criss-crossed the island and visited the main sites of the Icelandic Sagas. Morris travelled with the eyes of an artist. The rainbows, the fiery sunsets, the wild rivers and coastlines, the rich colours, the black beaches, the volcanoes and geysers, the moon-like landscape of central Iceland, were all later mirrored in his 'magic' novels of the 1890s.

For Morris, Iceland became the yardstick that he took with him back to Victorian England. People in Iceland had a hard life; however, they kept their pride and their sense of what was really important and this they nurtured. Since Iceland was settled by Norwegian families escaping the inhumane King Harald I, one can understand some of this spirit's survival

in the 19th century, perhaps even the 20th.

Only since the 13th century has a written literature existed in Iceland. The Sagas were transmitted orally and even in the 19th century it was still commonplace for families to tell tales, on long winter nights, as it was hundreds of years before when people listened to the Sagas. Morris admired this strong tradition, learned Icelandic, and translated, together with Magnússon, some of the Sagas into English prose.



In his journal Morris wrote about his fascination with the wild northern landscape, which became an attraction for the rest of his life. Morris's friends stated that his appearance became more and more similar to that of the Icelandic author and lawspeaker Snorri Sturluson of the 13th century.

Morris returned to England politicised and wrote 'the most grinding poverty is a trifling evil compared with the inequality of classes'. His journey to Iceland had opened his eyes; he called 'weird' this experience that allowed him to see a different world.

In 1877 Morris founded the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, perceiving as barbaric those restorations of old buildings that resulted so often in cultural and aesthetic damage.

In 1878 Morris rented the rural retreat Kelmscott Manor in Oxfordshire. Still under the influence of his visit to Iceland he continued to write English translations of Icelandic texts. He also wrote the novels *A Dream of John Ball* (1888) and *News from Nowhere* (1890).

In *News from Nowhere*, Morris presented his visionary politics to their full extent, portraying an ideal future society in 2012. One can well imagine this, written in the English class-conscious society of the 19th century, was regarded as subversive.

In 1883 Morris decided to become a revolutionary Socialist. He, son of a capitalist family, joined the Democratic Federation, a small party committed to social revolution, an equal society where art could flourish. From then on he decided to write only text with social and political relevance. However, not everyone perceived this change in Morris' writing and after Tennyson's death he was seriously considered for Poet Laureate in 1892. As a revolutionary socialist, Morris could not accept this post. Nevertheless, he became recognised as artist, author, businessman, and critical humanist.

In the 1990s, I saw an exhibition at the Powerhouse Museum in Sydney that presented the work of William Morris. Not only did I like Morris's designs and his social philosophy, to my surprise I found that Morris had a special relationship with Northern Europe and that he had learned Old Icelandic and translated Icelandic Sagas.

Thus I felt I walked in Morris's footsteps, and for this reason I began this book with an outline of William Morris's story.

CHAPTER ONE

ART OF THE 20TH CENTURY

Many objects described in this book show a remarkable resemblance to pieces created by well recognised artists of the 20th century.

Karl Ruhrberg (1998) described the beginning of symbolism, at the end of the 19th century, as a change in art creation, steering away from copying nature realistically in favour of changing the direction of light sources or varying the artist's view point, in order to dramatise a subject.

Bearing in mind this development, one may also imagine that, during the Bronze Age and the Early Middle Ages artists followed thoughts similar to those of our early modernist artists.

Paul Gauguin, Paul Sérusier, and Maurice Denis initiated symbolist painting and Symbolism spread from Paris to Ferdinand Hodler in Switzerland and Edward Munch in Norway. An independent, self-contained, and self-exploratory actuality informed the philosophy that gave the artist freedom to express his ideas subjectively by using colours and shapes, not to copy scenery realistically but to interpret the essence of an idea or object subjectively. Ruhrberg summed it up by stating that a creation can be 'based solely on intrinsic principles, corresponding to the artist's imagination and subject to his will to form'. Artists working within the symbolists' parameters used their achieved freedom to explore spirituality and the mysteries of existence.

In 1888 a small number of artists grouped around Sérusier and called themselves 'Nabis', Hebrew for 'enlightened ones'. Philipp Otto Runge, who had close contacts with the poets of his time, spoke of 'symbolic colour and pure forms'. With his paintings he attempted to achieve the same result as do well composed pieces of music.

This little explanation, from Karl Ruhrberg, of the feelings of some modern artists in the early movement towards abstraction, can be usefully

applied whenever we view art created in early Northern Europe before the urge set in to copy nature as realistically as possible.

To demonstrate the artistic relationship between Bronze Age, Early Medieval, and Early Modernist artists, the next few pages give an overview of the work of five artists with a prestigious international reputation.

Henri-Robert-Marcel Duchamp was born in Blainville-Crevon, Seine-Maritime, Normandy, on 28 July 1887. He died 81 years later, on 2 October 1968.

He was a painter, sculptor, chess player, and author. His work is cubist and conceptual and is often regarded as belonging to Dadaism. However, Duchamp never belonged to the Dada group. Nevertheless, with his very avant-garde work, he made a position for himself in the circle of the revolutionary artists of the 20th century.

Duchamp grew up close to his two brothers and sister, in a family that appreciated cultural activities. His maternal grandfather was an artist whose work filled the family home. The family liked playing chess, reading, and playing music together. At school, Duchamp's talent in mathematics and art crystallised. Winning prizes for his drawings in 1903 and 1904, he decided, like two of his close school friends, to become an artist. Duchamp's mentor was his brother Villon. He produced drawings and water-colours of his sister which show her in many different poses. He also painted landscapes in oil, in the then contemporary style of Impressionism.

Later, Duchamp experimented with classical techniques and themes, his work then appearing Post-Impressionistic. It was inspired by Odilon Redon whose style was individual, not experimental.

Between 1904 and 1905 Duchamp studied at the Académie Julian in Paris. At this time he drew cartoons which he combined with wordplay, often multilingual. The symbolism of such picture and word combinations was important to Duchamp throughout his life.

In 1908 his brother Jacques, a member of the Académie Royale de Peinture et de Sculpture, arranged for him to exhibit his work at the Salon d'Automne in Paris. In 1909, when Duchamp's work was shown at the Salon des Indépendants, the art critic Guillaume Apollinaire called his work 'Duchamp's

ugly nudes'. Even so, he became a good friend of Duchamp.

Like many artists in the early 20th century, Duchamp was fascinated with change, movement, transition, and distance. His most important painting from this time is the *Moulin à café*, the Coffee Mill, of 1911. In the same year he painted his two brothers playing chess together, his *Portrait de joueurs d'échecs*. This is executed in a cubist style and shows overlapping planes, as well as featuring multiple perspectives.

Albert Gleizes and Jean Metzinger wrote the first major treatise on Cubism, *Du Cubisme*, in 1912. Duchamp planned to show his 1912 cubist painting *Nu descendant un escalier n° 2*, Nude Descending a Staircase No.2, in the Salon des Indépendants exhibition. Albert Gleizes, however, criticised the title and approached Duchamp's brothers to convince him to change it. Duchamp rejected this, withdrew the painting from the exhibition, called a taxi, and took it home. This experience made him cautious about joining any groups or movements in the future.

Nevertheless, a few months after the Indépendants exhibition, the designer André Mare organised La Maison Cubiste for the Salon d'Automne. Duchamp was invited for the Section d'Or and accepted. It is assumed that Duchamp initially would have liked to stay in the group, before having felt insulted by Gleizes. The invitation from Mare, however, elevated him to such a privileged position that he could not refuse.

In 1913 Duchamp's work was shown at the Armory Show in New York City. This was the first important exhibition of avant-garde art, outside of Paris. Duchamp's *Nu descendant un escalier n° 2* became a centre of controversy since American art gallery visitors were as yet used to seeing only conventional realistic paintings.

Duchamp began to experiment with art. One of his preferred objects was 3 *stoppages étalon*, 3 standard stops. He prepared three canvasses with blue and black. Three threads, each 1 metre long, he let fall horizontally on the canvas where they landed in an undulating pattern. He painted these threads with varnish and glued them on to glass panes. These he used as patterns to cut three undulating wooden slats which he placed into a croquet box. Duchamp was fascinated with the result as these 3 pieces, even with their curves, were still each 1 metre long, a length of such great importance in our world but imagined, usually, as a straight line.

Another object Duchamp made at this time is the well-known *Roue de bicyclette*, the bicycle wheel. Duchamp mounted the front wheel of a bicycle upside-down on top of a stool and placed it in his studio for his own entertainment. He explained that watching the turning wheel is similar to watching the flames in a fire, something people always enjoy tremendously. He also stated that the creative act is not performed by the artist alone, the spectator participates in the process by interpreting the artwork and thus contributes to the creative act.

In 1914, when war was declared, Duchamp was exempted from military service. However, he no longer felt comfortable in Paris. Because of the scandal aroused by his painting *Nu descendant un escalier n° 2*, at the Armory Show in America, he became known and could now sell some of his paintings, which enabled him to afford a journey to New York. In 1915 he migrated to the United States and was surprised to be warmly welcomed when he arrived in New York. In a short time he became friends with many influential avant-garde artists and art patrons. Although his English was quite weak, he made a living by teaching French. In Ridgefield, New Jersey, not far from New York City, he joined an artists colony.

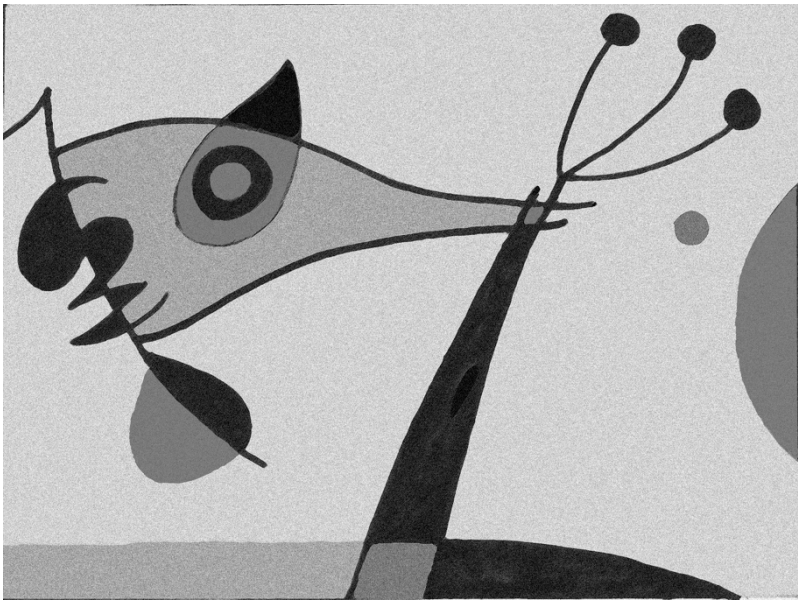
In 1918 Duchamp stepped away from the art scene, travelled extensively, spent several months in Buenos Aires, and played chess at championships back in France. In 1927 he married Lydie Sarazin-Lavassor but about a year later they were already divorced.

Only in the 1930s did he realise he would never become a chess champion; he gave up playing and focused on philosophical subjects. Even though he was no longer practising art, Duchamp kept in close contact with artists and art dealers in France and America.

In 1954 he married Alexina 'Teeny' Sattler who was his wife until his death. In 1963 the Pasadena Art Museum mounted his first retrospective exhibition where the photograph of himself playing chess with the nude model Eve Babitz appeared.

On 2 October 1968 Marcel Duchamp died in Neuilly-sur-Seine, in the western suburbs of Paris. Duchamp is certainly one of the most important artists of the early 20th century. His artistic experiments inspired many artists of the century and even for many years thereafter.

Joan Miró was born in Barcelona on 20 April 1893. His father was a watchmaker, his mother a goldsmith. The elements of art and craft were indeed a fertile environment for Miró's artistic development. He worked at painting, sculpture, and ceramics, and received lessons in drawing, at a private art school, when he was only seven years old. In 1907 Miró began his studies at the Escuela de Bellas Artes de la Llotja and the Escuela de Arte de Francesco Galí, Circulo Artístico de Sant Lluç. At the same time he attended a business school, which helped him to gain, for a short period, employment as an office clerk. However, art was more important to Miró and in 1918 he had his first solo exhibition in the Dalmau Gallery in Barcelona.



Before 1920 Miró experimented with different styles and techniques. Bright colours show his link to the traditions of Catalan folklore, as well as the artistic influence of the Fauves. During a journey to Paris, Miró was confronted with a number of artists, and different styles and techniques. Surrealism left the greatest impact. If Miró did not become a surrealist artist, he did collaborate with the well-known leading surrealist Max Ernst. In 1928 he exhibited his work alongside that of a group of surrealists, in Paris. However, in most of his work, Miró kept his own individual style.

During the years 1929 and 1930 he created predominantly collages which brought him subsequently to the third dimension, sculpture.

On 12 October 1929 Miró married Pilar Juncosa and in July 1931 their daughter Dolores was born. Also in 1931, Pierre Matisse, youngest son of the painter Henri Matisse, opened a gallery in New York City, which became influential in the American art scene. There Miró's work was shown regularly from the start, making his work well known in North American society.

From the 1960s onwards Miró created many monumental pieces, having a particular enthusiasm for public commissions. His work shows his interest in symbolism but its abstract quality makes this sometimes difficult to recognise.

The Fundació Pilar i Joan Miró a Mallorca marks what was Miró's home for a while. Now turned into a permanent exhibition for Miró's work was established by the council of Palma de Mallorca.

During his career Miró worked with many different media and techniques. Not only did he continue to work in his own style, he has also inspired many artists with his creations, even after his death on 25 December 1983 in Majorca.

Mario Merz was another distinguished international artist from the 20th century. In his art he preferred to communicate his ideas in three dimensions.

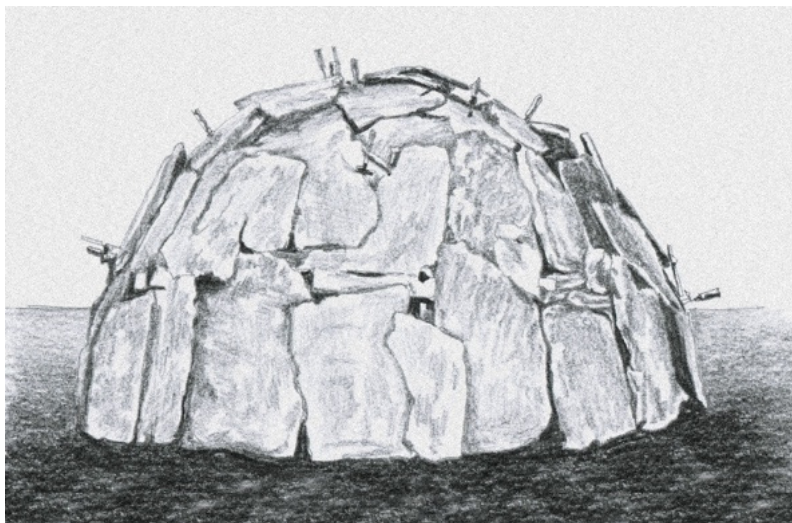
Merz was born on 1 January 1925 in Milan and died there at 78 on 9 November 2003. While he was still a child, Merz's parents decided to move with him to Turin. There he studied medicine until 1945 when he was arrested because of his activities with Giustizia e Libertà, an anti-fascist group. During his time in jail he started drawing and painting. After his liberation following the fall of Mussolini, Merz concentrated on the production of art. An autodidact, he was encouraged in his work by the art critic and curator Luciano Pistol. Merz's first (provocative) solo exhibition was at the Galleria La Bussola in Turin in 1954 when his paintings appeared Expressionistic.

During his studies in the 1950s he married the sculptress Marisa Merz;

each strongly influenced the other's art. In 1967 they joined a loose group of artists - Giovanni Anselmo, Alighiero Boetti, Luciano Fabro, Jannis Kounellis, Giulio Pasolini, Giuseppe Penone, Michelangelo Pistoletto, and Gilberto Zorio - who aimed, through provocative use of materials and uncommon techniques, to challenge the values of established institutions such as government, industry, and culture. Merz was an outstanding figure among them. The art critic and curator Germano Celant called their work 'Arte Povera' (poor art).

In the mid-1960s Merz's work became voluminous. As was typical in the Arte Povera movement, he used three-dimensional materials, without monetary value, such as beeswax, glass, twigs, and brushes, sometimes juxtaposed with mechanical or electrical objects, such as fluorescent light to contrast one material against another. Merz was fascinated by the Fibonacci sequence. From 1969 onwards, he applied this to nearly all his performances and installations. He did so to express the universal principles of creation and growth.

In 1968 Merz started to include the concept of igloos in his repertoire.



Igloos, Merz suggested, symbolise prehistoric tribal elements that continue into the present, the mobility of nomadic shelter. He mounted fluorescent scripts on the igloos, such as 'Rock 'n' roll' or the quotation, from the

North Vietnamese General Vo Nguyen Giap, ‘If the enemy masses his forces, he loses ground. If he scatters, he loses force’. These scripts were meant to connect the work to the present realism. Soon the igloos were accompanied by tables that symbolised social interaction, people sitting together, eating, drinking, talking, and arguing together.

Merz’s later work appears transcendent and light. In 1996 he collaborated with the fashion designer Jil Sander to construct a turbine to blow leaves and flowers through a 10-foot-wide cylinder or tunnel.

Joseph Beuys, born on 12 May 1921 in Krefeld, Nordrhein-Westfalen, Germany, was a happening and performance artist, as well as sculptor, installation artist, graphic artist, art theorist, and teacher.

His extensive work embraced humanistic concepts, philosophy, and anthroposophy. To bring this all together Beuys called it *Gesamtkunstwerk* (wholistic artwork). He engaged himself artistically in actions that would make people aware of social and environmental inappropriateness and he worked to find humane solutions to solve such problems. Because of his groundbreaking work, Joseph Beuys now is regarded as one of the most influential artists of the second half of the 20th century.

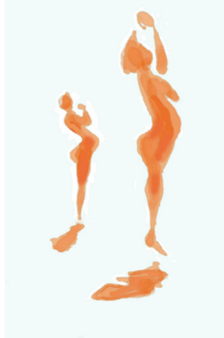


Originally Beuys planned to study medicine and during his senior school years he looked after some circus animals, earning his pocket money by designing publications for that small circus. However, during his last year at school, he saw photographs of Wilhelm Lehmbruck’s sculptures. These left such an impression that he decided to become a sculptor himself.

In 1942 Beuys was stationed in the Crimea as rear-gunner in a bomber. In March 1944 his aeroplane crashed. Injured, he was brought to a military hospital where he recovered after a few weeks. His pilot, unfortunately, did not survive. Beuys was transferred to the western front where he was injured several times. After Germany’s capitulation, Beuys was held as a prisoner of war for several months in an English detention camp, before he returned to his parents in Kleve.

At home in Kleve, Beuys met the sculptor Walter Br ux and the painter Hanns Lamers who both encouraged him to become a full-time artist. Subsequently Beuys became a member of Kleve's artists' association and in 1946 he enrolled as a student at the D usseldorfer Akademie der K nste. While studying under Edward Matar , Beuys was influenced by Rudolf Steiner's anthroposophy and this is recognisable in his work. In 1951 Beuys joined Matar 's master class and shared a studio with Erwin Heerich until 1954.

Beuys read James Joyce, the Irish modernist author, the German Romantics Friedrich von Hardenberg and Friedrich Schiller, and he studied Galileo Galilei and Leonardo da Vinci whom he admired for his genius in amalgamating art and science. Beuys' work was first exhibited at the Kleve's artists' association, at a solo exhibition at the Kranenburg home of Hans and Franz Joseph van der Grinten, and in the Von der Heydt Museum in Wuppertal.



In 1953, when Beuys was 32 and had finished his studies, he had only a minimal income from several art and craft assignments. In the 1950s he produced thousands of drawings such as that on the left and several sculptures; nevertheless, he was battling a financial burden. Despite this, in 1959 he married Eva Wurmbach, who also taught at the academy in D usseldorf. It was she who made for him the fishing vest without which he was thereafter rarely seen.

In 1961 Beuys was appointed professor at the D usseldorfer Akademie der K nste. An event at the Technische Hochschule in Aachen brought him into public limelight. A Festival of New Art took place at the 20th anniversary of the assassination attempt on Adolf Hitler. Beuys organised a happening which became interrupted by a number of students. One student attacked Beuys and hit him in the face. A photograph of him, with a bloody nose, was shown nationwide in the press and Beuys produced an artistic documentation of this event which he called *Lebenslauf/Werklauf* (life course/work course).

Beuys manifested his social/anarchic ideas by accepting as students in his class at the art academy anyone who felt drawn to the arts. This was not accepted by the academy's management and Beuys was sacked. Only 14

of 142 applicants were admitted by the academy. Beuys, who criticised the refusal of 128 applicants, undertook a ceremonial crossing of the Rhine to Cologne, which too was covered by national television and newspapers. From then on, Beuys gave many free public lectures and discussions. He was engaged politically and social-critically and his work is a major contribution to the arts of the second part of the 20th century. Of interest is that a lane, not far from the Düsseldorfer Akademie der Künste, is still named after Joseph Beuys.

The artist as shaman

Shamanism, for Beuys, was not simply a vehicle to present his art. For Beuys shamanism was an important part of his life as he observed society with its extreme focus on rationality which eliminates, unfortunately, human emotions that are the sources of energy and creativity.



From this point of view, his artwork was educational and therapeutic, though not easy to understand. It is important to engage with Beuys's work on a neutral level, to view his work without expectations and without prejudgements. Through spending a little extra time, by 'meditating', on the work to allow its composition, material, and placement *in situ* to be expressed, one may come to an understanding of Beuys's message. This reaches much further than decorative and commercial clichés.

During the 1950s Beuys suffered from depression and after a long healing process realised that he had to question everything in his life. He realised that the period of his depression was an initiation towards shamanism. The generally known story - that after his 'plane crash he was found and saved

by Tartar who healed him by packing him in fat and felt - may be understood as a rebirth from rational functioning to a spiritual understanding. The felt hat and felt suit that became Beuys's trademark, were a visual statement of a ritual change of his personality.

In 1962 Beuys became a friend of Nam June Paik, a member of the Fluxus group. Fluxus was a loose organisation of artists who challenged the accepted rules of art and tried to break them. This may be seen as a development from Dadaism. Beuys's work certainly often touched those borders but he was not consciously part of this group. However, he appears to have been influenced by the continuously applied philosophy of Marcel Duchamp's 'Readymade Art'.



The installation *Das Rudel*, displaying a Volkswagen bus and a number of sledges, carrying felt cloths and torches, presents a superb example of this concept.

Exhibitions: In 1953 Franz Joseph and Hans van der Grinten organised Beuys's first solo exhibition, in their home in Kranenburg. In 1965 the Alfred Schmela Galerie was the first commercial gallery that showed a solo exhibition of his work. In 1964 Beuys participated for the first time in the Documenta in Kassel. In 1969 his work was part of the Harald Szeemann exhibition *When Attitudes Become Form* at the Kunsthalle in Bern. In the 1970s Beuys had various exhibitions in Europe and the United

States. The most important collection of Beuys's work forms part of the Ströher collection, formerly in the Landesmuseum in Darmstadt and now in the Museum für Moderne Kunst in Frankfurt am Main. In 1976 und 1980 Beuys represented Germany at the Venice Biennale.

Ai Weiwei is a contemporary artist, reflecting strongly on social issues, as was Joseph Beuys. Ai has an extraordinary international reputation. He was born 1957 in Beijing; his father was Ai Qing, an acclaimed Chinese poet. Because Ai Qing did not conform with the politics of the People's Republic, the family was sent to a labour camp in Beidahuang. After Mao Zedong's death in 1978, back in Beijing Ai studied animation at the Film Academy and became one of the founders of the avant-garde group 'Stars'. Because state censorship was re-introduced, from 1981 to 1993 he lived in the United States, predominantly in New York City. There he enrolled at the Parsons School of Design, followed by a period as a 'street artist' and working in odd jobs. During his time in New York Ai was introduced to work by Marcel Duchamp, Jasper Johns, and Andy Warhol, which inspired him to create conceptual art by using readymade objects, such as introduced initially by Marcel Duchamp.

Ai Weiwei became a friend of Allen Ginsberg, the socially critical American poet. Ginsberg had been travelling in China and came in close contact with Ai Qing, Ai Weiwei's father. Like Duchamp, who was fascinated by playing chess, Ai developed a great interest in blackjack and is still regarded in gambling circles as a top professional player.

In 1993, after his father became ill, Ai returned to China and developed a rich body of work. He associated with the group of experimental artists called Beijing East Village. Together with the curator Feng Boyi, he has published three books, *Black Cover*, *White Cover*, and *Gray Cover*, explaining the philosophy of this new generation of artists.

In 1999 Ai moved to Caochangdi, in the northeast of Beijing. There he built a studio house and, due to his interest in architecture, he set up FAKE Design, an architecture studio.

Since 2005 the computer has become a tool for Ai, to bring artistic, social, and political thought to public attention via Sina Weibo, an internet platform in China. His blog was shut down by the authorities but he continued publishing by using Twitter.

After a devastating earthquake in Sichuan province, in May 2008, Ai led a team to film the terrible conditions in various disaster zones. He criticised the shabby material used for the buildings and the government's lack of transparency. Ai launched a 'Citizens' Investigation' in order to compile the names of students who perished in the earthquake due to substandard school campus construction. The authorities shut down his blog several times. Nevertheless, a list of 5,385 victims' names, with the material for a documentary about the investigation, reviled by 2009, together with 150 tonnes of scrap metal from the earthquake site, became a deeply moving installation.

After Ai Weiwei tried to testify for Tan Zuoren, a fellow investigator, he was taken by police and beaten for his critical support of Tan. In September 2009, in a hospital in Munich, Ai was diagnosed as suffering internal bleeding. This haemorrhage is believed to be linked to the police treatment of him.

In November 2010 Ai was placed under house arrest. The authorities planned to demolish a building in Shanghai that was supposed to be a studio for Ai where he could also teach architecture. While Ai was prevented from travelling, his Shanghai studio was demolished by the local government. When Ai tried to fly to Hong Kong, he was arrested, his studio was searched and computers taken away, and Ai's wife and eight staff members were detained. Several different reasons were given for this action.

A number of Western Governments and cultural institutions protested against Ai Weiwei's detention and in June 2011 he was released from gaol. Until 2015 Ai came under heavy surveillance and restriction of movement; however, in July 2015 he was given a passport and allowed to travel abroad.

In July 2015 Ai Weiwei, his partner Wang Fen, and their son Ai Lao arrived in Munich. Ai was due for a medical examination. Interviewed by Bernhard Zand for *Der Spiegel* (2015) he says 'As a human being, I feel like a cat that was finally released and is now traipsing across the rooftops, but as an artist, I have a big problem with this situation. I have only been here for a couple of days and I'm already asking myself: What should I do now?'

Ai applied for a half year visa to England but was granted a visa for only 14 days because of his criminal conviction.

Alexander Ochs, owner of a gallery in Berlin and a supporter of Ai since his imprisonment, called on the media, in the name of Ai Weiwei's supporters in Germany, to stop putting on artists pressure such as that from which Ai had suffered.

Ai Weiwei was offered a three year guest professorship at the University of the Arts in Berlin where he installed 14,000 life jackets at the portal columns of the Konzert Haus. This is a reminder of the many lives lost by refugees trying to escape the terrible war in Syria by crossing the Mediterranean.



In November 2015 he travelled to Melbourne where his work was exhibited alongside Andy Warhol's, and 2018, at the 21st Biennale of Sydney he exhibited *Law of the Journey*, a life raft, that is 60 metres long and 6 metres wide, crowded with hundreds of anonymous refugee figures. It demonstrates the inhumane loss of values in relation to humans in need.