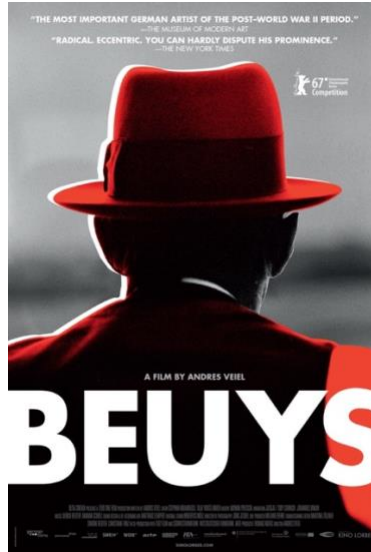


KINO LORBER



A film by Andres Veiel
DOCUMENTARY / GERMANY / 2017
111 Minutes / DCP

Festivals:

Berlin International Film Festival (2017)
CPH:DOX (2017)
Odessa International Film Festival (2017)

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KINO LORBER

CREW

Director – Andres Veiel
Producer – Thomas Kufus
Produced by ero one film GmbH
Co-Produced by Terz Filmproduktion, SWR/ARTE and WDR
Production Manager – Melanie Berke
Director of Photography – Jörg Jeshel
Edited by Stephan Krumbiegel and Olaf Voigtländer
Music – Ulrich Reuter and Damian Scholl
Sound – Hubertus Müll (O-Ton) and Matthias Lempert (Sound Design & Mischung)
Archive producer – Moni Preischl

SYNOPSIS

Thirty years after his death, Joseph Beuys still feels like a visionary and is widely considered one of the most influential artists of his generation. Known for his contributions to the Fluxus movement and his work across diverse media — from happenings and performance to sculpture, installation, and graphic art — Beuys' expanded concept of the role of the artist places him in the middle of socially relevant discourses on media, community, and capitalism. Using previously untapped visual and audio sources, director Andreas Veiel has created a one-of-a-kind chronicle: BEUYS is not a portrait in the traditional sense, but an intimate and in-depth look at a human being, his art and ideas, and the way they have impacted the world.

DIRECTOR STATEMENT BY ANDRES VEIEL

Joseph Beuys was an immense influence on me as a young man in the 1980s. His works were like dynamite in the Swabian suburbs I grew up in. They were misunderstood as “remnants from a construction site,” or else dubbed “the most expensive household trash of all time.”

Beuys also provoked people with his way of thinking. With inexhaustible energy, he advocated a broader vision of art that viewed every person as an artist with the potential to work together to shape social processes. He addressed economic questions and saw the great problem posed by the accumulation of income, which, free from democratic scrutiny, is aimed at the highest profits rather than where it is needed: education, research, and socially relevant investments. Beuys was one of the first artists to lay the groundwork for the idea of an unconditional basic income, drawing from a notion of capital derived from human capacities and not from money.

When I returned to his work in 2013, I realized that Beuys was just as relevant as ever – and that's why I decided to make a documentary about him. I viewed 300 hours of video and listened to as much audio material by and about Beuys as I could. At the same time, I gained

KINO LORBER

access to international collections with nearly 20,000 photos by almost 50 photographers. I also talked to more than 60 of his contemporary witnesses and acquaintances, and filmed around 20 interviews.

In April 2015, after two years of preparation and shooting, we began editing. Editors Stephan Krumbiegel, Olaf Voigtländer, and myself first attempted to fit the material into the structure of a strict biographical narrative – Beuys’ life from birth until death. Whenever the archival material appeared insufficient for the purposes of the narrative, we brought in the interview clips. This was the right idea in terms of content, but it led us into the dead end of a conventional artist biography. We thus found ourselves obliged to completely rework our approach and develop a more open, associative narrative style. Beuys always revealed and concealed himself in riddles and contradictions, often through his agile humor.

We realized that this openness ought to become the film’s principle as well, and began working playfully with the archival materials.

Layer after layer, we worked our way through the vast mountains of material. The statements of contemporary witnesses often paled in comparison with the original footage of and by Beuys: despite its inferior technical quality (Japan Standard, Umatic, Beta SP), from the point of view of the narrative, the archival material was better than the footage we had shot afterwards. This also applied to our footage of the works currently found in museums. In the context of the generally monotonous lighting of the exhibition halls, they seemed strangely forlorn, almost sterile at times. Little by little, they disappeared from the rough cut and were replaced by footage where we could watch Beuys while the work was being created.

The project, in which we were planning to use 30% archival material, turned into a film that now consists of nearly 95% archival footage.

We worked on BEUYS for over three years, and no one could have foreseen that the film would be completed during a time when more and more people are longing for a past that never existed. In light of these anti-Utopias, today Joseph Beuys is more important to me – to us – than ever.

In the film, Beuys persistently and subversively deals with issues that continue to remain relevant 30 years after his death, like a radical democratization that doesn’t shy away from new banking and monetary systems, or equal opportunities in a world of increasing inequality. Beuys insisted on the possibility that the world can be changed based on the capabilities of each individual person: “Nothing needs to remain the way it is.”

KINO LORBER

DIRECTOR ANDRES VEIEL

Andres Veiel was born in 1959 in Stuttgart, Germany, and studied Psychology in Berlin. He then attended seminars in Directing at the Artist House Bethanien in Berlin from 1985-1989. Since then, he has been writing film and theater scripts and giving lectures at the dffb (Deutsche Film- und Fernsehakademie Berlin).

His films include: A WINTERNIGHT'S DREAM (documentary, 1992); BALAGAN (documentary, 1993) winner of the German Film Award; THE SURVIVORS (documentary, 1996), winner of the Main Prize at the International Documentary Film Festival Munich and the Adolf Grimme Award in 1998; the highly-acclaimed BLACK BOX GERMANY (2001) for which he received the German Film Award and the European Film Award; ADDICTED TO ACTING (2004); THE KICK (2006), which won the Grand Prix Cinema du Reel; and IF NOT US, WHO (2011), which was presented at Berlinale Competition 2011 and won the German Film Award.

Filmography (Selection):

- 2001 Black Box BRD, Documentary
- 2004 Addicted to Acting, Documentary
- 2006 The Kick, Documentary
- 2011 If Not Us, Who, Alfred-Bauer-Award (Berlinale competition, 2011)

EDITOR STEPHAN KRUMBIEGEL

Stephan Krumbiegel was born in 1964 in Stuttgart. After finishing his education as a media engineer, he started his professional career as co-director and editor on a feature documentary on development aid projects in West Africa. Since 1996, he has worked as freelance editor for feature and documentary films, and has taught film editing at the Film University Babelsberg since 2007. He currently lives in Berlin.

Filmography (Selection):

- 2000 Lost Killers (Director: Dito Tsintsadze)
- 2001 Berlin: Sinfonie Einer Großstadt (Director: Thomas Schadt)
- 2001 Unternehmen Paradies (Director: Volker Sattel)
- 2002 Familienkreise (Director: Stefan Krohmer)
- 2004 Accordion Tribe (Director: Stefan Schwietert)
- 2005 Weisse Raben (Director: J.Feindt / T.Trampe)
- 2006 Heimatklänge (Director: Stefan Schwietert)
- 2006 Nacht vor Augen (Director: Brigitte Bertele)
- 2009 Wiegenlieder (Director: J.Feindt)
- 2010 Unter Kontrolle (Director: Volker Sattel)
- 2011 Gerhard Richter Painting (Director: Corinna Belz)
- 2014 Meine Mutter, Ein Krieg Und Ich (Director: J.Feindt / T.Trampe)
- 2015 Girl On Ice (Director: Stefan Krohmer)

KINO LORBER

EDITOR OLAF VOGTLÄNDER

After training as an audiovisual media designer, Olaf Voigtländer first worked as an assistant editor, before devoting himself to freelance editing and editorial support. He has been studying editing at the Film University Potsdam-Babelsberg since 2009, and now lives and works in Berlin.

Filmography (Selection):

- 2013 Imraan c/o Carrom Club. (Director: Uditha Bhargava)
- 2012 Arbeitswege. (Director: Daniel Abma)
- 2011 Energieland. (Director: Johanna Ickert)
- 2011 Pitch Builds A Ball and Destroys It. (Director: Uditha Bhargava)

MONIKA PEISCHEL (ARCHIVE)

Monika Preischl studied experimental media design at the University of the Arts in Berlin, where she graduated with distinction in 2004. In the same year, she was invited to the Talent Campus at the Berlinale. In 2005, she passed her masterclass exam under Heinz Emigholz.

Between 1996 and 2004, she completed various projects in several fields, such as room installation, camera and editing in Berlin, Essen, Hanover, Stralsund and Oslo. Since 2005, she focused on archival research for film productions.

She lives and works in Berlin, and worked together with Andres Veiel on BEUYS from 2014 to 2017.

Filmography (Selection):

- 2005 Unsere 50er Jahre. (Documentary series, zero one film GmbH)
- 2006 Unsere 60er Jahre. (Documentary series, zero one film GmbH)
- 2009 Almanyá (Director: Yasemin Samdereli, Roxy Film GmbH)
- 2010 If Not Us, Who (Director: Andres Veiel, zero one film GmbH)
- 2011 Vergiss mein nicht (Director: David Sieveking, Lichtblick Media GmbH)
- 2012 More than honey (Director: Markus Imhoff, zero one film GmbH)
- 2012 Balkan Melody (Director: Stefan Schwietert, zero one film GmbH)
- 2014 Francofonia (Director: Alexander Sokurov, zero one film GmbH)
- 2015 Une Jeunesse Allemande (Director: Jean-Gabriel Périot, Local Films)

PROTAGONISTS

Born in 1945, **Caroline Tisdall** studied art history at the University of London's Courtauld Institute of Art and has worked as an art critic for The Guardian since 1970. In 1972 she met Beuys during an "information action" at the White Chapel Gallery, and would eventually accompany Beuys on all his travels for over seven years. She was there during the first

KINO LORBER

American lecture tours in 1974 as well as the 1975 coyote action "I like America and America likes me" in New York.

It was Tisdall who introduced Beuys to the English-speaking art world, having also curated an exhibition of 400 paintings ("The Secret Block For A Secret Person in Ireland") in Oxford and many other British and Irish cities. In 1979, she was one of the curators of the major Beuys exhibition at New York's Guggenheim Museum.

Tisdall owns a collection of over 5000 photos from the years when she accompanied Beuys and has written several books following Beuys' death – about the "I like America and America likes me action" as well as a volume with photos and texts about Beuys ("We go this way").

Born in 1934 in Athens, **Rhea Thönges-Stringaris** studied archeology and art history in Bonn and Munich. Starting in the early 1960s, she lived with her husband and three daughters in Kassel, where she worked in the antiquities section of the Staatliche Kunstsammlungen. She met Joseph Beuys at the documenta 5/1972.

His forward-looking vision in matters of art, as well as his unique way of approaching ideas, formed the basis for a lifelong friendship. Thönges-Stringaris was involved in the "organisation für direkte Demokratie" and later founded the FIU (Free International University) in Kassel, which hosted events for many years.

Together with Beuys and the Achberger Kreis, she was a co-founder of the Green Party and served a legislative term as city councilor. She was also a member of the Documenta Board of Directors.

Thönges-Stringaris gives lectures and is the author of several publications in the field of Joseph Beuys research in both Germany and Greece. She resides in Kassel and Athens.

Born in 1933, **Franz Joseph van der Grinten** grew up on his parents' farm in Cleves, Germany. His older brother introduced him to Joseph Beuys in the late 1940s, leading to the van der Grinten brothers' first purchases of some of Beuys' early works. In 1953, the brothers organized a Beuys exhibition at their parents' farm.

A relationship between artist and collectors developed into a friendship. The brothers took him into their home for several weeks in 1957, at the height of his crisis. Over the following years, the van der Grinten brothers expanded their collection until it became a comprehensive inventory of 5000 paintings and other works by Beuys. These were presented to the Schloss Moyland Museum Foundation in 1993, and many of them are currently open to the public and on display at the museum.

Born in 1945, **Johannes Stüttgen** began his theology studies in Münster under Joseph Ratzinger, which he broke off in 1966 to study at the Kunstakademie Düsseldorf under Joseph Beuys. From

KINO LORBER

1980 to 1986, he was chairman of the FIU (Free International University) co-founded by Beuys. Following Beuys' death, Johannes Stüttgen went to court against the state of North Rhine-Westphalia; Kunstakademie employees had carried off and destroyed the "Fettecke" dedicated to Stüttgen. Beuys' pupil was awarded a five-figure compensation.

Beginning in 1989, he led and organized the "Baumkreuz" action, planting trees on an avenue along the B7 that incorporates the border fence between the two Germanies. In 1987, he initiated the campaign "Omnibus for direct democracy in order to re-establish both democracy and economic-financial cycles through the concept of art." In 2008, he authored the book "Der Ganze Riemen – Beuys as a teacher".

Born in 1938, **Klaus Staeck** studied law in Heidelberg and Berlin until 1962, before founding a producer's publishing house in 1965, which publishes limited edition objects (multiples) created by both himself and Joseph Beuys. Beginning in this period, Beuys and Staeck would enjoy a long-standing working friendship, leading to more than 200 editions that have been released over the years, encompassing graphic work, objects, manifestos, and posters.

One of the highlights of their collaboration was the attempt to jointly found a "Free School of Creativity and Interdisciplinary Research".

Staeck accompanied Beuys on many travels to Italy, Britain, and Belgium, one of the most memorable of which was their first flight to the U.S. in 1974, with visits to New York, Chicago, and Minneapolis. After Beuys' death, Staeck was appointed his successor at the Staatliche Kunstakademie Düsseldorf in 1986. Beuys referred to him as one of his students, although he never studied at an academy. In 2006 Staeck was named president of the Akademie der Künste, to which he was re-elected twice, holding the position until 2015.

JOSEPH BEUYS: A BRIEF BIOGRAPHY

(Text originally written for the Walker Museum website.)

Joseph Beuys, who is recognized as one of the most influential artists of the postwar period, had a grand and ambitious goal for his work: the transformation of Western culture into a more peaceful, democratic, and creative milieu.

His multifaceted career, which included sculpture, performance, lectures, activism, and even a campaign for elected office, were all part of an "expanded concept of art" that was aimed at advancing his utopian vision. In all its forms, his work is dense and highly allusive and draws on much of the accumulated knowledge of Western civilization, including history, religion, natural sciences, economic theory, and myth. A charismatic teacher, Beuys was mentor to a generation of younger artists who were inspired by his passionate fusion of art, life, and activism.

Service in World War II

Beuys was born in Krefeld, Germany, and as a youth pursued dual interests in art and the natural sciences. In 1940, at age 19, he joined the German air force. During his 5 years of

KINO LORBER

service, he was wounded several times and interned in a British prisoner-of-war camp. He returned home in 1945 physically and emotionally depleted, and spent nearly a decade recuperating on a friend's farm, where he made hundreds of drawings and small sculptures. Coming to terms with his involvement in World War II would be a lifelong process that informed much of his art.

Teaching at the Düsseldorf Art Academy, Sled

After the war, Beuys decided to dedicate himself to art. In 1961, he was appointed to a professorship at the Düsseldorf Art Academy and soon became the school's most sought-after teacher. At the same time, he began to develop his sculptural practice. One of his best-known works from this period is *Sled* (1969), which he called a "survival kit": an elemental means of transport carrying a felt blanket, a lump of fat, and a flashlight. *Sled* alludes to Beuys's oft-repeated story of crashing his warplane during a blizzard and being rescued by Tatar nomads, who treated his wounds with fat and wrapped him in felt to keep him warm. Whether true or not, the story is a powerful metaphor for the rebirth of both an individual and a nation after the horrors perpetrated by National Socialism.

I Like America and America Likes Me

Beuys was also a performer who was renowned for his "actions"—heavily symbolic events that illustrated his evolving ideas about how art could play a wider role in transforming society. The best known of these is *I Like America and America Likes Me* (1974), in which he spent several days with a coyote in a New York gallery space. Described as a "dialogue" with the animal, the performance presented Beuys as a shaman—a spiritual leader and healer who has a special affinity with animals—who traveled to the United States to enact a symbolic reconciliation between modern American society, the natural world, and Native American culture. To emphasize the urgent need for healing these rifts, Beuys had himself transported to and from the gallery in an ambulance.

"Everyone is an artist," Political Activism, 7000 Oaks

During the 1970s, Beuys focused much of his energy on political activism, helping to found such groups as the German Student Party, the Free International University, and the Green party, whose goals included worldwide disarmament, educational reform, and environmental stewardship. His well-known slogan, "Everyone is an artist," was meant to suggest that social transformation could be achieved if every human being applied his or her creative energies toward positive change in cooperative activities he called "social sculptures." His most famous of these was *7000 Oaks* (1982), a massive reforestation project in which seven thousand trees were planted throughout Germany, particularly in areas destroyed by bombing during World War II. In 1997, in homage to his idea, the Walker Art Center oversaw the planting of more than 1,000 young trees in Cass Lake, St. Paul, and the Minneapolis Sculpture Garden.

Recognition and Legacy

Beuys's work has been collected and shown widely in Europe and the United States, with major retrospectives mounted by the Guggenheim Museum (1979) and Tate Modern (2005), among

KINO LORBER

others. Large collections of his multiples are held by several American institutions, including the Walker Art Center and the Broad Art Foundation in Los Angeles. In 1986, Beuys was awarded the Wilhelm Lehmbruck Prize by the city of Duisburg, Germany. While the success of Beuys's ambitious program has been the subject of much debate, his enormous influence on the development of postwar art is undeniable. His exploration of sculptural form and materials, his mesmerizing performances, and his ideas about the powerful potential of consciously applied creativity are still catalytic forces in the art world.

ZERO ONE FILM (Production Company)

Zero One Film is an independent film production company based in Berlin, producing films and TV documentaries for the German and International market. Over the past 25 years, the company produced more than 100 documentaries, documentary television series and feature films. Many of them won international awards, including THE PEOPLE VS. FRITZ BAUER by Lars Kraume, MORE THAN HONEY by Markus Imhoof, WEST by Christian Schwochow, THE FLAT by Arnon Goldfinger, GERHARD RICHTER PAINTING by Corinna Belz, BLACK BOX GERMANY by Andres Veiel, or ECHOES OF HOME by Stefan Schwietert.

Selected Beuys Exhibitions

- 1975 – Hearth/Feuerstatte (The Brain of Europe);
- 1975 – Feldman Gallery, New York;
- 1979 / 1980 – Joseph Beuys Retrospective Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York;
- 1986 – Marisa del Re Gallery, New York City;
- 1986 – Memorial Exhibitions: Feldman Gallery, New York City;
- 1987 / 1988 – Dia: Chelsea, New York City;
- 1999 – Michael Werner Gallery, New York City;
- 2006 – The David Winton Bell Gallery, Brown University, Providence;
- 2006 – Broad Art Foundation in Los Angeles, CA;
- 2007 – Zwirner & Wirth, New York City;
- 2008 / 2010 – Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), New York City;
- 2010 – Pace Gallery, New York City;
- 2012 – Portland Museum (*Organized by the Portland Art Museum and curated by Bruce Guenther*);
- 2015 – Mitchell-Innes & Nash, New York City;
- 2016 /2017 – Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), New York City;

Beuys Works in the U.S.

The largest collections of Joseph Beuys works in the U.S. can be found in the Walker Art Museum in Minneapolis, Minnesota, the Harvard University Art Museum in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and the Broad Art Foundation in Los Angeles, California.