

EDITORIAL

“[T]he state no longer places much importance on the artistic aesthetic education of individuals; instead, it values the reproduction of technical intelligence to maintain its system of power.”¹

Joseph Beuys at documenta 5 (1972)

At *documenta 5* in Kassel in 1972, Joseph Beuys led discussions as part of an organization he cofounded called the Office for Direct Democracy. These conversations revolved around his ideas for a new kind of artistic-creative work involving all of society—with a new, equally broad, potential to bring about change. Three years later, Clara Bodenmann-Ritter, the mother of Sabina Korfmann-Bodenmann, published an excerpt from these discussions, which took place over one hundred days. The issues they address seem more relevant today than ever, even if they are focused on specific institutions and social aspects that are no longer at the forefront of our concerns. Their topics range from the significance of Waldorf schools as an alternative educational method to the remuneration of “household work,” whether performed by women or men—at the time, questions with far-reaching implications for everyday life. This public outreach had a palpable presence, especially since Beuys’s actions were widely reported on television. The critiques and counteractions it provoked—some of them filled with outrage—only amplified the public attention, which Beuys undoubtedly welcomed. The action at *documenta 8* that he called “7000 Oaks,” carried out by volunteer helpers, was realized as a critical intervention against bureaucracy and forest dieback, with a pithy motto playing on a near pun that roughly went: “self-forestation, not city administration” (in German: “Selbstverwaltung statt Stadtverwaltung”).² Like today’s so-called “climate artists” and activist artists, Beuys tied his artistic works and processes to paradigms of social crisis: to issues pertaining to the climate and the environment; to energy crises and the economy; to challenges to social cohesion; and to critiques of technology and the intensification of technological produc-

tion in a globalized world. The intervention and success of the Swiss group known as the Senior Women for Climate Protection at the European Court of Justice in Strasbourg on April 9, 2024, would have seamlessly fit into Beuys's concept.³ He believed people everywhere—whether in local, regional, or national contexts—should take the initiative for change. Dialogue, exchange, direct action—these should become the essence of art. This expansion of the very concept of art has become ubiquitous and irreversible. Take, for instance, the participatory performance *Where Your Ideas Become Civic Actions*, a “100-hour reading of Hannah Arendt’s *Elements and Origins of Totalitarianism*” staged in February 2024 by Tania Bruguera at Hamburger Bahnhof – Nationalgalerie der Gegenwart in Berlin. The museum writes:

“The historic hall of the Hamburger Bahnhof will be open to visitors free of charge for 100 hours without interruption: Cuban artist Tania Bruguera (born 1968) will read from Hannah Arendt’s (1906–1975) book ‘The Origins of Totalitarianism.’ Arendt’s history and theory of totalitarianism, published in 1951, which deals with the complex issues of totalitarianism and imperialism, and anti-Semitism and racism, is still very relevant today. While reading (in German and English), Bruguera alternates with public figures, theorists from various fields of knowledge, artists from different disciplines and people from the museum’s neighbourhood to reflect together on power and violence, plurality and morality, politics and truth and to discuss the work with the audience.”⁴

In retrospect, it is remarkable to see that more or less contemporaneously with Beuys’s expanded concept of art and especially his constant call for methodological diversity, art history experienced a profound change: it became possible to pursue a social history of the arts, to treat contemporary art as a subject of scholarship, and to teach photography in its historical and theoretical aspects. This shift was driven by individuals such as Wolfgang Kemp, who taught in Kassel before moving first to Marburg and then to the Hamburg Department of Art History as a professor. Ultimately, the establishment of the Center for Studies in the Theory and History of Photography, which I direct at the Institute of Art History at the University of Zurich together with the academic team at my chair, should be seen within this historical horizon. Methodological diversity has become a central goal of the humanities. It has been challenging, and remains so, to uphold photography as a specific subject of scholarship within this spectrum, especially since the medium has become one of many that are interconnected in contemporary art. But it is precisely the omnipresence of

photography in everyday life that makes it essential to examine the history and ever-evolving theorization of the photographic image from aesthetic, technical, social, and political perspectives. Just as the 1960s and 1970s evince a surprising parallel to our present, the history of photography in its various phases repeatedly serves as a model and point of reference for contemporary photography. It is only by analyzing historical phenomena that we can classify, compare, and better understand current developments. One example worth elaborating is the iconology of global protest photography, which emerged in the 1960s and 1970s; since around 2015, it has helped shape the photographic images of contemporary global protest movements.

The expanded concept of art and the diversity of methods also justify the publication series *Art & Photography*. The first two volumes dealt with photographic archival material and art forms by activist amateurs. The third volume focuses on a Swiss photography magazine, where one ism in the history of photography, namely, Pictorialism, experienced a kind of unexpected prolongation. While high art distanced itself from what was seen as old-fashioned art photography in favor of modernist photography, the Swiss magazine *Camera* persisted in its stance from its founding in 1922. In this regard, it was representative of many international clubs, for whom the canon and historical narratives of art and photography, with their typical paradigm shifts, simply did not apply. What might have seemed naïve and backward-looking at the time can now be seen as forms of resistance against overly powerful disciplines and institutions.

It always takes an additional step, making an experiment possible, to do something differently. This is why we have presented here a scholarly catalog of a photographic project that has almost entirely escaped public notice, a series that Kenneth C. Korfmann and Sabina R. Korfmann-Bodenmann executed with extreme energy and precision. More on this project can be found in the essay following this editorial.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Many collaborators and partners deserve thanks, which I would also like to extend as editor of this series on behalf of Sabina and Kenneth Korfmann. First and foremost, I thank Wolfgang F. Kersten as the author of this volume, who took on the task of commenting on each photograph and highlighting essential aspects of each image. Special thanks are also due to Roland Scotti, former director of the Kirchner Museum in Davos and the Kunstmuseum Appenzell. Drawing from his experience in contemporary art and commitment to artistic

positions in photography, he has written a profound and sensitive essay introducing the photographic work of the Korfmanns.

We owe the excellent translations into English to Michael Thomas Taylor. I am very grateful for our long-standing, trusting, creative, and always lively collaboration. Nadine Jirka, as a research associate at my chair and at the Center for Studies in the Theory and History of Photography, has done outstanding editorial work. We should have brought her on board earlier. Petra Florath provided drafts and made adjustments over many nights of hard work. We put a tremendous amount of effort into perfecting the quality of the reproductions, and as a result, we ultimately decided to produce a special edition (hand-numbered and signed) with the internationally renowned DZA Druckerei zu Altenburg. A heartfelt thanks to Birgit Landgraf and her team. The printing house has a 430-year history and continues to treat the book as a material object enriched with high-quality reproductions, even in the digital age.⁵ Special thanks also go to Tricolor Photoprint GmbH, especially to Alex Goldsmith, the long-standing partner of the Korfmann duo, for the excellent, efficient, and congenial collaboration.⁶

On the creative side, the Austrian artist Alois Köchl was unfortunately confronted with the rejection of his book cover design (fig. 3, p. XII), based on photographic portraits that Kenneth C. Korfmann and Sabina R. Korfmann-Bodenmann took of each other (figs. 1, 2, p. VIII, XI). The aesthetic differences between the painting and the photography were simply too great—paradoxically confirming the intention of this book series. Köchl's designs, with their painterly and graphic qualities, are meant to provide an aesthetic “surplus” for each book; sometimes they are even intended as a thought-provoking puzzle. But this time, I found myself unable in my capacity as editor to resolve the *paragone* between painting/drawing and photography. My view of collaborations with contemporary artists and authors is that it must ultimately leave them happy with the resulting publication—and I hope that is now the case. I thank Alois Köchl for his discerning humor, his serenity, and his ability to step back during a pit stop in the middle of the race and let others take the lead.

So it fell to Petra Florath, to whom I owe the overall design for the series, to once again give her all and create a new book cover.

In his proven manner, Martin Steinbrück took over project management while also supervising and moving other book projects along. He has been forced to juggle many balls in the air, partly because, for various reasons, a book backlog of sorts had developed, which is now delightfully being resolved as the books we have been planning are finally coming to print. And this, in turn, is presenting special challenges for Maria Effinger's team at the Heidelberg

University Library, which they are meeting with their usual great commitment. We are well aware of how many books the Heidelberg team produces every year and we are proud to be part of the program. A heartfelt thank you goes to Walther Fuchs, the founder and owner of Digiboo publishers in Küsnacht.

I am deeply grateful to the academic team at the University of Zurich, though for this book, Nadine Jirka bears sole responsibility. Our almost weekly meetings, where we plan, prioritize, talk, exchange ideas, and brainstorm together about the best ways to define and achieve our goals, about who feels most energized and ready to go and who does not—all of this inspires me to continue our work until another book is on the table ... or can be enjoyed and appreciated in open access. So, a heartfelt thank you to everyone directly and indirectly involved in the book and research project, in Zurich's local dialect: Mèrrsi!

Last but not least, thanks go to the Dr. Carlo Fleischmann Foundation and the Georg and Bertha Schwyzer-Winiker Foundation, and especially to art historian Claudia Steinfelds for her professional interest and constructive conversations. We are delighted and grateful to acknowledge the financial support from both foundations.

Bettina Gockel
Zurich, May 2024

Translated by Michael Thomas Taylor

NOTES

- 1 Clara Bodenmann-Ritter, ed., *Joseph Beuys: Jeder Mensch ein Künstler; Gespräche auf der documenta 5/1972*, 5th ed. (Frankfurt am Main: Ullstein, 1994 [1975]), 69. The conversations printed in this book were recorded by Clara Bodenmann-Ritter over two days and edited by Beuys. The *documenta 5* was curated by Harald Szeemann under the title “Befragung der Realität – Bildwelten heute/Questioning Reality – Pictorial Worlds Today.” For an inventory and critical appraisal of Joseph Beuys's work, see the exhibition catalog *Jeder Mensch ist ein Künstler: Kosmopolitische Übungen mit Joseph Beuys*, ed. Susanne Gaensheimer et al., K20 Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen, Düsseldorf (Berlin: Hatje Cantz, 2021).
- 2 For references to the “forest dieback” of the 1980s in Germany, see reports on the current state of the forests such as Helmut Stapel, “Waldsterben in Deutschland: Vier von fünf Bäumen sind krank,” <https://www.geo.de/natur/oekologie/waldsterben-in-deutschland--gruene-lunge-atmet-schwer--33764054.html>. Accessed May 19, 2024.
- 3 See KlimaSeniorinnen Schweiz, <https://www.klimaseniorinnen.ch/unsere-klage-am-egmr/>. Accessed May 20, 2024.

- 4 See the exhibition announcement of the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, <https://www.smb.museum/en/exhibitions/detail/tania-bruguera/>. Accessed June 5, 2024; see also the report on a conference at the Zurich University of the Arts: Stephanie Marchal, "Philosophie als ästhetische Praxis," *Kunstchronik* 4 (2023): 194–199, <https://doi.org/10.11588/kc.2023.4.102177>. Accessed May 20, 2024.
- 5 See the homepage of Druckerei zu Altenburg GmbH, <http://www.dza-druck.de>. Accessed May 20, 2024.
- 6 See the homepage of Tricolor Photoprint GmbH, <https://www.tricolor.ch>. Accessed May 20, 2024.