

# Joseph Beuys / 100!

18 April – 8 August 2021

The Kestner Gesellschaft celebrates the 100th birthday of Joseph Beuys with a series of events. One of the most charismatic and controversial artists of our times, Beuys was honored in the Kestner Gesellschaft in 1975 and 1990 with two comprehensive solo exhibitions, conceived and curated by the former director Carl Haenlein. The 1975 exhibition *Watercolors and Drawings* focussed on Beuys' works on paper. The press evaluated the exhibition in a critical way, with the voices ranging from "enrichment of the art scene" to "neither Beuys nor the public is served by this". The 1990 exhibition *An Inner Mongolia: Genghis Khan, Shamans, Actresses* with paintings, watercolors and drawings from the collection of Franz Joseph and Hans van der Grinten, can be compared to a quest to "express the future in the image of an older culture". The exhibition became a sensation, and to everyone's acclaim and praise, it travelled to St. Petersburg and the Puschkin Museum in Moskau, Russia, the Warther Kunstmuseum Kartause Ittingen, Switzerland, to Spain to the Fundació Joan Miró in Barcelona, to the Bayerische Akademie der Schönen Künste, to Frankfurt-Höchst and to the Kunsthalle Weimar.

A special presentation of the installation *First Aid: Homage to Joseph Beuys* (1969 – 2016) by Susan Hiller commemorates the artist and pays a tribute to the Kestner Gesellschaft's exhibitions. For over 40 years, Susan Hiller collected holy water from sacred sites, wells and streams around the world, from as far afield as the Ganges and an Irish sacred spring. She exhibited the samples in glass bottles in antique felt-lined medicine cabinets, suggesting that faith and reason are, to a large extent, cultural and historical. The series references the way Beuys, who believed in the healing power of nature and spirituality, imbued ordinary materials with sacred values, as well as persistent beliefs in popular culture. The manner of presentation also relates to Joseph Beuys' penchant for presenting special things in vitrines.

The exhibition is supported by the Förderkreis of the Kestner Gesellschaft.

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