Postwar Landscapes: Joseph Beuys and the Reincarnation of German Romanticism

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Contents

I. Introduction 3

II. Beuys' Germany: The 'Inability to Mourn' 3

III. Showman, Shaman, or Postwar Savoir? 5

IV. Beuys and Romanticism: *Similia similibus curantur* 9

V. Romanticism in Action: *Celtic (Kinloch Rannoch)* 12

VI. *Celtic+* ~~~: Germany's symbolic salvation in Basel 22

VII. Conclusion 27

Notes

Bibliography

Figures

Germany, 1952
O Germany, you're torn asunder
And not just from within!
Abandoned in cold and darkness
The one leaves the other alone.
And you've got such lovely valleys
And plenty of thriving towns;
If only you'd trust yourself now,
Then all would be just fine.
-Bertolt Brecht

Through communication... we would also attain an elemental, deep feeling for what happens in the soil on which we live and for what has died in the field, in the wood, in the meadow, and on the mountain.
-Joseph Beuys

Joseph Beuys was a dynamic force within postwar German society, not only because of his unorthodox aesthetic, but also because he was the first significant postwar artist to attempt to resuscitate Germany's spiritual identity in the aftermath of the Third Reich. Indeed, Beuys considered it his responsibility as an artist to transform the postwar generation's spiritually-devoid state by healing its inability to mourn. Beuys found an ideal prescription for his healing program in early nineteenth-century German Romanticism, a movement whose message of a land-based spirituality, while condemned for its ties to National Socialist ideology, was closely allied with the artist's own search for a common German *Geist*. By infusing his allegorical performance pieces with Romantic philosophy, therefore, Beuys was able to both rectify the ideological distortions of the era in history, and present postwar Germany with a model for spiritual salvation. The following essay will explore Beuys' employment of early nineteenth-century Romanticism in two actions from the early 1970s, *Celtic (Kinloch Rannoch)* and *Celtic+~~~*.

BEUYS' GERMANY: THE 'INABILITY TO MOURN'

In 1979, Joseph Beuys stated, "the human condition is Auschwitz, and the principle of Auschwitz finds its perpetuation in... the silence of intellectuals and artists.... We are now experiencing Auschwitz in its contemporary character."[1] Beuys was addressing the "silent" psychological state of German society in the aftermath of National Socialism, a state so detrimental to the nation's heritage that Beuys felt compelled to liken it to the Holocaust. Indeed, in the years following the Second World War, Germany found itself unable to confront the atrocities that had taken place on its

soil during the Third Reich, in part because Nazi ideology had infiltrated virtually all facets of German life. The nation therefore concentrated on reconstructing its identity in the present without the burdens of the past, instituting "manic defenses" against German history as a healing strategy.[2] Consequently, Germany's national heritage was forsaken for the security of international conformity.

The artistic climate of postwar Germany deviated little from this societal development. Postwar German artists turned to abstraction rather than figuration in their aesthetic, in part because they wanted to evoke the international connotations that abstraction afforded. Moreover, having witnessed the destructive power of the Nazi propagandizing of art, postwar artists were reluctant to suggest a contextual program in their work for fear it may be misconstrued, or for that matter, intimate a political agenda. Indeed, artists like Hans Hartung, Willi Baumeister, and the 'Zero' Group focused on form rather than content, in some cases as a means of "inner immigration." In the art historical realm, scholars avoided issues concerning a definitive "German" aesthetic, evaluating German art in terms of its international rather than national character. For instance, in his 1955 introduction to the exhibition catalogue *German Art of the Twentieth Century*, noted art historian Werner Haftmann asserted:

> Is there such a thing as a 'German' modern art? Is not German merely a geographical term, an historical convention?...For we all know that one of the most astonishing and significant characteristics of modern man is the really tremendous expansion of his historical and spatial consciousness.... It must be recognized that German artists have not worked in isolation.[3]

Joseph Beuys was one of the first artists to recognize the destructive character of Germany's inability to mourn, and, indeed, to take measures artistically to "break through the insulation (mental and social)."[4] In fact, Beuys turned to art after serving in the

German army during World War Two because, as he recollected in a 1979 interview with Caroline Tisdall, he "realized the part an artist can play in indicating the traumas of a time and initiating the healing process."[5] Beuys not only reaffirmed the importance of content in his promotion of conceptualism,[6] but he also expanded the parameters of art to include all aspects of life and to involve all members of society ("Everyone an artist").[7] It was his belief that an expanded definition art had the power to heal contemporary society, in that art could reincarnate the creative spirit of ages past in all facets of life, even those dismissed as taboo in the postwar period. Beuys therefore created actions, his term for performance pieces, that, like rituals, provided a framework for conjuring spirituality in the collective unconscious. Rather than making specific references to Germany, however, in his formulation of the "healing process," Beuys relied on universal myth motifs and allegory to communicate his ideas. It was these "primitive mediums," Beuys asserted, that are "in the position to activate centers within many individuals who remain fairly unmoved by the most grisly representations of human suffering, illness, war, concentration camps, etc."[8]

SHOWMAN, SHAMAN, OR POSTWAR SAVIOR?

In turning to a universal language for his artistic program of healing, Beuys fostered a sense of ambiguity regarding his willingness to confront Germany's destructive history. While the artist championed reconciliation between the past and the present, he rarely addressed issues of the Third Reich in his art. In fact, Beuys' extensive *oeuvre* includes only three instances in which the title and content of the work directly reference National Socialism: *Auschwitz/Concentration Camp Essen* (showcase assemblage,

Ströher Collection, Hessische Landesmuseum, Darmstadt, 1958), *Kukei/Akopee-nein/Brown Cross/Fat Corners/Model Fat Corners* (performance, Aachen, 1964), and *Show your wound* (environment, Munich, 1976). The obvious equivocation of Beuys' stance has provoked scholars and critics to reevaluate his aesthetic based solely on his relationship to German history. Many of Beuys' devoted supporters, including Caroline Tisdall, maintain that the artist's sculptural program derives directly from his experiences in the German Army, particularly his mythologized rescue by the fat and felt of Crimean Tartars. Art historian Gene Ray has even suggested that Beuys elicited the atrocities of the Holocaust in his selection of materials; fat and felt, he argues, recall the soap and blankets that were made from the discarded body parts of Holocaust victims.[9] Other critics, above all art historian Benjamin Buchloh, have denounced Beuys' universal shaman status, labeling it a guise that enabled the artist to disassociate himself from his involvement with the Nazi Regime. In his 1980 article "Beuys: The Twilight of an Idol," Buchloh stated that Beuys'

> myth is trying to deny his participation in the German war and his citizenship.... The very negation of Beuys' origin in a historic period of German fascism affirms every aspect of his work as being totally dependent on, and deriving from, that period.[10]

In fact, Buchloh considered Beuys' ahistoricity to be further indication of his fascist leanings, in that the artist aestheticized the political situation of postwar Germany just as the Nazis had aestheticized their political ideology with Aryan myth.[11] Moreover, in mythologizing his own association with the Hitler Youth and the *Luftwaffe*, Beuys initialized a path towards German mourning without roots in reality, thus rendering any potential healing superficial at best. As Buchloh explained, Beuys

> follows the archaic and infantile principle that as long as you do not acknowledge the existence of things in reality that seem to threaten your ideas, they will not concern or affect you.[12]

According to Buchloh, therefore, Beuys is allied with rather than resistant to his contemporaries who averted historical confrontation by espousing universal abstraction.

The factional nature of these arguments, coupled with the postwar tendency to perceive contexts in terms of "black" or "white," Nazi or victim, have led many Beuys scholars to evaluate the artist's relationship to the Third Reich within the two extremes described above.[13] When one transcends this subjectivism, however, and places Beuys' work within the historical framework of postwar Germany, the possibility emerges that Beuys evaded direct references to National Socialism *because* he saw allegory as the most effective means to reconcile Germany with its past. During the sixties and seventies when Beuys' art was at its height, any narrative that explicitly pointed to aspects of National Socialism would have been immediately dismissed as taboo. In fact, although the Student Movement of 1968 planted the first seeds of a collective dialogue confronting the past, issues of the Third Reich were not addressed on a national level until the *Historiker Streit* in the mid-1980s.[14] If Beuys had recounted the events from 1933 to 1945 on a literal level, he would have run the risk of broaching the unbroachable, thereby alienating his audience and undermining the healing process. Allegory, however, enabled Beuys to create, as scholar Irit Rogoff has stated, a "commemoration of... what cannot be recuperated in direct historical narrative,"[15] that is, an appeal for a dialogue about National Socialist atrocities that was not an affront to German sensitivies. The artistic character of Beuys' message, moreover, ensured that Germany's historical confrontation would not culminate in irreconcilable despair. Art historian Donald Kuspit explains:

> At the least, artistic action encourages us to respond to trauma creatively, lessening the likelihood that it will destroy us completely. It becomes a model for a positive response to threatening experience.[16]

In turning to allegory and its inherent multiformity, moreover, Beuys was able to extract the positive dimensions of German history from National Socialist perversions, thus making the past more acceptable to the postwar generation. Beuys indeed felt that the primary source of postwar Germany's maladies was its abandonment of tradition; he therefore promoted the resuscitation of German history through allegory as the most effective means for healing society. In his 1985 speech "Talking about one's own country," for instance, Beuys implored the German population to "see yesterday's opponent [history] as tomorrow's friend" in his art in order to "eliminate all the external difficulties which have arisen through ideologies and ambition for power." [17] By reviving a positivist view of history in his works, moreover, Beuys hoped to provide a solid foundation for future societal developments. As the artist explained, "we must try and work out projects for the future, but we can only do so if we are aware of the methods of the past, of the methods of past revolutions."[18] When one examines the structure and agenda of Beuys' art, particularly his performance pieces, there is ample evidence to suggest that the "past revolution" employed in his artistic healing process is early nineteenth-century German Romanticism.[19] By allegorizing Romantic philosophy in his choice of materials and actions, Beuys was able to rescue German history from its ideological pigeon-hole, thereby remedying the cultural void of post-Nazi Germany.

BEUYS AND ROMANTICISM: *SIMILIA SIMILIBUS CURANTUR*

Throughout his career, Beuys maintained that his art, while revolutionary in appearance, was a "new-born child of the old disciplines," a continuation of rather than a reaction to tradition.[20] Indeed, when questioned about the genesis of his ideology, Beuys explained that a "good starting-point" for understanding his approach "would be the age of German Idealism.... You find it in the Romantics, in Novalis, etc."[21] Moreover, Beuys credited Schiller with planting the first seeds of his signature concept "Every man an artist":

> Schiller is a point of reference [for me]. He too talks about creativity, and he understood numerous aspects of it: he considers man himself according to how he appears in art. He could have taken this to its logical conclusion and said that man too is a work of art.[22]

Ties between Beuys and Romanticism, however, have been largely depreciated in art historical scholarship; many historians acknowledge parallels between these traditions, but caution a direct comparison because of Beuys' artistic reliance on ahistoricity.[23] Other scholars have likened Beuys' ideology to Wagnerian Romanticism, although Beuys himself denounced this association: "I am not a [Wagnerian].... I have seldom considered Wagner [a source of inspiration]."[24] There is, however, significant evidence to support an immediate relationship between Beuys and early nineteenth-century Romantics like Schiller and Novalis, particularly when one considers similarities in historical context and motivations for socially oriented artistic agendas.

Like Beuys' theory of social sculpture, the Age of Romanticism grew out of a period of political and social unrest ("*Sturm und Drang*") in which the need to revitalize a common German identity was brought to the fore. Germany at the turn of the nineteenth century existed not as a nation but as a conglomeration of over fifteen self-governing

principalities, each with its own cultural character. The success of the French Revolution, however, left a taste for nationalism on the palate of German liberals, and many pushed to dispel old orders and create a modern nation for all ethnic Germans.[25] With the advance of Napoleon's army into the former Holy Roman Empire beginning in 1796, this desire for national unity intensified as a defensive strategy; Germans throughout Central Europe felt compelled to define political and cultural commonalities as a barricade to foreign domination.[26]

Early nineteenth-century German Romanticism derived to a large extent from the desire to find deep-rooted affinities among the divided German principalities. Romantic intellectuals,[27] however, were not as concerned with the political unity of the emerging nation as with the spiritual solidarity of the German people. They, like Beuys, sought to remedy the lack of a centralized German identity by delineating a singular "German" spirit from cultural traditions throughout Central Europe.[28] In recalling this *Volk*-based spirituality through art and poetry, sources far removed from the reality of Enlightenment politics, the Romantics hoped to create a metaphysical confederacy of German states that transcended geographical borders. "Germany" under Romanticism thus became a state of mind, an inner *Geist* known only to those born on its soil.

During the Third Reich, this Romantic propagation of the inextricable ties between the German land and its people became the basis for the Nazi "blood and soil" doctrine, the policy used to justify Germany's domination over and elimination of "lesser" races. It was this "blood and soil" doctrine that Beuys considered one of the most devastating outcomes of Hitler's reign, not only because it inspired the mass genocide of millions, but also because it led to the annihilation of Germany's national character and

rich cultural heritage in the postwar period. In fact, in his 1973 manifesto for the Free International University (FIU),[29] coauthored with the poet Heinrich Böll, Beuys pointed to Nazi ultra-nationalism as having not only "ravaged the land and spilled the blood," but also "disturbed our relation to tradition and the environment."[30] As the result of National Socialist atrocities, postwar Germany shunned "blood and soil" ideology, or for that matter any movement promoting a national German identity, like nineteenth-century Romanticism. In fact, Beuys' generation devised a "sheltered" history of the Age of Romanticism, excluding those philosophies that had any ideological relation to National Socialism. The movement in its entirety, however, was discounted as a suitable heritage for postwar Germany.

By reclaiming the positive character of German Romanticism, the postwar generation would gain an acceptable historical basis for transcending the fascist ideological perversions of the movement; "yesterday's opponent" would become "tomorrow's friend," the savior of history, and thereby society. Romanticism thus befit Beuys' prescription for the homeopathic healing of Germany: "*Similia similibus curantur*- heal like with like,"[31] cure the atrocities of National Socialism with their philosophical origin. By infusing his revolutionary aesthetic with Romantic elements, particularly those focusing on the revitalization of German spirituality through land and nature, Beuys was able to proffer a positive interpretation of philosophies rendered deleterious by the Nazis, thereby restoring Romanticism's historical validity and providing an ideal framework for the healing process. Evidence for Beuys' pointed employment of early nineteenth-century Romanticism emerges when one examines two of Beuys' actions from the early 1970s, *Celtic (Kinloch Rannoch)*, performed in

Edinburgh, Scotland in August 1970, and *Celtic+~~~*, performed in Basel, Switzerland, in April 1971.

ROMANTICISM IN ACTION: *CELTIC (KINLOCH RANNOCH)*

The actions *Celtic (Kinloch Rannoch)* (1970) and *Celtic+ ~~~* (1971), though not conceived as a series, depict Beuys' conceptual impressions of the Scottish landscape and its indigenous Celtic mythology through abstracted movement and allegorical materials. Although the *Celtic* actions are marked by notable idiosyncrasies, the basic composition of both performance pieces is based on the sequence of events that Beuys created for *Celtic (Kinloch Rannoch)* in conjunction with the exhibition *STRATEGY: GET ARTS* at the Richard Demarco Gallery in Edinburgh, Scotland.

Celtic (Kinloch Rannoch) was a four-hour performance that Beuys staged twice a day between August 26 and 30, 1970, in the Student Life room at the Edinburgh College of Art (Fig. 1). Beuys initiated the action by staring noiselessly at his audience from a chair placed in the center of the unadorned, neon-lit room. After an extended period of uncomfortable silence in which the small group of spectators, sequestered to the opposite end of Beuys' action space, became restless, Beuys arose from his chair and walked to the piano on the right, playing a single note on the keyboard. He then picked up the chalkboard that was leaning against the piano and poured a solution of clay and water over it, as if to clean and prepare it for the drawings to come. When the board was thoroughly covered with brown liquid, Beuys began to draw a series of seven abstracted images on it, each demonstrating the scientific properties of language and communication (Fig. 2).[32] After Beuys completed each drawing, he leaned the chalkboard against the

piano and pointed at it with a spear, as if teaching a lesson to the audience. He then placed the chalkboard on the ground, threw his own body to the floor, and pushed the drawing across the length of the room with a long staff representing a spear (Fig. 3). Beuys' movements during this sequence were not governed by a particular tempo, but oscillated between slow and hectic rhythms.[33] When the artist was ready to initiate a new drawing process, he would erase the chalk image with the palm of his hand and repeat the entire set of actions. Throughout the chalkboard sequence, Henning Christiansen, the Dutch musician assisting Beuys, added multimedia elements to the action. He in fact initiated the start of the performance by projecting film footage from Beuys' action *Eurasianstaff*, first performed in Vienna in 1967, onto the back wall. As Beuys prepared the chalkboard for the first drawing, Christiansen began to play a cassette recording of his organ symphony *82 min. fluxorum organum*, also from 1967. The film and music served as cues for Beuys' movements, for each time the footage or sound came to an end, Beuys stopped suddenly and embarked upon a new drawing sequence.

After an hour of repeated movements, Beuys abandoned the chalkboard and moved to the center of the room, where he balanced on one leg for approximately fifteen minutes. Quite unexpectedly, Beuys then disrupted the death-like stillness of the action space by transforming into an uncontrollable wild creature. With the chaotic spirit of an animal, Beuys violently threw large clumps of gelatin onto the surrounding walls, running around the room sniffing, grimacing, and snarling. After five minutes of this animalistic behavior, Beuys stopped in the center of the room, where he grabbed his spear and positioned it behind his back, contorting his arms and legs to wrap around its length (Fig. 1). At that point, Christiansen projected the film *Rannoch Moor*, a three-mile-per-

hour panorama around the Scottish moorlands that Beuys had filmed a few days prior to the Edinburgh action, onto the back wall (Fig. 4). Beuys placed the chalkboard next to the moor film, turned toward the audience, and stepped forward with two cassette recorders on his shoulders, each playing the message "yes, yes, yes, yes, no, no, no, no." As Christiansen amplified the organ symphony, adding screaming and splashing sounds, Beuys took a ladder and a large piece of tin from the back wall, and began picking clumps of gelatin off the surrounding walls (Fig. 5). After an hour of collecting the gelatin and amassing it on the tin plate, Beuys lifted the plate over his head and poured the entire contents over his body (Fig. 6). Beuys then moved to microphone in the center of the room, lifted the chalkboard drawing over his head, and howled. The action drew to a close as Beuys, having placed the chalkboard on the floor between his lunging legs, stood in this warrior position, spear in his right hand, for forty-five minutes. At that time, Christiansen played a tape recording of Beuys saying, "thank you very much," signaling the audience to leave.

As the disjointed and enigmatic nature of this sequence of events illustrates, Beuys was not attempting to recreate Celtic tradition in setting the action in Scotland, but to use it as an allegorical framework for addressing his ideational program. Beuys in fact reported that his only preparation for *Celtic (Kinloch Rannoch)* was the formulation of the concept:

> I ordered the films, a piano, and much more. I didn't know what was going to come. I only knew that I was going to give a concert. I prepared myself for it inwardly.[34]

In focusing on conception rather than physicality, Beuys intended the objects and movements in the action to generate "the ideas of things, sensations, and connections" linked to Celtic culture rather than symbolic depictions of Scotland.[35] Thus, the moor

film projected on the wall during the last half of the action was shown not to recreate the Scottish moorlands in the action setting, but to evoke the idea of a wild, mystical landscape in the minds of spectators.

Beuys maintained that the concept behind *Celtic (Kinloch Rannoch)* was place, referring not only to Scotland, but also to the idea of place as an essential component of life. In describing his motivations for the Edinburgh action, Beuys explained:

> The place was important. I say, we only live once on this planet as a living organism, so the place in which we live plays an important role. Initially as a simple question: What is Scotland? What is it? Then I began to smell, I put out my antennae and immediately received impressions.[36]

The "impressions" that Beuys revealed in the allegorical composition of the action center on the search for spiritual identity in nature and mythical cultures, a theme that derives directly from nineteenth-century German Romanticism. In fact, Beuys acknowledged a connection between his focus on place and that of previous philosophers, stating "if one goes back to tradition... the idea of place comes into the picture."[37] Scotland, according to Beuys, was not a "purely arbitrary" choice in allegorizing Romantic spiritual philosophies "in the sense of the pictorialization of the idea."[38] Beuys felt that the Scottish terrain represented "the last European wilderness,"[39] and thus the last place where a people could extract its spiritual identity from the land without the distortions of modernity. Scotland, moreover, provided an ideal framework for reincarnating Romantic notions of "blood and soil" in the postwar context; if Beuys had recalled the spiritual connections between land and culture in a specifically German setting, he would have risked evoking National Socialist sentiments, thereby discounting his healing program. In both *Celtic (Kinloch Rannoch)* and *Celtic+ ~~~*, therefore, the Scottish landscape

becomes the structure behind Beuys' allegorization of Romanticism, and thus his remedy for postwar Germany.

One of the primary Romantic philosophies that Beuys evoked in the *Celtic* actions[40] is the unearthing of spiritual identity from the wilds of nature. Early nineteenth-century Romantics believed that humanity's true spiritual essence, its *Ursprünglichkeit*, was largely imperceptible in the modern age due to the rational constraints of civilization (i.e. political systems, social customs). Spirituality, however, remained unadulterated in untamed environments like the Scottish moorlands, where nature retained its inherent irrationality and mysticism. In recalling the wilds of nature, therefore, the Romantics believed that humanity could rekindle its spiritual identity and thereby revert to a fundamental, more veritable state of being. As Romantic intellectual Carl Gustav Carus poeticized:

> Drawn into the sacred sphere of nature's mysterious life, your mind will expand, ...and as everything recedes which is merely individual and weak, you are strengthened and uplifted by this immersion into a higher realm.[41]

Beuys too found a direct connection between spiritual identity and nature. In the 1979 exhibition catalogue for his retrospective at the Guggenheim Museum in New York, the artist asserted that the rugged landscape of Northern Ireland and Scotland "more honestly expresses the state of society [spiritually] than the carefully sterilized facades of West German cities."[42] By instilling the *Celtic* actions with allegorical references to the rugged Scottish terrain, Beuys hoped to reawaken the spiritual essence that had been lost to postwar rationality.

In *Celtic (Kinloch Rannoch)*, Beuys evoked the wilds of Scotland using several atraditional motifs, including setting the action in the Student Life Room at the

Edinburgh College of Art. As Richard Demarco, the Edinburgh gallery owner who organized the first *Celtic* performance, recalls, Beuys rejected the gallery as an adequate forum for his spiritual message because its pristine, rectangular rooms were antithetical to the Scottish moors.[43] Indeed, the space that Beuys chose for the action was an unadorned, worn room where, according to Beuys, "the evidence of physical labor of those who have previously worked there is not yet eradicated."[44] Although the Student Life Room did not simulate the Scottish landscape visually, its elemental character as a place for germinating creativity intimated nature's cultivation of spirituality.[45]

Beuys did pictorialize the moors within the action space by projecting the film *Rannoch Moor* onto the back wall during the last half of *Celtic (Kinloch Rannoch)* (Fig. 4). A few months prior to the Edinburgh performance, Beuys had traveled to Rannoch Moor, an isolated, harsh terrain northwest of Edinburgh, to survey the landscape and ingest its spiritual dimension. As accompanying cameraman Mark Littlewood noted, the objective of the artist's journey was to capture on film " the energy inherent in the rain-soaked moorland," so that the spirit of nature would be present during the action.[46] The resulting footage consists of a three-mile-per-hour panorama through Rannoch Moor with Beuys' hand intermittently rising into the frame from below, as if he were clutching the landscape. In projecting this film during the action, Beuys wanted the audience members to play the role of the hand and grasp the idea of nature, thereby rekindling their latent spiritual identity. Indeed, the artist wanted the Scottish moors to serve as a "memory prop" for society, an image that, through its allegorical associations, would inspire recollection in the viewer's unconscious.[47] Through such internalization, according to Beuys, nature's spirituality would communicate directly with the soul, resulting in a

reawakening of spiritual identity. As Beuys asserted, "man is naturally a creator in the realm of nature. Or one can say that every future tree carries a human characteristic with it;" in unearthing spirituality, man creates the wilds of nature within his soul.[48]

The Romantics too promoted the internal presence of nature within one's soul, and in fact maintained that the most mystical of landscapes existed only as a utopian image in the mind. In his 1798 work *Blütenstaub*, the poet Novalis proclaimed:

> We dream of journeys through the cosmos, but is the cosmos not in us?... The secret path leads inward.[49]

Indeed, in rendering the wilds of nature in painting, Romantic artists renounced empirical depictions of landscape elements in favor of capturing their inner impressions of nature on canvas. Caspar David Friedrich, one of the best-known Romantic painters, offered the following methodology for landscape painting:

> Close your bodily eye, that you may see your picture first with the eye of the spirit. Then bring to light what you have seen in the darkness, that its effect may work back on others, from without to within.[50]

Although Beuys' performance art is stylistically opposed to nineteenth-century Romantic painting, he too composed his art with "the eye of the spirit," allegorizing natural elements in the context of inner spirituality. In fact, Beuys likened rugged landscapes such as Scotland to the human spine, in that, like the spine, nature facilitates communication between one's inner spirit and outward existence.[51] In cleansing the blackboards with a solution of clay and water in the *Celtic* actions, therefore, Beuys was illustrating how nature, the clay, prepares society to ingest the spiritual messages that the artist will convey in chalk. Nature in Beuys' art thus becomes, as Romantic physicist and philosopher Johann Wilhelm Ritter championed, the teacher of mankind.[52]

The gelatin that Beuys picked off the walls during the last half of *Celtic (Kinloch*

Rannoch) further recalls nature's role as the internal communicator of spirituality, in that its dual structure denotes a link between inner spirituality and outer rationality (Fig. 7). Beuys was attracted to gelatin, like fat and felt, because of its allegorical potential as a colloidal substance, a molecular blend of both liquid and solid particles. For Beuys, the coexistence of gelatin's polar states mirrored the latent presence of spirituality in the rational mind.[53] Like gelatin, which has the ability to alter states depending on natural forces, society has the ability to transform when its spiritual identity is revealed through nature. Indeed, as art historian Claudia Mesch has indicated,[54] Beuys employed substances with dualistic structures like fat and gelatin to express the ever-present potential for transformation, the core of his theory of social sculpture: (Beuys) "Balance, reintegration, and flexible flow between the areas of thinking, feeling and will, all of which are essential, are the objective of the theory."[55]

In turning to gelatin as the objectification of transformation, Beuys was following the tradition of allegorizing crystalline forms in nineteenth-century German Romanticism. It was the belief of Romantic intellectuals that crystals supplied material evidence of nature's inherent spirituality, in that their structure reflected, as scholar Regine Prange notes, "a necessary link between the external and internal, form and content, beyond the beautiful."[56] The Romantics, moreover, were drawn to the duality of crystals; although they appear inorganic and changeless, they are born of the earth and remain independent of form, much like humanity's spiritual essence. Indeed, the Romantic perception of crystalline forms emerges as an ideal allegorical framework for Beuys' healing of postwar Germany, especially when one considers the following passage from Rudolf Steiner, the anthroposophic philosopher whom Beuys studied in great depth:

> When a crystal is smashed, it is its form alone that is destroyed. This can, however, be reconstructed somewhere else, independently of the form that was destroyed.[57]

Germany, destroyed both in reality and idea after World War Two, had the ability to reconstruct its spiritual identity through the sense of land within, even if reconstruction transpired in a Scottish context. Transformation from one state to another, the movement from external reality to internal spirituality, could, according to Beuys, "break through insulation (mental and social)" and overcome Germany's inability to mourn.[58]

For Beuys and the Romantics, the potential for spiritual transformation existed not only in nature, but also in primal, animistic cultures like the Celts in Scotland. Indeed, as tribes whose spirituality derived directly from natural phenomena, mythical cultures provided an ideal framework for evoking society's spiritual identity as realized through nature. In his formulation of *Celtic (Kinloch Rannoch),* Beuys underlined the integral role that Celtic mythology plays in revealing Scotland's inherent spirituality:

> Edinburgh, a quite specific place motif, derived from the decadent yet still-existent Celtic mythology- the area of a specific clan... That is the point.[59]

Beuys was particularly drawn to Celtic culture because traces of its animistic traditions remained current in modern Scottish society. As Richard Demarco, a staunch supporter of Beuys, explained:

> They [the Celts] have survived into the twentieth century. They are one of the last European cultures to know how to live with a spiritual dimension in their lives; to them the ever-changing physical realities of sky, land and sea were nothing less than the expression of the divine energy of the Earth spirit.[60]

Moreover, Beuys felt that there was a strong, long-existent connection between Celtic and Germanic cultures, in that both stemmed from similar mythological traditions.[61]

In both *Celtic (Kinloch Rannoch)* and *Celtic+ ~~~*, Beuys recalled Celtic mythology using two objects that embodied the culture's primal interaction with the land and its creatures, namely, the ax and the spear (Fig. 3; Fig. 8).[62] Although Beuys did not employ these instruments in their traditional capacity (the ax remained attached to the microphone throughout the action; the spear was used to push the chalkboard), he felt that their presence was vital in evoking Celtic spirituality. Beuys recounted:

> Upon my arrival [in Edinburgh], I saw an ax in a store, which I bought... and even though I didn't use it, it was good that it stood there.[63]

Indeed, Beuys was concerned with the impressions that the ax and the spear made in the mind of the viewer, impressions that he himself, to quote the artist, "had been carrying around for a long time: Scotland, King Arthur's Round Table, the Holy Grail."[64] He did not want to revive Celtic culture from its virtual death in the modern age, but to use it as a model for the future, for a time when nature's spiritual essence once again becomes the purveyor of existence. As Beuys explained:

> My intention is obviously not to return to such earlier cultures, but to stress the idea of transformation and of substance.... While Shamanism marks a point in the past, it also indicates a possibility for historical development.[65]

The nineteenth-century Romantics also turned to mythical cultures as a framework for restoring spiritual identity in contemporary society. According to Romantic philosopher August Wilhelm Schlegel,

> If *ein Volk* finds itself... enobled by the possession of a great past, of memories from prehistoric times, in brief by the possession of poetry, it will be raised by this very fact... to a higher plane.[66]

Myth was considered the medium of truth for Romantics in that it was, according to Novalis, a record of humanity's spiritual history from which a culture could derive its true identity.[67] Following this line of thought, Beuys' evocation of Celtic mythology becomes

a tool for healing postwar Germany in particular; by giving his generation a primal, unadulterated history, an inner *Geist* by which to live, Beuys would instigate the rebuilding of the nation's spiritual identity transcendent of the perversions of National Socialism.[68]

CELTIC+~~~: GERMANY'S SYMBOLIC SALVATION IN BASEL

Beuys' mission to heal postwar Germany through the allegorization of Romantic themes becomes discernable in the action *Celtic* + ~~~, a permutation of *Celtic (Kinloch Rannoch)* that was performed in Basel, Switzerland, on April 5, 1971. While *Celtic*+ ~~~ retained the basic plot of the Edinburgh action, the addition of elements from the action ~~~, a performance piece that Beuys developed in his classroom at the Düsseldorf *Kunstakademie* on February 5, 1971,[69] afforded a new connotation for the German-speaking audience. Beuys in fact articulated the importance of this fusion, stating that *Celtic (Kinloch Rannoch)* could not transpire in the Basel setting without the additional symbolism of ~~~: "I simply felt the need to tie these things together, because I knew that the Edinburgh action could not come to pass [in Basel]."[70] Indeed, the action ~~~ propagated Beuys' program of healing to the German public, in many ways more directly than previous actions.[71] The Düsseldorf performance, created on occasion of a television documentary about Beuys' unconventional teaching methodology,[72] began as the artist washed the feet of seven members of his class in a Christ-like ritual of purification (Fig. 9). When the last had been cleansed, Beuys knelt in a large basin filled with water and sulfur, while Johannes Stüttgen, a fellow instructor at the *Kunstakademie,* poured water over his head with a watering can (Fig. 10).

The inherent Christian symbolism articulated in these gestures was intentional; Beuys wanted his audience, in this case the German public viewing the documentary, to recognize the signification of his redemptive message, thereby translating the religious connotations behind feet washing and baptism into the profane context of social transformation. Indeed, in an interview with Friedhelm Mennekes, Beuys divulged the intended meaning of his actions in ~~~, stating that the washing of feet was a

> symbolic expression of an attempt at an extensive therapeutic process. It is basically the start of social therapy, of a complete purification, a complete healing, of the entire social sphere.[73]

Baptism for Beuys, moreover, represented the ultimate act of salvation, a gesture that, through Christ and now through man, "transforms the entire world down to matter itself."[74] Indeed, in Christ, Beuys found an ideal model for his salvation of postwar Germany, in that he too redeemed society through the resurrection of the spiritual. Beuys in fact asserted that his program of artistic healing mirrored "the principle of resurrection, transforming the old structure, which dies or stagnates, into a vital, vibrant, life-enhancing and soul-and-spirit-promoting form."[75] When one considers the impetus for the action ~~~, the filming of a documentary for German television, it becomes clear that Beuys used this performance to transmit an unequivocal message of redemption to the German public, thereby initializing the purification and resurrection of the nation's spiritual identity from its postwar demise. Indeed, as Beuys expressed in a 1984 speech, "in the German people can be found the strength of resurrection;"[76] through art, he had the ability to reveal this potential.

In formulating *Celtic*+ ~~~, therefore, Beuys framed the events of the Edinburgh *Celtic* action with the gestures of ~~~, so that the sequence of events in Basel

communicated his prescription for healing postwar Germany through Romanticism. Beuys opened the action by washing the feet of seven audience members, each randomly selected from the hundreds gathered to witness the performance. When the last had been cleansed, Beuys carried out the chalkboard and gelatin rituals of *Celtic (Kinloch Rannoch)*, ending with his symbolic baptism in a large washbasin. Beuys' arrangement of these segments is significant, in that it reveals the artist's desire to heal Germany specifically through the Celtic reincarnation of Romantic spirituality. By initiating the action with the foot-washing, Beuys articulated the need to purify audience members for the *Celtic* sequences to follow, thereby emphasizing the import of the Romantic allegories of spiritual transformation through nature. Inversely, in concluding *Celtic+ ~~~* with the baptismal allusion of salvation, Beuys intimated the redemptive effect of those Romantic ideas presented in the preceding events.

Indeed, in order to emphasize the healing potential of Romanticism in *Celtic+ ~~~*, Beuys intensified those references to spirituality in nature that he had first introduced in Edinburgh. For instance, he chose an abandoned civil defense room as the setting for the Basel action, so that the audience would not mistake his intended evocation of a locality far removed from the white walls of the gallery (Fig. 11).[77] Moreover, Beuys ensured the continuous presence of the Scottish moors in Basel by projecting the film *Rannoch Moor* onto the dark walls throughout the entire action (Fig. 12). Beuys in fact added references to land and its spiritual potential in *Celtic+ ~~~* in order to elucidate his healing intent in the minds of the spectators. For example, during the preparatory stage of the action, Beuys created a small installation piece entitled *Jura*, which consisted of a series of mountain-shaped earth mounds topped with petrified dog

droppings, each placed on a window sill in the action building (Fig. 13). While Beuys maintained that the objective of the piece, which remained on view throughout *Celtic+ ~~~*, was to recall the Jura Mountains of France and Switzerland, one cannot discount the second meaning of the word *Jura* in the German language: law.[78] In the artist's program of spiritual redemption, as the work reveals, humanity's sense of law and justice germinates directly from the land. Beuys also added the sound-art piece *Requiem of Art* to the multi-media component of the gelatin sequence in order to conjure images of nature's spiritual resurrection in the viewers' consciousness. The text, recorded by Ursula Reuter-Christiansen, describes a personified image of nature:

> His legs were wrapped with narrow strips of material like a mummy. A bent, haggard, naked human creature that was surrounded on the flanks with long hair, imprisoned in the dry leaves, dust, and thorns. He wore straw, clay, and shreds of canvas around his loin and knee. His flaccid, earth-colored skin hung around his fleshless joints like lumps off dry branches. Arid, blanched, ligaments like sticks, hair, garments, reliquary, mummy, burned out fire, ashes.

Like nature's mummy, postwar society could become one with the land, thereby reincarnating and preserving its essence for the future.

While *Celtic+ ~~~* was performed in German-speaking Switzerland, there is evidence to suggest that Beuys was specifically targeting postwar Germany in his message of spiritual redemption. Indeed, in the Düsseldorf action *~~~*, as Johannes Stüttgen recollects, Beuys articulated his desire for an action setting like Switzerland through an ancient Greek quote by Archimedes, which the artist wrote on the classroom chalkboard as a backdrop for the action: "Give me a solid point where I can stand, and I will move the earth."[79] Because of its long-standing tradition of neutrality as well as social and political stability, Switzerland provided Beuys with the most solid of places to "move" society into the healing process. Like Scotland, moreover, Switzerland afforded

a setting in which Beuys could propagate his Romantic formula for "blood and soil" spirituality without arousing the extreme controversy characteristic of postwar Germany. Most importantly, Basel and Germanic Switzerland, according to Beuys, possessed the same spiritual identity as his own nation, in that the cultures shared the German language. Indeed, as Beuys stated in his1984 speech "Talking about one's own country," "the concept of a people is elementally coupled with its language."[80] Indeed, in both *Celtic (Kinloch Rannoch)* and *Celtic+~~~*, Beuys articulated the importance of language, both "recent and primal,"[81] through the abstracted images of vocal resonance within the chalkboard drawings.

Language and communication were in fact the focal points of Beuys' prescription for healing postwar Germany. By speaking the German language, Beuys maintained, Germany would verify its inherent national commonalities, thereby redeeming the existence of a truly Germanic spiritual identity.[82] Moreover, in communication, Germans would end the silence of the postwar period and open dialogue about past triumphs and tragedies, a dialogue needed for healing. Indeed, Beuys insisted that language was the "only way of overcoming all the surviving racist machinations, terrible sins, and indescribable darkness without losing sight of the for even a moment."[83] In fact, the healing power of communication lay in the fact that it necessitated a confrontation with the past, a confrontation absent in Germany's inability to mourn. Whether through Romantic allegories, chalkboard drawings, or Christ-like messages of redemption, communication, according to Beuys, was the key to resuscitating the dying German identity. As Beuys explained,

> As a result of coming to life again through language we would influence our land too; we would be able to consummate a process of healing this soil where we were all born.[84]

Language would reclaim the "elemental, deep feeling for what happens in the soil on which we live and for what has died in the field, in the wood, in the meadow, and on the mountain," Germany's spiritual essence. In affirming the positive connotations of "blood and soil" spirituality through language, Beuys was able not only to take measures to reconcile Germany with its history, but also to reincarnate Romantic spirituality in the present, opening doors to new possibilities for the future. Indeed, with the German language, Germany would be able to vocalize a transformative path for the nation's future greatness.

CONCLUSION

When critic Willhoughby Sharp asked Beuys to describe his desired position in the history of art, the artist replied, "After I am dead I would like people to say, 'Beuys understood the historical situation. He altered the course of events'."[85] Indeed, Beuys devoted his career to transforming the spiritually-devoid state of postwar society into the Romantic-inspired spiritual landscape of the future. Although this essay has concentrated on only two of Beuys' numerous performance pieces and installations, the philosophical purport of the artist's healing program can be applied to further works. In fact, Beuys' *Coyote* action series (*I like America and America likes me*, New York, 1974, *Aus Berlin: Neues vom Kojoten*, Berlin, 1979, and *Coyote III*, Tokyo, 1984) mirrors the Romantic devices employed in the *Celtic* series, in that these actions address issues of nature and spirituality. Indeed, as scholarship gains historical hindsight and Beuys' aesthetic is

evaluated in the context of postwar history, the artist's classification as Universal Shaman will likely become Postwar Spiritual Redeemer. Beuys has indeed played a significant role in healing Germany from its inability to mourn, if only as an inspirational force for the next generation of artists who have not shied from exposing Germany's horrific past. In fact, Anselm Kiefer credits Beuys as being "his teacher in the largest sense of the word."[86] In his four decades as an artist, Beuys was able to change the artistic, cultural, historical, and spiritual landscape of postwar Germany; he was indeed able to "alter the course of events."

NOTES

[1] Tisdall, 1979, 23.

[2] Mitscherlich, 8.

[3] W. Haftmann, A. Hentzen, and W. Lieberman, *German Art of the Twentieth Century*, New York, 1957, 13-15.

[4] Beuys in Tisdall, ed., *The Secret Block for a Secret Person in Ireland*, Edinburgh, 1974, n.p

[5] Beuys in Tisdall, 1979, 21.

[6] Beuys is often considered one of the founding fathers of Conceptualism, and indeed, his early emphasis on the idea as the work of art inspired many artists and movements of the late 1960s and 1970s, including Eva Hesse, Robert Morris, and many of the Earth Artists.

[7] The Beuys' quote "Everyone an artist" has become the catch-phrase of Beuys scholarship, so much so that it is often used as a stylistic term.

[8] Beuys, cited in Mesch, 9.

[9] Ray, 1997, 84.

[10] Buchloh, 1980, 38. While Buchloh's essay is renowned for its passionate evaluation and condemnation of Beuys' aesthetic, I caution its use in validating Beuys' faulty relationship with German history. Buchloh, today a professor of art history at Columbia University, was writing from a critical rather than scholarly standpoint when he wrote the article in 1979. In fact, in a 2001 speech addressing the effects of his words on Beuys scholarship, Buchloh emphasized that he had not positioned Beuys in a "critical historical framework," and if he had, he would have acknowledged Beuys as "the first German, if not the first European artist, to have incorporated reflections on recent political German history." (See B.H.D. Buchloh, "Reconsidering Joseph Beuys, Once Again," in *Joseph Beuys: Mapping the Legacy*, G. Ray, ed., New York, 2001, 75-89.)

[11] Ibid., 43.

[12] Ibid., 39.

[13] Until recently, American scholars have approached Beuys' relationship to National Socialism with an extreme subjectivism that is more in line with opinionated art criticism than historical discourse. It is interesting to note that in Germany, however, many scholars have been reluctant to address this topic at all. Most of the German analyses I have encountered treat Beuys' art as a scientific experiment, in that the personal dimension is completely eliminated. It is my belief that the differences in discourse reflect the ways in which both nations have dealt with the horrors of the Second World War.

[14] The *Historiker Streit* began as a philosophical debate on German war guilt among intellectuals, including Ernst Nolde, Jürgen Habermas, and Daniel Goldhagen.

[15] I. Rogoff, "The Aesthetics of Post History: A German Perspective," *Vision and Textuality*, S. Melville, ed., Durham, N.C., 1995, 121.

[16] D. Kuspit, "Joseph Beuys: Between Showman and Shaman," *Joseph Beuys: Diverging Critiques*, Liverpool, 1995, 29.

[17] Beuys, "Talking about one's own country," 45.

[18] Beuys, 1986, "Death keeps me awake," 164-65.

[19] Romanticism, a period once considered the apex of German culture, was rendered taboo in the postwar period because of its misuse during the Third Reich.

[20] Beuys, "Talking about one's own country," 38. Beuys' reversion to traditional principles separated him from his avant-garde contemporaries, who were intent on divorcing themselves from historical aesthetics. In fact, Beuys was often criticized by both the left and the right for fusing innovative methods with conventional thought.

[21] L. Romain, "Franz Marc und Joseph Beuys: Zur Wiederkehr des Romantischen in der deutschen Moderne," *Romantik und Gegenwart: Festschrift für Jens Christian Jensen zum 60. Geburtstag*, Cologne, 1988, 200. Beuys was defending the often incomprehensible quality of his art by drawing parallels to Romanticism.

[22] Beuys, 1986, "Death keeps me awake," 166-167. In an interview with Knut Fischer and Walter Smerling in 1981, Beuys, when asked about the originality of his conceptual program, also credited Schiller with laying the foundation for his theories: "It is not my law, but extends far over my individuality... the genesis" can be traced in essence to "Schiller and Novalis."

[23] See T. Vischer, *Beuys und die Romantik: Individuelle Ikonographie, individuelle Mythologie,* Cologne, 1983, 12-13.

[24] A. von Graevenitz, "Erlösungskunst oder Befrieungspolitik: Wagner und Beuys," *Unsere Wagner*, G. Förg, ed., Frankfurt am Main, 1984, 13. Comparisons between Wagner and Beuys were primarily made by American critics around the time of Beuys' retrospective at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York City, in 1979. Beuys' use of material assemblages in the context of traditional ideals suggested the Wagnerian definition of a *Gesamtkunstwerk.* These comparisons, however, were for the most part negative, for the idea of Wagner continued to carry fascist connotations. Thus, Beuys' denial of any association with Hitler's "teacher" supports the idea that he wanted to rescue history from its postwar grave, but with artistic means so as not to transgress society's willingness to confront.

[25] Vaughan, 1980, 3.

[26] Ibid.

[27] It is important to note that the term "Romantic" embodies a wide range of disciplines and philosophies, which are loosely allied through similar themes and intentions. In fact, while the term was coined in the early nineteenth century, it remains to a large extent a grouping of historical convenience.

[28] Menhennet, 23-24.

[29] Beuys founded the Free International University as a loosely incorporated school for societal transformation and the "furtherance of democratic potential." Its establishment, which Beuys considered a work of art in and of itself, was in part a reaction to Beuys' dismissal from the Kunstakademie in Düsseldorf on grounds of allowing too many students to take his classes. For more information on the FIU, see the Walker Art Center Online, www.walkerart.org/beuys/gg12.html.

[30] Beuys and Böll, cited in Ray, 1997, 189.

[31] Beuys, cited in Moffitt, 148. Beuys made this comment in explaining his 1958 work *Concentration Camp Essen*, the assemblage of his Auschwitz-monument drawings (completed in the same year as a contest entry for a monument in the Polish concentration camp), charred remains, a drawing of a starving girl, lengths of *blutwurst*, a dead rat, small vials of poison, and electric plates with lumps of fat. He

asserted that this work "was not a description of the events in the camp but of the content and meaning of catastrophe. That must be the starting point- like a kind of substance- something that surmounts *Concentration Camp Essen.* Similia similibus curantur: heal like with like, that is the homeopathic healing process." It is my belief that this sentiment can be applied to the postwar avoidance of Romanticism, especially considering Beuys' conception of "Auschwitz": "The human condition is Auschwitz, and the principle of Auschwitz finds its perpetuation in... the silence of intellectuals and artists. I have found myself in permanent struggle with this condition and its roots. I find for instance that we are now experiencing Auschwitz in its contemporary character. This time bodies are outwardly preserved (cosmetic mummification) rather than exterminated, but other things are being elminated." (see Tisdall, 1979, 21-23).

[32] Beuys in 1984 interview with Mario Kramer, cited in Schneede, 268.

[33] Ibid., 277.

[34] Beuys, cited in Schneede, 267. This statement was made in an interview that Beuys gave to the Scottish press about *Celtic (Kinloch Rannoch)* soon after his performance. Like Beuys' other actions, the objects and movements in *Celtic* act as physical manifestations of Beuys theories rather than direct symbols; they are thus, as Beuys related in 1971, "only understandable in the context of my ideas."

[35] Beuys, cited in W. Bojescul, *Zum Kunstbegriff des Joseph Beuys,* Essen, 1985, 22. In making this statement, Beuys was not referring specifically to *Celtic (Kinloch Rannoch),* but to the general composition of his performance program. Because of the unique consistency of Beuys' aesthetic, I see no problem in applying this statement to this particular action.

[36] Adriani, 203.

[37] Beuys in 1984 interview with Mario Kramer, cited in Schneede, 268.

[38] Ibid.

[39] Beuys, Ibid., 266.

[40] I would like to stress that my analyses are not limited to *Celtic (Kinloch Rannoch)* and *Celtic+* ~~~; rather, these actions represent a case study of Beuys' use of Romanticism. Although I have not expanded my thesis to include Beuys' *oeuvre,* I am certain that evidence exists for further interpretations, especially as Beuys scholarship gains historical hindsight.

[41] Carus, "Nine letters on landscape painting," *Neoclassicism and Romanticism, 1750-1850,* vol. 2 of 2, L. Eitner, ed., Englewood Cliffs, NJ, 1970, 49.

[42] Beuys in Tisdall, 1979, 32. In the context of the entire statement, the "state of society" to which Beuys refers does not imply the contemporary state of society, but the spiritual state of society during the healing process. Interestingly, this quote is extremely similar to a statement made by Friedrich Schiller in his essay "Über das Erhabene" from the early 1790s: "Who would not rather... feast his eyes on Scotland's wild cataracts and misty mountains... that on the sour victory of patience over the most obstinate of the elements in the dead-straight Dutch countryside." (see I.B. Whyte, "The Sublime," *The Romantic Spirit in German Art, 1790-1990,* K. Hartley, ed., London, 1994, 138.)

[43] R. Demarco, "Notes to Beuys," *Similia similibus: Joseph Beuys zum 60. Geburtstag*, Cologne, 1981, 120.

[44] Beuys in Tisdall, 1979, 32.

[45] Beuys' choice of the "Student Life Room" gains a new dimension when one considers its name and purpose; it can be said that Beuys was teaching society, the students, about the life of spirituality through his allegorical references to nature.

[46] From a Richard Demarco Gallery brochure, *Joseph Beuys. A Tribute on Rannoch Moor- 27th September 1986*, Edinburgh 1986, cited in Schneede 267.

[47] Mesch, 52, 184. Beuys first referred to his actions as "memory props" in an interview with Caroline Tisdall: "The whole thing [his art] is a play which concerns itself with anchoring a vehicle somewhere close by through this kind of information, a vehicle which people will remember, so a kind of memory prop." (Mesch 184).

[48] Beuys, Interview with K. Fischer and W. Smerling, 39. This logic further suggests the Romantic idea of the sublime, in that the essence of the message exists not in the observed object but in the viewer's reaction to observation. While Beuys' art often employs the power of the sublime, I have not included it as a component of my argument, principally because I feel the subject requires an essay of its own. Moreover, there exists a great deal of information on Beuys and the sublime, for most Beuys scholars who have linked the artist to Romanticism have focused on this particular aspect. Two good resources for further exploring the subject are G. Ray, "Joseph Beuys and the after-Auschwitz sublime," in *Joseph Beuys: Mapping the legacy*, G. Ray, ed., 2001, 55-74; and C. Mesch, "Problems of remembrance in postwar German performance art," 2 vols., unpublished PhD dissertation, University of Chicago, 1997.

[49] Novalis, cited in I.B. Whyte, "The Sublime," *The Romantic Spirit in German Art, 1790-1990*, London, 1994, 140.

[50] C.D. Friedrich, cited in W. Schmied, "Faces of Romanticism: Friedrich, Delacroix, Turner, Constable," *The Romantic Spirit in German Art, 1790-1990*, London, 1994, 29.

[51] Tisdall, 1979, 62.

[52] Vischer, 77. In pouring the clay water over the chalkboard, a traditional instrument for teaching, perhaps Beuys was offering a literal translation of Ritter's philosophy; nature, embodied in the clay, is teaching mankind.

[53] Tisdall, 1979, 72. In fact, Beuys maintained that his use of gelatin should be read in a spiritual context; upon viewing this material duality, according to Beuys, "people instinctively feel it relates to inner processes and feelings." (See Tisdall, 72; R. Prange, "The Crystalline," *The Romantic Spirit in German Art, 1790-1990*, London, 1994, 162).

[54] Mesch, 207-210. Mesch considers the potential for transformation inherent in Beuys' choice of materials (i.e. decay, chemical reactions, fermentation, etc.), relating it to the artist's theories of fluctuation.

[55] Beuys in Tisdall, 1979, 72.

[56] Prange, 156. Interestingly, Friedrich often included icebergs in his seascapes because of their crystalline symbolism.

[57] Steiner, cited in Moffitt, 132. While Steiner is not considered a Romantic, his theories fall in line with Romantic notions of spirituality in nature (Steiner was in fact an archivist of Romantic materials). Beuys often credited Steiner with having a major influence on his art. (See Beuys, "Death keeps me awake," Interview with Achille Bonito Oliva (1986), in *Joseph Beuys in America*, Carin Kuoni, ed., New York, 1993, 155-180.)

[58] Beuys in Tisdall, ed., *The Secret Block for a Secret Person in Ireland*, Edinburgh, 1974, n.p. The entirety of the quote reads as follows: "It's the idea of using movement to break through insulation (mental and social). I feel that the insulator has been underestimated, and that from it one could create a new energy field. This is a physical speculation but it's psychologically right."

[59] Beuys in 1984 interview with Mario Kramer, cited in Schneede, 268.

[60] Demarco, "Celtic Vision in Contemporary Art," *The Celtic Consciousness*, R. O'Driscoll, ed., New York, 1982, 519.

[61] Under his 1974 drawing *Suffering Elk*, Beuys wrote, "You see my suffering German Celtic name." (Tisdall, "Beuys and the Celtic World," *Joseph Beuys: Diverging Critiques*, Liverpool, 1995, 107). As historian Ullrich Kockel has noted, claiming Celtic heritage became a trend in the late twentieth-century, as more Europeans sought a spiritual identity. Moreover, because the Celts settled throughout Southern and Eastern Europe, they became a "convenient common ancestor for European regionalists." U. Kockel, "The Celtic Quest: Beuys as Hero and Hedge School Master," *Joseph Beuys: Diverging Critiques*, Liverpool, 1995, 131.

[62] It is interesting to note that both the ax and the spear were used as weapons in Celtic society; it is thus possible that Beuys chose these objects in particular to represent his weapons in the battle against the loss of postwar spirituality.

[63] Beuys in Adriani, 203. In his account of *Celtic (Kinloch Rannoch)*, Richard Demarco noted that "the whole room reverberated with the sound of long-forgotten European cultures... It was a sounding board for the past, present and future of art activity." (see R. Demarco, "Notes to Beuys")

[64] Beuys in the 1970 Edinburgh press conference for the opening of *Celtic (Kinloch Rannoch)*, cited in Schneede, 267.

[65] Beuys in Tisdall, 1979, 23.

[66] Schlegel, cited in Moffitt, 84.

[67] Vischer, 74; Menhennet, 30.

[68] It is not improbable that Beuys used *Celtic (Kinloch Rannoch)* as a forum for healing postwar Germany, especially when one considers the work that Beuys exhibited in conjunction with the performance piece for the *STRATEGY: GET ARTS* show, *Das Rudel* (*The Pack*). This large-scale installation consists of twenty sleds, each carrying felt, fat, and a flashlight, streaming anthropomorphically out of the back of a Volkswagen bus. Caroline Tisdall interprets the work as a rescue survival kit: "In a state of emergency the Volkswagen bus is of limited usefulness, and the more direct and primitive means must be taken to ensure survival." While I agree that the message presented is one of rescue, I believe that Beuys was directly referring to the healing of postwar Germany in his selection of the Volkswagen. The Volkswagen (literally, "the people's car") was developed during the Third Reich as yet another assertion of extreme nationalism; however, it survived into the postwar period largely pardoned from its association with National Socialism. In using the Volkswagen bus as the origination point for the sleds, therefore, Beuys was allegorically demonstrating how postwar Germany's rescue must originate in something that can overcome fascist perversions, like Romanticism. "*Similia similibus curantor*: Heal like with like." (For an analytical description of *Das Rudel*, see Tisdall, 1979, 190.)

[69] While the origins of the title ~~~ are unclear, Uwe Schneede suggests that the symbol refers either to beams of light or to water currents. Beuys had in fact contemplated adding the word *Aquarius* to the title, indicating that ~~~ referenced water. Schneede, however, draws attention to the presence of the symbol in Beuys' 1965 pocket calendar, under which Beuys wrote *Lichtwelle* ("light wave"). See Schneede, 275.

[70] Beuys in an interview with Mario Kramer, 1984, cited in Schneede, 276.

[71] Art Historian Claudia Mesch has noted that "*Celtic+* ~~~ remains the most literal and heavy-handed of Beuys' performances, and the pinnacle of his christological self-depiction." (See Mesch, 246).

[72] From February 3 through 27, 1971, filmmaker Hans Emmerling shot the film *Joseph Beuys und seine Klasse. Beobachtungen, Gespräche, Fragen* in Beuys' Düsseldorf classroom.

[73] Beuys in interview with Mennekes, 33.

[74] Ibid. While Beuys did not claim to be the Christ of the postwar generation, he did assert that man was the god of the future: "Man is a kind of god.... I cannot expect it any differently: if Christ lives in man... then man must also be a type of Christ, or at least partially be Christ." (Beuys cited in Lauf, 95-96.) It should be noted that this "man as god" attitude was promoted during the Age of Romanticism. In a 1802 letter to his brother Daniel, artist Philipp Otto Runge stated: "The image of God is simply the noblest and highest that each person has ever been.... To seek out and develop this within us: this we must call the ideal of art." (See P. Schuster, "In search of Paradise Lost: Runge-Marc-Beuys," *The Romantic Spirit in German Art,* K. Hartley, ed., London, 1994, 63.) Like Beuys, the Romantics also wanted to apply religious symbolism to profane causes; this accounts for the prevalence of ruined cathedral structures in the paintings of Caspar David Friedrich. Friedrich explained: "The splendor of the church and her servants is a thing of the past; a different time, a different yearing for clarity and truth, have emerged from the ruins." (See H. Schrade, *German Romantic Painting*, trans. by M. Pelikan, New York, 1977, 21).

[75] Mennekes, 34.

[76] Beuys, "Talking about one's own country," 35.

[77] The bomb-shelter-like setting of the civil defense room, with its crumbling concrete walls and cave-like interior, suggests ruins in nature like those images of abandoned cathedrals in the work of Caspar David Friedrich. The connotation of the bomb shelter as a place of protection from war, moreover, imparts another layer of meaning; perhaps Beuys was demonstrating his desire to penetrate the protective insulation of postwar society by bringing his message of spirituality into the protective confines.

[78] Schneede, 275. Hans U. Bodenmann, one of the witnesses of *Celtic (Kinloch Rannoch)* recalled: "Beuys took a lump of clay from his pants pocket and a pocket knife and formed and carved the mound.... Beuys gave the object the name '*Jura*'.... The stimulus came from a trip in the Jura [mountains] that Beuys had undertaken a day before with Dieter Koepplin. He loved the Jura."

[79] Ibid., 274. It is important to note that *Celtic+~~~* is the only instance in Beuys' *oeuvre* where the artist combines earlier works in such a direct manner. In fact, Schneede has called the Basel performance a "retrospective of Beuys' current work." Because of the deliberateness and uniqueness of this combination, I do not believe that any decision Beuys made in composing the action was arbitrary, including the decision to bring the Edinburgh and Düsseldorf actions together in Basel.

[80] Beuys, "Talking about one's own country," 37.

[81] Ibid. Beuys maintained that both formal language and primal, indecipherable utterances were legitimate forms of communication; the latter was unaffected by the rules of semantics, thus making it a more "vital transmitter of energy" and spirituality. Indeed, Beuys often displayed animal-like behavior in his actions in order to communicate more essentially with humanity's spiritual essence. This reversion to animalism is in fact a Romantic idea most likely transmitted to Beuys through the Expressionist painter Franz Marc. The Romantics believed that an animal's unadulterated spirit could best communicate with man's fundamental spirituality because in nature, they are the same. Thus, when Beuys snarled, sniffed and howled in the *Celtic* actions, he was actually keeping in line with his Romantic allegorization of spirituality through nature.

[82] Ibid., 35.

[83] Ibid., 37.

[84] Ibid.

[85] Beuys, Interview with W. Sharp, 92.

[86] Kiefer in J. Ammann, "A talk with Joseph Beuys, Jannis Kounellis, Anselm Kiefer, Enzo Cucchi," *Flash Art*, no. 128, May/June 1986, 39.

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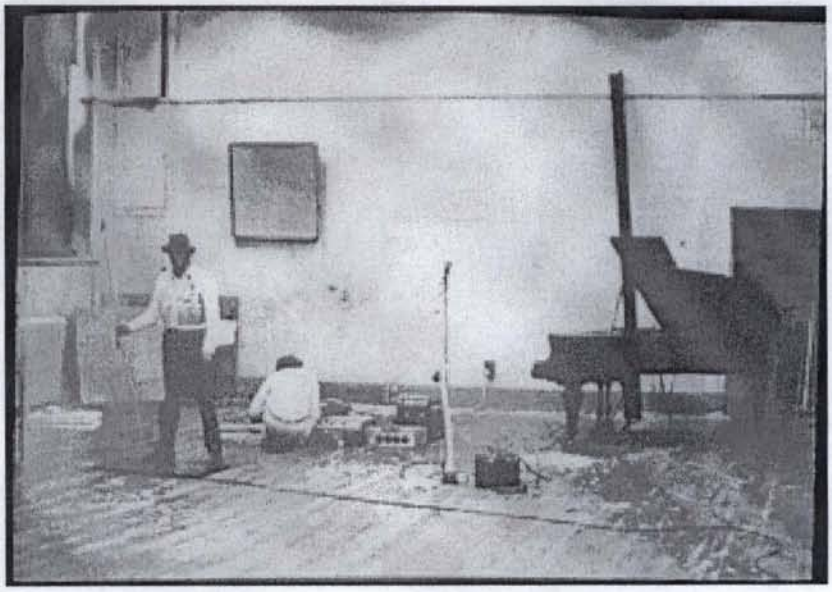

Figure 1: The Student Life Room at the Edinburgh School of Art, as set for *Celtic (Kinloch Rannoch)*, Edinburgh, August 1970

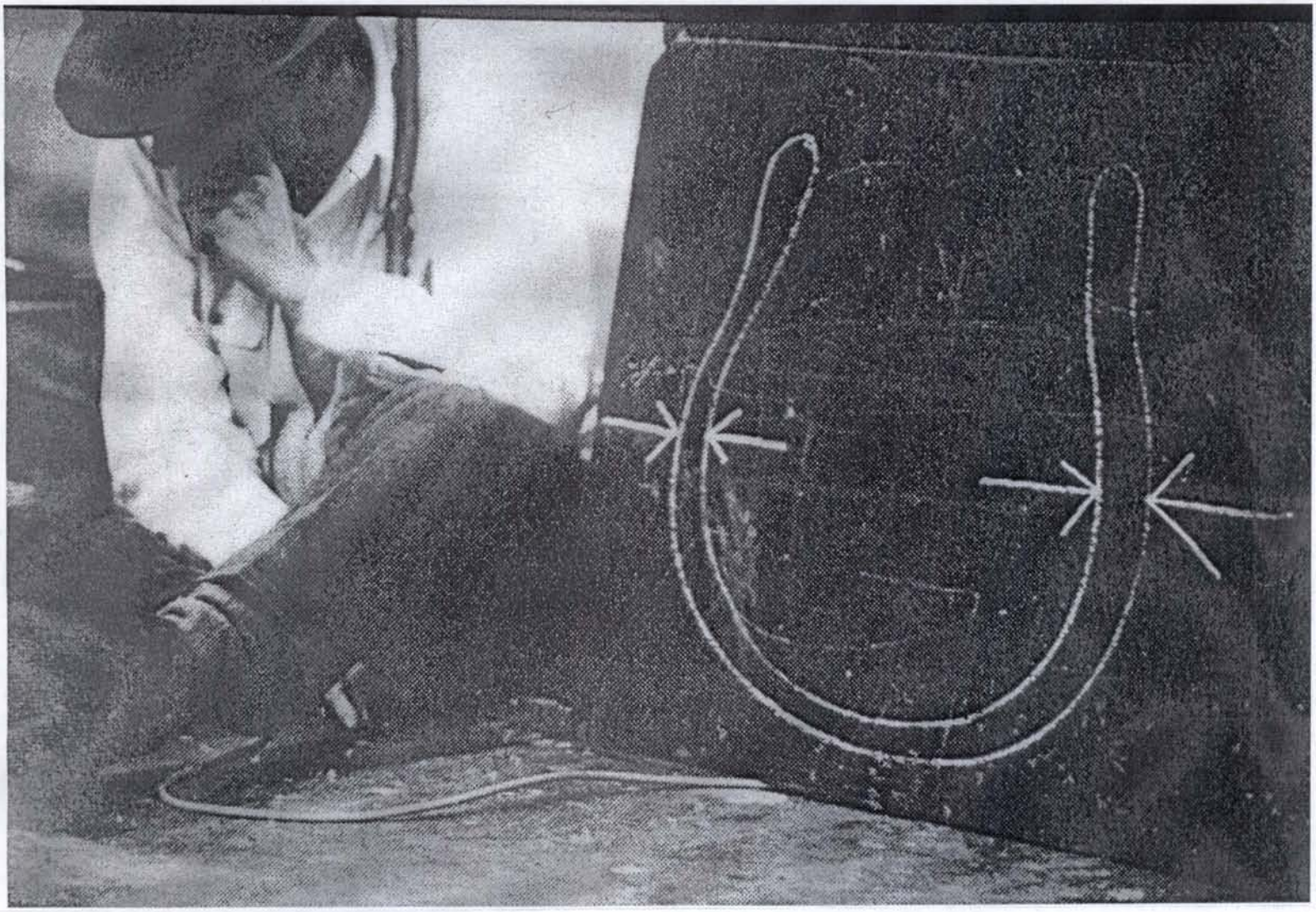

Figure 2: Chalkboard drawing depicting the resonance of bass tones, *Celtic (Kinloch Rannoch)*, Edinburgh, August 1970

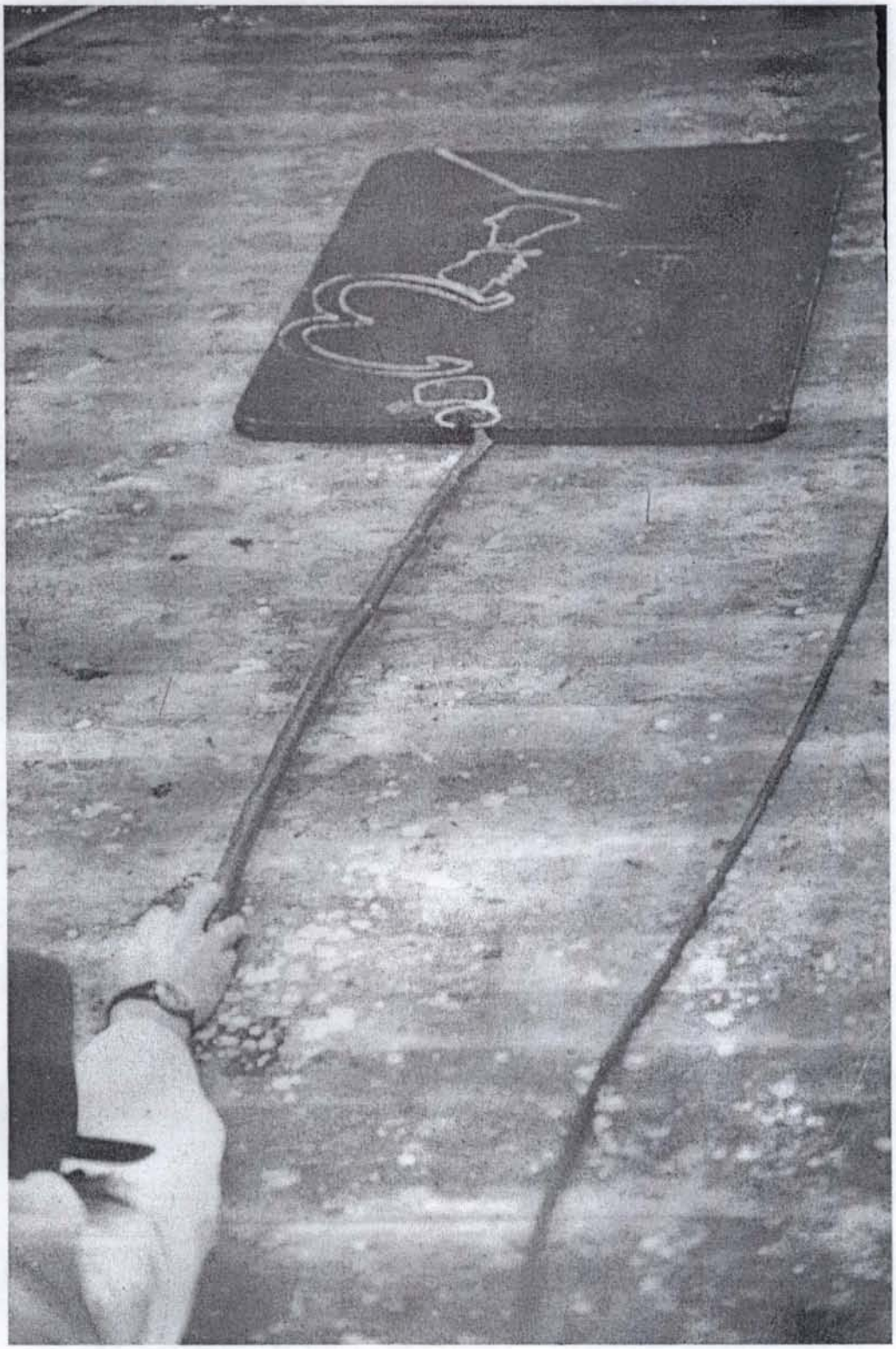

Figure 3: Beuys pushing the chalkboard drawing with his staff, *Celtic (Kinloch Rannoch)*, Edinburgh, August 1970

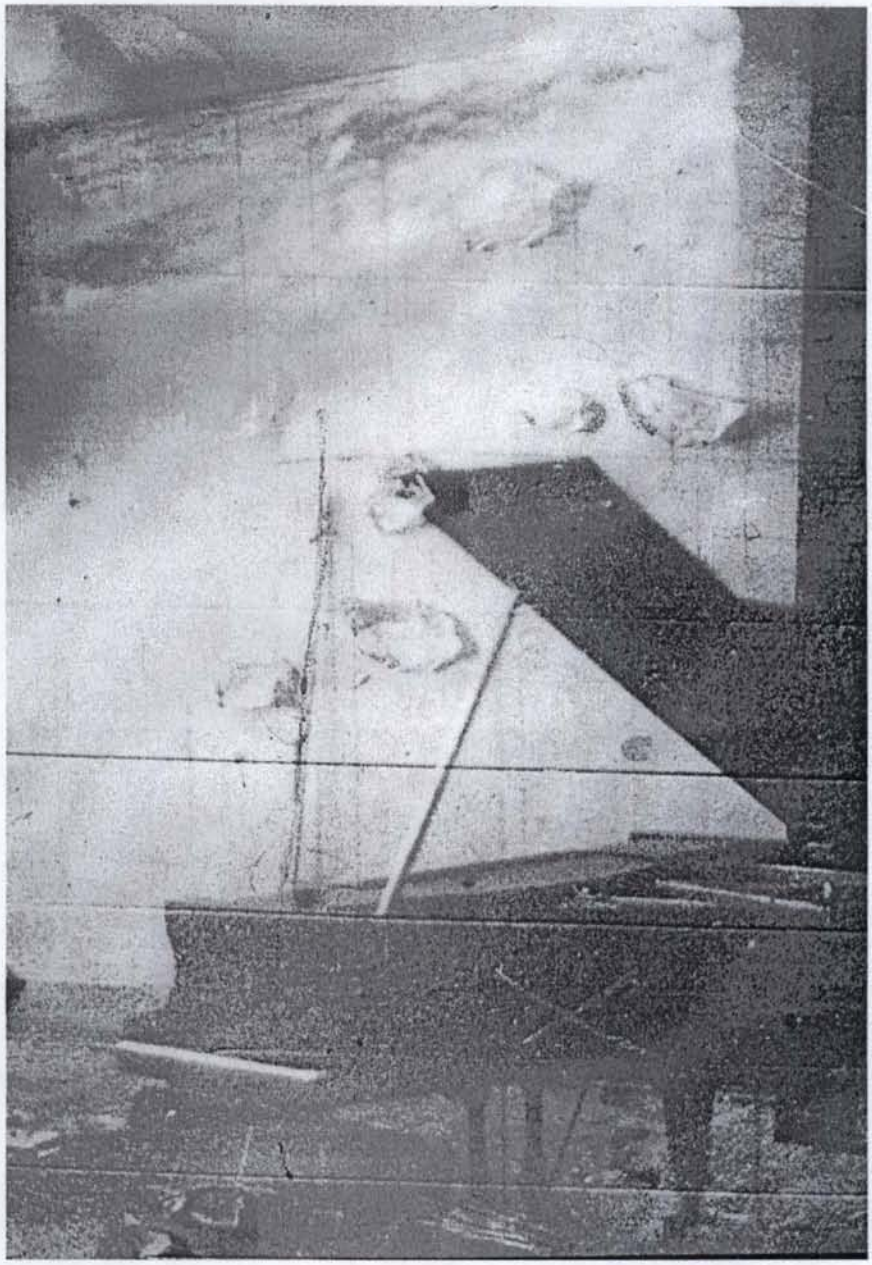

Figure 4: The film *Rannoch Moor* projected onto the back wall of the Student Life Room, *Celtic (Kinloch Rannoch)*, Edinburgh, August 1970

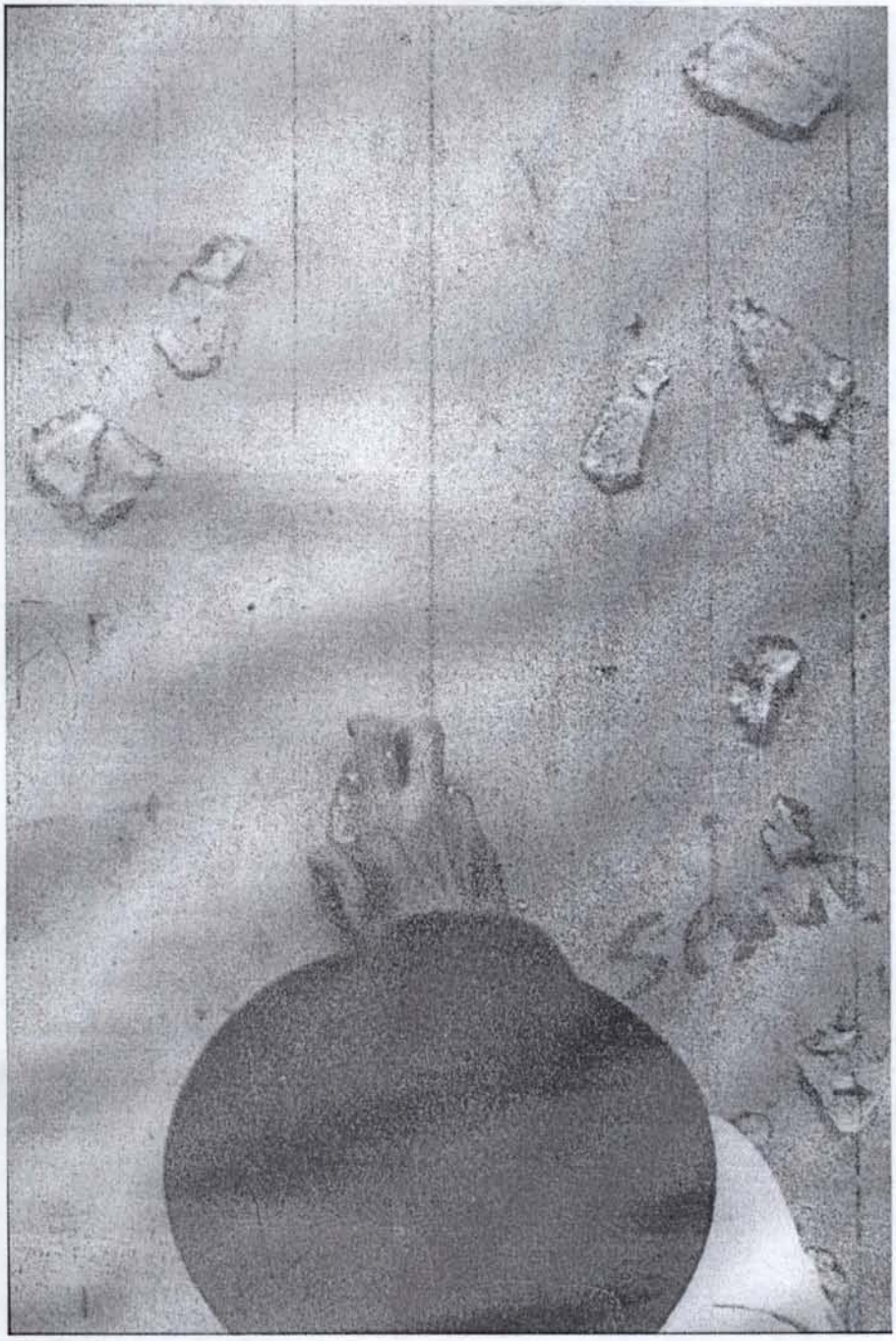

Figure 5: Beuys picking gelatin clumps off of the wall, *Celtic (Kinloch Rannoch)*, Edinburgh, August 1970

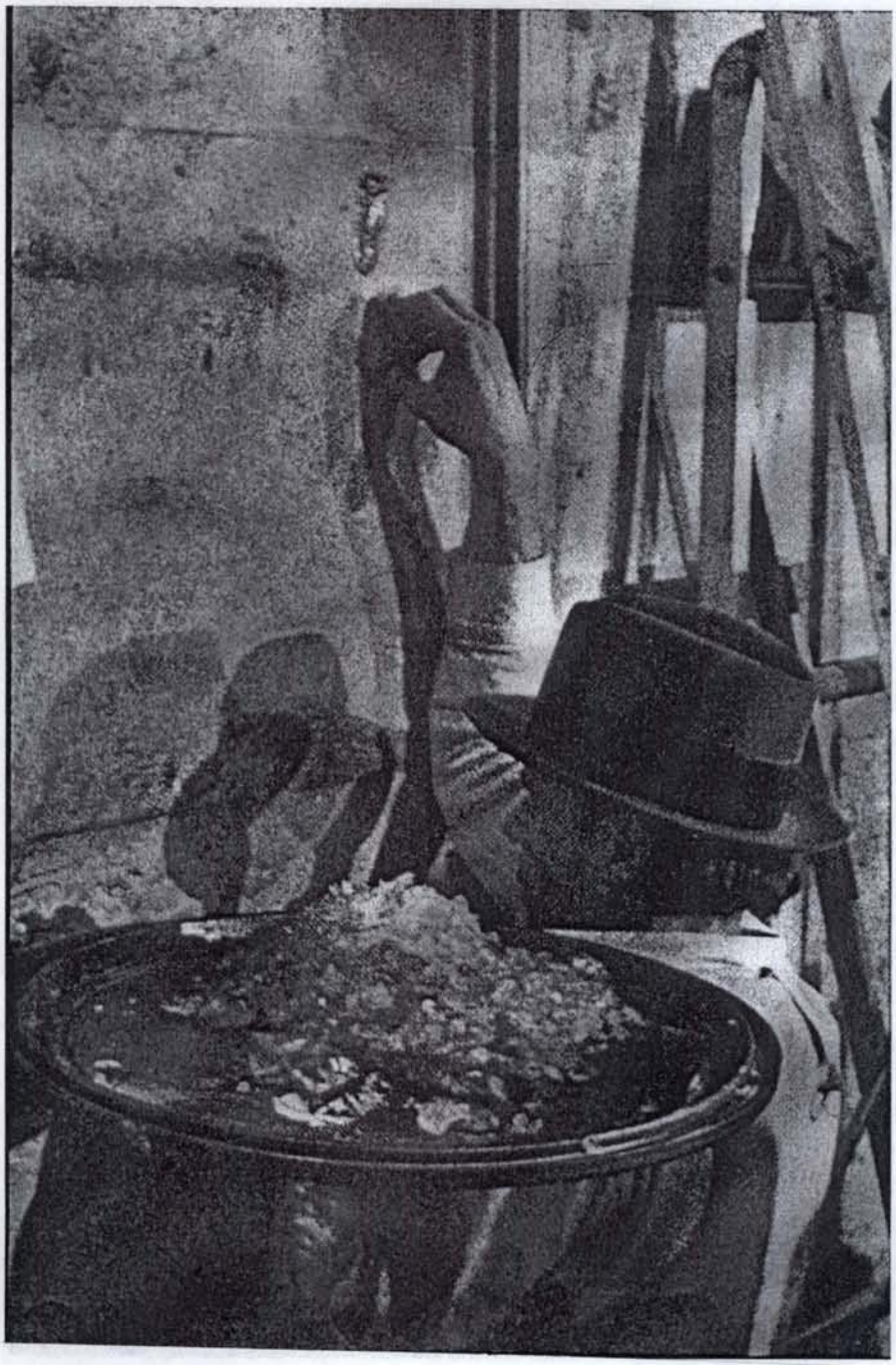

Figure 7: Beuys picking gelatin clumps off of the wall, *Celtic+~~~*, Basel, April 5, 1971

Figure 6: Beuys pours the amassed gelatin over his head, *Celtic (Kinloch Rannoch)*, Edinburgh, August 1970

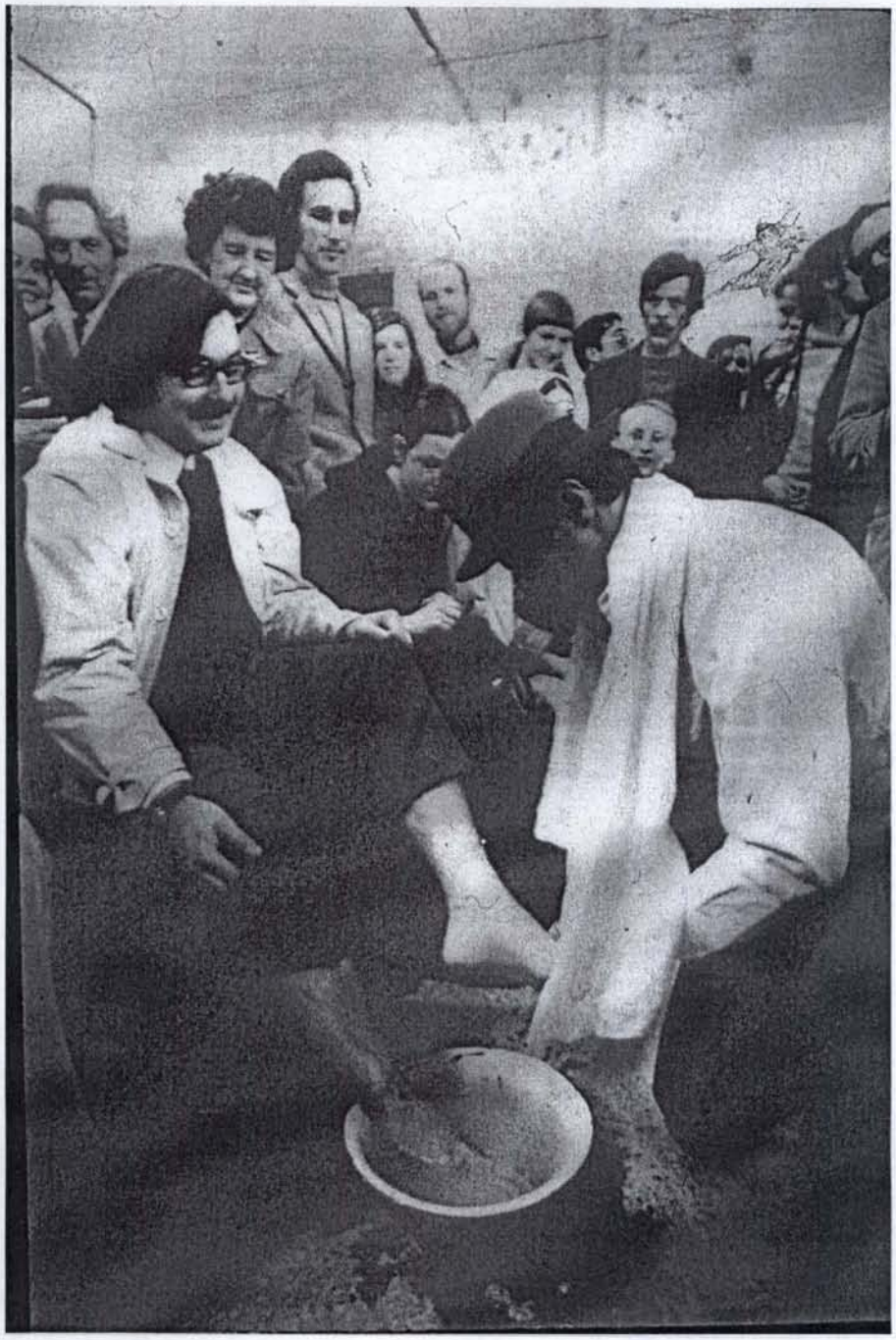

Figure 9: Beuys washing the feet of an audience member, as formulated in the action ~~~, *Celtic*+~~~, Basel, April 5, 1971

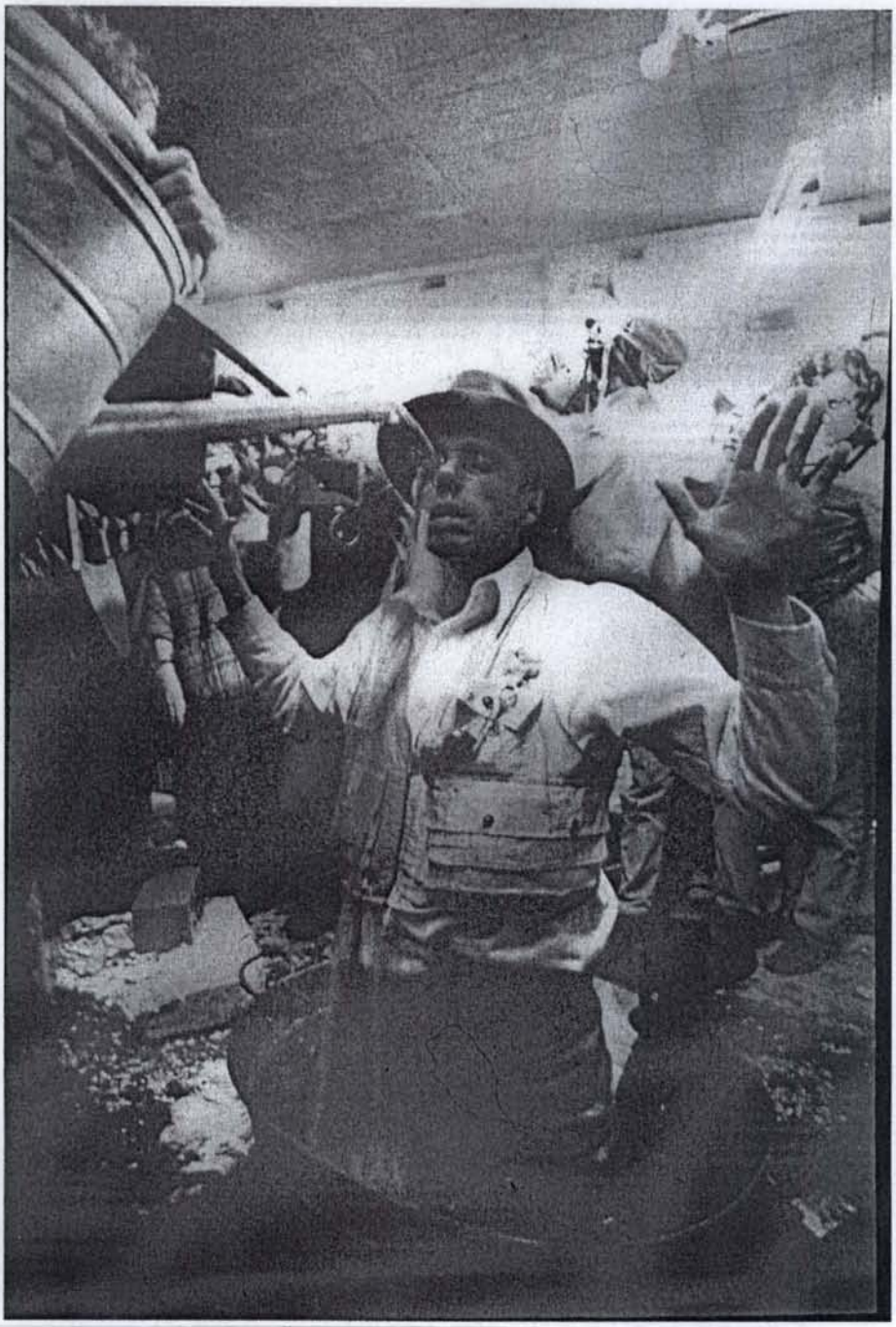

Figure 10: Beuys being baptized, as formulated in the action ~~~, *Celtic+~~~*, Basel, April 5, 1971

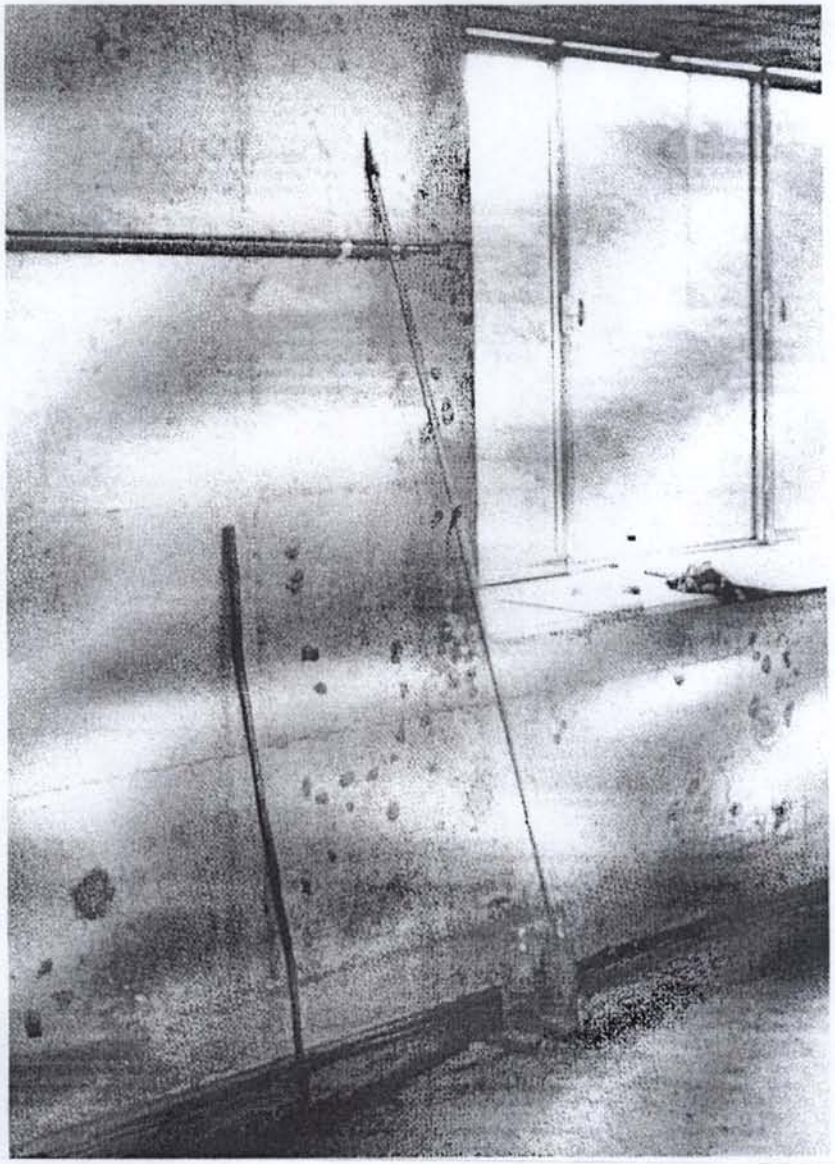

Figure 11: Abandoned Civil Defense Room, *Celtic+~~~*, Basel, April 5, 1971

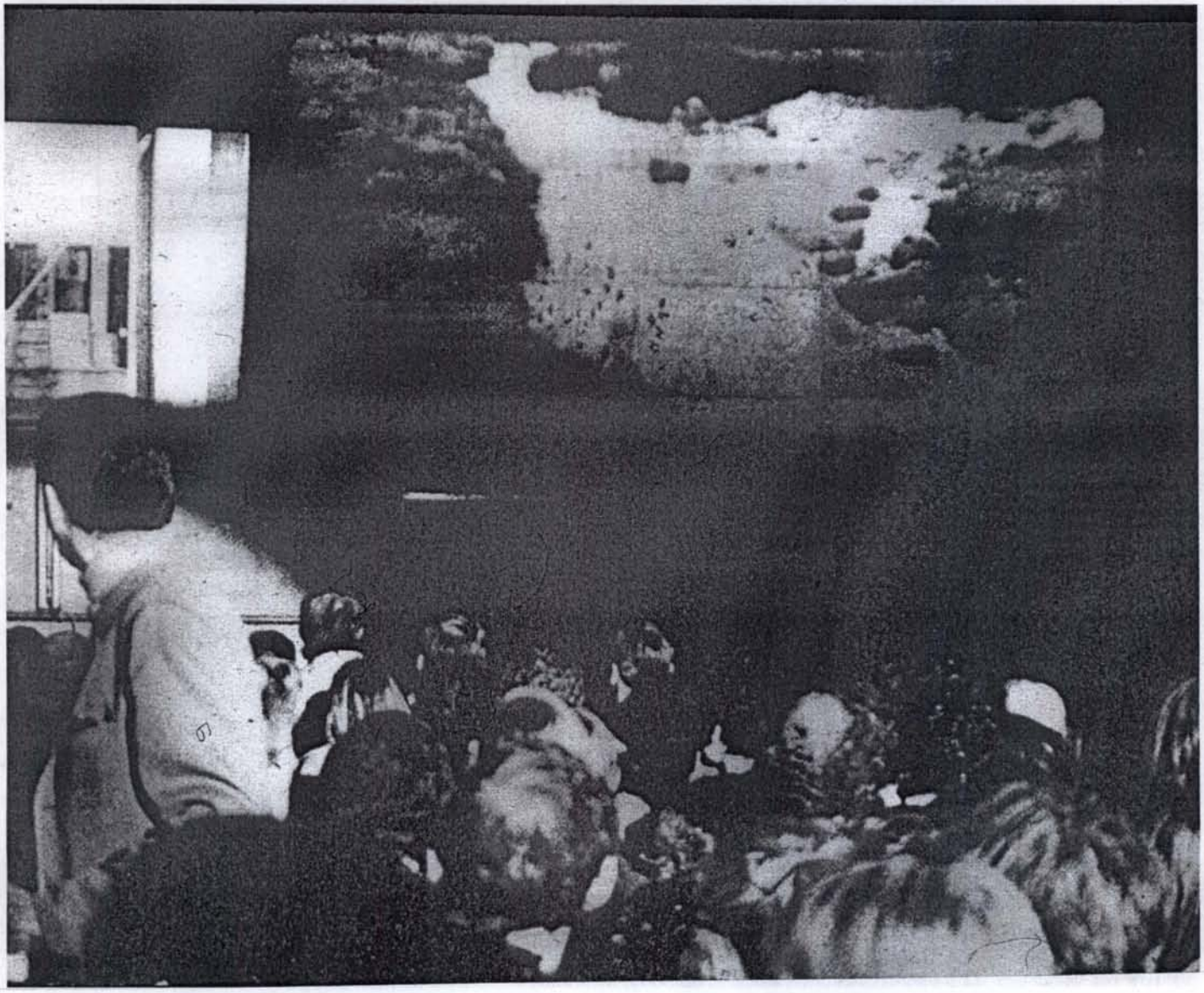

Figure 12: The film *Rannoch Moor* as projected in *Celtic+~~~*, Basel, April 5, 1971

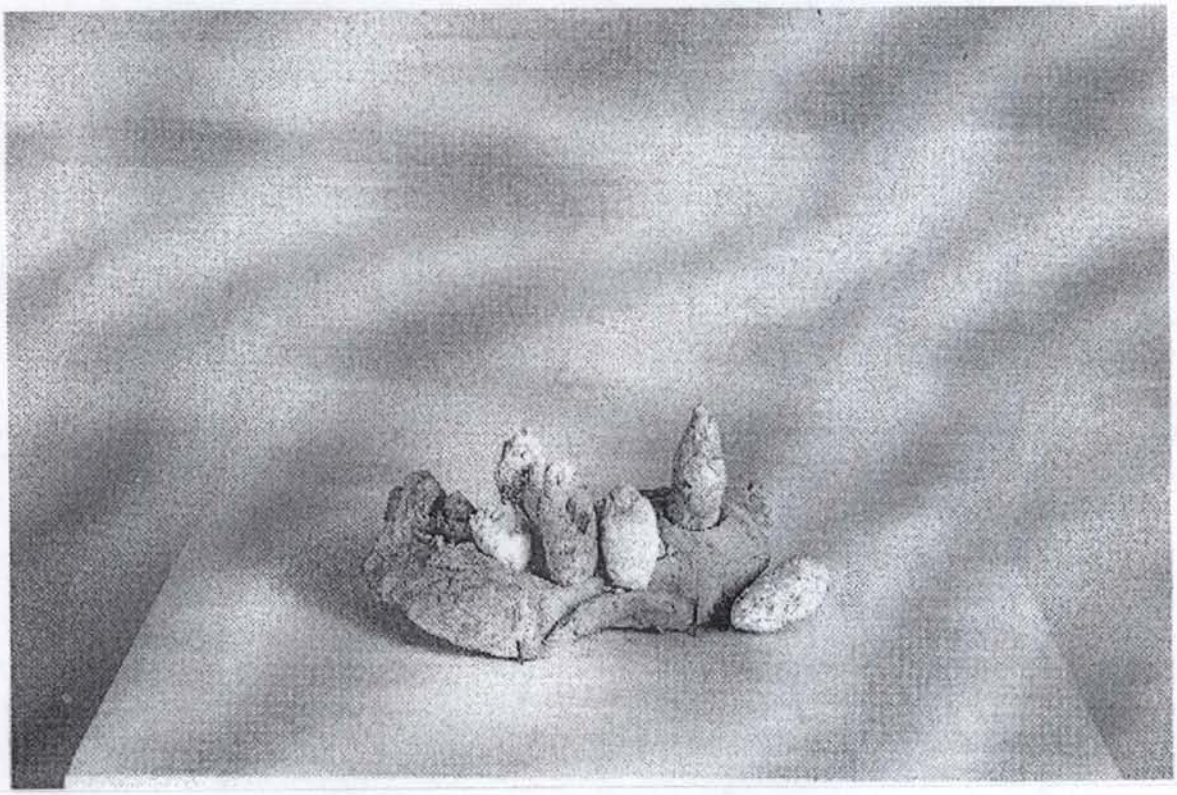

Figure 13: *Jura*, *Celtic*+~~~, Basel, April 5, 1971