

Exhibition: *Joseph Beuys. Multiples*
IVAM – Centre Julio González
28 February – 25 May 2008

Organized by: Kunstmuseum Bonn
Institut Valencià d'Art Modern

Curators: Pilar Ribal and Christoph Schreier

This exhibition, organized by the Kunstmuseum Bonn in collaboration with the IVAM, presents about 100 works by Joseph Beuys (1921–1986), including all kinds of objects and materials, photographs, engravings and prints, using a great variety of supports and techniques, together with sound recordings and films. These works are multiples, meaning that they were produced in editions, producing a total of over 300 different items. The many combinations of multiples which Joseph Beuys made during his life provide a concentration of the aims and creative activity of this visionary German artist, one of the most influential artists of the twentieth century, and they bring out the philosophical basis of his thinking on art, society and politics. The exhibition catalogue includes illustrations of the works exhibited, together with essays by the former Director of the Kunstmuseum Bonn, Dieter Ronte, a Jesuit priest who was a friend of Beuys, Friedhelm Mennekes, the curators of the exhibition, Christoph Schreier, currently Deputy Director of the Kunstmuseum Bonn, and Pilar Ribal, art historian and critic, an interview with Joseph Beuys by Jörg Schellmann and a biographical and bibliographic section.

The exhibition *Joseph Beuys. Multiples* covers five thematic areas. The first includes items representative of his personal mythology, such as the felt suit or the sled. It also show the part played by drawing as an instrument of reflection and it focuses on key issues such as his sacramental view of nature or his preference for materials that could be transformed.

The second area concentrates on an essential idea in Joseph Beuys's artistic aims: the transformation of energy as an analogy of society's capacity for change and healing. He used warm materials which changed when exposed to heat, such as fat, honey, wax, oil or metal, not only to show his rejection of the idea of art as merchandise but also because of their suitability for representing transmission and reception as a natural phenomenon comparable to social processes.

The works covered by the third thematic area document actions which Beuys performed in the natural environment and which were directly connected with the emergence of ecological awareness and his spiritual view of nature. The use of various agricultural implements and animals (such as the hare, with which he identified) and the value he attached to trees, plants and natural substances such as water, oil or wine give his work an ethical dimension that goes beyond the bounds of art.

The fourth area concentrates on Beuys as a social reformer. His opposition to political forces by means of intellectual activities (writing, teaching, giving talks and so on) explains the extensive use of magazines, newspapers and printed "promotional" material in his work and justifies the introduction of the economic variable which determines the balance of forces in society.

The fifth and last thematic area, focusing on his films, refers to Beuys as actor (performer) and speaker, providing valuable testimony of his activity, life and work. His concerts, conversations and sit-ins, his personal view of the art world and also memories of those he admired (such as the film director Ingmar Bergman, his friend Klaus Staeck, the publisher, or the Korean artist Nam June Paik) provide a conclusion for this exhibition which sets out to accomplish a profound observation of the world of this artist who made his work a veritable "mission".