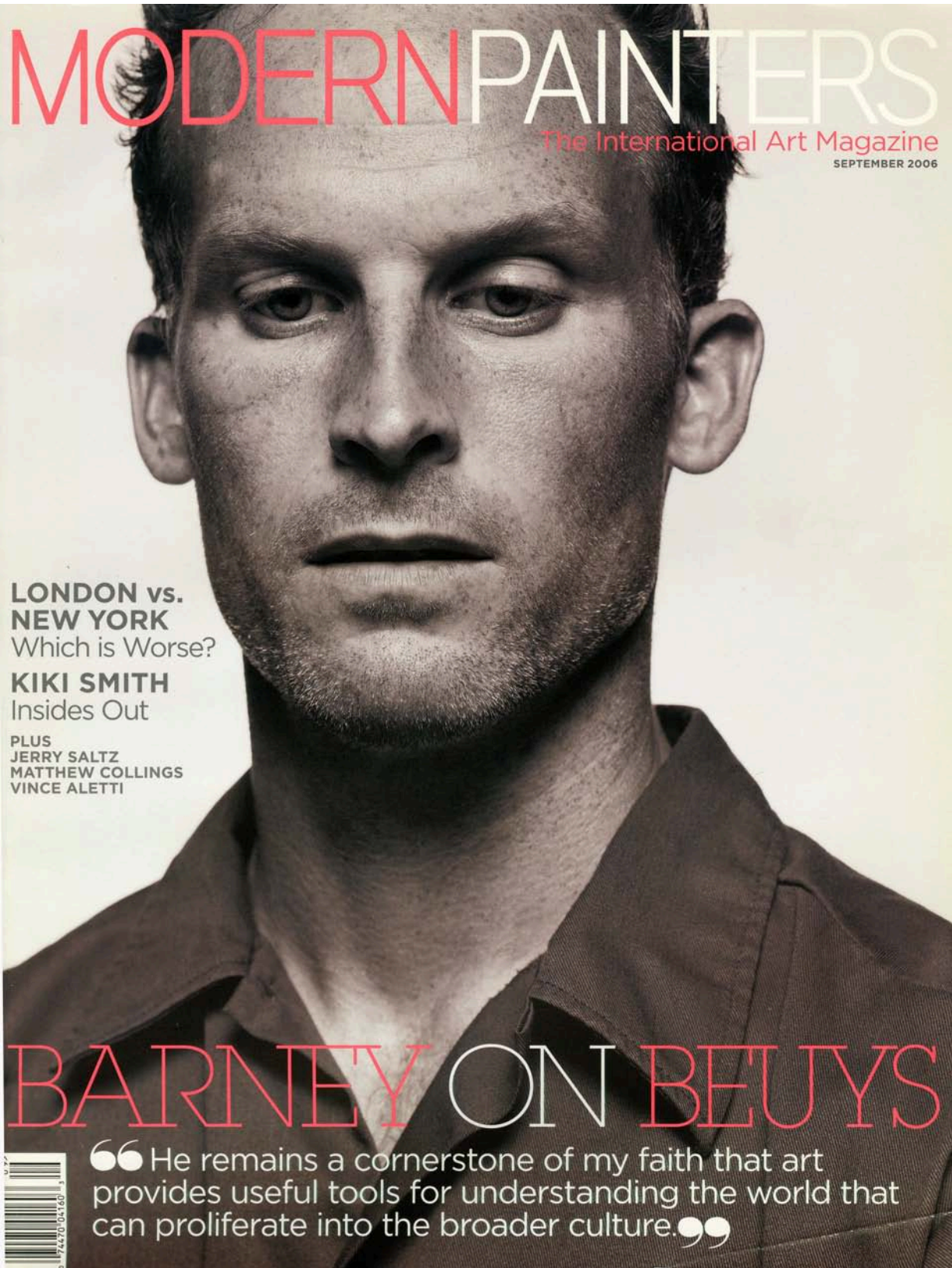


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Matthew Barney and Arthur C. Danto, "Blood & Iron," *Modern Painters*, September 2006, p. 62.



MODERN PAINTERS
The International Art Magazine
SEPTEMBER 2006

LONDON vs. NEW YORK
Which is Worse?
KIKI SMITH
Insides Out
PLUS
JERRY SALTZ
MATTHEW COLLINGS
VINCE ALETTI

BARNEY ON BEUYYS

“He remains a cornerstone of my faith that art provides useful tools for understanding the world that can proliferate into the broader culture.”

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A Dialogue on
BLOOD
Blut und Eisen
& **IRON**

Matthew Barney and Arthur C. Danto
on Joseph Beuys

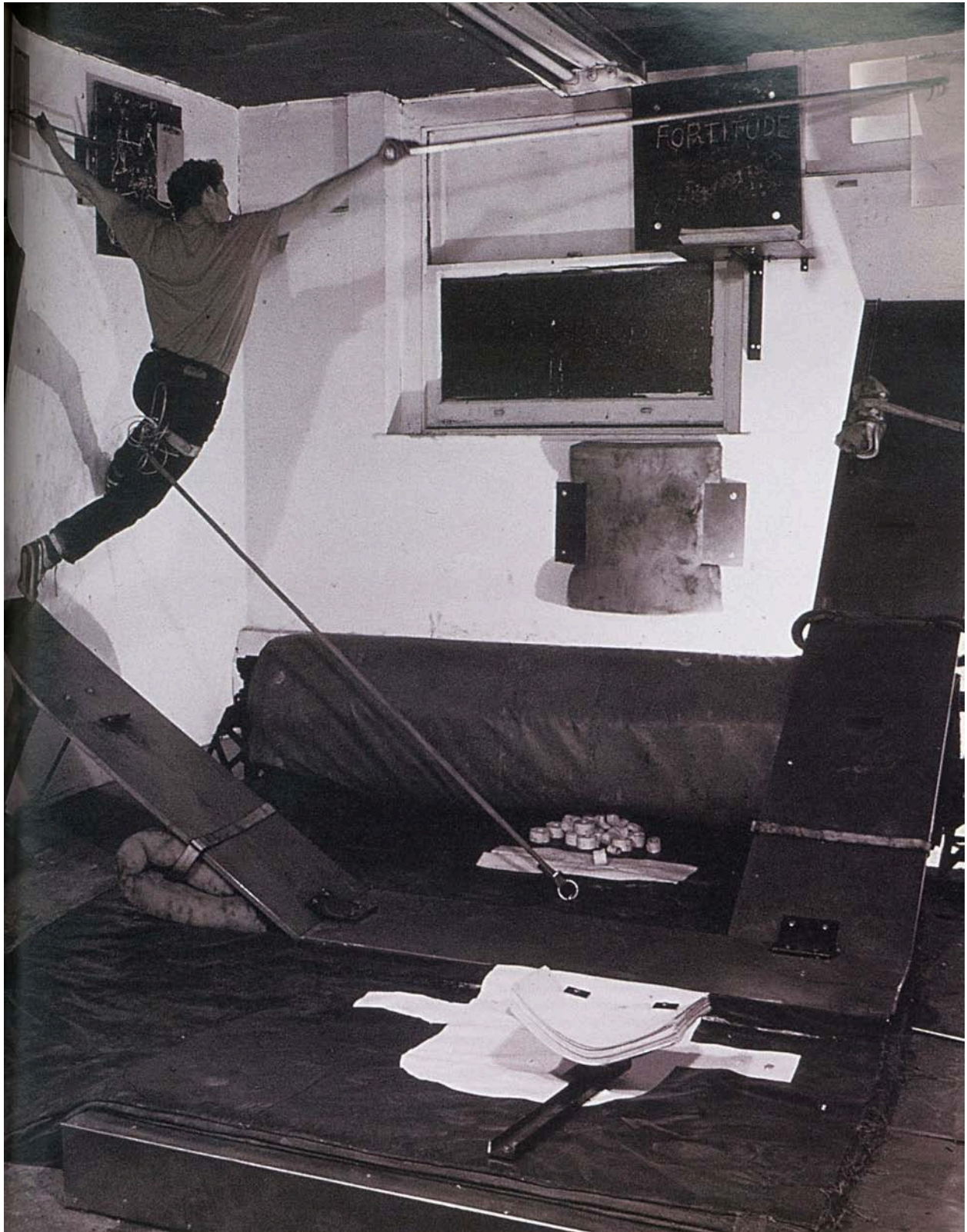
Matthew Barney and I had met, but hardly knew one another when it was proposed that I discuss with him *Heal the Knife That Cuts the Wound*, his forthcoming exhibition with Joseph Beuys at the Deutsche Guggenheim Museum. I had met Beuys, and had even talked with him in New York, though I shirked the chance at a public conversation at the time of his Guggenheim show. Now Barney was in Berlin and I New York, making face-to-face interchange out of the question. He was, however, amenable to and even enthusiastic about the idea of a conversation by e-mail, and so, though Matthew went from Berlin to Reykjavik to Croatia during the short period of our correspondence, our epistolary to and fro began. I found, as I hope those looking over our shoulders will find, that this was an exciting dialogue, surprising, open, and with flights of speculation on both sides. I certainly felt I knew Matthew Barney's art and mind a great deal better than when we began, and I was sorry when it had to stop in the interest of getting this first issue of the American version of *Modern Painters* before the reading public. —AC.D

RIGHT
MATTHEW BARNEY
DRAWING
RESTRAINT 2, 1988
DOCUMENTATION
STILL
PHOTO MICHAEL REES
© MATTHEW BARNEY
COURTESY MATTHEW
BARNEY AND GLADSTONE
GALLERY, NEW YORK



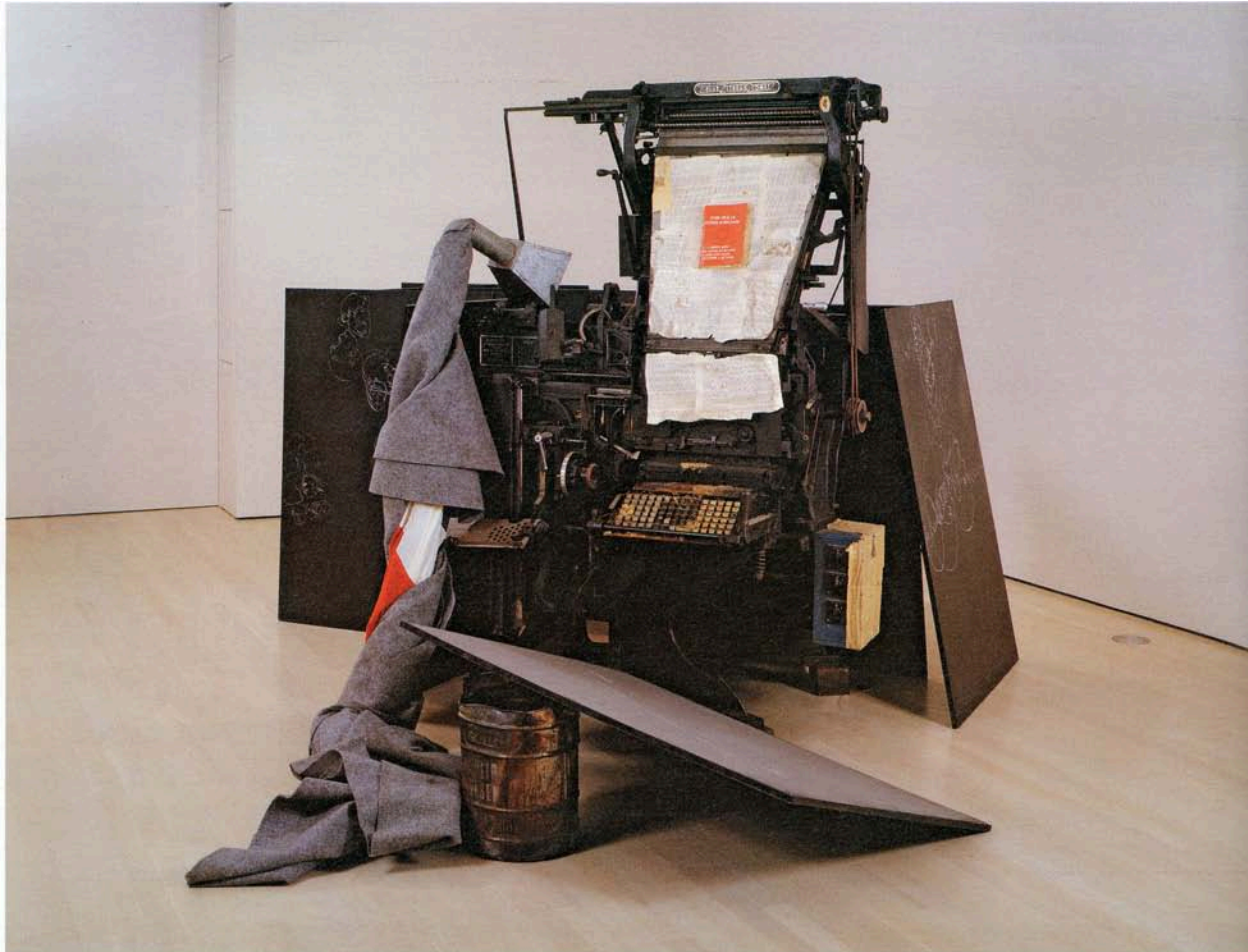
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ABOVE
JOSEPH BEUYS
TERREMOTO, 1981
TYPESETTING MACHINE
WITH GREASE, ITALIAN
FLAG WRAPPED IN
FELT, CHALK ON NINE
BLACKBOARDS, METAL
CONTAINER WITH FAT AND
LEAD TYPE, RECORDER
WITH CASSETTE, AND
PRINTED BROCHURE
80 X 137 3/4 X 193 IN
COURTESY SOLOMON R. GUGGENHEIM
MUSEUM, NEW YORK

Arthur C. Danto: I understand you're spending time with the "Beuys people" in Berlin. I have a memory of the youthful attendants who accompanied him to New York when he had his show at the Guggenheim [1979]. They were all somewhat menacing, wearing red jumpsuits, and had the air of militia. Beuys himself I liked. I met him that year at Ronald Feldman Fine Arts, where he showed *Aus Berlin: Neues vom Kojoton* [From Berlin: News from the Coyote], an installation involving dirt, miners' lamps, and copper canes leaning against a wall. It was not easy to get a clear explanation out of him, but the work, as always in his case, had an air of great human significance. A curator tried to organize a conversation between us, but I did not feel up to it. I may have missed something unforgettably important.

On my most recent trip to Berlin, I saw a profound work of his at the Hamburger Bahnhof, *Tram Stop* [1976], which I felt ought to have been considered the true memorial to the murdered Jews of Europe, rather than Peter Eisenmann's monument. It conveys a sense of unspeakable suffering. It was as if the train brought those destined for death to the last stop, after which they had to proceed by foot to the furnaces. It was like some metaphor from Dante, even if, literally, it was no more than a tram stop, rusty, bent, unusable. I always responded emotionally to the felt and the fat that defined, at least for me, the fragility of human beings in a world at war. There was a book by Ludwig Bemelmans [author of the Madeline series of children's books—ed.] with the achingly moving title *Are You Hungry? Are You Cold?* His world and Beuys's really was the whole world at war, something I had also lived through.

I'd like to talk a little about *Heal the Knife That Cuts the Wound*. I

think our dialogue would be greatly enhanced if you were to say what you think are the main topics of the conversation between you and Beuys. Are you, for example, addressing the same subjects or the same kind of subjects? Are you engaged by the same social and political causes that inform Beuys's work?

Or let's put it like this: there is what we might speak of as "the world of Beuys." It is like a mythic overlay on our world, and serves as a kind of moral critique. Is his world congruent with "the world of Matthew Barney"? Is there a "world of Matthew Barney"? Do you, so to speak, live in the same world as he?

Matthew Barney: I want first to confess that I'm a bit nervous, as I feel like I'm in an unfamiliar position with this project (both with the exhibition, and this discussion). I've tried to avoid involvement in curatorial projects. It's interesting how often artists are asked to play this role these days. In this case, I trust Nancy Spector [curator of *Heal the Knife That Cuts the Wound*] and I feel like there is something valuable to be learned through the process. I should be clear, though, that I don't consider myself a curator of this exhibition, but to have a useful dialogue about the subject of Beuys's work in relation to my own, and to assist Nancy with the exhibition, requires a level of self-analysis that I'm not accustomed to. I tend to find it difficult to talk about my own work. It has been much easier for me to retrace the internal logic of my practice, and in doing that, to find the more concrete and external aspects of it (which have been internalized), that can provide entry points into a conversation.

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“ I often fear that I will lose my ability to relocate the fertile point of initiation, and this fear grows stronger the deeper I delve into any given project. MB ”



Heal the Knife That Cuts the Wound comes at an interesting time for me. I feel that I'm at the end of my foray into feature-length filmmaking. That's not to say I won't return to it at some point, but I need to reconsider some of the real-time actions and performances I was making before I started *The Cremaster Cycle* [1994–2002]. I continue to feel engaged with the problem of making narrative sculpture, but I feel that the narrative can be described another way, and on a different scale, without lessening its potential to generate objects. For that reason, it feels quite useful to me to look at object-based performance from the '60s and '70s.

Since this exhibition was suggested to me, I've been returning to Beuys's work for the first time since I graduated Yale in 1991. Looking again at this material has made me realize that, as much as I feel an affinity to his work, I've had some significant misconceptions about it. The main misunderstanding is in regard to its essentially Christian structure and proposal. Beuys's oeuvre has one center, whether you consider that center to be Beuys, or if you follow his logic of the "sun state," which sketches his vision of a democratic state of interconnectedness and balance. Somehow that didn't register for me when I first came across the work. Perhaps it's that our current international political condition makes one more conscious (and weary) of dominant religious structures. I'm told that a younger generation of German artists is not so interested in Beuys; I'm wondering if models organized with a distinct center are less useful to younger people. An artist from Beuys's generation could align his practice with the more binary philosophies of Hegel or Rudolf Steiner, for example, while an artist from the current generation would naturally gravitate toward something pluralistic, along the lines of Deleuze. *The Cremaster Cycle* could be considered in these terms, in that it's a system that seeks freedom by decentralizing its energy, attempting to hybridize itself into a web of available cultural vehicles.

My sculpture-making system was developed as a personal tool to navigate through the world, and this tool definitely gives a privileged



“ Beuys wouldn't have feared that. He thought he was doing something more important than art. He was practicing a religion of healing, if you believe him. ACD ”

role to intuition. With this system, I have also attempted to create a map of my creative process. This map feels necessary to me. There's a way in which I fear that I will lose my ability to relocate the fertile point of initiation, the creative impulse that one must always return to, and this fear grows stronger the deeper I delve into any given project. So the map is like a trail of bread crumbs that ensures a way back to the beginning. Beyond its personal function, this system was built to communicate with and provoke the viewer. Its narrative is more of a proposal, and has an intentionally open-ended structure that invites the audience to complete the story. And as the primary objective of this system is to generate sculpture, the narrative remains abstract—a way to leave space for more specific distillation in the form of sculpture. I believe these ideas are sympathetic with those of Beuys.

In terms of your question "Do you think you live in the same world as he?": on the most basic level, I would say no. The models and tools that I need are different from those he employed. On the other hand, if we're on the verge of a Third World War, this response might need to be reconsidered.

I definitely agree with you about *Tram Stop*. It is monumental.

ACD: I'd like to talk in a general way about Beuys, and your current perception of him. I have written about him on a couple of occasions, but I can't pose in any way as an expert. He was, I think, one of the oceanic talents of the 1970s, and one of the main points of reference for understanding what happened to art in our time.

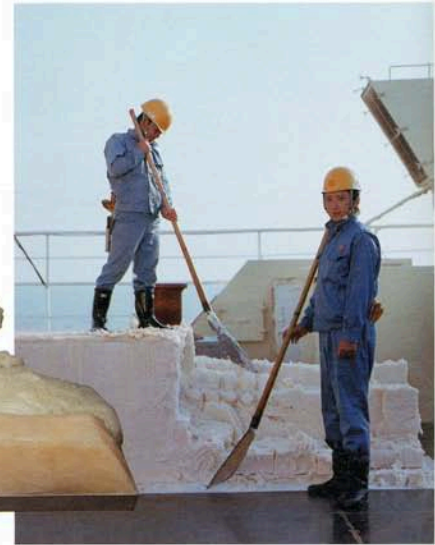
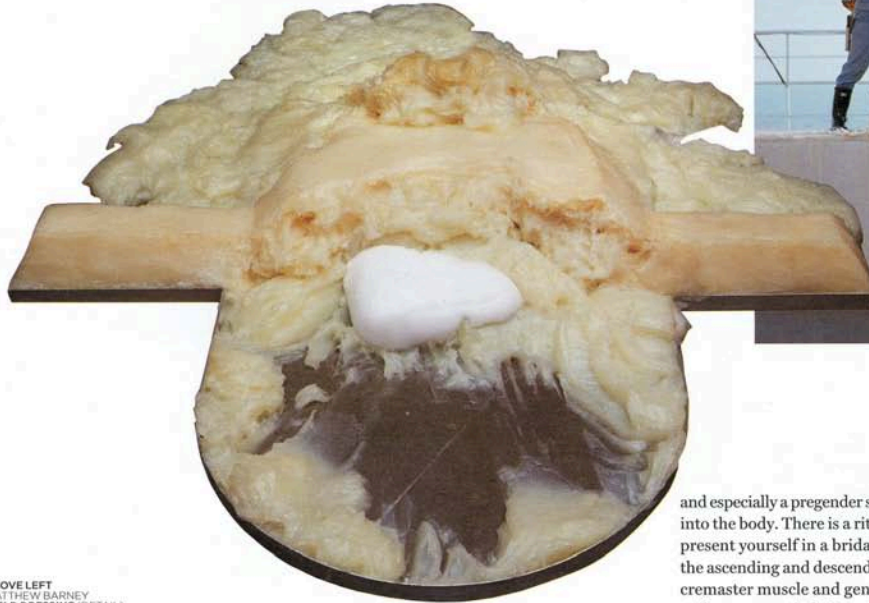
For one thing, it would never have occurred to me that he was

ABOVE LEFT
VIEW OF JOSEPH BEUYS,
SOLOMON R. GUGGENHEIM
MUSEUM, 1979-80
PICTURED: TRAM STOP, 1976,
AND FALLOW, 1977
PHOTO MARY DOUGLON
© SOLOMON R. GUGGENHEIM FOUNDATION
NEW YORK

ABOVE RIGHT
MATTHEW BARNEY
CHRYSLER IMPERIAL
(DETAIL), 2002
CAST CONCRETE, CAST
PETROLEUM JELLY, CAST
THERMOPLASTIC, STAINLESS
STEEL, MARBLE, AND
INTERNALLY LUBRICATED
PLASTIC, FIVE UNITS
FOUR UNITS APPROXIMATELY
24 X 60 X 90 IN, ONE UNIT
APPROXIMATELY 66 X
156 X 168 IN
PHOTO DAVID HEALD
© SOLOMON R. GUGGENHEIM
FOUNDATION, NEW YORK

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ABOVE LEFT
MATTHEW BARNEY
FIELD DRESSING (DETAIL),
1989/1999/2006
TEFLON, CAST LEADED
OPTICAL CRYSTAL, LATEX,
FOAM, NYLON, PYREX,
PETROLEUM JELLY, SPECU-
LUM, ALUMINUM, STAINLESS
STEEL, FREEZER, CAST
MICROCRYSTALINE WAX,
MAGNESIUM CARBONATE
DIMENSIONS VARIABLE
PHOTO DAVID RIESER, 2008
© MATTHEW BARNEY
COURTESY MATTHEW BARNEY AND
GLADSTONE GALLERY, NEW YORK

ABOVE RIGHT
MATTHEW BARNEY
DRAWING RESTRAINT 9,
2005
PRODUCTION STILL
PHOTO CURR WINGET
© MATTHEW BARNEY
COURTESY MATTHEW BARNEY AND
GLADSTONE GALLERY, NEW YORK

projecting a Christian structure. I always thought this message was religious in a diffuse and rather antidenominational way. He seemed a kind of Druidic presence: ritualistic, shamanistic, primitivistic. Heidegger once said, "Only a god can save us." A god—not God, who perhaps represented for him a wrong turn taken long ago when we turned our back on what he spoke of as Being. Heidegger felt we either had to get rid of language, or evolve a new and less alienating kind of language. I don't think Heidegger would have endorsed any of the world's religions, and neither, I think—I am almost certain—would Beuys.

Beuys wanted to undo all the technology that separated us from nature. His central thought was healing. Think of one of the pieces that will be in the Guggenheim show, *Terremoto* [1981; the work refers to an earthquake that destroyed a small city near Naples]. Beuys incorporated a typesetting machine into it, using the earthquake as an opportunity to get rid of typesetting and printing; he spread fat over the machine keys as if to "heal" the printing press, the way the fat helped heal him when he was wounded. He would rather have written—or better, to have drawn—with vegetable juices. He wanted to repeal modernity, fraternize with animals, live by means of plants, and converse with birds. If he is Christian, he is like Saint Francis.

I think you and Beuys have a philosophy of salvation in common—overcoming the gender boundaries, the human-animal boundaries. Consider your *Field Dressing* [1989]. When I thought of the meaning of the expression, I thought of a kind of bandage soldiers carry for treating chest wounds, with an absorbent pad and a plastic band. They are not for mosquito bites! It is the first and the most primitive medical treatment for serious wounds.

Viewers at the time, of course, were struck by the nakedness of the figure and treated the piece as flaunting the body—but that left out the Vaseline with which you slathered yourself. The subtitle of the piece was orifill. There is no such word in the OED, but I took that to mean filling orifices, especially the sexual openings, in an effort to attain a presexual

and especially a pregender split by healing the open wounds of entrances into the body. There is a ritual and an ordeal involved in the work: you present yourself in a bridal gown, ready to be cleft. And then there is the ascending and descending, which echoes the primal episode of the cremaster muscle and gender identity in *Cremaster*. As a narrative it strikes me as entirely Beuysian. And juxtaposed with Beuys, how can one repress the analogy between fat and Vaseline? I am sure that that was part of what suggested the comparison between you and him, though I don't think he was as engaged in issues of gender. "Hybridization into a web of cultural vehicles" would on the other hand differentiate you from him, since he would not have been a pluralist (though he benefited from pluralism).

I agree that your "sculpture-making system" gives a "privileged role to intuition." I wonder whether Beuys would not have said something like that. He would not have used the word "system," I would guess. But he would also not have feared that he would lose the ability to reconnect with his creative impulse. I think that is because he did not think of himself as making art in the first place. He thought he was doing something more important than art. In that way he was practicing a religion of healing, if you believe him, or just believe in him.

I am struck by the difference, as I understand it, between sculpture as you think of it, where it is definitely art; and social sculpture, the organization of human beings into an ideal political community, of the kind Faust aspired to establish in the second part of Goethe's masterpiece. Have you harbored any such thoughts?

MB: I agree with you completely that Beuys continues to be a giant figure in the understanding of contemporary art. He remains a cornerstone of my faith that art can provide useful models and tools for understanding the world, and that these models eventually proliferate into the broader culture and become functional in the collective consciousness. I wouldn't argue that all art does this, or should do this, but only that it's possible. That said, I'm disappointed Beuys is not so present in the minds of the younger German generation, as this seems like a natural time to reconsider him, given our current ecological and political condition.

Field Dressing was made at the end of my college term. This was just four years after I stopped playing football, or more significantly,

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“Through athletics I realized that I had an ability to use my body as a tool toward a creative end, and that my body could belong to a sculpture-making language, as Beuys had proven. I understood that the competitive athlete has the ability to be simultaneously inside and outside of their body. MB”

after athletics was replaced by art as the center of my life. Most of those four years were spent making durational experiments with my body in the studio. I was compelled from the start to put my own experience into the things I was making, and my life up to that point was dominated by athletics. I realized that through those experiences I had an ability to use my body as a tool toward a creative end, and if my body could belong to a sculpture-making language, as artists like Beuys had proven, then this crossover into the studio would feel very natural to me. I came to the understanding that the competitive athlete has the ability to be simultaneously inside and outside of their body. They have the ability to perceive the field in plan, section, and elevation as they move through it. I believe that *Field Dressing* was the first work I made that suggested that kind of abstraction of the body. It was a departure from the *Drawing Restraint* experiments I was making at the time, involving physical obstacles that I had to overcome in order to make a drawing. In these my body was central and concrete. But in *Field Dressing* the body became a character (I stopped identifying it as me), and the character was split and active in two spaces simultaneously.

An even more liberating departure came after *Field Dressing*, with the Otto/Houdini works from 1991–92, where I employed actors and established a narrative. Character zones were developed that would have “protagonistic” or “antagonistic” qualities, but those zones were visualized as existing within one larger body. These works started to satisfy an interest I had in being present in the work, within my body, yet being multiple.

Around the time of *Field Dressing*, I was reading *Creativity and Perversion* [1985] by the French psychoanalyst Janine Chasseguet-Smirgel. The book was a reexamination of Freud’s concept of perversion. She suggested that perversion is a dimension of the human psyche common to us all that has a direct relationship to creativity. She

cites texts and art by the Marquis de Sade, Hans Bellmer, and others to describe an impulse that was trying to overcome its condition in the world, freeing itself from the constraints of paternal law by eroding the difference between gender and generation . . . internalizing the world as a way of breaking it down to an undifferentiated, primordial, or excremental state. This language was useful for me, and helped organize some of the thoughts I was having at the time.

The working title of the exhibition in Berlin has been *Heal the Knife That Cuts the Wound*. This, of course, is a crudely translated version of one of Beuys’s titles, *If You Cut Your Finger, Bandage the Knife* [in the original German, *Wenn Du Dich schneidest, verbinde nicht den Finger sondern das Messer*]. My attraction to this title had been in the way that it blurs the difference between interiority and exteriority. In my own way of reading this, or as a way of applying it to my own universe, there is no difference between the knife and the wound. They are aspects of the same, greater organism.

For practitioners of Candomblé, an Afro-Brazilian religion, the deity Ogun is the god of both iron and war. As the creator of iron, he makes the blade to cut away the primordial forest and create civilization. With this same knife, he has the ability, too, to take the life of another. In the way that Candomblé uses nature as a lens for understanding the world, Ogun is particularly attractive to me as a creation myth whose function is to describe a balance between creative and destructive energy. On some level, *The Cremaster Cycle* was designed to figuratively destroy itself in the process of its making. As a model of the creative process, it felt necessary to allow for that to happen so that the system could be visualized as potentially regenerative. It also felt necessary to describe a conflict similar to the one proposed by Chasseguet-Smirgel, of an entity that is trying to defeat its destiny as a predetermined, differentiated form, though not necessarily succeeding in this case.

I’m starting to feel that the exhibition title in Berlin would need to allow for an internalization of the knife. In my eyes, in order to heal the knife/wound, the knife has to be internalized, and even imitated.

The title *Field Dressing* related more to the hunter’s procedure of

ABOVE LEFT
MATTHEW BARNEY
CREMASTER 4, 1994
PRODUCTION STILL
PHOTO MICHAEL JAMES O'BRIEN
© MATTHEW BARNEY
COURTESY MATTHEW BARNEY AND
GLADSTONE GALLERY, NEW YORK

ABOVE RIGHT
MATTHEW BARNEY
DRAWING RESTRAINT 12, 2005
PRODUCTION STILL
PHOTO HYUNSOO KIM
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ABOVE LEFT
JOSEPH BEUYS
ANIMAL WOMAN, 1949
(CAST 1984)
BRONZE, 19 3/8 X 5 1/4 X 4 IN.
COURTESY SOLOMON R. GUGGENHEIM
MUSEUM, NEW YORK

ABOVE CENTER
JOSEPH BEUYS
*I LIKE AMERICA AND
AMERICA LIKES ME*, 1974
PERFORMANCE STILL
PHOTO CAROLINE TIDDALL
© ARS 2006

ABOVE RIGHT
JOSEPH BEUYS
FRECKLED FROGS
(*GEFLECKTE FROSCHEN*), 1958
PENCIL AND WATERCOLOR
ON GREASEPROOF PAPER,
EACH 15 1/16 X 9 1/16 IN.
COURTESY SOLOMON R. GUGGENHEIM
MUSEUM, NEW YORK



skinning and eviscerating an animal carcass in preparation for its consumption. The internal space within the body, or field, is emptied out, and the orifices are sealed off, creating an organic architecture where the drama can be carried out.

ACD: Maybe the young generation of artists disaffected with Beuys has something to do with the way Beuys made the war so central to his personal myth. I believe, like you, that "healing the knife" belongs to a much wider vision than its use as a weapon—a vision in which the means and the subject of sacrifice belong to a larger whole.

I think that at least the first generation of Beuys's students was put off simply by his persistence in making art. Jörg Immendorff, who was his student in the '60s, made these gigantic babies and created the slogan (in baby talk) "*Tein tunst machen*" (Don't make art). In a 1966 painting, he scrawled the words *Hört auf zu malen* (Stop painting) over an impulsively crossed-out bed, with Beuys's signature hat hung over the bedpost. Like Brecht's "*Erst kommt das Fressen*" (Grub comes first [from *The Threepenny Opera*, 1928]), Immendorff's injunction to treat paintings like potatoes signaled a determination to make art that was humanly useful in some basic way. Radical German students are pretty unforgiving. They turn against exactly the ones you would expect to be their heroes—like Habermas or Adorno—especially in the late '60s. They mocked Habermas's harelip, and the girls bared their breasts in Adorno's classes as a sign of contempt. Immendorff got involved in establishing a sort of baby-land, which he called "Lidlstadt." Lidl was meant to evoke the sound of a baby's rattle, and he used to drag a block of wood with the word *LIDL* painted on it in front of the parliament.

Whether it was the police or the art-school guards who finally broke up Lidlstadt, I don't remember. I don't know if these political ideas infect the German students today, but attitudes and patterns of conduct don't just go away. On the other hand, art students in Germany, in my experience, are pretty career oriented. Maybe Beuys was too idealistic to be a model!

I think that you were onto something, in 1989, when you made *Field Dressing*, by focusing on a subject that was much in the air, namely the body. It has been more or less the artistic property of women as a subject, largely in consequence of the preoccupations of feminism (the idea of the body as wounded, or even as a wound, belonged to that discourse). I think frontal male nudity was pretty dicey at the time: think of all the fuss that was made about *The Perfect Moment* exhibition of Mapplethorpe's work, although at that time AIDS would have been

considered a specifically gay male pathology. What you did was claim the male body not as the bearer of disease, but an embodiment of health and beauty. And you thematized—to use a term from phenomenology—athleticism as an attribute. The body as gendered was made available to you by the times—it made it possible for you to be an artist, or at least the artist you became.

The body in fact became a philosophical subject in the early '70s. I published a book in 1973 called *Analytical Philosophy of Action*. My concern was bodily movement as a metaphysical problem, which was pretty distant from the moral issues that the body was to raise in the artworld, and of course athleticism never greatly entered our discussion. But the point you raise about the bodily perception available to athletes—of being inside and outside the body—would have been a general proposition about the human body as such, and not just or not especially the athletic body. But you saw the body as a site for sculptural possibilities. What surprises me most, I guess, is seeing this as something that Beuys had also explored. I hardly think of Beuys as having a body, though people who knew him say he was talented as an acrobat. But his uniform was so important to his myth—the hunter's vest, the boots, the fedora—that one struggled to visualize him as naked underneath all those accoutrements.

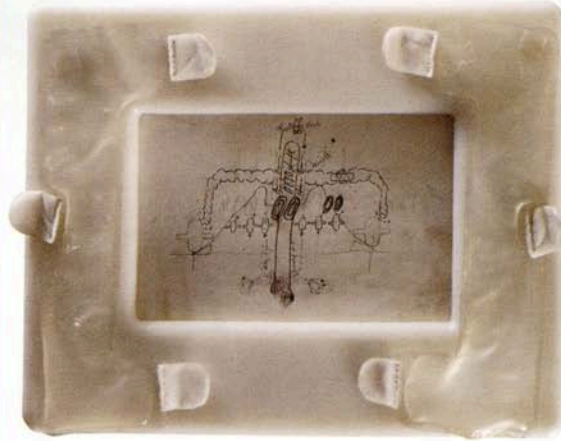
Once the body-as-sculpture was established, you went far beyond that. The Otto-Houdini modes of using the body were just genius, as far as I am concerned. And going on to include Gary Gilmore, Norman Mailer, and the Texas two-step is the height of artistic imagination. But it demanded, I would have thought, cinematic amplification. That is what puzzles me somewhat in your going back to precinematic sculpture—but like everyone else, I'll have to wait and see what that means.

I want to return to the title of the show. The idea, I guess, is that if the user of the knife wounds himself, the knife is somehow wounded and needs to be treated. That implies an ideal of the knife and its intended object—the one that is wounded—as being, as you put it, part of a whole. Think of the great image in Chuang Tzu's story of the butcher Ting, who cuts the carcass of an ox merely by inserting the point of his knife in the empty spaces between the natural parts, which sort of fall apart from one another, without dulling the knife. This Zen hero is one with the carcass, and never, accordingly, "wounds the knife." It never occurred to me to wonder what the knife was made of. It could have been made of jade, or obsidian. It needn't be iron. The main thing is the knowledge and the skill of the wielder, and the way the carcass is articulated.

MB: I guess I think of Beuys's body as being at the center of his practice. For this reason, I feel like I haven't had a primary experience with his work, only secondary experiences with the sculpture and documentation of his actions. I did find viewing his work at a remove to be very

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stimulating as a student (as I did other performance-based work from the late '60s and '70s—Chris Burden, Rudolf Schick, Marina Abramović and Ulay), and ultimately it influenced my own work in video and performance. I accepted that Beuys's body was a transformer, a conductor, and a transmitter. With the conductive plate of iron under his foot, the insulating felt on his head, and with the various antennae in his hand, all of the conceptual, political, or autobiographical input had to pass through the transformer before it could become useful, healing energy and emitted as such.

But this brings me back to the question about a Christian model. If this belief system is about healing and redemption, and if everything must pass through this central wounded body, or transformer, it starts to suggest a Christian character, or at least a Christian structure. Perhaps I'm being too simplistic about this. Again, if this is true, I'm not condemning the work for it, but only wondering if it might suggest a reading that makes the younger generation uneasy.

For me, the exhibition title *Heal the Knife That Cuts the Wound* is a kind of existential proposal. It doesn't suggest that the knife would be eliminated from the equation, only that it's accepted for what it is. It reminds me again of Ogun. If Ogun is the creator/destroyer energy in the blade of the knife, then one makes a lifelong contract with Ogun. In this contract, one offers a respect for the knife and its dualistic nature and in return receives a promise that, over time, the opposing energies will maintain an equilibrium. The contract keeps the knife healthy and the deity happy. As I understand it, Ogun suggests that conflict is inevitable and essential to development in nature.

I really like your example from Chuang Tzu about the butcher Ting. That's beautiful. I visited a master sword maker in Japan during one of my research trips for *Drawing Restraint 9* [Barney's most recent feature film, released in 2005]. I was looking for some kind of understanding of the whale-flensing craft, and thought I should start with Japanese metallurgy. I was lucky enough to witness the stage in the development of a samurai sword where the blade is given its essential character. After many weeks and many stages of folding and layering the metal, the blade is heated up in an asymmetrical way. More heat is exposed to the

top of the blade and less heat to the blade's edge, where a layer of clay covers the metal. The master then plunges the red-hot blade into a bath of cool water, the ceramic shatters, and the blade forms into a curve. No two knives have the same character, or behavior.

ACD: I guess I can see what you mean by Beuys's body. It was typically present in the work, either when Beuys was a performer, or when the work referred to Beuys as a physical presence—wounded, for example, or teaching while surrounded by blackboards. So his body was transformative. Something passes through it, and that, to you, suggests the analogy to Christ, and ultimately to a Christian relationship between his message and his auditors. That has to be underwritten by his suffering, as Christ's suffering is the means to our redemption.

The German art historian Karlheinz Ludeking just replied to a question I sent him, when we first started writing to each other, about why few younger German artists seem to revere Beuys:

For them his teachings seem to be more important than his work. And, as you know, Beuys always talked a lot about the mysteries of the world and a better future and actually held some rather weird opinions. His mixture of romanticism and shamanism is perhaps no longer regarded as up to date in a world ruled by clever calculation. Also, the growing rejection of his achievements has certainly been aggravated by the fact that the dominant art-critical circles in the US have never been in favor of Beuys. Rosalind Krauss and Yve-Alain Bois even had a little chapter in their exhibition catalogue L'Informe [1996] with the title 'Non à Joseph Beuys.' But the aversion usually seems to be fueled much more by the things Beuys said, not so much by what he created.

So according to Ludeking, it seems that his critics can accept Beuys as an artist but not as a proselytizer. But without the talk, the art is just stuff. What value does a pile of fat have unless it is accompanied by the artist's talk of healing? Ditto the stack of blankets. Beuys wasn't into readymades. The talk and the art go together, like the knife and wound.

HEAL THE KNIFE THAT CUTS THE WOUND: MATTHEW BARNEY AND JOSEPH BEUYS is on view at Deutsche Guggenheim, Berlin, from October 28 to January 14, 2007. It travels to the Peggy Guggenheim Collection in Venice during the 2007 Venice Biennale. MATTHEW BARNEY: DRAWING RESTRAINT is on view at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art through September 17.

ABOVE LEFT
JOSEPH BEUYS
UNTITLED, 1957
PENCIL AND BRAUNKREUZ
ON NOTEPAD PAPER
11 5/8 X 8 3/16 IN
COURTESY SOLOMON R. GUGGENHEIM
MUSEUM, NEW YORK

ABOVE RIGHT
MATTHEW BARNEY
STADIUM, 1991
GRAPHITE ON PAPER
FRAMED WITH INTERNALLY
LUBRICATED PLASTIC
FRAME AND ICE PACKS
15 1/2 X 29 1/2 X 2 IN
PHOTO: LARRY LANE
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