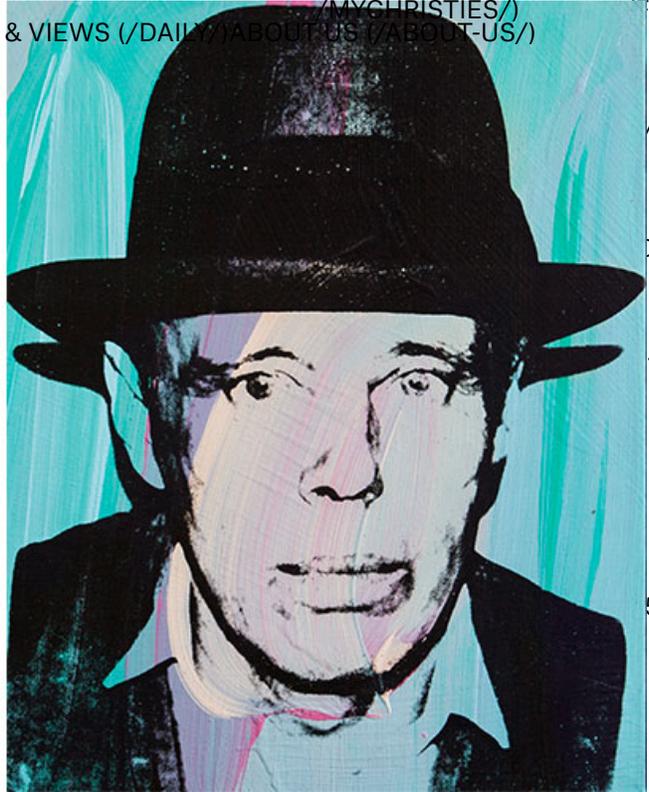


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When Warhol met Beuys

Among the highlights of an exhibition of Andy Warhol works at the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford is a series of screen prints of German conceptual artist Joseph Beuys. Here, the show's curator Sir Norman Rosenthal discusses the series with Chris Mugan



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This spring, the Ashmolean is showing, for the first time in public, works by Andy Warhol (<http://artist.christies.com/Andy-Warhol--50365.aspx>) owned by Andrew and Christine Hall. A focus for the 100 paintings, sculptures and drawings in Andy Warhol: Works From the Hall Collection (<http://www.ashmolean.org/exhibitions/andywarhol/>) is a

series of screen prints of the influential German conceptual artist Joseph Beuys (<http://artist.christies.com/Joseph-Beuys--12050.aspx>).

It is a surprising topic for the Pop art master, most often associated with New York's demi-monde or celebrities (Mao, Jackie Kennedy and others also feature in the exhibition). Yet for curator Sir Norman Rosenthal, understanding the relationship between them is key to appreciating each figure's practice.





Andy Warhol (1928–1987), *Joseph Beuys*, 1980. Unique screen print on green rip-stop nylon laundry bag. 131 x 203 cm. Hall Collection. © The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts Inc; the Artists Rights Society, New York; DACS London

These large portraits derive from a single Polaroid photograph taken by Warhol in 1979 when these two giants of Post-war art met for the first time. It may seem surprising that the consummate Pop artist, famed for his fascination with celebrity culture and consumerism, found common ground with this modernist shaman who sought spiritual depth in everyday materials, yet both were clever exponents of



honing their respective images.

The exhibition is the fourth to arise from a long-term arrangement between the Ashmolean and the Hall Art Foundation (<http://www.hallartfoundation.org/>), supported by Andrew and Christine Hall, that has already seen shows on British-born artist Malcolm Morley and a joint exhibition featuring Beuys and Jörg Immendorff (<http://www.hallartfoundation.org/exhibition/joseph-beuys-and-jrg-immendorff/installation-views>), each curated by Rosenthal.

Joseph Beuys meets Andy Warhol



In his essay for the Warhol exhibition's catalogue, the curator notes the mutual respect between Warhol and Beuys. Examining a YouTube video that documents their meeting in Düsseldorf in 1979, Rosenthal notes Warhol immediately asks if he can take a picture, to which Beuys just as readily assents. Warhol also says, 'I like the politics of Beuys. He should come to the US



and be politically active there. That would be great...
He should be President.'

These Beuys screen prints are presented as a highpoint of the Warhol exhibition. What makes them so important?

Sir Norman Rosenthal: These seven, really amazing paintings make a wonderful counterpoint to the big wall of portraits we have in the exhibition, the more classical, society portraits, including six of the singer Paul Anka.

Do we know what perceptions these two artists had of each before they met?

I'm sure they admired each other. They were both great artists; one was the greatest European artist of his time and one was arguably the greatest American artist. Both were more than artists, both became social symbols.

Given that they were such significant figures in the art world, why did they only meet so late in their respective careers?

In many ways, they lived in totally different worlds. Warhol took a single photograph and that was enough for him to make these extraordinary portraits.

As well as the interesting subject matter, these Beuys prints stand out, ironically, because Warhol used less colour than in many of his other portraits.



They tend to be very black and white — grey actually. Warhol was an incredible colouriser, but he chose to do these things partly on large laundry bags. Was this a reference to the materials Beuys worked with? Perhaps — subjectively. Warhol had an amazing instinct to be right in everything he did, just like Picasso and Beuys. Whatever they touched turned to art.

Andy Warhol: Works from the Hall (<http://www.ashmolean.org/exhibitions/andywarhol/>) collection is at the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford until May 15

Main image at top: (Left) Andy Warhol (1928–1987), Joseph Beuys, 1980. Screenprint, in white, with diamond dust on Arches Cover black paper. 112 x 76 cm. Hall Collection © The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts Inc; the Artists Rights Society, New York; DACS London. (Right) Andy Warhol (1928–1987), Joseph Beuys, c. 1983. Synthetic polymer paint and silkscreen ink on linen. 51 x 40 cm. Hall Collection. © The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts Inc; the Artists Rights Society, New York; DACS London

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