

# **Beuys and after : contemporary German drawing from the collection : the Museum of Modern Art, February 1-May 14, 1996**

**[Magdalena Dabrowski]**

Author

Museum of Modern Art (New York, N.Y.)

Date

1996

Publisher

The Museum of Modern Art

Exhibition URL

[www.moma.org/calendar/exhibitions/277](http://www.moma.org/calendar/exhibitions/277)

The Museum of Modern Art's exhibition history—from our founding in 1929 to the present—is available online. It includes exhibition catalogues, primary documents, installation views, and an index of participating artists.

# Beuys and After

Contemporary German Drawings from the Collection

The Museum of Modern Art, February 1–May 14, 1996

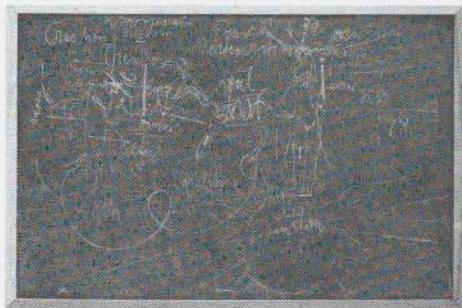
M67A  
1737

## Within the Museum's holdings

of contemporary drawings, those by German artists constitute the most comprehensive and coherent group. These works demonstrate the diversity of expression in the work of three generations of vanguard German artists active in the years since World War II. Although by no means representative of all tendencies or even all stages within the development of the individual artists, the works included in this exhibition reflect the vivacity and complexity of that period's artistic climate.

Although German art in the 1950s was largely in disarray, in subsequent decades Germany has been the locus of exceptionally varied and provocative innovations. The National Socialist regime had put an abrupt end to the development of progressive art, which the Nazis deemed "degenerate."

Postwar generations thus had a dual task: to face the void created by the annihilation of the avant-garde tradition and to formulate a national identity that would confront the heinous political



1. Joseph Beuys. *Untitled (Sun State)*. 1974. Gift of Aldrich Abby Rockefeller and acquired through the Lillie P. Bliss Bequest (by exchange)

past while allowing them to look toward the future. Artists born before or during World War II felt compelled to invent an artistic vocabulary that would reflect their society's disturbing rupture with the past. Active in the Düsseldorf-Cologne area and Berlin—then the two principal centers of artistic effervescence—these artists strove to achieve a distinctive language of creative expression.

Joseph Beuys emerged as the pivotal figure in this process. Through the performances he called "actions" and his various activist Happenings, where art and life merged into what he termed

"social sculpture," Beuys created a personal myth of heroic proportions. He attempted to come to terms with the national psyche by criticizing Germany's postwar emphasis on material rather than spiritual values. In the course of his various artistic phases, Beuys produced thousands of works that subverted traditional notions of drawing and emphasized its conceptual aspects. Beuys's personal and idiosyncratic works on paper represent his first visual manifestation of the abstract idea. Throughout his career he repeatedly shifted his conception of drawing, stressing the crucial importance of each individual work and essentially rejecting style as the primary element of art. His early drawings, derived from observations of nature or of objects, are nevertheless meticulous renderings of abstract concepts. Their precise delineation recalls the German Romantics' careful attention to detail. By focusing on the drawing mark itself and the spiritual aspects of drawing, Beuys radicalized the medium in a way that deeply influenced younger generations of artists.

Anselm Kiefer, impressed by Beuys's integrity and conscience, investigated the difficult territory of the German past and its roots. Kiefer directed his creative energies toward a new vision of painting. For him, the notion of the new encompassed both form and content: both experimentation with nontraditional mediums like straw and

lead, and exploration of German myths and biblical themes to convey their universal dimension and to imbue his work with ethical and often religious values (fig. 2).

While Kiefer probed his German heritage and formulated a new expressive mode, numerous artists in Berlin were introducing bold pictorial innovations. The aggressive, dramatic Neo-Expressionism of Georg Baselitz, Jörg Immendorff, Markus Lüpertz, and A. R. Penck (Ralf Winkler) was the obvious heir of the German Expressionism of the first decades of this century. The younger Expressionists were largely inspired by Nietzsche and his views on human existence in tragic periods. Characterized by heavy, gestural brushstrokes, their work injected new energy into an artistic scene that had been disrupted by the war and the Berlin Wall.



2. Anselm Kiefer. *Departure from Egypt*. 1984. Gift of the Denise and Andrew Saul Fund

These artists suffered from feelings of solitude, exile, and alienation—all inherited from the German Romantic tradition and now amplified by political reality. The Neo-Expressionists also fell under the spell of Beuys, who was introduced to Berlin in 1964 through that city's first Happening, a performance of Beuys's *The Chief*. At the same time, abstraction became the subject of vehement debate in Berlin and strongly affected these artists. Internal German influences fused with the powerful impact of the work of the American Abstract Expressionists—particularly Jackson Pollock, Willem de Kooning, Philip Guston, Franz Kline, and Mark Rothko—whose paintings were first exhibited in Germany in 1958 in an exhibition organized by The Museum of Modern Art.

Although functioning in the same environment and sharing the same tradition as Kiefer, the Neo-Expressionists developed a fundamentally distinct style. The work of Baselitz, who left Berlin in 1963, utilizes the figurative tradition (fig. 3) but often inverts the figure and fractures the drawing of it, creating a new expressive reality. Lüpertz, in contrast, retains the presence of objects but pushes them to the edge of abstraction (fig. 4).

While Baselitz, Lüpertz, and their colleagues in Berlin were creating a new mood in art, their contemporaries in Düsseldorf were making the Rhineland a

center of extraordinary activity and potential. Beuys, who taught at the Kunstakademie, Düsseldorf, and organized various "actions" there, provided a vital focal point. Moreover, the inauguration of the Cologne art fair in 1967 resulted in the opening of several galleries that began to show new art. Those who had emigrated from East Germany, like Sigmar Polke and Gerhard Richter, sought to come to grips with postwar disillusionment. These artists, educated within the canon of Socialist Realism, were now surrounded by Western materialism. In 1963, joining in with Konrad Lueg (Fischer), they launched a new style called Capitalist Realism, reflecting their cynical and ironic attitude toward their adopted environment. A German version of Pop art, it made use of familiar imagery but inflected it with a critical, satirical tone.

Polke borrowed from mass media, frequently recycling the same image until it lost its original meaning. He mixed drawing, painting, photography, and printmaking to achieve a personal style. Sometimes he incorporated disparate sequences into a single collagelike narrative; in other works (fig. 5), he emphasized the mechanized mark within a limitless space that still referred to the flat picture plane. In many instances Polke has combined figurative and abstract elements, stretching the boundaries of both styles.





3. George Baselitz. *Big Night Down the Drain*, 1963. Gift of R. L. B. Tobin

Richter moved away from Capitalist Realism through his color charts, city views, finger paintings, and cloud studies of the 1960s and 1970s. Abstraction has dominated his work since 1976. Often working in series, he emphasizes the sensuous quality of color, while his black and white drawings (fig. 6) explore the nuances of line and chiaroscuro, creating a mysterious pictorial reality. A. R. Penck, Richter's contemporary and a compatriot from Dresden, emigrated to West Germany in 1980, although he had been exhibiting there since 1969. His work evolved in two directions. One involved highly structured compositions of childlike stick people and striding hieroglyphic figures evoking the "primitive"; the other consisted of nearly abstract drawings and watercolors. Penck's work emphasizes the sign, articulated and manipulated

on different levels, and disregards the hierarchical structure of the traditional figure-ground relationship. Like other artists in this exhibition, he highlights the continuous interchange between the figurative and the abstract.

The generation of German artists born well after the war in the 1950s is represented by Günther Förg, Martin Kippenberger, Albert Oehlen, Thomas Schütte, and Rosemarie Trockel. Their work provides an indication of the stylistic pluralism now flourishing in Germany. Having developed during a period of great national prosperity and a high point in art collecting, these younger artists express a different set of artistic concerns than their predecessors. They reinterpret the issues of early modernist abstraction, collage, and naive drawing, as well as those of the representational tradition. They embrace diverse interests including politics, anthropology, theology, sociology, and even mathematics, creating works of multilayered complexity.

Viewed together, these works confront us with evidence of a vivid national identity, while at the same time addressing universal issues in contemporary art.

Magdalena Dabrowski  
Senior Curator, Department of Drawings

This brochure is made possible by The Contemporary Arts Council of The Museum of Modern Art.  
© 1996 The Museum of Modern Art, New York

# Beuys and After

## Contemporary German Drawings from the Collection

### Georg Baselitz

Born 1938

*Big Night Down the Drain (Die Grosse Nacht im Eimer)*, 1963

Watercolor and graphite  
24 1/4 x 19" (62.9 x 48.3 cm)  
Gift of R. L. B. Tobin

*P. D. Zeichnung*, 1963

Ink and pastel on two sheets of paper  
Overall dimensions:  
33 1/4 x 24 1/4" (85 x 61.5 cm)  
Purchased with funds given by Ronald S. Lauder and Leon D. Black

*Dog-Split (Hund-Geteilt)*, 1968

Pencil and watercolor  
19 1/4 x 12 1/4" (49.9 x 30.9 cm)  
Gift of The Cosmopolitan Arts Foundation

*Massai*, 1972

Brush and ink, pencil, and charcoal  
22 1/4 x 17 1/4" (57.5 x 43.5 cm)  
Gift of The Cosmopolitan Arts Foundation

*Eagle*, 1977

Oil and pencil  
33 1/4 x 24 1/4" (86 x 61.1 cm)  
Gift of The Cosmopolitan Arts Foundation

Untitled, 1991

Pencil and pastel  
34 x 24 1/4" (86.4 x 61.6 cm)  
Gift of Barbara G. Pine

### Joseph Beuys

1921–1986

Untitled, 1947 and 1970s

Pencil on four sheets of paper mounted on painted wood panel  
Overall sheet dimensions:  
11 1/4 x 38 1/2" (30 x 98.2 cm)  
Gift of Agnes Gund and Ronald S. Lauder

*Hogan in Spring (Hogen im Fröling)*, 1957

Watercolor, body color, dirt, and metallic paint  
9 1/4 x 12 1/2" (24.5 x 32.8 cm) (irregular)  
Gift of Barbara G. Pine and purchase

*Dynamis 3*, 1960

Enamel, pen and ink, pencil, and glue on two sheets of paper mounted on construction paper  
Overall dimensions:  
19 1/2 x 13 1/2" (50.2 x 35.3 cm)  
Purchase

Untitled, 1974

Pencil  
8 1/2 x 5 1/2" (21.6 x 13.7 cm)  
Gift of the artist

Untitled (*Sun State*), 1974

Chalk on slate with wood frame  
47 1/2 x 72" (120.7 x 183 cm)  
Gift of Abby Aldrich Rockefeller and acquired through the Lillie P. Bliss Bequest (by exchange)

### Miriam Cahn

Swiss, born 1949

Lives and works in Germany

*To Read in Dust, T.W.L. (The Wild Life) (lesen im staub, d.w.l. [das wilde leben])*, 1984

Charcoal  
Page 24 x 16 1/2" (61 x 43 cm)  
Gift of Walter Bareiss

### Hanne Darboven

Born 1941

*II B*, 1970–73

Pen and ink and typewriting on twenty-eight sheets  
Each 11 1/2 x 33" (29.3 x 83.8 cm)  
Gift of Ileana Sonnabend

### Günther Förg

Born 1952

Four Untitled drawings, 1987

Brush and colored ink on yellow paper  
Each 9 1/4 x 7" (23.3 x 17.8 cm)  
Gift of Walter Bareiss

Four Untitled drawings, 1989

Watercolor  
Each 13 1/4 x 11" (35.2 x 28 cm)  
Gift of R. L. B. Tobin and Mr. and Mrs. Bernard A. Greenberg

**Jörg Immendorff**

Born 1945

*Café Deutschland*,  
1978

Tempera

11 1/4 x 8 1/2" (29.4 x 21.1 cm)

Gift of The Cosmopolitan  
Arts Foundation

*Tables for Café*

*Deutschland*

(*Tische für Café*

*Deutschland*), 1978

Gouache and graphite

11 1/4 x 8 1/2" (29.6 x 20.8 cm)

Gift of The Cosmopolitan  
Arts Foundation

**Anselm Kiefer**

Born 1945

*Birth of Painting*

(*Nascita della*

*Pittura*), 1981

Synthetic polymer paint

and oil on photograph

23 1/4 x 31" (58.8 x 78.7 cm)

Purchase

*Departure from Egypt*  
(*Auszug aus Ägypten*),

1984

Synthetic polymer paint,

charcoal, and string on

cut-and-pasted photograph

and cardboard

43 1/4 x 33 1/2" (109.5 x 85 cm)

Gift of the Denise and  
Andrew Saul Fund

**Martin Kippenberger**

Born 1953

*The World of the*

*Canary* (*Die Welt des*  
*Kanarienvogels*), 1988

Pencil

156 sheets, each 5 1/2 x 4 1/4"

(14 x 10.5 cm)

Gift of Walter Bareiss and  
R. L. B. Tobin

**Markus Lüpertz**

Born 1941

*Atelier*, c. 1973-74

Tempera and crayon

16 1/2 x 22" (41.7 x 55.9 cm)

Gift of The Cosmopolitan  
Arts Foundation

*Snail and Shovel*, 1976

Pastel

24 1/2 x 16 1/2" (61.1 x 42.9 cm)

Gift of The Cosmopolitan  
Arts Foundation

Untitled, 1980

Charcoal, gouache, and chalk

19 1/2 x 27 1/2" (49.8 x 70.2 cm)

Purchase

**Albert Oehlen**

Born 1954

Four studies for

*Tannhäuser*, 1987

Cut-and-pasted printed

papers, pencil, ink, and gouache

11 1/4 x 8 1/2" (29.2 x 22.2 cm)

Gift of R. L. B. Tobin

**Blinky Palermo**

(**Peter Heisterkamp**)

1943-1977

Untitled, 1971

Conté crayon on sand paper

and ink and synthetic polymer

paint on painted wallpaper

Overall dimensions:

17 1/2 x 10 1/2" (44 x 26.7 cm)

Gift of The Cosmopolitan  
Arts Foundation

Seven Untitled drawings,  
1976

Synthetic polymer paint

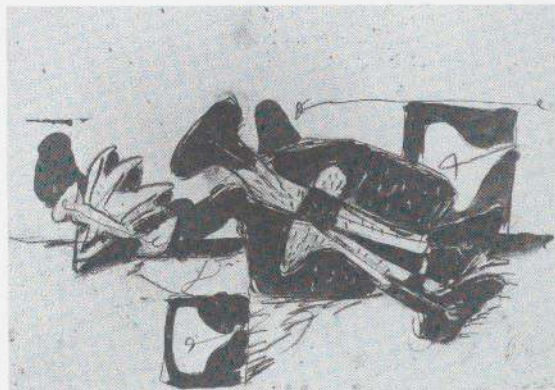
on notebook paper mounted

on board

Each 27 1/2 x 19 1/2"

(69.8 x 49.5 cm)

Gift of The Leary Family



4. Markus Lüpertz. Untitled. 1980. Purchase

**A. R. Penck  
(Ralf Winkler)**

Born 1939

Seven Untitled drawings,  
1967

Watercolor

Each 7 x 9 1/2" (17.9 x 24.5 cm)

Gift of Walter Bareiss and  
purchase

Untitled, 1975

Pencil

16 1/4 x 23 1/2" (41.9 x 59.4 cm)

Gift of Mrs. Frank Y. Larkin

*Structure T. M.*, 1976

Tempera

28 1/2 x 40 1/2" (73.2 x 102.9 cm)

Gift of The Cosmopolitan  
Arts Foundation

Untitled, c. 1980-81

Watercolor

11 1/2 x 15 1/2" (29.4 x 40.4 cm)

Purchase

Nine Untitled drawings,  
1980

Ink on parchment paper

19 1/2 x 29 1/2" (50.2 x 75.2 cm)

Gift of Ronald S. Lauder

**Sigmar Polke**

Born 1941

*Free of Dizziness*

(*Frei von Schwindelgefühl*),

1964

Ballpoint pen

11 1/2 x 8 1/2" (29.7 x 21.1 cm)

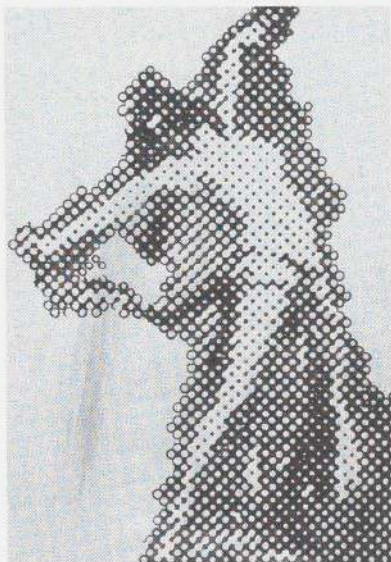
Gift of The Cosmopolitan  
Arts Foundation

*Joke (Witz)*, 1965

Felt-tipped pen and  
watercolor

11 1/2 x 8 1/2" (29.8 x 21.2 cm)

Gift of Ronald S. Lauder



5. Sigmar Polke. Untitled, 1994. Gift of Ronald S. Lauder

*Silver Brick (Silberner  
Ziegelstein)*, 1965

Ballpoint pen

11 1/2 x 8 1/2" (29.8 x 21 cm)

Gift of Barbara G. Pine

*Physiognomy with Car,*  
1966

Ballpoint pen and gouache

11 1/2 x 8 1/2" (29.6 x 20.8 cm)

Gift of The Cosmopolitan  
Arts Foundation

*Whip*, 1968

Pen and ink

8 1/2 x 5 1/2" (21 x 14.8 cm)

Gift of The Cosmopolitan  
Arts Foundation

Untitled, 1968

Watercolor, synthetic polymer  
paint spray, and gouache

37 1/2 x 25" (95.9 x 63.6 cm)

Purchase

Untitled, 1983

Synthetic polymer paint

27 1/2 x 39 1/2" (69.7 x 99.3 cm)

Purchase

Untitled, 1994

Gouache

40 1/2 x 28 1/2" (102.8 x 73 cm)

Gift of Ronald S. Lauder

**Gerhard Richter**

Born 1932

*Engels*, 1982

Pencil

11 1/2 x 8 1/2" (29.7 x 21 cm)

Gift of Constance B. Cartwright

*Static*, 1982

Pencil

11 1/2 x 8 1/2" (29.5 x 21 cm)

Gift of Constance B. Cartwright



**Untitled, 1982**

Pencil and pen and ink  
19 1/4 x 26 1/4" (49.3 x 68.3 cm)  
Gift of Walter Bareiss

**Firenze, 1983**

Pencil on two sheets  
of notebook paper  
Overall dimensions:  
14 1/4 x 9 1/4" (37.3 x 24.4 cm)  
Purchase

**G. A. Nos. 1-5, 1984**

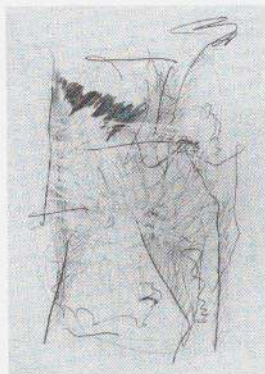
Colored inks, watercolor,  
pencil and crayon  
Each 11 1/4 x 8 1/4" (29.7 x 21 cm)  
Gift of R. L. B. Tobin

**Untitled, 1985**

Pencil  
9 1/4 x 6 1/4" (23.8 x 15.9 cm)  
Purchase

**Untitled, 1986**

Oil  
22 1/2 x 32 1/2" (57.8 x 83.4 cm)  
Gift of Walter Bareiss



6. Gerhard Richter. *Engels*. 1982.  
Gift of Constance B. Cartwright

**Untitled, 1988**

Colored inks and watercolor  
6 1/4 x 9 1/4" (16.5 x 23.9 cm)  
Gift of The International Council  
in honor of H. R. H. Prinz Franz  
von Bayern

**Untitled, 1988**

Colored inks and watercolor  
11 1/4 x 15 1/4" (29.9 x 39.6 cm)  
Gift of Walter Bareiss

**Untitled, 1988**

Colored inks and watercolor  
6 1/4 x 9 1/4" (16.5 x 23.8 cm)  
Gift of Walter Bareiss

**Untitled, 1988**

Oil  
9 1/4 x 16 1/4" (24.8 x 41.5 cm)  
Gift of Barbara G. Pine

**Untitled, 1990**

Pencil  
8 1/4 x 11 1/4" (21 x 29.8 cm)  
Gift of The Contemporary  
Arts Council

**Untitled, 1991**

Colored inks and watercolor  
9 1/4 x 13 1/4" (24.2 x 33.5 cm)  
Gift of the Patsy R. Taylor  
Family Trust

**Thomas Schütte**

Born 1954  
Seven Untitled drawings,  
1989  
Watercolor, ink, gouache  
and pencil  
Each 12 1/2 x 9 1/4" (31.7 x 23.8 cm)  
Purchase

**Rosemarie Trockel**

Born 1952  
Untitled, 1983  
Ink and gouache  
11 1/4 x 8 1/4" (29.5 x 21 cm)  
Gift of Walter Bareiss



7. Rosemarie Trockel. *Untitled*. 1993.  
Gift of Walter Bareiss

**Untitled, 1983**

Watercolor and synthetic  
polymer paint on graph paper  
8 1/4 x 6 1/4" (20.8 x 16.3 cm)  
Gift of Walter Bareiss

**Untitled, 1983**

Watercolor on yellow  
ruled legal paper  
11 1/4 x 8 1/4" (30 x 21 cm)  
Gift of Walter Bareiss

**Untitled, 1984**

Synthetic polymer paint  
6 1/4 x 7 1/4" (16.5 x 19 cm)  
Gift of Walter Bareiss

**Untitled, 1986**

Watercolor on ruled paper  
8 1/4 x 5 1/4" (20.5 x 14.7 cm)  
Purchase

**Guenter Tuzina**

Born 1951  
*3-Part Drawing  
Series (3-Teilige  
Zeichnungsgruppe)*,  
1988  
Synthetic polymer paint  
and pencil  
Each 12 1/2 x 9 1/4" (31.8 x 23.8 cm)  
Gift of Walter Bareiss