

One day in 1967 there was a knock at my door. I opened it and in front of me was a man wearing a hat. I knew a little bit about Beuys, but not much – he wasn't so familiar to me at the time, and became famous only later through the Mönchengladbach exhibition. He stood there and said rather directly, 'I'm here because I want you to become the new professor of architecture in Düsseldorf'.¹

The rather unusual circumstances of this unexpected encounter between the German artist Joseph Beuys and the Viennese architect Hans Hollein were still fresh in the architect's memory almost four decades later. It was a meeting that would indeed result in Hollein taking up a professorship at the Kunstakademie Düsseldorf, and later would prompt the commission of what is probably his most important building, the Museum Abteiberg in Mönchengladbach, which won Hollein the Reynolds Memorial Award in 1984 and largely influenced his Pritzker Architecture Prize in 1985. The story of this new museum is a complex one, and hinges on a synergy between three men: Hollein, Beuys and Johannes Cladders.

Today, alongside Andy Warhol, Beuys is seen as arguably the most significant artist of the second half of the twentieth century. Yet in 1967, when he so forthrightly rapped his knuckles on the door of Hollein's apartment in Vienna, only insiders in the Düsseldorf art scene really knew about him. In Austria he was more shadowy still. A selection of his work had been shown at the avant-garde Galerie nächst St Stephan in Vienna in November 1966 – a little-noticed and small exhibition of rather fragile sketches that received mixed reviews, largely because Austrian critics were expecting something more visceral from the 'Düsseldorfer Happening-Professor'.² But when Beuys returned to the same gallery four months later, on 1 March 1967, he did not disappoint. Accompanied by the music of Henning Christiansen, his performance, *Eurasiensstab 82 min Fluxorum Organum*, captivated its audience, among them three of the best-known Vienna Aktionists – Hermann Nitsch, Günther Brus and Otto Muehl – as well as Hollein's friend and sometime collaborator Walter Pichler. A repeat showing would take place during an international symposium at the gallery in July later that same year.

These performances were instigated by Oswald Oberhuber, who had recently taken over the running of the Galerie nächst St Stephan on behalf of the gallery's founder, the charismatic Catholic priest Monsignor Otto Mauer. While Mauer had stepped back from the day-to-day aspects of his avant-garde venue, he was nonetheless still interested in the new directions that art practices were taking, and would often act as an interpreter for speakers at its various openings. Among these new practices, Beuys's work especially appealed because of its Catholic iconography. As Mauer succinctly explained, 'it is thus the spiritual element and not the material that makes art'.³

It was also through the Galerie nächst St Stephan that Beuys first came across Hollein, who was a frequent visitor, organiser and exhibitor. Mauer, in his more conventional priestly guise, had even officiated at Hollein's wedding to Helene Jenewein in 1966, and Oberhuber was godfather to their first child, Max, born in 1969. It appears that the German artist explicitly sought out Hollein to support

Triptych for an Ideal Museum

Hollein, Beuys
and Cladders

Eva Branscome

his own increasingly tenuous situation at the Düsseldorf Kunstakademie. Problems had started there in 1965 when the faculty nominated him for the academy's directorship. A large majority of tutors voted in support, but Paul Mikat, culture minister for North Rhine-Westphalia, vetoed the appointment. He had not forgotten Beuys's anarchic performance at the Technical University in Aachen during the Festival der Neuen Kunst on 20 July 1964 – coincidentally the twentieth anniversary of the attempted assassination of Adolf Hitler – which had caused public outrage. One indignant young member of the audience had even come onto the stage and punched Beuys

full in the face. The now iconic photograph by Heinrich Riebesehl shows the artist, blood running from his nose to form a small ersatz moustache, with a crucifix held aloft in his left hand, like a sacred chalice, and his right arm outstretched. In a written statement to Hans Schwippert, then still the director of the Kunstakademie, Beuys wrote that the gesture alluded to his work on 'death and resurrection', but to Schwippert and everybody else it simply looked like the *Führer* making a Nazi salute.⁴

Bruised but also buoyed by the uproar surrounding not only his Aachen performance but his failed bid to become director of the Kunstakademie, by 1967 Beuys had become increasingly interested in politics. On 21 June that year he formed the *Deutsche Studentenpartei* (German Student Party) calling for the abolition of Germany's state-run institutions and even of the state at large, in the process branding his collective not so much a party as an *Antipartei*. These political ideals of freedom and self-government were intimately connected to his mission as a teacher, and he considered his political and didactic self inseparable from his activities as an artist. Hosting his more professorial duties, the academy, he argued, should be freely accessible to all as a place of study, and students should have a voice and indeed voting rights in questions relating to admissions and the appointment of professors.

A former student, Johannes Stüttgen, remembers Beuys holding forth on a completely new status for art. 'For him', Stüttgen wrote, 'art seemed to include literally everything: himself, directly, as a person, his conduct, every situation of consequence, every object with which he came into contact and especially the work of his students'. He went on to suggest that for Beuys, 'art was not only a subject to teach or the name given to a defined area of activity, but was a right. And nothing was exempt from its reach'.⁵ Clearly Beuys's manner of teaching was messianic and deeply seductive, instilling an exhilarating sense of the possibilities for autonomy. Yet it was also evident that his ideas were essentially concerned with destabilising the same academic environment in which he was working, and so in this sense were bound to induce some kind of instant, local response.

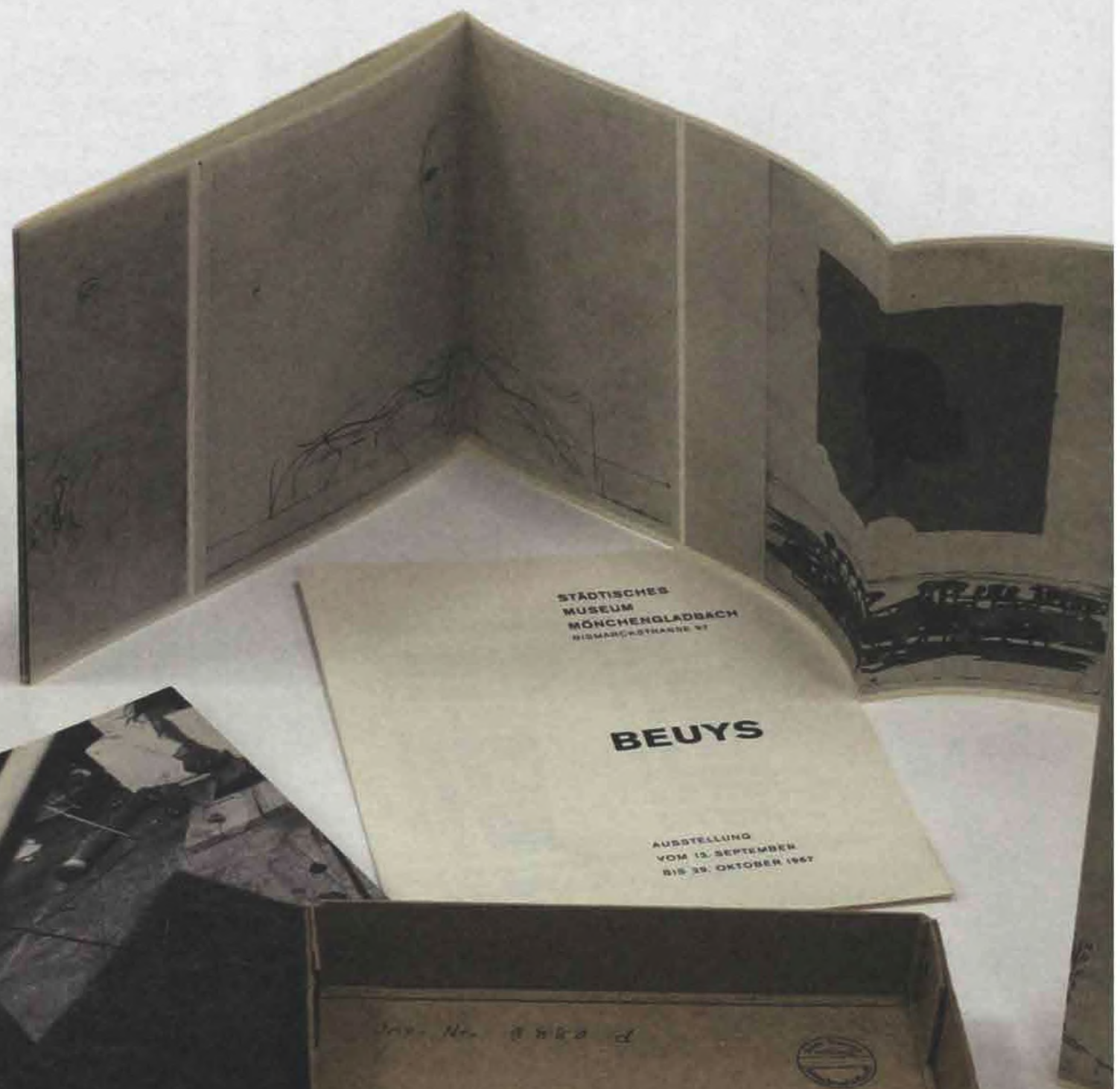
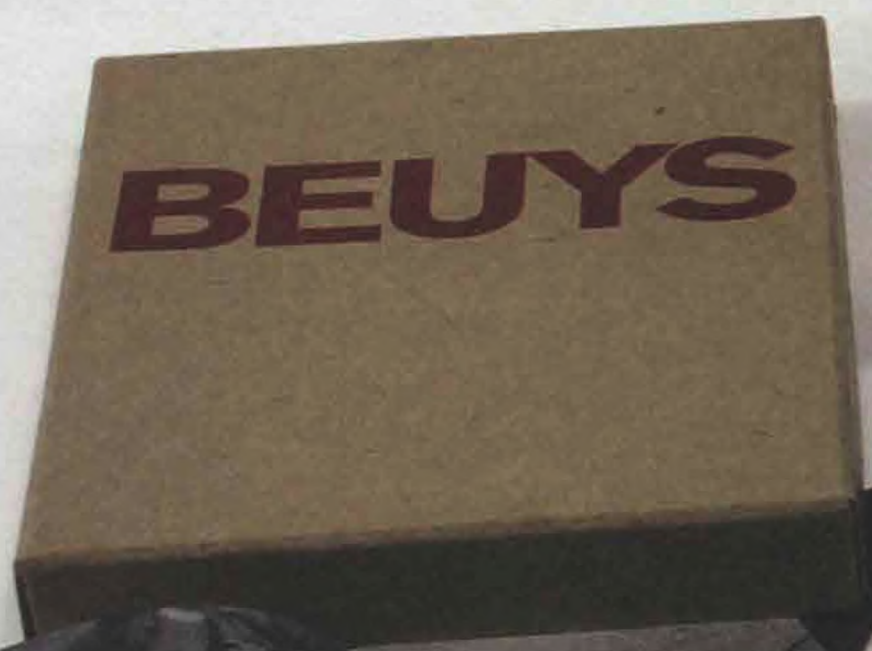
Anthem to these ideas was Beuys's famous slogan, 'everyone is an artist', which found an immediate echo in Hollein's declaration, 'everything is architecture', and which signalled to Beuys that he had found a kindred spirit, ally and lifelong friend.⁶ Hollein's own journey to this point had followed a similar path. He too had launched his public persona with a performance of his own manifesto, *Zurück*

Marcel Duchamp,
Boîte-en-Valise, 1940–41
© University of Iowa Museum of Art



*Amis, mes articles de quincaillerie
parviennent, nous recommandons un
sujet qui a arrêté de visiter
quand on ne l'écrit pas.
C'est toute la nuit.
L'avez-vous de passage de
passage.
Il faut dire
La course des lymphes, et
non le sacre du printemps.
Le système
temps bleu.
Les bus en
Il amenez
Tels et ra*





STÄDTISCHES
MUSEUM
MÖNCHENGLADBACH
RISMARCKSTRASSE 97

BEUYS

AUSSTELLUNG
VOM 13. SEPTEMBER
BIS 29. OKTOBER 1967



Inv. No. 8888 d



zur Architektur, in a packed room in Monsignor Mauer's gallery on 1 February 1962. Though a number of progressive artists connected with the gallery were less than convinced of architecture's ability to crossover with art, Mauer was captivated by what he saw. Hollein was immediately given the opportunity to follow up with a three-day exhibition, for which he enrolled the help of his friend Pichler. Titled 'Hans Hollein, Walter Pichler, Architektur: Work in Progress', the show opened in May 1963. As Hollein recalled, people stormed the space, provoking an explosive response, both for and against – 'there were even people who stamped on our models and we were physically attacked'.⁷

More than his models, however, it was Hollein's drawings, collages and written manifestos that seemed to rethink the scope of architecture, expanding its definition to include rocket science, transport infrastructure, ancient structures, religious rituals, politics, the human body, suffering and sex. Vienna's architectural establishment, then still largely in the grip of a rather dour form of international style functionalism, interpreted these provocations as a threat, and effectively blacklisted Hollein; even professors at the city's three main architecture schools forbade their students from attending any events associated with this maverick artist-architect.

Hollein's response was to escape to the US, working as a visiting professor at Washington University in St Louis in 1963–64 and again in 1966, in addition to more intermittent appointments at Yale, before returning to Europe in 1967 to take up his Düsseldorf professorship.⁸ In America he found people far more appreciative of his work and ideas, and was quickly able to navigate through the upper echelons of the art and architectural establishment without the need for any public provocations. Along the way, he befriended Philip Johnson and Claes Oldenburg, and shortly afterwards (thanks no doubt to his new associates) the Museum of Modern Art in New York started acquiring his drawings and models – among them the celebrated *Aircraft Carrier City in Landscape* collage. At the same time his frequent forays back to Vienna saw him complete his first substantive architectural project, the Retti candle shop, on a city plot just 4m wide. He also began co-editing the newly relaunched *Bau* magazine, alongside Oswald Oberhuber, Günther Feuerstein and several others. And it was an issue of *Bau* in 1968 that provided the main forum for his celebrated manifesto, *Alles ist Architektur* (Everything is Architecture), in which the ideas he had been developing since the early 1960s were suddenly made overt through a combination of striking pop images and subversive written content.

Meanwhile, following the success of the 'Work in Progress' exhibition, the Galerie nächst St Stephan started to shift its curatorial programme and become both more daring and more inclusive, largely due to the influence of Oberhuber. Recognising that Vienna's art and architecture world was tight-knit, incestuous and infested with intrigue and strife, the gallery deliberately moved away from the *Art Informel* it had consistently fostered. Significantly, in addition to Beuys and Hollein, among the artists Oberhuber exhibited were the Viennese Aktionists, ending their long exclusion from the art scene. Perhaps the only surprise and slight disappointment at their opening event was that they managed to keep their clothes on, a case of extreme self control for a group renowned for their frequent violation of decency laws.

By 1967, then, the Viennese arts scene had taken on a whole new character, but in Düsseldorf, too, the situation was changing. At the Kunstakademie Hollein quickly proved to be

a faithful and supportive ally of Beuys, and the two were very much committed to the cross-fertilisation of their respective practices. Interestingly, even if he was nominally professor of architecture, Hollein's promotion to this role was secured by votes that came disproportionately from the artists in the school, rather than the architects. As Agatha Buslei-Wuppermann has noted, the architectural faculty were in fact extremely sceptical about the appointment, with very few of them even aware of Hollein's work and ideas. 'A member of the appointment committee, who had clearly never heard the name before, is said to have leafed through Hollein's application and asked whether he had ever built anything as high as two storeys.'⁹

Yet this lack of recognition was not unique to Hollein. Even Beuys's own students were not especially familiar with his work, despite the fact that he had been teaching at the academy since 1961 – but things were about to change.¹⁰ In 1967 Beuys was given his first retrospective exhibition, an event that would immediately make him the anointed champion of the avant-garde, not only in Germany but internationally. This took place in the local museum in Mönchengladbach, an industrial town close to Düsseldorf that was known for its football team but certainly not for its art. The museum had existed since the turn of the century, but a new director had recently taken over – an ambitious middle-aged curator called Johannes Cladders.

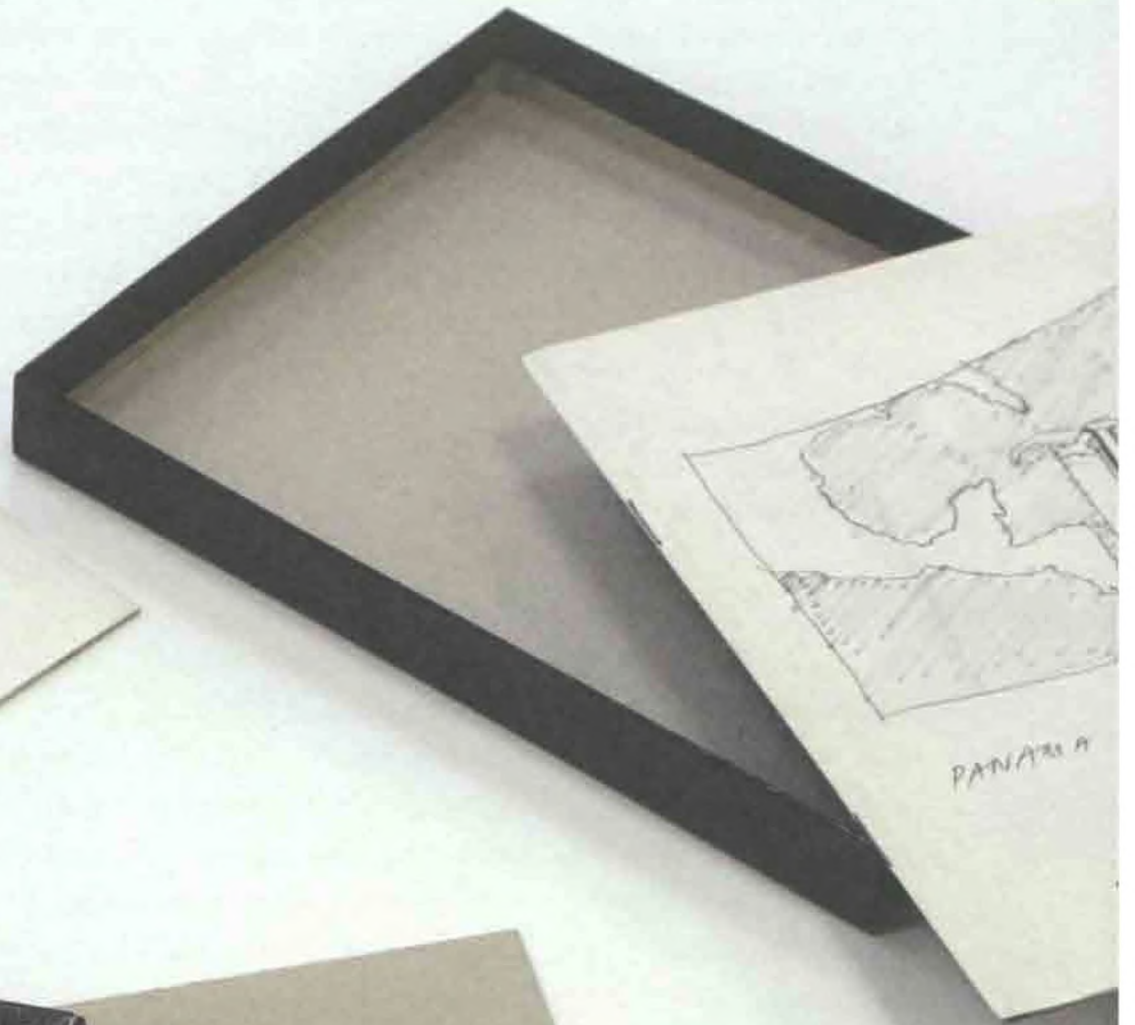
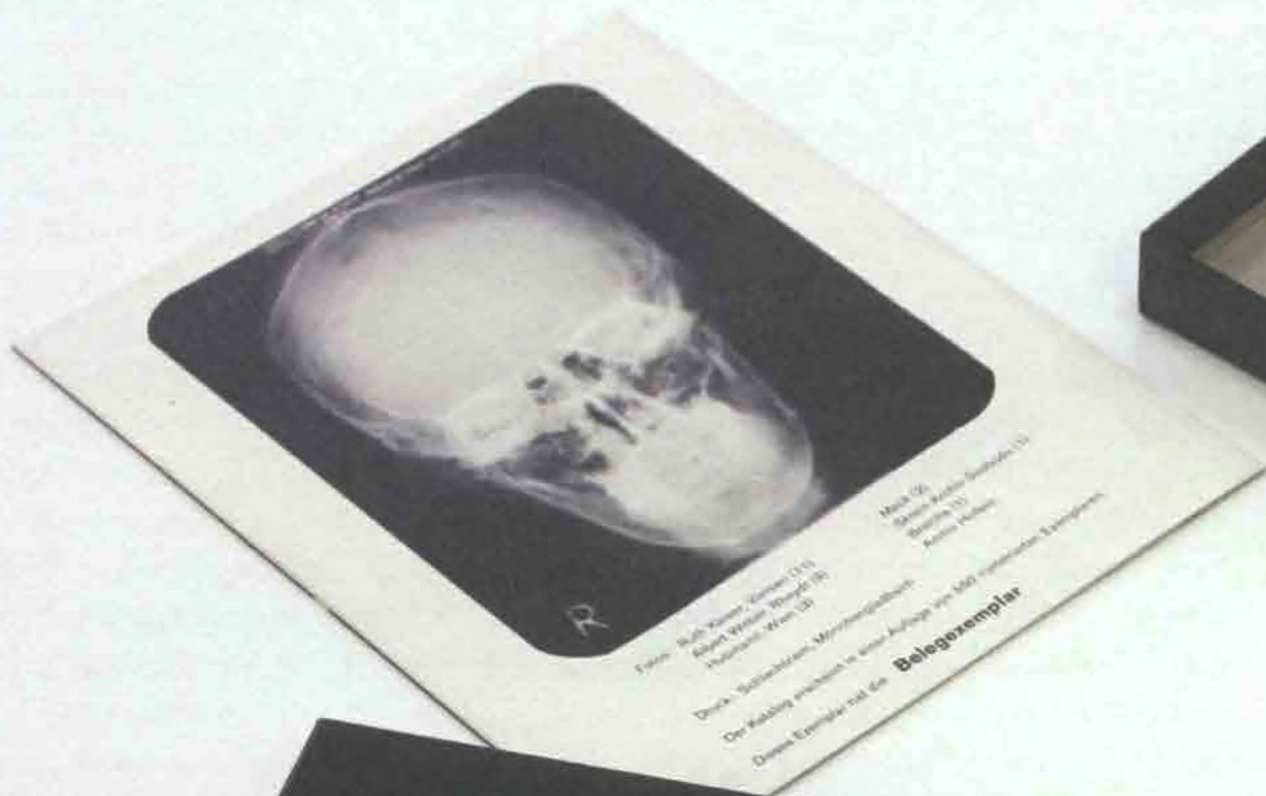
The museum building Cladders inherited had been constructed at the end of the nineteenth century as the private residence of Oskar Kühlen, a successful printer who specialised in Catholic devotional cards. Following Kühlen's death, it had been donated to the town in 1924 for the purpose of housing its local museum until a more appropriate purpose-built structure could be provided. But somehow no such building ever materialised and the museum remained in Kühlen's former home. Cladders described it like this:

Neo-gothic, creaking floorboards, a smell of sauerkraut that seeped down from the caretaker's room in the attic, and a collection reminiscent of a kind of Wunderkammer. There was a sampling of local history, an excellent collection of ancient Coptic textiles as well as stocks of liturgical vestments and a few old sculptures from the Lower Rhine, alongside more recent works by local artists and a small but fine selection of German expressionist drawings and paintings that had been acquired with modest means by Dattenberg after the war, and enhanced by a more recent Kaesbach donation with works by Heinrich Nauen.¹¹ Dattenberg had also already begun to collect contemporary art. So overall a mixed bag, although decidedly less extensive and significant than the collection at Krefeld, which I not only knew but even loved.¹²

While Cladders openly embraced the eclectic assemblage of objects, he was not nearly so delighted at the prospect of having to organise exhibitions in a two-storey, four-bedroom bourgeois townhouse. He had even complained about this at his job interview, pointedly asking about the likelihood of a new building. In this, though, he was pushing at what was already an open door, since the Kühlen residence had always been considered merely a temporary venue, and clearly needed to be expanded and improved. But as some compensation for these architectural constraints, Cladders enjoyed a large degree of independence, being answerable only to the mayor and town clerk. He also quickly developed a solution to the limited space, typically using one floor of the house for the display of the museum's

permanent collection, and the other as a gallery for contemporary shows. Sometimes he even packed up and stored all of the mismatched items in the permanent collection so that he

Joseph Beuys,
exhibition box catalogue, 1967
Photo Uwe Riedel
© Museum Abteiberg, Mönchengladbach



*make us experience these things as part of life, just as he sees his own life as a work of art. This is an idea that runs through the art of this century, from Marcel Duchamp to Yves Klein, yet no one else has made it as concrete as Beuys.*²¹

Empowered by these ideas, Beuys stuffed the museum still further. Blobs of grease were offered up as artefacts, as were hair balls, toenail clippings, a dead rat, a pack of rancid butter, a chocolate Easter bunny, plastic toys (including an Etch-a-Sketch) and an old withered sausage. In many ways, by celebrating this detritus as art, he was critiquing both the institution of the museum in general and the Mönchengladbach museum in particular, highlighting its perplexing mix of important pieces from modern art alongside the cultural relics of a local history. At the same time, he treated the museum like any other object, accepting it as a found thing, not changing it in any obvious sense, and so exposing all of its inadequacies to a viewing public. Busso Diekamp, a local councillor responsible for culture, witnessed the whole installation, and immediately began to worry that the whole thing was going to blow up in their faces.²²

Meanwhile, Cladders was desperate for his first big show to be well received, and so to attract a wider audience he ingeniously scheduled the opening to coincide with the Cologne Art Fair. He must have therefore been pleased to get pre-orders for the box catalogues even before the show was up and running. But he could not have anticipated what would happen next. On the first evening, before the doors opened, Cladders took Beuys, Monsignor Mauer, the art collector Karl Stöher and a few others out to a local restaurant. As they walked back to the museum they found 600 people already queuing to get in. Busso Diekamp need not have worried. Art lovers, collectors, critics and gallerists seemed to have flocked to Mönchengladbach from all over Germany, immediately straining the capacity of the modest house-sized museum. Those waiting outside were soon only permitted entry in small groups, and then only after others had first exited.²³ All 330 of the box catalogues, which included bijou felt rectangles with a painted brown cross hand-produced by Beuys, sold out. The following day several of them were being offered for resale at the Cologne Art Fair at a huge mark-up. Mass dissemination was instant.²⁴

Cladders' anxiety about attracting a suitable audience – a fear immediately assuaged by the vast crowds – was matched by pre-show nerves about the possibility that the strongly Catholic iconography adopted by Beuys would give offence to the town's good *bürgers* and municipal bureaucrats. And so to defuse any possible outrage he invited Monsignor Mauer to come all the way from Vienna to give the opening speech. While most of the visitors on that first night were younger people from the Cologne and Düsseldorf art scene – among them the now notable artists Gerhard Richter and Sigmar Polke, who would exhibit their own work in Mönchengladbach in 1974 and 1983 respectively – photographs of the evening show a more staid group of older onlookers, leaning back in their chairs or standing in the aisles, their arms crossed defensively across their chests and their brows furrowed. Perhaps their stiffness was merely an expression of their incomprehension, because in his speech Mauer celebrated Beuys's work through a kind of homily that combined an engaged reading of artistic truth with aspects of eucharistic theology:

There is a deep inner sufficiency that emanates from the artwork, a spiritual sufficiency, a spiritual reality that stirs us and touches us deep down; there is a correspondence here. And it is from this correspondence,

*ladies and gentlemen, that we live. From the correspondence between the dawning of being and human gnosis, human knowledge. From the correspondence between the ultimate goodness of being and the striving to fulfil our desire for perfection, for self-perfection, which holds out the promise that we may yet become human, though we are all fragments, all half-human. And so it is in the aesthetic realm. This splendour, this lustre of the aesthetic, gives us a deep certainty regarding an ultimate meaning. So when I see these things that Beuys offers us, that he annoys and torments us with, then I would like to say: Ecce homo, here is a true human being. And because he still suffers under these things and under the condition of being human, then we permit him to annoy us and attack us; for his exhibition is an act of aggression.*²⁵

At the opening, this simultaneously disarming and insightful speech was broadcast through a tannoy system to a crowd of people who weren't able to find a seat inside. The response was so eager and receptive that the speech became a kind of installation in its own right, recorded and then played back twice a day for the duration of the exhibition. There was even a demand for a printed transcript – satisfied a year later when it appeared in a publication that celebrated the museum's activities since Cladders had taken over.²⁶

By the time the Beuys show closed, on schedule, precisely 37 days after its opening, it had been visited by 2,679 people.²⁷ The town of Mönchengladbach breathed a huge sigh of relief (an anonymous note delivered to the museum announced that 'Gladbach is looking forward to the 29 October 1967 when this exhibition will be closed'),²⁸ but for most it was an unqualified triumph, not least for its 46-year old artist, who was immediately propelled into international stardom, and for Cladders, now hailed as an exciting new museum director. In the *Frankfurter Rundschau* a piece by Peter Iden noted:

*That Johannes Cladders, who has just taken over the museum in Mönchengladbach, started his tenure with this exhibition, speaks volumes for his decisiveness; as do the first pieces of a collection (by Yves Klein, Fontana, Tinguely, Arman – all of good quality), that he wants to build up gradually. One would hope that he gets the support – not least from the town – that he needs and deserves. In Mönchengladbach contemporary art could find a new showcase.*²⁹

And indeed, as director of this new showcase, Cladders would go on to mine an incredibly rich seam of then little-known artists. A list of exhibitors gives some idea of the sheer density: Erwin Heerich in 1967; Bernd and Hilla Becher, Carl Andre in 1968; Hanne Darboven, George Brecht, Robert Filliou, Panamarenko, Piero Manzoni in 1969; Hans Hollein, Richard Long, Stanley Brouwn in 1970; Daniel Buren, Jasper Johns, Marcel Broodthaers in 1971; Reiner Ruthenbeck, Jan J Schoonhoven in 1972; Palermo, Ulrich Rückriem, Lawrence Weiner in 1973; Gerhard Richter in 1974; Braco Dimitrievic, Joel Fisher, Daniel Buren in 1975; Jonas Hafner in 1976; Giulio Paolini, James Lee Byars, Gorgona, Georg Ettl in 1977; John Cage, Jannis Kounellis in 1978.

As Iden indicates, in addition to hosting these exhibitions, Cladders rode the success of the Beuys retrospective by building up the museum's permanent collection, focusing in particular on Dadaism and Constructivism. One especially important piece was Duchamp's *Boîte-en-Valise*, a second edition, from 1940–41, of the celebrated 'box in a suitcase' first produced by the artist as a miniature version of his portfolio during his 1938 visit to the US. Cladders explained its acquisition by suggesting that no other work was able to capture the trends and intentions of his collection in quite the same way.³⁰

As much as it was a model for his collection, and perhaps also an inspiration for the cardboard box catalogues (their own form of

'multiple'),³¹ Duchamp's *boîte* was more fundamentally an image of a kind of portable museum that conceptually rendered all existing institutions defunct³² – something of an echo of Marinetti's provocative call to destroy all museums, along with academies and libraries, and a prelude to Andy Warhol's more whimsical but prescient quip that 'someday all department stores will become museums, and all museums will become department stores'. These notions were especially appealing to Cladders because he was still struggling with the limitations of the townhouse he had inherited. The museum was far too small, and it exuded a domestic rather than a civic presence. No firm decision had yet been made on its replacement, though the municipal authorities were unanimous on the need for such a building. And so while Cladders waited for his new museum to materialise, the box catalogues he produced not just for Beuys but for other later exhibitors served as its stand-in – it was as if he had already started packing the museum and its shows into their respective moving boxes, conceptually, if not in actuality, ready to switch to his new ideal museum when it was eventually built.

Hollein was among the many visitors to the Beuys show, and his trip to Mönchengladbach also gave him the chance to familiarise himself with the museum and its director's broader ambitions. Soon he and Cladders were in frequent contact, and within a year he was invited to put on an exhibition of his own work – his first ever show in Germany – which eventually opened two years later, in 1970. Titled 'Hans Hollein: Alles ist Architektur. Eine Ausstellung zum Thema Tod' (An Exhibition on the Theme of Death), this was not a retrospective like the Beuys exhibition but rather an interactive environment in which the museum was transformed into a kind of archaeological site. The entire surface of the ground floor was covered in mounds of white building sand, out of which rose the 'ruins' of brick walls and staircases, while the sides of the room were concealed behind long floor-to-ceiling curtains. Visitors were encouraged to pick up a spade and find out for themselves what lay buried beneath the sand – which was not so much ancient fragments as everyday artefacts from the period, bits and bobs made of plastic. But as an incentive to dig, a few coins issued by the Deutsche Bundesbank were also buried, the reliable standby of avarice being used to stimulate public participation. The excavated items – a salt cellar, bottle opener, cake tin and such like – were then put on display in cabinets on the upper floor, objects now worthy of museum curation, their cultural significance identified and secured for posterity.³³

The installation also featured an artificial grave covered with a thick slab of plate glass, through which visitors could see other uncovered remnants of a contemporary culture: a hardhat from a building site, golf club, mountaineering crampons, a coin and some glass shards from a smashed Coca-Cola bottle. This particular piece was titled *Grave of a Warrior?* Or was it really that of a struggling architect? Cladders described the exhibition as an allegory of affluent western society and the competing demands of work, consumption and leisure. It also seemed to borrow from Beuys, questioning the values we ascribe to things and elevating everyday items to the status of art. A feature on the exhibition on Radio Bremen declared it of 'enormous socio-political impact'.³⁴

Yet the items were also designed to expose a certain cultural confusion, including relics that had been wrongly identified by Hollein's fictional archaeologist. As he described this conceit:

The objects in the display cases on the upper exhibition floor are deliberately misinterpreted. The captions do not describe what they are

*really about. So for example, a dunce cap is assigned to a king, a spiked helmet to a medicine man, a top hat is declared a protective helmet. The misattributions of archaeologists are consciously magnified and transported into our time. Misinterpretations, with their often sarcastic explanations – a metal tube with a showerhead then becomes a 'Cleaning Device for Maintaining Racial Purity', exploiting the association of this harmless bathroom fitting with the gas nozzles of Auschwitz.*³⁵

This calculated misidentification also mirrored Beuys's performances, in which he would pretend to experience everyday objects for the first time – a tactic that allowed him to assign them new meanings while questioning concepts of reality and culture. Another kind of misdirection was integrated into the last part of Hollein's show, where the subtitle of the exhibition – the theme of death – really came to the fore. In a darkened room, veiled in inky fabric, stood a black coffin, topped with a tremendous bouquet of flowers. As each day passed the flowers slowly wilted, their perfumed scent gradually transforming into the pungent smell of decay. The head of the coffin was left open, inviting curious visitors to peer inside. But when they did so, a mirror showed them only their own reflection, and therefore also their mortality. Many instantly recoiled in shock. In the adjoining stairwell, death shrouds hung like lifeless banners, black, white and yellow. There was also a hospital bed, borrowed from a local ward, ominously surrounded by a medical screen.³⁶ What Hollein appeared to be saying was that in modern society death had become anonymous, western culture no longer having any adequate means to express it.

The box catalogue for this exhibition, issued in an edition of 550 copies, was black with a cut-out square that exposed a lower section of the cardboard on which Hollein's name was embossed – no longer a miniature portfolio but a miniaturised sarcophagus. Three printed leaflets were inside. The first was a text written by Cladders explaining the exhibition, while a second mostly featured photographs of the opening event showing Hollein alongside Beuys, both digging energetically. Accompanying the photographs was a set of architectural drawings accompanied by fragmentary notes.³⁷ These plans adopted different styles of *poché* to distinguish the original 1890 house from the 1970 installation, while dashed lines – explained in the key only with a question mark – denoted some kind of hypothetical future building. The third leaflet was a pamphlet showing Hollein's earlier work, including his manifesto *Alles ist Architektur*. These printed documents were then finished off with a handful of pressed flowers taken from the actual installation; fragile remnants of ephemeral beauty and life.

Contemporary reports describe visitors coming away from the exhibition in a state of turmoil, quivering, feeling stirred both by their newfound powers of self-reflection and a certain degree of angst.³⁸ This was clearly not an easy art installation for viewers to take in, pushing at the limits of what was considered tolerable.³⁹ Yet it was also enthusiastically reviewed by the media. A TV crew from Westdeutsches Fernsehen turned up during the last week of the show and shot a short profile,⁴⁰ while among many favourable articles in newsprint Georg Jappe's piece for the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* was especially trenchant:

'Everything is Architecture' is Hollein's motto, and so in a sense he is the Beuys of architecture ('Everyone is an Artist'). Death and the future are excavated as the archaic sine qua non of our existence. Hollein understands architecture as an extension of our senses, although it would have been preferable if he not only exhibited psychological spaces but also realised them as a new concept of architecture. We have

*a progressive architect in the museum, instead of a progressive museum architect – this is the absurdity of timid town planning, which increasingly shies away from the ideas of art. Is it not finally time to allow an artist to build a psychological space for art?*⁴¹

As an article for a national newspaper this story itself became news, prompting follow-up pieces in the local *Westdeutsche Zeitung* that called directly on Mönchengladbach's town council to take the hint and recognise that Hollein was the right architect for their long-promised new museum.⁴² Is this, then, what the exhibition was really about? A kind of calling card for a subsequent commission? Writing a decade or so later Hollein actually admitted to an ulterior motive, acknowledging that the show was a precursor to the design of the new museum, a commission he got in 1972, just two years after the exhibition, without having to participate in any competition.⁴³

For an architect to use a provocative, highly conceptual avant-garde art installation as a means to secure a major building contract would be remarkable today, but in Mönchengladbach this really seems to have been what happened. And indeed, with the benefit of hindsight, we can detect traces of Hollein-the-architect as opposed to Hollein-the-artist in a short narrative buried in one of the 1970 box leaflets, which now reads like the opening of a pitch for a job:

*Originally I had a completely different exhibition in mind – one that looked at the new media of environmental design, communication, the use of technology, holographs and other laser architectures – all those things which fit so perfectly into our life-affirming world. But already after my first visit to Mönchengladbach different thoughts began to surface. This landscape seemed cloaked in immense sadness. And as for this town, it was a Sunday and it was deathly quiet, seemingly expired. Every now and then a couple of locals would appear in their Sunday best. Or a flashy car would drive around a corner too fast. A few adolescents hung around, looking bored. I had trouble finding the museum, but I actually liked that somehow. This old townhouse had something of the atmosphere of my old primary school. The dark wooden staircase, the gloomy air. And then there were its centuries-old scraps of fabric, all meticulously maintained. All those abandoned treasures. And yet this was also the place that staged exhibitions by the best, most lively people. An animated museum, and an animated director. The whole environment affected me. I could not just move in and act. I also had to respond.*⁴⁴

Hollein's ultimate response, in this sense, was not an exhibition on the theme of death but a project that envisaged the end of the local – imagining killing off a somewhat crusty provincial museum in its nineteenth-century bourgeois house, located appropriately enough on Bismarckstraße; an antiquated and now out-of-date version of Germany. In the manner of Beuys, he did this by provoking a discussion about what the old museum was about, using fake ruins and coffins as his props, and above all suggesting that if not the whole institution, then for sure this particular outpost, was obsolete and in need of immediate replacement. The task naturally required an architect who not only understood the limitations of the existing house, but also appreciated the avant-garde artistic practices that would animate its future home. Hollein's desire to kill off the old museum was therefore simply the starting point for his design of Cladders' ideal new museum.

Of course, this attack on the museum must also be understood within the context of the cultural upheavals that had started in 1968. Along with the academy, the museum was under siege throughout Europe, as an institution through

which society was seen to enforce its context, produce its history and reproduce its culture. The Palais des Beaux-Arts in Brussels was occupied that summer, as were the Milan Triennale and the Venice Art Biennale, complicit events that fed into the system. Cladders caught the mood of the time. At the end of May 1968, he commemorated his first year as director with an essay titled 'Das Antimuseum', published as an insert within a box catalogue. Later, in September, he used a speech at the opening of Marcel Broodthaers' 'Musée d'Art Moderne, Département des Aigles' – a fictional museum, located in the artist's own Brussels apartment – to criticise the museum's power to transform an artist's work through a kind of official process of cultural validation. And yet, as a museum director he continued to exercise a certain provocative power of his own, as could be seen in October 1969, with the exhibition 'Zeit ohne Zeit' (Time without Time), a further display of his signature curatorial interest in confrontation, in which a mixture of items from the permanent collection were arranged as temporal and contextual collisions, entirely rejecting chronology and all forms of categorisation. The exhibition following Hollein, in September 1970, by the Dutch Fluxus artist Stanley Brouwn, perhaps took these provocations too far, with the galleries bare, displaying absolutely nothing at all. The empty museum generated the expected disapproval, but this time the reviewers were distinctly underwhelmed, comparing the exhibition, perhaps justifiably, to the story of the emperor's new clothes.

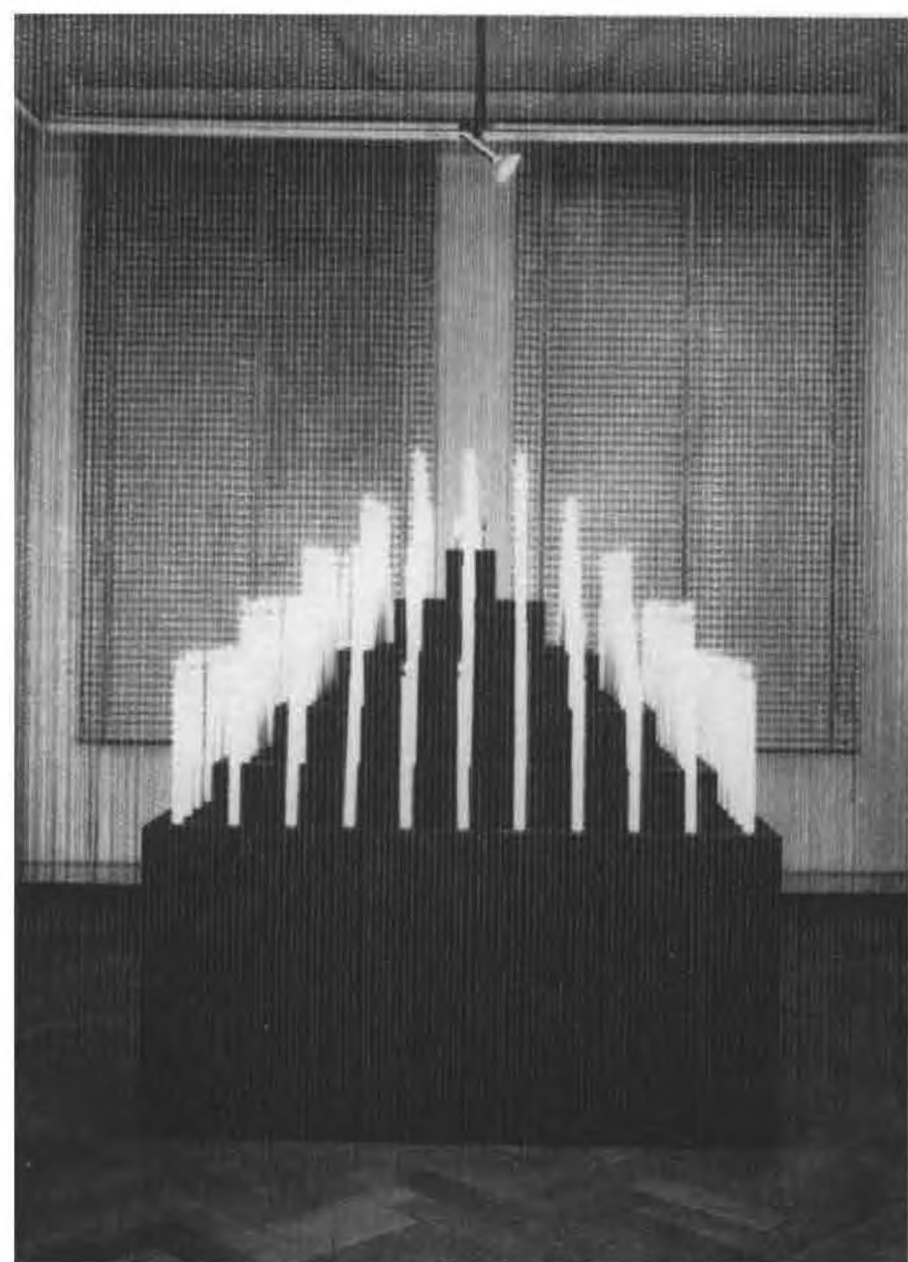
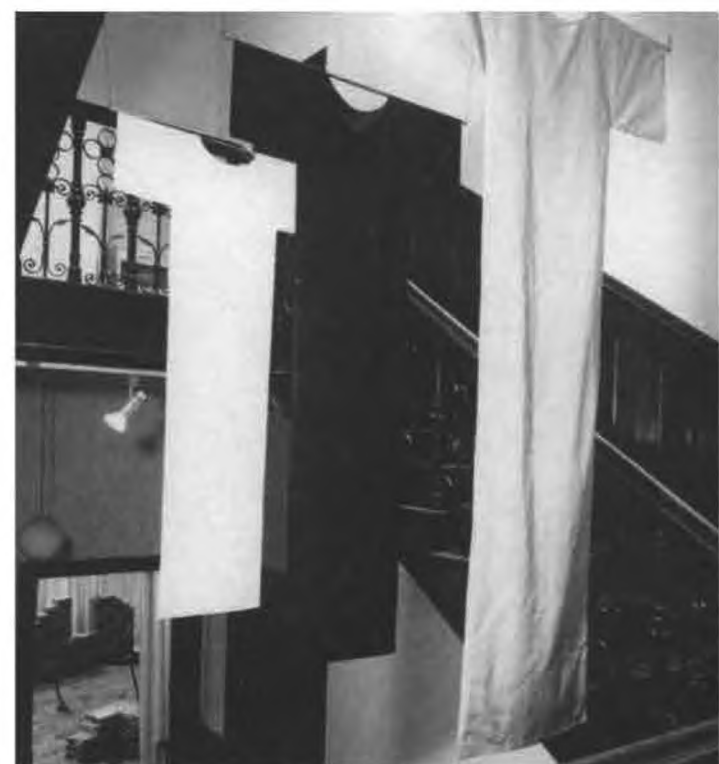
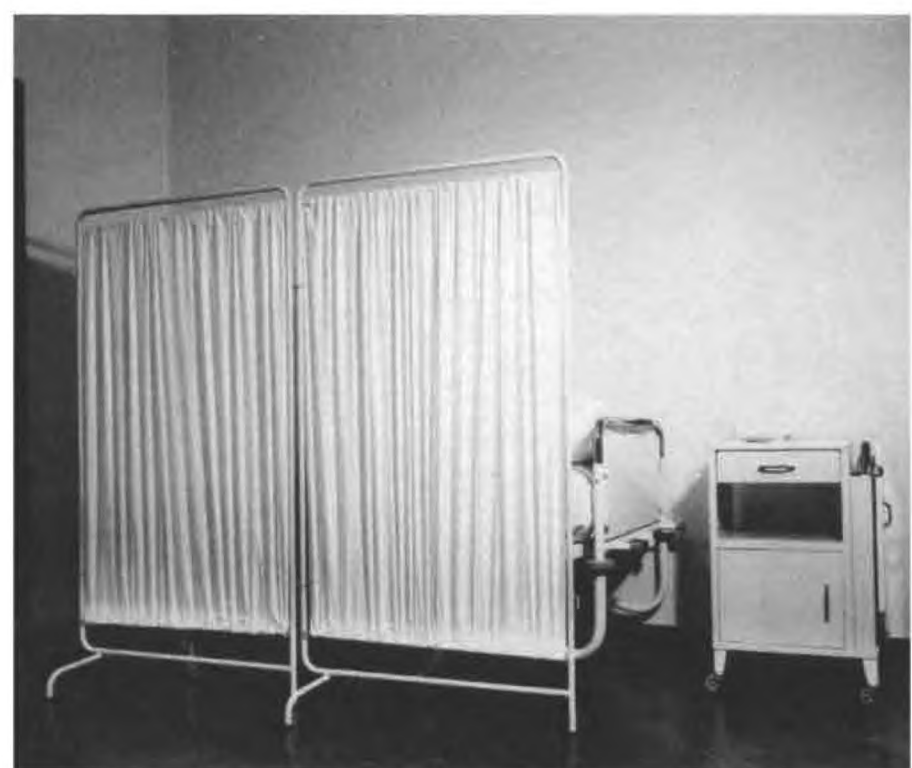
At the Düsseldorf Kunstakademie the tension had also been escalating, but it was Beuys, as much as the academy, who was under attack. On 12 November 1968 ten of the 22 professors published an open letter declaring a loss of confidence in their celebrated colleague. In particular, they were aggravated by the admissions policy he had adopted for his studio, which let in just about anyone who wanted to study at the academy for a trial period of two semesters.⁴⁵ Ignoring his colleagues' fears, Beuys continued the unregulated admission. By 1971 his class numbered more than 200 students, many of them spilling out of his three teaching rooms into the hallways. While the official capacity of the entire school was 400 students, actual enrolment was now closer to 700. When, later that summer, figures for the new intake were processed, it was revealed that Beuys had accepted every single student who applied, disregarding the fact that the great majority of them had already been officially turned down by the school. Had all of them taken up his offer, his own class would have doubled in size to 400, filling the whole building.⁴⁶ By now, with Beuys having lost the support of nearly all the faculty (although Hollein stood by him), the Kunstakademie's director Eduard Trier saw no other option but to apply to the ministry to initiate disciplinary proceedings.

1972 proved to be a big year for Beuys, Hollein and Cladders. In June Beuys exhibited at Documenta 5 in Kassel with an installation that took the form of an office. For 100 days he sat behind a desk from which he launched a forum for direct democracy and political debate. In one photograph Hollein is shown next to him. The two men sit at a table covered with neat stacks of paper, a single rose in a clear glass vase and an ashtray. Further chairs are available for anyone else wanting to join in. Behind the two men is a second desk with more stacks of paper and a telephone, with a blackboard next to it. When the show closed and Beuys returned to Düsseldorf he was dismissed from his teaching post with immediate effect.

Photographs from the installation and opening of the Joseph Beuys exhibition, 1967
Photos Ruth Kaiser

© Museum Abteiberg, Mönchengladbach
Bottom right: Beuys opening, 1967
© bpk / Stiftung Museum Schloss Moyland /
Ute Klophaus / Leihgabe der
Ernst von Siemens Kunststiftung





That same year Cladders officially appointed Hollein to design his Museum Abteiberg in Mönchengladbach. Photographs of the ground-breaking ceremony in 1977 bear an uncanny similarity to Hollein's original archaeological exhibition – the spades and shifting sands being a feature of both.⁴⁷ When the building finally opened in 1982 – its ten-year gestation only fuelling a sense of public expectation – Beuys was there to celebrate with Hollein. In fact, Beuys was doubly present, as the museum opening was accompanied by the unveiling of Cladders' latest purchase, Beuys's *Revolutionsklavier*, first created at an earlier performance at the old museum, when he had 'decorated' and filled an old upright piano with red roses and carnations, thereby rendering it mute. Now encased in its own display cabinet, the 1982 version was adorned by Beuys for a second time – the artist pointedly removing the old wilted flowers during the opening press conference and replacing them with 200 fresh long-stemmed red Baccara roses and 100 red carnations as a symbol of the renewal of the Mönchengladbach museum. Today the piano still occupies a prime location inside the museum, but the flowers – just like the rose in his box catalogue – are now dry and crumbling.

In the years leading up to this moment Cladders had added other key pieces to the collection, and even if the old museum had long engendered feelings of resentment, part of him had also to feel grateful. For it was within the walls of this dusty old house that he had helped push the careers of Beuys and Hollein to whole new levels, and the piecemeal unmaking of the house – through wilfully destructive exhibition after exhibition – not only defined new forms of site-specific art practice but also miraculously allowed art to challenge the sanctity of the museum while remaining under its shelter. By the time the replacement building opened, these avant-garde practices were no longer peripheral but occupied the centre of the discourse, and its celebrated artists and curators had all entered the canon. Everything had become connected to architecture and everyone was indeed an artist. Everything had also become fixed, because when Cladders launched his first show in the new galleries it was notable that he no longer produced a box catalogue but a traditional bound booklet. The era of transience and portability had ended. Mönchengladbach had finally got its dedicated museum and like the Coca-Cola bottle in its permanent collection, this was the real thing.

Research for this essay has been made possible through a grant by the Gerda Henkel Stiftung as a collaboration between the author and the Museum Abteiberg, in particular its director Susanne Titz.

1. Interview with Hans Hollein by Susanne Titz and Chantal Jacobi, Mönchengladbach, 31 August 2005, from Michael Stevenson (ed), 'Meeting Johannes Cladders and Hans Hollein', *Art of the Eighties and Seventies* (Frankfurt: Revolver – Archiv für aktuelle Kunst, 2006).
2. From Kristian Sotriffer, *Die Presse*, 9 November 1966, reprinted in Robert Fleck, *Avantgarde in Wien: Die Geschichte der Galerie nächst St. Stephan, 1954–1982 Kunst und Kunstbetrieb in Österreich* (Vienna: Löcker-Verlag, 1982), pp 590–91, footnote 84.
3. Monsignor Mauer's theological interest in Joseph Beuys is also explained by Johanna Schwanenberg, art historian and director of the Dommuseum in Vienna, <http://oe1.orf.at/programm/350578>.
4. In the end the directorship of the Kunstakademie went to the art historian Eduard Trier. The official reason was that Beuys – unlike Trier – was not a civil servant, which at that time was a requirement for such a post. Subsequent efforts in 1966 to overturn the decision, including a letter of support by Monsignor Mauer, were unsuccessful. See Hans Peter Riegel, *Beuys: Die Biographie* (Berlin: Aufbau Verlag, 2013), pp 201, 242–44. It was actually the Aachen event that had first brought Beuys to Hollein's attention, and it was from the famous bloodied photograph that Hollein was able to recognise the artist when he stood at his front door.
5. Johannes Stüttgen, 'Anmerkungen zu Joseph Beuys als Lehrer der Kunstakademie Düsseldorf und die Beuys-Klasse 1961–1972', *Die Geschichte der Kunstakademie Düsseldorf seit 1945* (Berlin: Deutscher Kunstverlag, 2014), p 109. Translation by the author.

- Before going to Düsseldorf to work with Beuys, Stüttgen had studied theology in Münster under Joseph Ratzinger, the future Pope Benedict XVI.
6. Hollein attested to his own long friendship with Beuys in an interview with the author, Vienna, 4 June 2010.
 7. Hans Hollein, interview with the author, *op cit*.
 8. See Peter M Bode, 'Ein Star der daheim lange nichts galt: Porträt des Architekten, Plastikers und Designers Hans Hollein', *Art: Das Kunstmagazin* 2 (1986), pp 109–10.
 9. Agatha Buslei-Wuppermann, 'Die Baukunst an der Kunstakademie Düsseldorf seit 1945', *Die Geschichte der Kunstakademie Düsseldorf seit 1945* (Berlin: Deutscher Kunstverlag, 2014), p 385. Translation by the author.
 10. Johannes Stüttgen, *op cit*.
 11. Heinrich Dattenberg had been the museum's director from 1945–67, immediately preceding Johannes Cladders.
 12. Walter Grasskamp, *Johannes Cladders* (Cologne: DuMont, 2004), pp 32–33. Translation by the author.
 13. *Ibid*, p 22.
 14. *Ibid*, p 36. Translation by the author.
 15. *Ibid*, p 36.
 16. Hans Peter Riegel, *op cit*, p 270.
 17. Walter Grasskamp, *op cit*, pp 38–39, 44.
 18. Hans Strelow, 'Joseph Beuys als Zeichner', box-catalogue for Joseph Beuys retrospective, *op cit*.
 19. Johannes Cladders, *ibid*. Translation by the author.
 20. Johannes Stüttgen, cited in Hans Peter Riegel, *op cit*, p 271. Translation by the author.
 21. Hans Strelow, 'Das Bewusstsein wird erweitert: Ausstellung Joseph Beuys in Mönchengladbach', *Rheinische Post*,

22 September 1967. Translation by the author.

22. Walter Grasskamp, *op cit*, pp 38–39.
23. *Rheinische Post*, *op cit*.
24. *Amtliche Mönchengladbacher Mitteilungen*, no 27, 20 September 1967.
25. Monsignor Otto Mauer, 'Einführungssrede zur Ausstellung Beuys', box-catalogue for 'Beleg 1 – Neuerwerbungen 1967–1968' at the Städtisches Museum Mönchengladbach, 29 May – 11 August 1968. Translation by the author.
26. *Rheinische Post*, 20 September 1967.
27. *Ibid*, 30 October 1967.
28. Anonymous posting to museum, archive of Museum Abteiberg Mönchengladbach.
29. Peter Iden, 'Moralist in Grau: Zu den Arbeiten von Joseph Beuys im Städtischen Museum Mönchengladbach', *Frankfurter Rundschau*, 6 October 1967. Translation by the author.
30. Johannes Cladders, 'Die Revolution der "Welt-Anschauung": Dada und der Konstruktivismus', Städtisches Museum Abteiberg Mönchengladbach (Braunschweig: Westermann, 1982), pp 40–45.
31. Horst-Johs Tümmers, 'Kunstbücher – Rehcübtsnuk: von den Nöten eines Kunstbibliothekars', *Museen in Köln* 12, 1967.
32. Susanne Wischermann, *Johannes Cladders: Museumsman und Künstler* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, Europäischer Verlag der Wissenschaften, 1997), pp 24–25.
33. Werner Krüger, 'Mönchengladbach: Hans Hollein macht den Tod ausstellungsreif: Die Besucher graben nach Flaschen und Ziegeln', *Kölner Stadtanzeiger*, 2 July 1970.
34. Radio Bremen, 30 June 1970.
35. Johannes Cladders, opening speech, *op cit*. Translation by the author.
36. 'Die Welt von 1970 auf dem Totenbett: Der Architekt Hans Hollein stellt in Mönchengladbach aus', *Rheinische Post*, 29 May 1970.
37. The museum's collection contains Kazimir Malevich's drawing, *Bleistiftskizze für ein suprematistisches Gemälde*, which resembles Hollein's architectural drawing for the installation. Johannes Cladders, 'Die Revolution der "Welt-Anschauung"', *op cit*, p 44. The parallels between the drawings of Malevich and those of Hollein have also been pointed out in John Anthony Thwaites's review, 'Tod und Architektur', *Saarbrücker Zeitung*, 26 June 1970.
38. Werner Krüger, 'Mönchengladbach: Hans Hollein macht den Tod ausstellungsreif. Die Besucher graben nach Flaschen und Ziegeln', *Kölner Stadtanzeiger*, 2 July 1970.
39. 'Die Welt von 1970 auf dem Totenbett: Der Architekt Hans Hollein stellt in Mönchengladbach aus', *Rheinische Post*, 29 May 1970.
40. *Westdeutsche Zeitung*, 3 July 1970 and 7 July 1970.
41. Georg Jappe, 'Architektur – psychisch: Hans Hollein in Mönchengladbach', *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 3 July 1970. Translation by the author.
42. *Westdeutsche Zeitung*, 14 July 1970.
43. Hans Hollein, 'Zu Johannes Cladders', *Hommage à Cladders: 14 September 1984* (Redaktion Rolf Hoffmann und Klaus Flemming, Museumsverein Mönchengladbach, 1984), pp 19–20.
44. Hans Hollein, cited in the opening speech, *op cit*. Translation by the author.
45. Johannes Stüttgen, *op cit*, pp 110–11.
46. Hans Peter Riegel, *op cit*, pp 351–54.
47. Compare photographs of digging for 'archaeological treasures' during the exhibition with those taken of the symbolic digging activity at the 'Erster Spätenstich' and then the 'Grundsteinlegung'. Museum Abteiberg Mönchengladbach archive.

Photographs from the installation and opening of the Hans Hollein exhibition, 1970, and the ground-breaking ceremony for the new museum, 1977
Photos Ruth Kaiser and Albert Weber
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