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**The Broad's Fall 2024 Exhibition *Joseph Beuys: In Defense of Nature*  
Foregrounds Social Reconciliation, Cultural Memory, and Environmental Justice  
in the Artist's Work**

**As Part of PST ART, Public Reforestation Project *Social Forest: Oaks of Tovaangar* Will  
Center Indigenous Perspectives and Bring 100 New Native Trees to Elysian Park**



**LOS ANGELES, CA** – This fall, in a multifaceted effort, The Broad will present a free collection exhibition, offsite public reforestation project, and series of programs connected with the legacy of Joseph Beuys's art and environmental advocacy. The exhibition *Joseph Beuys: In Defense of Nature* is organized by The Broad's curator Sarah Loyer with Beuys scholar Andrea Gyrody, director of the Frederick R. Weisman Museum of Art at Pepperdine University. It will coincide with a major reforestation initiative, *Social Forest: Oaks of Tovaangar*, as part of Getty's landmark arts event PST ART: *Art & Science Collide*. These dual projects present Beuys's work and practice as more urgent than ever before, as the planet's climate continues to warm.

Opening on November 16, 2024, the exhibition will present over 400 artworks that illuminate Beuys's practice as a model for direct environmental action, drawing from the Broad's extensive

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holdings of the artist's work. The corresponding *Social Forest* initiative will echo the appeals for change seen within the exhibition, with an emphasis on the unique social and environmental context of current day Los Angeles. Undertaken in partnership with North East Trees and Tongva (Gabrielino) archaeologist Desireé Reneé Martinez and artist Lazaro Arvizu Jr., the project encompasses the planting of 100 native trees, primarily coast live oaks, in Elysian Park in Los Angeles and additional plantings at Kuruvungna Village Springs in West L.A.

"This exhibition marks the first time we are displaying our uniquely deep collection of Joseph Beuys's important and extensive multiples at The Broad, and, through *Social Forest*, our first permanent offsite project," said Joanne Heyler, Founding Director of The Broad. "Beuys's focus on democracy and environmental justice remains deeply relevant today, and both our exhibition and the offsite project additionally underscore Beuys's belief in communicating with a wide audience. Through his innovative concept of 'social sculpture,' he demonstrated the power of art to connect and uplift—affirming the resilience of humans to reconcile with each other and with the past, and seed a better, more just future."

*Joseph Beuys: In Defense of Nature* will prominently highlight the artist's "multiples," spanning from 1965 to 1985. Arranged thematically throughout the first-floor galleries, the multiples are editioned objects made to be sold or given away, more accessible than singular, large-scale pieces. Iconic works such as *Sled* (1969) and *Felt Suit* (1970) join lesser-known multiples such as *Rhine Water Polluted* (1981), a bottle of river water that exemplifies the artist's approach to artmaking, using humble materials to draw attention to social conditions and environmental issues, such as the contamination of the Rhine River. This expansive array of historical works will show how Beuys transformed the medium of sculpture, with his political concerns at the forefront.

"Joseph Beuys revolutionized contemporary artmaking, modeling how environmental and political consciousness can be fused with sculpture, performance, and even everyday interactions between communities and individuals," said Loyer. "His work asks us to explore the past actively and find ways we can disrupt, change, and transform our world for the better through creativity, which he believed was inherent to human experience."

The reforestation project is inspired by Beuys's profoundly influential work *7000 Eichen (7000 Oaks)*. Beuys's action—part performance, part installation—began in 1982 and involved planting 7,000 trees accompanied by stone markers throughout Kassel, Germany, as a means to collectively reckon with the traumas of World War II. "It is hard to overstate the impact of *7000 Oaks*, whether on the city of Kassel, on the major exhibition documenta, staged every five years in the city, or on the history of ecological art," said Gyorody. "Beuys surmounted every hurdle imaginable—bureaucratic, financial, ideological—to realize this work, and countless artists since have looked to this project as a beacon of what strong vision and immense dedication can achieve."

Centering the unique cultural, historical, and environmental context of Los Angeles, *Social Forest: Oaks of Tovaangar* brings new meaning to this reforestation action four decades later, in

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a vastly different landscape that also demands reconciliation. The project addresses two central themes: first, ecology and environmental repair; and second, confronting historical trauma toward restoration. The title *Social Forest* expresses the connection between humans and the environment, while *Oaks of Tovaangar* names the land in the Tongva (Gabrielino) language. The project is part of an ongoing reckoning with the historic and current impacts of colonialism and white supremacy occurring in the United States. With this context at the forefront, *Social Forest* is shaped in partnership with leaders from the Tongva community, in recognition of the deep history of the Tongva people who have called this land home for thousands of years, and celebrating their thrivance—a term that indicates radical prosperity and resistance, beyond base survival. “We are creating an artful process to negotiate our self in relationship to nature,” said Arvizu Jr. “It is a collective activity that becomes a gift to future generations.”

To execute the planting of 100 California native oak trees in Elysian Park’s Chávez Ridge area, The Broad has partnered with North East Trees, a community-based non-profit that engages in conservation projects throughout the city of Los Angeles. Similar to *7000 Oaks*, which employed the use of basalt stones local to Germany to mark each planting, each of the new trees along Park Row Drive will grow next to an accompanying naturally shaped boulder made of sandstone local to Los Angeles. At Kuruvungna Village Springs, a sacred Tongva site where a natural spring emerges, five oak trees will be planted accompanied by a stone mortar used for grinding acorns into flour, honoring the acorn as a traditional Tongva food source. These trees and stones support the Gabrielino Tongva Springs Foundation’s work to restore and steward this important site while nurturing Tongva culture and history.

Public programs tied to this two-branched initiative will include programs onsite in Elysian Park and at The Broad. The focus of The Broad’s educational programs for this project is a newly developed curriculum that incorporates Tongva knowledge and practices. The curriculum was developed in consultation with Martinez and Arvizu Jr. and presents unique learning opportunities for LAUSD, Charter, and Private schools. Additional programs include a newly commissioned performance/workshop in February 2025 from acclaimed South African violinist Lynn Daphne Rudolph and Arvizu Jr., which will explore the revitalization of indigenous music, languages, and culture between Southern California and South Africa through performance. This performance is part of a two-week Los Angeles performance series of Johannesburg-based The Centre for the Less Good Idea, presented in collaboration with CAP, UCLA and The Wallis. The series will present Los Angeles premieres that showcase the Centre’s ability to foster a safe space for absurdity, addressing challenging issues, and multi-disciplinary collaborative performances/workshops that often do not have a natural home in a theater or a gallery, not unlike Beuys’s practice of social sculpture. This performance is co-developed and co-presented with The Lunder Institute at Colby College.

Joseph Beuys was born in Krefeld, Germany, in 1921. As a young man, Beuys was a radio operator in the air defense forces of the Third Reich in World War II; he was wounded several times and detained in a British prisoner-of-war camp before returning home in 1945. His subsequent career was dedicated to confronting and working through the traumas of World War II and its global aftermath. Art, and what he called “social sculpture,” became the medium to

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work through these ideas. In the 1960s, he became a renowned professor at the Staatliche Kunstakademie Düsseldorf and was briefly associated with the Fluxus movement, an avant-garde network of artists, musicians and composers that inspired Beuys's early experiments with performance. In the late 1970s Beuys solidified his political commitments when he participated in the founding of the German Green Party, running as the Green candidate for the European Parliament the same year on an antiwar and anti-nuclear platform. These core beliefs influenced his defining work *7000 Oaks* (1982–87), for which the artist planted 7,000 oak trees with accompanying basalt stones throughout the city of Kassel, as a means of environmental and social repair.

*Joseph Beuys: In Defense of Nature and Social Forest: Oaks of Tovaangar* will run from November 16, 2024 through April 6, 2025. Tickets will be made available in fall 2024 at [thebroad.org](https://thebroad.org), with public programs for *Social Forest* occurring in winter 2024 to 2025.

One publication featuring both initiatives will accompany the projects, published by the museum in collaboration with DelMonico Books, featuring essays by Sarah Loyer, Curator and Exhibitions Manager at The Broad; Lazaro Arvizu Jr. (Gabrielino/Tongva), artist and educator; Andrea Gyorody, Director of the Frederick R. Weisman Museum of Art; Desireé Reneé Martinez (Tongva, Gabrielino), tribal archaeologist; Thaddaeus Ropac, founder of Thaddaeus Ropac Gallery; Aaron Thomas, International Society of Arboriculture certified arborist and environmental activist; and Aradhna Tripathi, climate science professor and faculty director and founder of the Center for Diverse Leadership in Science at UCLA. This unique catalogue will have a dual-cover design, offering two front covers, one featuring the exhibition and the other the reforestation project.

Image credit: Joseph Beuys, *Difesa della natura (Defense of Nature)*, 1984. Color offset on heavy paper. © 2024 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn. Photo by Joshua White/JWPictures.com

## **About The Broad**

The Broad's mission is to make contemporary art accessible to the widest possible audience. Founded in 2015 on Grand Avenue in downtown Los Angeles by philanthropists Eli and Edythe Broad, the museum offers free general admission and presents an active program of special exhibitions and innovative live events, all within a landmark building designed by Diller Scofidio + Renfro in collaboration with Gensler. The Broad is home to the Broad collection, one of the world's leading collections of postwar and contemporary art, which continues to grow as new artists and artworks are added. The museum is the headquarters of The Broad Art Foundation's worldwide lending library, which has been loaning collection works to museums around the world since 1984. To create greater public access, The Broad will break ground on a 55,000 square-foot expansion in early 2025.

## **About East West Bank**

East West provides financial services that help customers reach further and connect to new

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opportunities. East West Bancorp, Inc. is a public company (Nasdaq: “EWBC”) with total assets of \$68.5 billion. The Company’s wholly owned subsidiary, East West Bank, is the largest independent bank headquartered in Southern California, and operates over 120 locations in the United States and Asia. The Bank’s markets in the United States include California, Georgia, Illinois, Massachusetts, Nevada, New York, Texas, and Washington. For more information on East West, visit [www.eastwestbank.com/](http://www.eastwestbank.com/)

## **About PST ART**

Southern California’s landmark arts event, PST ART, returns in September 2024, presenting more than 70 exhibitions from organizations across the region exploring the intersections of art and science, both past and present. PST ART is presented by Getty. For more information about PST ART: *Art & Science Collide*, please visit [pst.art](http://pst.art).



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