

## **Wirtschaftswerte / Museumswerte**

**8. April – 18. June 2017, Opening 7. April 2017, 21:00**

An exhibition on the fiftieth anniversary of the Kunsthalle Düsseldorf on Grabbeplatz

**With Giovanni Anselmo, Art & Language, Bernd & Hilla Becher, Joseph Beuys, Marcel Broodthaers, Daniel Buren, Christo, Tony Cragg, Hanne Darboven, Braco Dimitrijević, Jim Dine, Hans-Peter Feldmann, Barry Flanagan, Lucio Fontana, Jef Geys, Gilbert & George, Hans Haacke, On Kawara (temporarily), Yves Klein, Imi Knoebel, Jannis Kounellis, Bernd Lohaus, Richard Long, Nam June Paik, Blinky Palermo, Panamarenko, Gerhard Richter, Dieter Roth, Andy Warhol and an intervention by Richard Venlet**

Since its founding in 1881, the Kunsthalle Düsseldorf along with the Kunstverein für die Rheinlande und Westfalen have been devoted to current artistic production. Contemporary modern art was the focus even at the original museum in its Classicist building. In addition to renowned artists such as Cézanne, van Gogh, Monet, Renoir, Rodin, Kirchner, Schmidt-Rottluff, Pechstein, Nolde, Kandinsky, and Matisse, the legendary Sonderbund exhibitions also took place at the museum in 1909 and 1911. In 1967 the building, which had been severely damaged in the war, was torn down and rebuilt as a brutalist concrete cube slightly set back on Grabbeplatz by the architects Konrad Beckmann and Christoph Brockes. On 30 April 2017, the Kunsthalle Düsseldorf will celebrate its fiftieth anniversary in the building.

From the beginning, the museum was conceived as an institution for very different and idiosyncratic exhibition formats, which have focused on an “expanded concept of art” and interdisciplinary approaches under the aegis of Karl Ruhrberg, Jürgen Harten, Marie-Luise Syring, Ulrike Groos, and myself. The museum has viewed itself both as a venue for the local scene and for international contemporary projects. In addition to legendary exhibition series such as *Prospect* (1968–1976), *between* (1969–1973), and *Compilation* (2003–2009), this is evidenced by solo exhibitions featuring Henry Moore (1968) and Edvard Munch (1969, 1978) along with the three-year projects *Kunsthalle BÜHNE* and *seitenlichtsaal* (2011–2013) as well as *Transfer Korea-NRW* (2013) and *SONG Dong* (2015).

Both the Kunstakademie Düsseldorf and the local art scene have always been present with exhibitions by artists such as Konrad Klapheck, Norbert Kricke, Fritz Schwegler, Katharina Sieverding, Nam June Paik, Günther Uecker, K. O. Götz, Gerhard Richter, Klaus Rinke, Sigmar Polke, Imi Knoebel, Bernd and Hilla Becher, Andreas Gursky, Reiner Ruthenbeck, Blinky Palermo, Katharina Grosse, Hans-Peter Feldmann, KRIWET, Tomma Abts, Tal R, Thomas Ruff, and most recently Rita McBride and *Schaf und Ruder/Wool and Water*.

The large number of over 500 exhibitions and some 2500 artists has had a significant influence on the institution’s identity as an exhibition venue for the latest contemporary art. In this anniversary year, against the background of the changing values during this period, it is worth reflecting on the art-historical significance of the programmatic and pioneering exhibitions that took place at the museum very early on and continue to take place today.

The first of a total of four programmatic exhibitions in this anniversary year bears the title *Wirtschaftswerte / Museumswerte* and explicitly examines the history of the Kunsthalle Düsseldorf since its reestablishment— one could say: *PROSPECTRETROSPECT* from today’s perspective as well as that of 1976. Movements and positions of exhibited works which were cutting-edge, experimental, and barely or not at all established at the time have now largely become part of the collections of international museums and thus canonized. The timeframe of this exhibition is the period from 1966 to 1981. In close collaboration with the Municipal

Museum of Contemporary Art in Ghent (S.M.A.K., reestablished in 1975, with its own building since 1999), we are presenting our selection as a kind of *musée imaginaire*. The point of departure is the artworks that uniquely reflect and document the “spirit” and the international connections that emerged from the Belgian and German art scenes within this generation of artists. The geostrategic situation of the Rhineland and its neighbors of the Netherlands and Belgium are a particular focus. Proximity along with differences, conceptual and sensory interests, and fruitful encounters between artists, gallerists, collectors, and institutions form the conceptual backdrop of the exhibition. Düsseldorf, Krefeld, Mönchengladbach, Leverkusen, and Cologne in Germany, and Eindhoven, Antwerp, Brussels, and Ghent to the west have engaged in a continual exchange. The reestablishment of galleries such as Wide White Space (1966 in Antwerpen) and exhibitions at Konrad Fischer Galerie (beginning in 1967 in Düsseldorf) were manifestations of this new orientation, friendly exchange, and productive collaboration.

The work that gives the exhibition its name is the installation *Wirtschaftswerte (Economic Values)* by Joseph Beuys, which was first shown in 1980 in Ghent in the exhibition *Art in Europe after 1968*. The work consists of packages of typical food products from East Germany on sparsely stocked, simple iron shelves as a counter-image to the surplus of products at supermarkets in the West—a critique of a society based on disposable goods and the misuse of resources that are essential to life, one of which Beuys believed was human creativity. The shelves are framed by classic paintings from the collection of the Museum Kunstpalast, which were created during Karl Marx’s lifetime.

With the exhibition *Wirtschaftswerte / Museumswerte*, the Kunsthalle Düsseldorf has temporarily become a venue for an exhibition of works from a museum collection. It thus also deals with the current question of status and perception in the profile of institutions with and without their own collection. The changes in values in museums, the art system, and society since the 1960s as well as the question of the critical approach to this history and its significance for artists play a crucial role for us. Over the past fifty years, a radical change has occurred in all areas of our society: the 1968 student movement, the collapse of the Eastern bloc, and the digital revolution are just three examples. Likewise, the boom in museums since around 1980 and major exhibitions such as *Westkunst, von hier aus*, and *Bilderstreit*, the marked increase in the “eventification” of culture, along with a boom in art fairs, biennales, and the new role of cultural sponsorship, the move of the federal government in Germany from the Rhineland to the new “creative center” of Berlin, and debates about a so-called victors’ art (Wolfgang Ullrich) and many other topics have ushered in a change in values that has barely been understood in all its dimensions, in which art is lent a rather negative connotation as a product, decoration, or an object of prestige or speculation: art = capital.

Like Marcel Broodthaers in his day and above all Joseph Beuys, today we aim to positively direct people’s gaze to the life-sustaining and healing qualities of the “nourishment or fuel” that is art in order to sensitize them to a more conscious approach to (these) valuable and value-building resources, especially in a time of increasingly senseless waste. With our foyer, which features palms and garden chairs decorated in the style of Broodthaers, the institution of the museum is once again camouflaged as a fake and questioned.

The artist and architect Richard Venlet from Brussels has developed a special grid for this exhibition as well as the preceding show in Ghent in 2014. With a shifted grid pattern on the floor – based on the mandatory lighting requirements intended to protect artworks exhibited in the Upper Hall at the Kunsthalle Düsseldorf – he has created a spatial intervention that calls for a new reading of the rectangular building and institutional system.

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