



Group 4: I like America and America likes me (1974)

A. Watch the video excerpt of Beuys performance and discuss the questions.

Important: You have 6 minutes for this part. Once you're done, go to the next page.



Click [here](#) to see the video.

Alternative: Open the QR-Code:

SCAN ME



1. What do you see in the video?
2. What is Beuys doing? What materials/objects can you identify?
3. Which materials/objects/... are central to the performance?

B. Find out more about the performance.

Important: You have 4 minutes for this part. Once you're done, go to the next page.

The process: In 1974, Beuys flew to NYC, where he was taken by ambulance to the René Block Gallery. But he was not sick. Carried by a stretcher and wrapped in a felt blanket, Beuys shared a room at the gallery for three consecutive days with a coyote.



The coyote: At first the animal was hostile towards Beuys. The coyote was unsettled and tore apart one of Beuys' felt blankets. Over time, he grew more tolerant of Beuys though and ended up accepting a hug by Beuys at the end.



The materials: The most prominent materials and objects were a felt blanket, a cane, heaps of straw, a pile of The Wall Street Journal and an old hat.



Discuss:

What may have been the meaning behind the process and the different components?



C. Find out more about the symbolism and meaning behind the performance.

Important: You have 5 minutes for this part. After this, the group exercise stops.

The location: Beuys aimed to address the racial divisions in the US. His performance focused on the history between Native Americans and European settlers. He was convinced that the US needed to reckon with its history to heal its societal wounds.



The coyote: was an important symbol for Native Americans: it symbolized transformation. In contrast, European settlers viewed the animal as an aggressive predator. To Beuys, the coyote symbolized America's spirit. By befriending the hostile animal, he wanted to demonstrate that the US can only heal its divisions through communication and connection.



The myth: During WW II, Beuys was part of the German air force. In 1944, he survived a plane crash in Eastern Europe. Afterwards, Beuys told the story that he was saved by Nomads who slathered his body in fat and wrapped it in felt. Today, it is known that the story was only a myth.



DISCUSS:

1. Though Beuys clearly expressed his personal intentions, art is always open to interpretation.

What does this project mean to you? Which thoughts does it evoke?

2. How do you feel about this performance? Why?

interested / curious / surprised / unsettled / shocked ...



SOURCES

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