

der berühmte Abgesang auf seine Heimatstadt, wenn man es theatralisch mag: Chargesheimers Vermächtnis. War es am Anfang der melancholische Blick auf Straßen und Menschen, stimmen die Aufnahmen dieses finalen Werks nur noch depressiv: Eine gänzlich entvölkerte, aber verkehrsgerechte Stadt. Gespenstische Betonwüsten, Verkehrsinseln, Richtungspfeile – stumme Zeugen der vermeintlichen Moderne. Alles reine „Funktion und Funktionierung“.<sup>17</sup> Die perfekte Visualisierung von Alexander Mitscherlichs Diktum von der „Unwirtlichkeit der Städte“. Wolfgang Vollmer, der ein Vierteljahrhundert nach Chargesheimer dieselben Fluchten, Straßen, Perspektiven fotografiert, kommt in seinem Katalogbeitrag zu ähnlichen Schlüssen (313–315): Die Stadt ist nicht nur hoffnungslos hässlich und verbaut – „Köln bietet keine Freiräume mehr, optisch, atmosphärisch und inhaltlich.“

Resignation und die Furcht, den Zenit längst überschritten zu haben, quälen Chargesheimer. Dazu die Tatsache, dass Studentenbewegung, Hippie- und Popkultur drohen, ihm den Rang als Querdenker und Bohemien streitig zu machen. Er setzt seinem Leben in der Silvesternacht auf das Jahr 1972 ein abruptes Ende. Die Stadt Köln, die ihrem umtriebigen Sohn vermutlich mehr verdankt als ihr lieb ist, hat ihm ein zweifelhaftes Denkmal gesetzt: Den Chargesheimerplatz, ein Unplatz am Fuße der Domplatte, einer der schlimmsten Bausünden der 1960er Jahre. Eine Bronzeplatte erinnert dort an den Namensgeber Chargesheimer: „Photograph, Photolehrer, Bühnenbildner, Regisseur, Kinetiker, Maler, Publizist und Bildhauer“. Und zum guten Schluss: „Ein Kölner Multikünstler, der seiner Zeit voraus war.“

Wem das zum Erinnern oder Entdecken nicht reicht, bekommt dank des hier besprochenen Katalogbandes endlich ein wissenschaftlich fundiertes sowie reich illustriertes Standardwerk zu Chargesheimer an die Hand, das seinem Stellenwert gerecht wird.

RÜDIGER MÜLLER

Köln

<sup>17</sup> Chargesheimer. In: Katalog photokina 1970, S. 8. Zit. nach: Im Auftrag der Photokina: Chargesheimer. In: Kultur, Technik und Kommerz. Die photokina Bilderschaufen 1950–1980; Köln 1990, S. 109.

**Heike Fuhlbrügge: Joseph Beuys und die anthropologische Landschaft;** Berlin: Dietrich Reimer Verlag 2008; 265 S., 66 Abb.; ISBN 978-3496013723; € 49,00

Joseph Beuys was prescient in his awareness of the social, political and economic costs of unrestricted capitalist „development“ of natural resources; one can say with certitude that at this point in history most nations acknowledge that a continuation of our current exploitation of natural resources and disregard of its environmental costs would bring about consequences on an apocalyptic scale. Heike Fuhlbrügge’s ambitious book sets out to examine Beuys’ complicated views on the relation of man to nature, a topic that is central to any argument regarding Beuys’ continuing relevance to art and culture in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Fuhlbrügge chooses to limit the scope of her

analysis to the subject of landscape and to the medium of drawing. In focusing on landscape-as-nature as subject matter – an iconographical element that spans all of art history – she signals her intent to trace the elaborate web of historical references and sources that Beuys wove together in his art over several decades. In particular the book promises to examine two general historical figures of natural science that Beuys took up explicitly in his art and in his voluminous commentary on his own art: Leonardo and Goethe. Fuhlbrügge understands these two towering figures as representative of two eras in intellectual history, that of the Renaissance and of German Romanticism or, as she calls it, German Idealism.

The project the book undertakes is then an important one, as it should make a case for Beuys' importance well into the future. However in its scope the book also sets a very high level of expectation, since it enters an area of Beuys Studies that has previously been examined in brilliant, focused studies of the intricacies of Beuys' drawings (Dieter Koepplin), of Beuys' relation to Leonardo's conjoining of art and scientific investigation (Martin Kemp and Ann Temkin), and of Beuys' complex relation to German Romanticism (Theodora Vischer). While this book clearly intends to take a tack that differs from these earlier studies and to offer a wider scope of historical analysis, references to these important precedents are sparse; the author would have benefited from using this extraordinary literature as more of a point of departure for her own analysis.

The book spends most of its time examining the parallels between historical figures, many of them ancient or other than Leonardo and Goethe, and Beuys' own ideas and theory. Using Beuys' own term Fuhlbrügge also traces how Beuys „expanded“ upon these ideas to formulate his own late-20<sup>th</sup>-century notions about the relation of man to nature, and to press for the need for fundamental ideological change on the issue. Generally the project is a good one and it raises a topic that is indeed central to Beuys' art. In execution however the book often falls short in its analysis. As is frequently the case in the Beuys literature the author takes the artist too much at his own word, for example, in terms of the analogies to Renaissance and Romantic notions of nature that are to be found in his works and statements. As a result this book smoothes over the radical difference between, for example, the intellectual context of Leonardo in 15<sup>th</sup>-century Florence and that of Beuys in West Germany, and how these contexts shaped their respective and vastly different understanding of the category of landscape, let alone other more complex notions like „nature“ or „science“. Enormous differences in intellectual history are leveled, and the result is something like a relativistic historical soup. The author also does not address the fact that by means of the arcane historical references with which Beuys peppered his artworks, he deliberately fashioned himself to be an intellectual heir to these largely premodern European legacies of the artist/scientist; as Fuhlbrügge states, „Beuys wants to be for his time what Leonardo was for his.“ (p. 46). This is, of course, an utter impossibility.

Beuys was in the end very interested in the medium of drawing itself. This formalist aspect of Beuys' connection to early artist-scientists is not examined in the book;

as Kemp and others have already pointed out, Beuys was certainly fascinated by the format of the notebook as a medium where art and scientific ruminations on nature had often been brought together, even by other modernists such as Paul Klee. Although the book tells us it will focus on Beuys' drawings, we don't spend much time with individual works by Beuys or his chosen predecessors until the final sections of the book. The passages on Beuys' direct response to Leonardo in his multiple *Codices Madrid*, for example, does not contain any images, and we learn only later in the book that certain Beuys drawings discussed in other sections of the text are included in Beuys' *Codices Madrid*. Several fascinating watercolors and a painting in hare's blood are analyzed but without comment on their medium or why they are included in this study. Exceedingly difficult to penetrate, Beuys' diagrammatic, Rorschach-like drawings invite purely iconographic readings that are anchored in Beuys' titles for these works. Fuhlbrügge keeps to this approach. Nevertheless the passages on the drawings *2x schwangere Frau* (1954) or the bizarre *Entpuppung* (1957) offer fascinating possible readings of Beuys' treatment of the female nude, in its connection to Renaissance notions or to Goethe's early 19<sup>th</sup>-century notion of the *Urform* in his studies of morphology.

Fuhlbrügge formulates the term „anthropological landscape“ as the central analytical category or tool for her study. She extrapolates the term from Beuys, and defines it as „an observation of nature which substantially contains the fundamental experiences of human life“ (p. 13). It is regrettable that she dismisses the notion of the *anthropomorphized* landscape, a term which would have been less flattening to her analysis but which she discards in favor of a „more comprehensively Beuysian conception of man and landscape/nature“ (p. 17). This slippery Beuysian notion enables the author to shuttle between vastly different eras in intellectual and scientific history as though they were in the end very much like our own modern world. The result does not really bring together highly varied philosophical understandings of landscape throughout history. Rather, even tangential ideas of the past (often read through the prism of secondary literature) are related to Beuys' because it is claimed that Beuys „expands“ them. One does wonder if in fact some of these notions aren't fully transformed in conforming them to both modern ideas and to Beuys' totalizing art theory. For example, Fuhlbrügge discusses the ancient relational framework of macro- and microcosm that Leonardo famously takes up, in his Codex II, in order to conceive the human body as a model for nature, the „body of the earth“ (one could think of it as relating landscape to physiology). Thus in his sketched maps, rivers of the landscape then become like blood vessels. She maintains that like Beuys, Leonardo connected art and science in his project of making the invisible apparent, which she reads in his artistic interest in the human tendency to find images and figures within abstract patterns, which she further believes is analogous to „écriture automatique“ (38; 44–6). She quotes Beuys in speaking of the Irish landscape: „What interests me was the psychology that is embedded in physiology.“ Fuhlbrügge then finds a correspondence between Beuys' poetic fathoming of the psyche of both nature and of mankind and what she calls Leonardo's „anthropological investigations.“ One

can say with confidence that Leonardo had no notion of the human psyche or the unconscious underlying the materiality of the human body as characterizes 20<sup>th</sup>-century thought since Freud. One should also say that Beuys' lyrical ascribing of an unconscious to nature is far removed from Leonardo's materially-based observations and drawings. Fuhlbrügge makes a similar leap in ascribing a psychologizing content or concern to the Romantic study of morphology as Goethe or Schelling pursued it when she states, „Morphological transformation could be carried over to human consciousness“ (182).

These types of conflation occur most often in long, abstract and philosophical passages that make no direct reference to any artworks, and one loses a connection to the artworks in question or, sometimes, to the subject of landscape. Nonetheless some of the historical examples of the cultural engagement with the landscape that Fuhlbrügge has discovered are fascinating almost for their own sake: fifteenth-century stories and depictions, found in sources such as Jean de Meun's *Roman de la Rose*, of the allegorical figure of nature appearing before a judge to lodge her complaints against the growing pursuit of mining; or Alexander von Humboldt's early meteorological ruminations on the effects of world weather on human consciousness in his *Kosmos* of 1845. Yet when actual drawings are discussed, some observations are baffling: two generally unarticulated oval areas at the lower edge of Beuys' abstract work *Gey-sir* (1947) are read as a reference to the female figure and emblem of Natura, for example, or, a vertical form with two triangles is read as a „stylized flower.“ It is sometimes difficult to locate the relations and references the author reads in these Beuys drawings.

The book tends toward an over-determined reading of almost all of Beuys' drawings, even the most arcane, as reflections of his theory of social sculpture. How much more interesting it would have been to consider these remarkable works as evidence of Beuys' restless intellect discovering these other thinkers, or his working-through of certain technical and artistic strategies of these great artist-scientists of history.

One is also left with the implication that Beuys sought to revive earlier and fully obsolete – i.e. non-empirical, anti-scientific and premodern- notions about natural science or evolution. If he did, then he truly was a quack, as his most vocal critics have insisted. I think that Beuys fully acknowledged that Leonardo and Goethe's views on natural science were rooted firmly in the past and cannot simply be taken up again in our empirical age. His interest was rather in contrasting earlier, holistic notions of man's place within nature with our own in order to foreground the shortcomings of postwar ideology. Beuys pointed to certain aspects of premodern science in order to argue for the immediate implementation of ecological change, both socially and politically.

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