



IMAG

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Joseph Beuys and the Artistic Education

Carl-Peter Buschkuhle

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Joseph Beuys and the Artistic Education

Carl-Peter Buschkühle



„Everyone is an artist“
Joseph Beuys

Beuys points the copper Eurasia staff up, down, and in the four cardinal directions, which represent cultural hemispheres as well. He hereby connects all of these directions with the artist in the center. At its peak, the staff points back to the artist, the origin of these movements.

These movements form a cross with which Beuys narrates the dimensions of the artwork, existing between past and future, mind and matter. These are also existential dimensions, which all artists of living must act within.



Figure 1 Joseph Beuys: Eurasia-Staff 83 min fluxourm organum op. 39, 1967, 1968

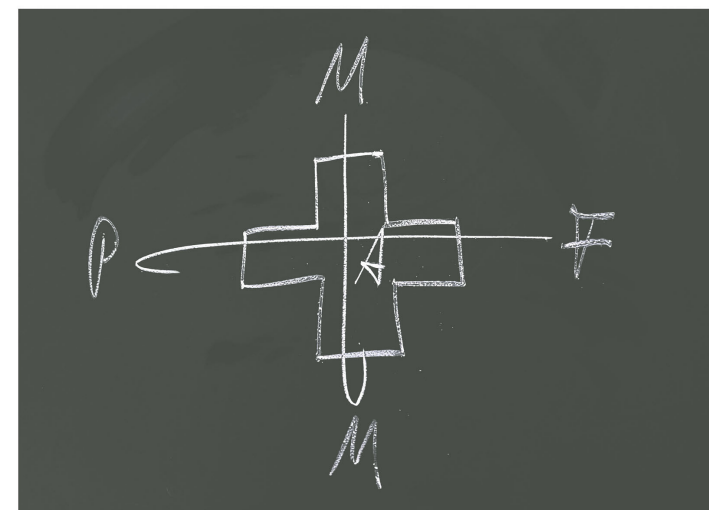


Figure 2 Diagram of the existential dimensions of art

Exercising Artistic Communication



Figure 3 Diagram of artistic communication



Figure 4 Joseph Beuys: How to Explain Pictures to a Dead Hare, 1965

Beuys silently sits before an exhibition of his drawings with a dead hare in his arms. His head is smeared with a mixture of honey and gold. This indicates the polarity of artistic thought, which moves between intuition and rationality. The action presents a contemplative dialogue between the artist and the animal. Beuys depicts artistic communication in a diagram where the active receiver (R) is concentrated to the sender (S), which can be anything - an animal, a person, an artwork etc. From there, the impressions reflect back upon the artist who is 'listening' with heart and mind.

The plastic movement of creativity

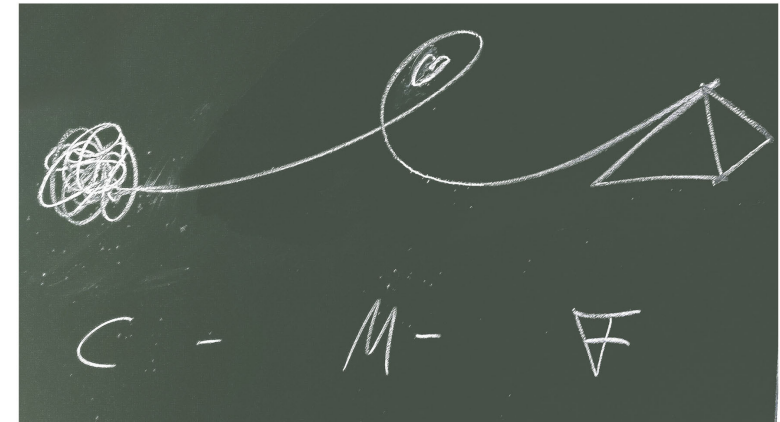


Figure 5 Beuys' diagram of the creative process. Chaos - movement - form: passionate artistic engagement between chaotic moments and achieved form

Artistic education seeks to realize these aspects of Beuys' art theory and art:

- Exercising **artistic communication** based on attentive perception
- Learning through **creative processes in artistic projects**
- Invoking the **existential dimensions** between mind (of artists/students) and matter (e.g. material, form), between past (e.g. art and cultural history) and future (creating artworks)
- Exercising **artistic thought** extending Beuys' polarity between intuition and rationality to:

Sensitive perception

Critical reflection

Personal imagination

Willpower

Skills

Head with a Story

Artistic Project
Class 8 Gymnasium

Figures 6 - 8 Student's work



We started with spontaneous drawings of heads. Comparing them with the real heads of the classmates led us to more accurate anatomic knowledge.



We imagined new head shapes by creating and interpreting random forms that inspired fantastical hybrid heads consisting of human and animal elements.



Chaos - movement - form: The students worked out their fantastical heads in a clay model. Observing natural objects from the biological collection of the school helped to realize detailed anatomic forms.



Figure 9 Michael Pacher: St. Augustine and the Devil, 1471 - 75



Figure 10 Orks



Figure 11 Darth Vader

During the work on the clay-heads we occasionally analyzed images of fantastical hybrid heads in art history and popular media, such as the devil and its modern incarnation in orks. These hybrid figures combine human and animal elements, while Darth Vader's mask consists of human, animal, and technical elements. These images provide the students with historical and contemporary contexts of their own work on hybrid heads.



Figures 12 - 18
End of phase 1 of the project:
Student's works, clay-heads



After finishing the clay-heads the students wrote a short story (alone or in groups) in which featured characters inspired by the heads. After this, they sketched out complete figures in dramatic scenes of the story. The second work phase of the project focused on 'figures in action'.

The sketches of the whole figures showed no action. We had to observe techniques used in dramatic images in order to develop strategies for their presentation. We discovered that baroque paintings used methods which are still influential in popular media, such as comic strips, film, and computer games.



Figure 19 Student's sketch of a whole figure



Figure 20 Caravaggio: The Calling of St. Mathew, 1599 -1600



Figure 21 Roland Deschain: Comic



Figures 22 - 25 Student's works



In this second phase of the project, the students developed scenes where their figures appeared in certain moments of the story. They used strategies to create drama such as emphasizing movement, the relation between figures, and the proximity of the action ('zoom'). The students now chose the medium - painting or digital montage. Often, they worked together in groups of two to four to let their figures interact in the scene.

Left above: Two digital montages

Left below: Two paintings (each 50 x 70 cm)

Learning in Artistic Projects

Artistic projects are a method of **creative learning**

They combine the act of **gathering knowledge** with the **creation** of a work

By creating artworks, students are challenged to work out their **own narratives** on a topic

The creative processes between chaos and form provoke the efforts of the **wholistic artistic thought**

- **Sensitive perception** of material, images, forms
- **Critical reflection** on personal intentions and relevant contexts

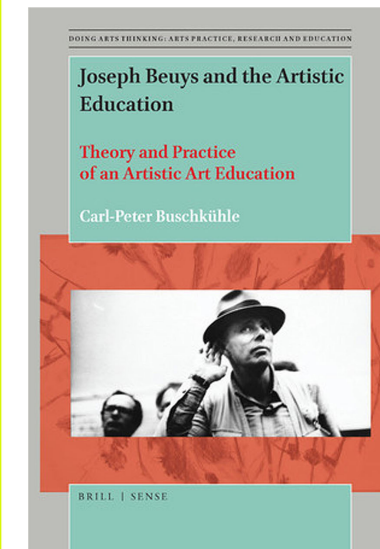
- **Personal imagination** of the work in progress

- **Willpower** to become responsible for and complete the work

- Developing **skills** to achieve solutions

By exercising creative thought and action, artistic education contributes to the **education of basic abilities** for a self-responsible art of living in contemporary societies of multitude.

More information on the theory and practice of artistic education based on Joseph Beuys' broadened concept of art can be found in this publication:



<https://brill.com/view/title/59388>

Figures

1 Joseph Beuys: Eurasian Staff, 1968, (<http://josphbeuysfanclub.files.wordpress.com/2018/02/beuys-eurasiensstab-1968.jpg>). Copyright VG Bildkunst, Bonn, 2019

2, 3, 5 Carl-Peter Buschkühle: Diagrams after Joseph Beuys

4 Joseph Beuys: How to Explain Pictures to a Dead Hare, 1965 (<http://www.ruedo.be/amarant09/duitsland/joseph-beuys-1921-1986/joseph-beuys-wie-man-dem-toten-hasen-die-bilder-erklart-1965/beuys09>). Copyright VG Bildkunst, Bonn 2019

6 - 8 Carl-Peter Buschkühle: Student's work

9 Michael Pacher: St. Augustine and the Devil, 1471 - 1475 (Imago, Humboldt-Universität Berlin, Institut für Kunst- und Bildgeschichte)

10 Orks from 'Lord of the Ring'
(<https://www.welt.de/img/kultur/kino/mobile145248346/8722501997-ci102l-w1024/Biblische-Spuren-in-Tolkiens-Herr-der-Ringe.jpg>)

11 Darth Vader from 'Star Wars' (<https://de.pinterest.com/kadeharman/darth-vader>)

12 - 18 Carl-Peter Buschkühle: Student's works, clay heads

19 Carl-Peter Buschkühle: Student's work, sketch of a whole figure

20 Caravaggio: The Calling of St. Mathew, 1599 - 1600 (HeidICON - Europäische Kunstgeschichte, Ruprecht-Karls-Universität Heidelberg, Universitätsbibliothek)

21 Roland Dschain Comic

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