



# What is Art?: Conversation with Joseph Beuys

*Joseph Beuys, Volker Harlan*

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## **What is Art?: Conversation with Joseph Beuys** Joseph Beuys, Volker Harlan

‘Joseph Beuys was one of the most important artists of the twentieth century. He was one of the first German artists to engage with his country’s turbulent and destructive recent history. His art embraced processes of political renewal within society, the search for an appropriate spiritual approach in our times, and a belief in the creative potential in each individual.’ - Sean Rainbird, Senior Curator, Tate Collection ‘Twenty years after his death, Beuys is still the most inspirational artist of modern times. No other figure has so moved people to find their own creativity and to innovative solutions to the biggest environmental threats facing our planet.’ - Professor Caroline Tisdall, Oxford Brookes University ‘Joseph Beuys was the most significant artistic innovator of the twentieth century. His extended concept of art and his Social Sculpture Theory contain the seeds needed for addressing the root problems of our global society today. Harlan’s book is a seminal contribution to the understanding of Beuys’ work.’ - Otto Scharmer, co-author, Presence: Human Purpose and the Field of the Future, Lecturer, MIT Sloan School of Management Joseph Beuys’s work continues to influence and inspire practitioners and thinkers all over the world, in areas from organizational learning, direct democracy and new money forms to new art pedagogies and ecological art practices. Here, in dialogue with Volker Harlan - a close colleague, whose own work also revolves around understandings of substance and sacrament that are central to Beuys - the deeper motivations and insights underlying 'social sculpture', Beuys's expanded conception of art, are illuminated. His profound reflections, complemented with insightful essays by Volker Harlan, give a sense of the interconnectedness between all life forms, and the foundations of a path towards an ecologically sustainable future. This volume features over 40 b/w illustrations.

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