11 July

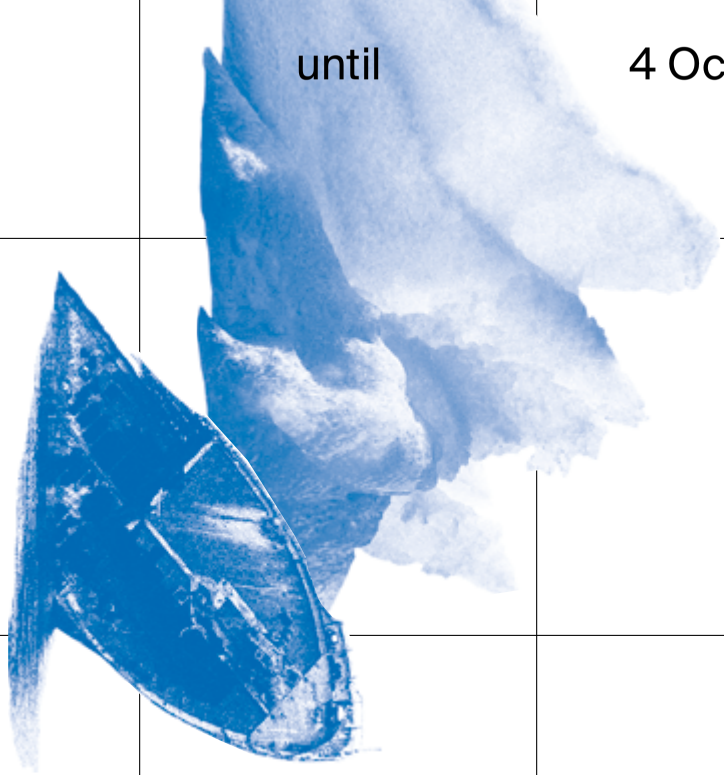
until

4 October

2020

Thinking in Metaphors

Hans Blumenberg.



Human history is a cosmically unnoticeable event.

Photo: Peter Zolna

Hans Blumenberg, *Shipwreck with Spectator. Paradigm of a Metaphor for Existence,* trans. Steven Rendall, MIT Press: Cambridge/London 1997, p. 38.

Hans Blumenberg
Der Prozeß der theoretischen Neugierde
Hans Blumenberg
Säkularisierung und Selbstbehauptung
Hans Blumenberg
Die Lesbarkeit der Welt
Hans Blumenberg
Die Genesis der kopernikanischen Welt
Hans Blumenberg
Die Vollzähligkeit der Sterne
Hans Blumenberg
Paradigmen zu einer Metaphorologie
Hans Blumenberg
Begriffe in Geschichten
Hans Blumenberg
Theorie der Unbegrifflichkeit
Hans Blumenberg
Beschreibung des Menschen
Hans Blumenberg
Ästhetische und metaphorologische Schriften

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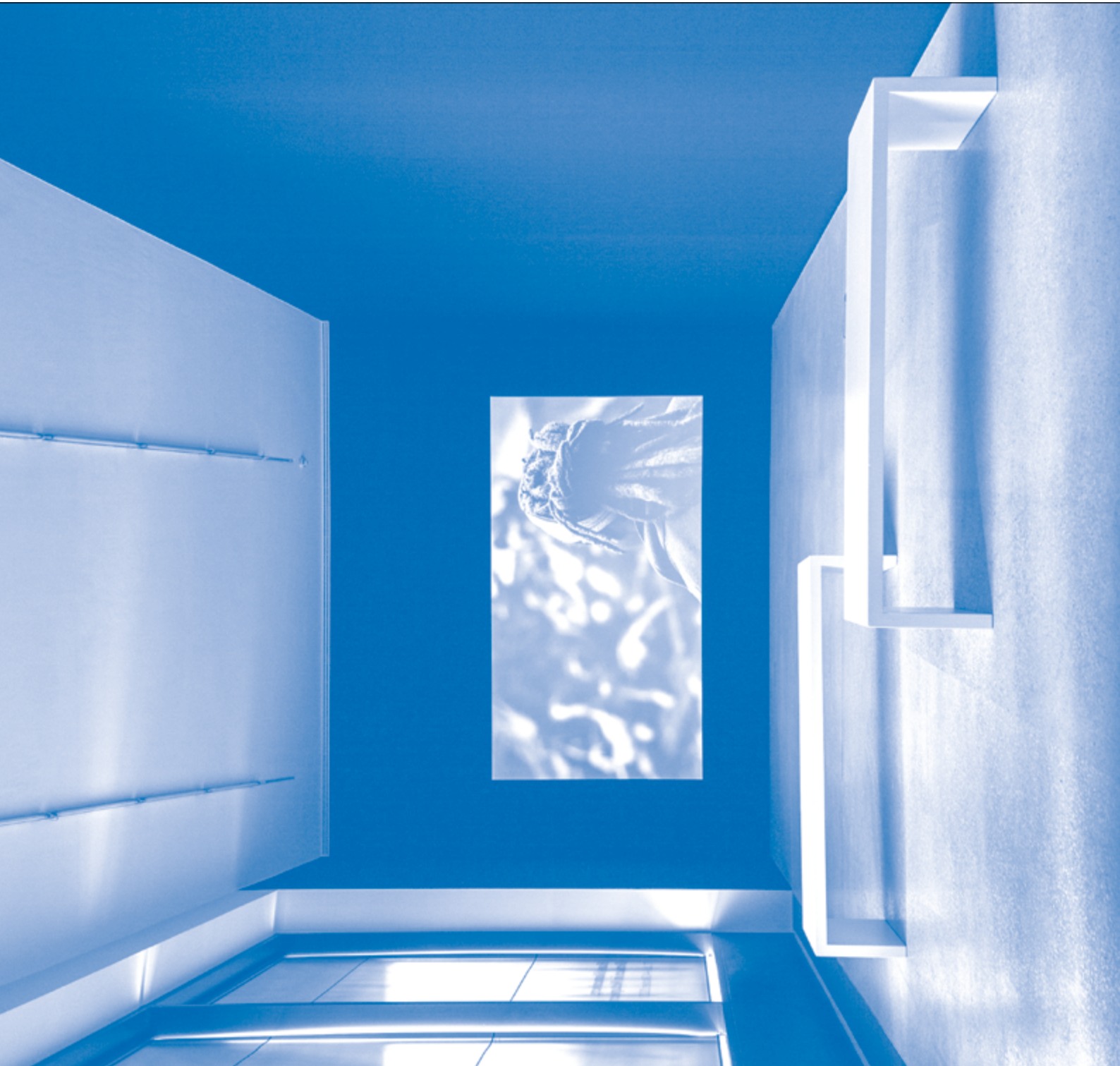

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HANS BLUMENBERG CENTENNIAL
His Writings and their Reception in Art

Images, myths, metaphors—they serve as a yardstick and orientation for people in the face of the challenges of the present. Thus, for the first time, images are given a potency, impact and structuring force previously reserved for reason in Western philosophy. This idea was something of a leitmotif for Hans Blumenberg (b. 1920 in Lübeck; d. 1996 in Altenberge near Münster), who was professor of Philosophy at the Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität (University of Münster) from 1970 until his retirement in 1985.

Through his radical expansion of the history of ideas, which allowed him to make references to poetry, the imagination and fiction, his writings enjoyed wide readership, especially in the fields of the visual arts, art history and literary studies. Published in 1979, his book *Schiffbruch mit Zuschauer* (Shipwreck with Spectator) met with a lively and—as it were—productive reception, especially among visual artists in the 1980s. The prodigious and simultaneously versatile scope for inspiration that Blumenberg's writings offered is reflected in artworks that not only connect with Blumenberg's theory but also cite his ideas and, above all, bring them up to date against the backdrop of current political configurations and developments in human history.

Hans Blumenberg's work, which is closely linked to his many years of teaching at the University in Münster, has resonated internationally, a fact documented by the numerous translations of his writings into other languages. On the occasion of the centenary of his birth—he would have celebrated his hundredth birthday on 13 July 2020—the Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität (WWU), Westfälischer Kunstverein and the LWL-Museum für Kunst und Kultur have launched

a joint exhibition project at a number of venues and locations across the city. The participating institutions are linked by virtue of Blumenberg's interdisciplinary writings and their geographical proximity. Hans Blumenberg's intellectual work is at home in the Philosophy Department at the University of Münster, where he taught for over fifteen years. This is an ideal starting point for a perambulation around the Blumenberg domain: in the entrance hall of Philosophikum at the WWU, there is a selection of Hans Blumenberg's publications, all of which are indicative of the scope and horizons of his teaching and research in the humanities. They include seminal works, such as *Schiffbruch mit Zuschauer* (Shipwreck with Spectator) or *Die Lesbarkeit der Welt* (The Readability of the World), both from 1979, in which Blumenberg sought to capture reality in a study of metaphorology originally planned to run to five volumes. The summary of his publications chronicles the formidable range of a continuously mobile bent of mind and intellectual versatility, which is reflected in the metaphorical texture of the book titles, unfolding its own special poetry.

Exiting the building on the side next to the cathedral, it is only a stone's throw to the northern entrance of the LWL-Museum für Kunst und Kultur, where preparatory materials for a work by Ludger Gerdes normally held in the Skulptur Projekte Archives are on display in the Contemporary Art Collection section on the second floor. They establish a connection between the linguistic metaphor and the visual trope of the shipwreck as the perennial disaster per se. Drawings and sketches, as well as a model for the permanent installation *Schiff für Münster* (Ship for Münster), which Gerdes designed and made for the *Skulptur Projekte in Münster 1987,* are supplemented by a comprehensive loan from the Stiftung Kunstfonds (Kunstfonds Foundation).

The metaphor of the ship is adopted by Marcel Odenbach and the context of Blumenberg's *Schiffbruch mit Zuschauer* receives an update. Odenbach's video *Im Schiffbruch nicht schwimmen können* (Shipwrecked and Unable to Swim) (2011) screened in the project space jointly run by the Museum and the Westfälischer Kunstverein, postulates an artistic reflection on shipwreck as both an aesthetic motif and an existential experience, and which unfolds in the moving image. The significance of images and metaphors for the evaluation of our reality assumes an explosive topicality here as Odenbach, with a scene inspired by Blumenberg, outlined a development in 2011 that has since caught up with us as a collective of spectators of a dramatic event—and not just on the borders of Europe. The tragedy of flight and perilous rescue at sea persists to this day and if the current political climate in the world is anything to go by, it will continue to parade the consequences of our actions before our eyes in the years to come. The large window facade facing the forecourt of the Kunstverein and the museum facilitates a flexible reception of the work in various forms and at different times of the day: during the day, the video with sound can be viewed from inside the building, and at night after sundown it is visible from outside as a public space event.

There are also manifest connections to Blumenberg's ideas in two artworks from the *Skulptur Projekte Public Collection,* which refer explicitly to his writings. These include Ludger Gerdes's *Schiff für Münster* (Ship for Münster) (1987) located in the northwest of Münster, which can be easily reached by bicycle from the city. Harald Klingelhöller's work *Die Wiese lacht oder das Gesicht in der Wand* (The Meadow Laughs or the Face in the Wall) (1987) is located in the courtyard of the Juridicum, and thus near all three participating sites.

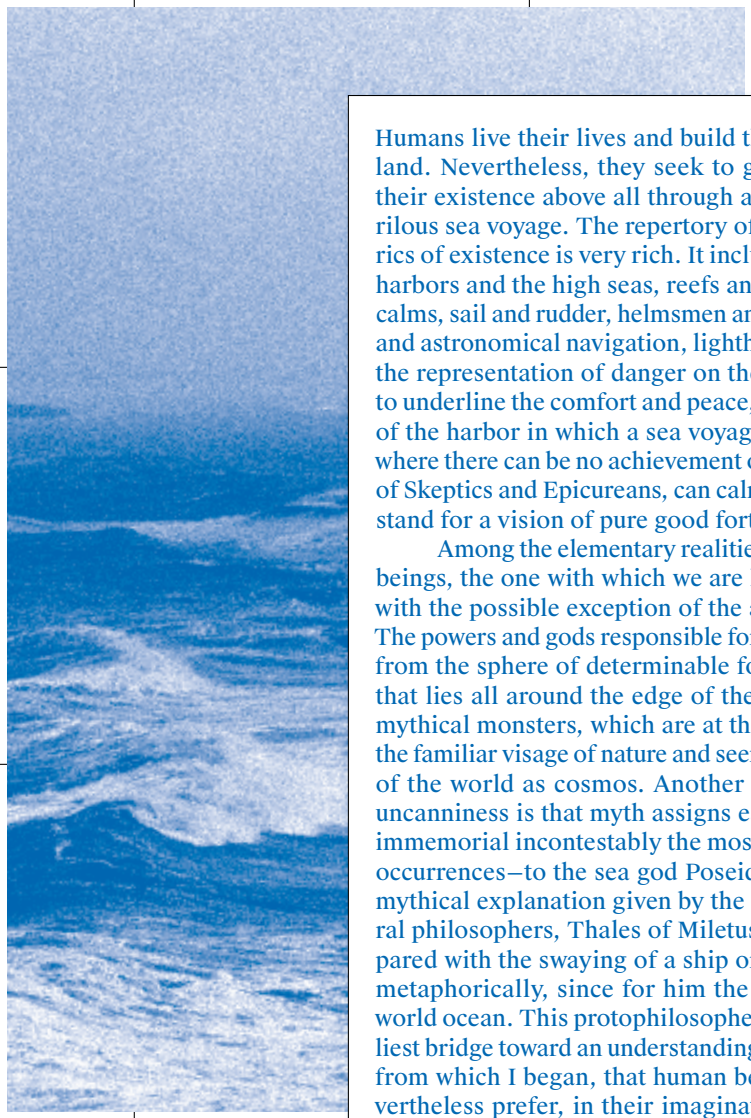
The *Blumenberg Lectures,* which were held in 2007 and 2017 by the University of Münster in parallel with the *Skulptur Projekte* as a discursive contribution to the major international public space exhibition and which featured prominent speakers from the humanities, also reflected the philosopher's significance as an interdisciplinary thinker in the light of contemporary debate on aesthetics, art, society and the public sphere.

Hans Blumenberg's research illuminated the visuality of metaphor as an ontological strategy with which to temper the inherent ruthlessness and contingency of reality. His manifold references to the visual world of art are exemplary for the numerous cultural techniques and forms of thought, upon which art and literature, as well as philosophy, have always been predicated. The art historian and visual theorist, George Didi-Huberman, for example, examines the power of metaphor by means of affective words, such as anger or grief, and points out further that we are invariably talking about images here. Metaphor, according to Didi-Huberman, is endowed with the power of "potentiality", namely the notion "that images think powerfully". Metaphors are "fecund images" that transcend a purely terminological definition. Their impact and effectiveness are reflected in the representations of the visual arts; yet, for Didi-Huberman, interpretation is both "porous" and fluid, whereby what is represented is repeatedly questioned, challenged and expanded. Didi-Huberman's observations will appear separately in a book containing other essays by Till Julian Huss on a prospective Blumbergian metaphorology of art and Adriana Markantonatos on Hans Blumenberg's correspondence with the historian Reinhart Koselleck, among others. As a result, this more detailed publication is able to approach the unique impact of metaphor and the significance of Blumenberg and his writings, especially for the visual arts, from a variety of angles.

In keeping with the sentiment of Blumenberg's *Quellen, Ströme, Eisberge* (Sources, Currents, Icebergs) (2012), this project, which unfolded in the manner of a network itself, arose from working with different sources and had to dodge many an iceberg in the process. Although the abnormal conditions of the pandemic have transformed everyday organisational details into not inconsiderable challenges, they have by no means diminished our overall commitment. We would like to thank the Sparkasse Münsterland Ost and the WWU-Kulturfonds for their financial support. We would also like to express our thanks to Stiftung Kunstfonds for the generous loan of a work by Ludger Gerdes from the Skulptur Projekte Archives for the presentation.

An accompanying programme of talks, lectures and discussion on Blumenberg's significance for contemporary discourse will, for the most part, take place in online formats on account of the ongoing Covid-19 restrictions. The dates of the forthcoming events will be published via the newsletters and websites of the participating institutions respectively. A selection of Hans Blumenberg's publications accompanying the exhibition can be obtained from the Walther König bookshop in the LWL-Museum für Kunst und Kultur and from the Rosta bookshop.

Jana Bernhardt, Ursula Frohne,
Jenni Henke, Ulrike Hofer, Kristina Scepanski
and Marianne Wagner



Humans live their lives and build their institutions on dry land. Nevertheless, they seek to grasp the movement of their existence above all through a metaphorics of the perilous sea voyage. The repertory of this nautical metaphorics of existence is very rich. It includes coasts and islands, harbors and the high seas, reefs and storms, shallows and calms, sail and rudder, helmsmen and anchorages, compass and astronomical navigation, lighthouses and pilots. Often the representation of danger on the high seas serves only to underline the comfort and peace, the safety and serenity of the harbor in which a sea voyage reaches its end. Only where there can be no achievement of a goal, as in the cases of Skeptics and Epicureans, can calm on the high seas itself stand for a vision of pure good fortune.

Among the elementary realities we confront as human beings, the one with which we are least at ease is the sea—with the possible exception of the air, conquered later on. The powers and gods responsible for it stubbornly withdraw from the sphere of determinable forces. Out of the ocean that lies all around the edge of the habitable world come mythical monsters, which are at the farthest remove from the familiar visage of nature and seem to have no knowledge of the world as cosmos. Another feature of this kind of uncanniness is that myth assigns earthquakes—since time immemorial incontestably the most frightening of natural occurrences—to the sea god Poseidon's realm. In the half-mythical explanation given by the first of the Ionian natural philosophers, Thales of Miletus, earthquakes are compared with the swaying of a ship on the sea—and not only metaphorically, since for him the dry land floats on the world ocean. This protophilosopher thereby builds the earliest bridge toward an understanding of the strange paradox from which I began, that human beings living on land nevertheless prefer, in their imagination, to represent their overall condition in the world in terms of a sea voyage.

Hans Blumenberg, *Shipwreck with Spectator. Paradigm of a Metaphor for Existence,* trans. Steven Rendall, MIT Press: Cambridge/London 1997, pp. 7–8.

Marcel Odenbach
Im Schiffbruch nicht schwimmen können
(Shipwrecked and Unable to Swim) (2011)
Video still

THE METAPHOROLOGY OF ART OR ART AS METAPHOROLOGY?
Using Blumenberg to Go Beyond Blumenberg

Artists think in metaphors. They use creative transmissions and understand or articulate one phenomenon in terms of another in order to generate artistic strategies and conceptualise their thinking about phenomena in general. Why, then, is it so worthwhile to examine Hans Blumenberg's observations on metaphor when describing artistic ways of thinking and their visual expression? The answer lies in his anthropological anchoring and the elaboration of the historical and aesthetic dimension of metaphors.

Blumenberg did not engage with metaphorical expression in artworks, nor did he treat a specific mode of artistic thinking in metaphors. Moreover, he did not develop a theory of metaphor in the strict sense, but ultimately studied and described metaphors, which, as key ideas, as so-called background metaphorics, have shaped human thought and often only find implicit expression in texts. In his detailed studies, he describes the influence and the historical change of such key ideas and thus traces a "metakinetics of the historical horizons of meaning and ways of seeing".[1] Blumenberg calls this method metaphorology and initially assigned it the status of an auxiliary discipline within conceptual history. While other theories of metaphor attempt to determine the general process of the transmission of meaning, Blumenberg turns to individual metaphors in order to demonstrate a way of going about description and not to silence metaphor's imaginative back-

1 Hans Blumenberg, *Paradigms for a Metaphorology,* trans. Robert Savage, Cornell University Press: Ithaca 2010, p. 5.

ground, its "system of imagination".[2] Alongside this aesthetic perspective, he primarily opens up an anthropological perspective on metaphor by casting man as both an *animal metaphoricum* and an historical being, because he has a history and situates himself in life with the help of stories, myths and metaphors. Blumenberg invariably pits the metaphor against the concept, the unambiguousness of which he understands as an impoverishment of imaginative background. He points out that humans are able to distance themselves from their environment via the agency of concepts and their abstractions. He derives ideas about the world, being, time and history from them. However, the act of this distancing gives rise to the predicament whereby concepts are ill-equipped to harness such ideas, because they are bereft of corresponding images. For Blumenberg, they are thus "absolute metaphors" and the realities we inhabit.

But how do we arrive at a more precise understanding of Blumenberg's image concept of metaphor? If we think visually, orientate ourselves in the world via images and also create culture, are not artistic image worlds also part of this orientation accomplished through metaphor? Blumenberg uses a textual hermeneutics to pursue a phenomenology of life-world horizons. He does not, therefore, concern himself with the material images of art, but instead with those visual ideas that come into play and offset the very impotence of concepts in order to make absolutes, such as the world, truth and reality, more tangible. By providing what was hitherto unavailable and by creating an orientation in the disorientation inherent in the reason for existence, the metaphor counteracts an anthropological shortcoming and allows us to react to it aesthetically. Whereas the concept leads away from sensation and thus engenders distance, the metaphor by contrast represents a desired return to it. However, the images generated by the imagination as dynamic and multisensory mental events must not be confused with static material images. Blumenberg opens up a vista on the aesthetics of language but he does not formulate an implicit picture theory as such. To deploy his insights into the workings of metaphors for that material visual culture, to which a large part of the visual arts belongs, would mean using Blumenberg to go beyond Blumenberg.

The extension of metaphorology to art can be performed in two ways. On the one hand, art theory and philosophy can be analysed in terms of their background metaphorics. The focus here is upon the key ideas about art in general and those metaphors of artistic media and representational content in particular. With regard to the first aspect, Blumenberg himself cast some light on the matter, for example, by tracing, via the history of ideas, the mimetic function of art as an imitation of nature and its abandonment in favour of creative thinking and production. He places art theory thereby within the framework of his great project of establishing the legitimacy of modern thinking on the basis of changes in historically significant key ideas. Art history addresses the second aspect, but for the most part without the metaphor as an explicit instrument of analysis. They are the kind of ideas that refer to representational painting in terms of it being an open window or incarnation, in the sense of it becoming flesh on the canvas's skin, which can be understood as background metaphorics and which have already been thoroughly researched in art history. The extent to which metaphorology and, for example, iconology as an analysis of the historical change of symbols in art, converge or diverge in their methods and objectives, would, in turn, provide an insight into the merits of Blumenberg's observations on metaphor for a description of art. However, this points to a second extension of metaphorology to art. For if the artists themselves produce, vary and also comment on those visual ideas about art and its media, are they not themselves the purveyors of metaphorology?

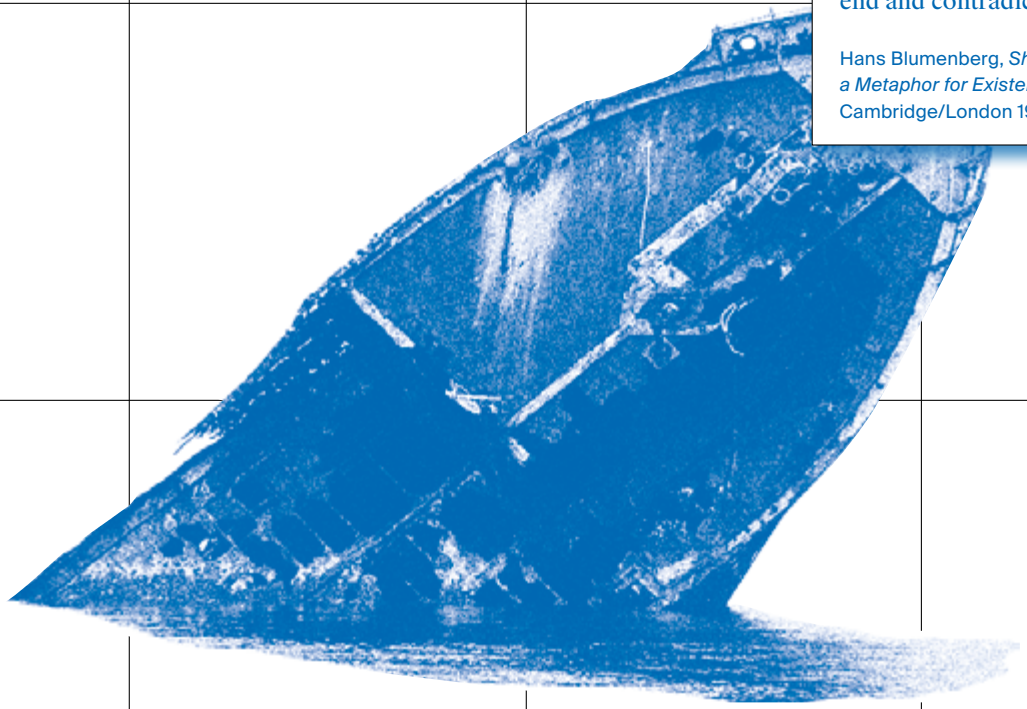
2 Hans Blumenberg, "Beobachtungen an Metaphern", in *Archiv für Begriffsgeschichte,* vol. XV (Bonn 1972), pp. 161–214, here p. 177.

Blumenberg's examination of myth and anecdote in the phenomenology of life-world horizons could be combined with an artistic questioning of visual key concepts, such as the ones that feature in the works of Ludger Gerdes and Marcel Odenbach on the subject of shipwreck. Both artists refer specifically to Blumenberg's remarks on ontological metaphors enshrined in the shipwreck motif and the concomitant central importance of the viewer's position, and translate the metaphor into concrete images and a present-day context. Their works oscillate between an almost metaphorological commentary on the progression of images and a practical participation in this very progression. However, it would be an attenuation of Blumenberg's metaphorology were it to be hastily transferred to the productive generation of images within artistic practice. The gap between the absolute metaphor as a system of imagination and both Ludger Gerdes's ship sculpture and Théodore Géricault's painting *The Raft of the Medusa* featured in Marcel Odenbach's video, would endorse this. Blumenberg's combination of metaphor, myth and everyday anecdote with regard to their anthropological significance, however, opens up a new perspective on the essential orientational scope of aesthetic creativity. The performative individualisation of myths is concerned with an anthropological fundamental mood that we are keen to assimilate but find difficult to fix linguistically, yet something to which we can respond aesthetically.

Till Julian Huss studied art and philosophy in Münster and received his doctorate on the aesthetics of the metaphor from the Humboldt University, Berlin. He has been working as a research assistant in the field of art and media theory and philosophy at the University of Applied Sciences Europe in Berlin since 2019.

The pattern was set by the Roman, Lucretius. At the beginning of the second book of his cosmic poem, he imagines observing, from the safety of shore, other people who are in peril on the storm-tossed sea: "e terra magnum alterius spectare laborem." Clearly, the pleasantness that is said to characterize this sight is not a result of seeing someone else suffer but of enjoying the safety of one's own standpoint. It has nothing to do with a relationship among men, between those who suffer and those who do not; it has rather to do with the relationship between philosophers and reality; it has to do with the advantage gained through Epicurus's philosophy, the possession of inviolable, solid ground for one's view of the world. Even the spectator of mighty battles who is not threatened by the perils of war has to be aware of the difference between the need for happiness and the ruthless caprice of physical reality. Only the observer who is secured by philosophy can blunt his difference into a distance. It is the sage—or at least the man who is prepared for the natural process and the business of the world by the *doctrina sapientum*—who both carries the theory ideal of classical Greek philosophy, figured by the spectator, through to its end and contradicts it on a decisive point.

Hans Blumenberg, *Shipwreck with Spectator. Paradigm of a Metaphor for Existence,* trans. Steven Rendall, MIT Press: Cambridge/London 1997, p. 26.



1 Blumenberg's Books

Location

Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität Münster
↘ Philosophikum
Domplatz 23, 48143 Münster
Opening times: Mon–Fri, 10 am–4 pm
Free admission

Westfälische
Wilhelms-Universität
Münster

↘ Philosophikum
Entrance Hall
(Library)

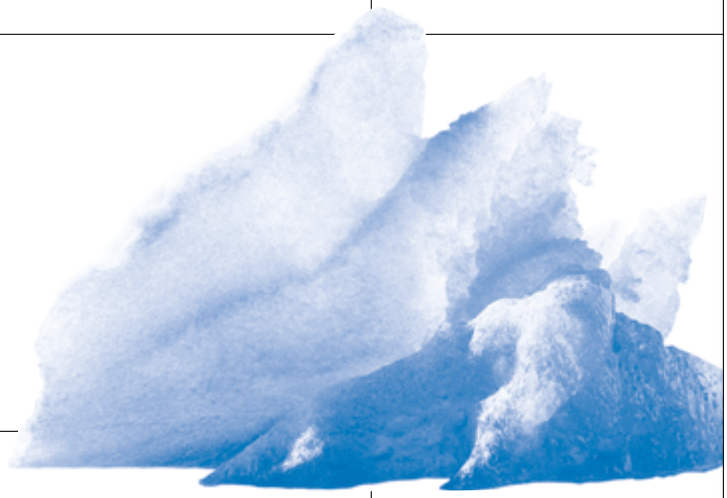
PRESENTATION OF HANS BLUMENBERG'S WRITINGS

A selection of Hans Blumenberg's books exemplifies the extraordinary productivity of his work as an academic and thinker, including his time at the University of Münster. They represent the breadth of his research interests and illustrate his examination of the visuality of metaphor and its cognitive dimension. The literary tropes of his book titles convey the key ideas of Blumenberg's intellectual work and, in the context of the exhibition, trace the trajectories of his ideas in terms of their sensitivity to language. Formulations such as *Arbeit am Mythos, Schiffbruch mit Zuschauer, Höhlenausgänge* or *Die Sorge geht über den Fluß* (Work on Myth, Shipwreck with Spectator, Cave Exits, Care Crosses the River) take up figures of speech that can be traced back to a *longue durée* of pictorial topoi in both literature and the visual arts. They evoke ideas that touch upon elementary questions of human existence. This effectively highlights the anthropological dimension of Blumenberg's thinking, which postulates the continuity in the role of images as a cultural and social practice. The constellation of the book titles reveals his understanding of the depth of meaning of these concepts. The emergence and transformations of these tropes are situated in interrelations between mental, linguistic and physical metaphors. Armed with this blueprint of a philosophical metaphorology, Blumenberg pursued an intellectual project comparable to the one Aby Warburg embarked upon with his *Mnemosyne Atlas,* an encompassing, cultural-historical visual reference system. Via his writings, the exhibition presents a tableau of Blumenberg's reflections on linguistic metaphor that resonate aesthetically throughout his academic work. Although the philosopher rarely referred to the visual arts in his writings, his pictorial figures of speech, which he pursued intensively throughout his life, still wield a great influence and attraction for artists and creative minds to this day. – Ursula Frohne, Art History Department, WWU Münster

We would like to thank the Brillux Co. for its support in the acquisition of the publications.

Art is the museal counterpart to nature, as if man were to gather up everything he has to offset the losses that have been inflicted on nature by his quest for self-preservation and self-expansion. In my private futurology, artworks, insofar as they are old enough and the circumstances of their genesis long forgotten, are viewed in the same way as the skeletons of dinosaurs and the bizarre fossilised plant life in slate and sandstone that nature once indulged itself as its speculative luxury and then ultimately forewent.

Hans Blumenberg, *Ein mögliches Selbstverständnis,* Reclam: Stuttgart 1997, pp. 193–194. Translated into English by Tim Connell.



The point toward which the reception history of the shipwreck-spectator configuration tends is the dissolution of its original relationship to nature. Considered quantitatively, the nineteenth century was surely *the* epoch of shipwrecks. Down to the sinking of the *Titanic,* nature's force manifested itself more convincingly than ever before; in the nineteenth century, England alone lost five thousand men a year through ships going down—off the British coast there were 700 shipwrecks in the first six months of 1880, and in the first six months of 1881, 919—in whose memory J. M. W. Turner set up a last fierce monument of romantic longing for death. In spite of this reality, the shipwreck metaphorics was completely occupied by the newly emerging historical consciousness and its insoluble dilemma of theoretical distance versus living engagement.

Hans Blumenberg, *Shipwreck with Spectator. Paradigm of a Metaphor for Existence,* trans. Steven Rendall, MIT Press: Cambridge/London 1997, p. 67.

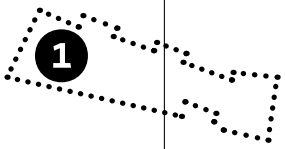
Ludger Gerdes

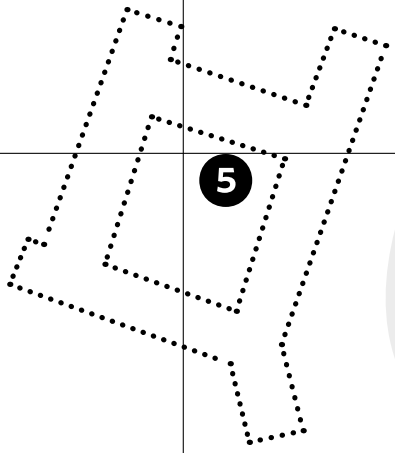
Adjacent to the Kinderbach,
between Horstmarer Landweg and
Mendelstraße
→ p. 57

4

Blumenberg's Books

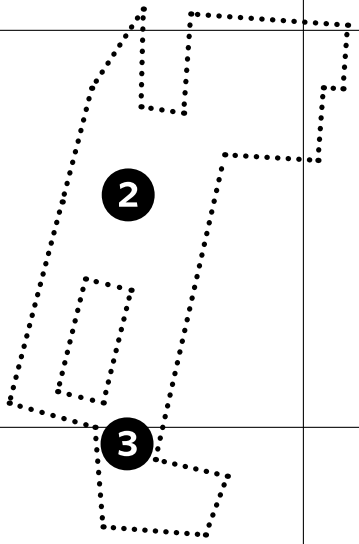
Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität
Philosophikum, Entrance Hall (Library)
→ p. 33





Ludger Gerdes

LWL-Museum für
Kunst und Kultur,
Skulptur Projekte
Archives
→ p. 41



Harald Klingelhöller

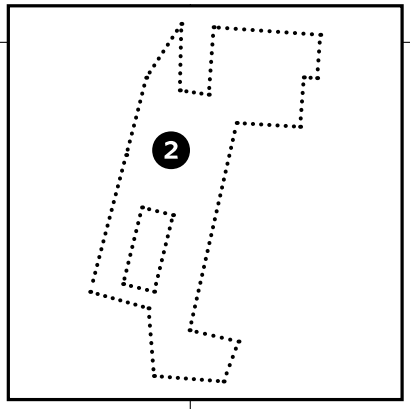
Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität Münster
Courtyard of the Juridicum, Faculty of Law
→ p. 65

Marcel Odenbach

Westfälischer Kunstverein
Project Space
→ p. 49

Location

LWL-Museum für Kunst und Kultur
↘ Contemporary Art Collection,
2nd floor, room 2.13
Domplatz 10, 48143 Münster
Opening times: Tue–Sun, 10 am–6 pm
Admission: 9 € / 4,50 €



2 Ludger Gerdes

LWL-Museum für
Kunst und Kultur

↘ Collection (2nd floor)
Room 2.13

PRESENTATION FROM THE
SKULPTUR PROJEKTE ARCHIVES
Schiff für Münster (Ship for Münster) (1987)

Ludger Gerdes (1954–2008) participated in the second edition of the *Skulptur Projekte* in 1987 in the shape of his Schiff für Münster (Ship for Münster). His contribution comprised a piece of landscape art located on the outskirts of the city surrounded by a moat, which now forms part of the *Public Collection.* The Skulptur Projekte Archives holds correspondence, watercolour sketches and drawings relating to Gerdes's *Schiff,* as well as items documenting a sculpture exchange. As part of the *Skulptur Projekte 2017,* the City of Marl loaned the neon work *Angst* to Münster to this end, which sparked controversy about public space in the Aegidiimarkt precinct opposite the museum.

A copy of a detailed design draft, revised in fineliner, went straight into the Skulptur Projekte Archives from the preparatory period of the exhibition. In the drawing, Gerdes depicted a bird's-eye view of the *Schiff für Münster* during the planning stage and at a slight angle, noting down two further options for its implementation. In the August of the previous year prior to the exhibition, he was asked by the curatorial team whether he would like to suggest an author for the catalogue text or whether he would like to write the text himself. At that time, artists' personal statements were a characteristic feature of *Skulptur Projekte* catalogues and, in a lengthy text, Gerdes explained his idea of a kind of visually-narrative art that is capable of creating fixed places and local identity. He also made very specific comments on his project:

"The *Schiff* in Münster evokes memories of typical Münsterland designs, of moated castles as well as of the inland waterways of the Dortmund-Ems Canal. And of a metaphor, which the Münster philosopher Hans Blumenberg described in its most diverse manifestations: 'Humans live their lives and build their institutions on dry land. Nevertheless, they seek to grasp the movement of their existence above all through a metaphorics of the perilous sea voyage.'" [1]

Fig. p. 6: Presentation from the Skulptur Projekte Archives with additional loans made by the Stiftung Kunstfonds from the Ludger Gerdes estate.

1 Ludger Gerdes, "Anmerkungen", K. Bußmann and K. König, eds, *Skulptur Projekte in Münster 1987,* exh. cat., Cologne 1987, p. 104. Translated into English by Tim Connell.

LWL-Museum für Kunst und Kultur

↘ Collection (2nd floor) Room 2.13

These lines are from the opening passage of Hans Blumenberg's book *Schiffbruch mit Zuschauer* (Shipwreck with Spectator) published in 1979 adumbrating his theory of metaphor, which Gerdes engaged with intensively. Gerdes described his own, often model-like works as "visual metaphors", and he characterised pictures as "the invention of mental figures with the help of which the imagination can identify things and facts".[2] The existential metaphors of seafaring and shipwreck described by Blumenberg in particular run like a golden thread through Gerdes's work. In the course of a long-term project from 1994 until 2000, Gerdes collected representations of disasters at sea from magazines and combined them in the form of photocopies with texts, such as quotations from writers or philosophers. Gerdes has also integrated a passage from Blumenberg's *Schiffbruch mit Zuschauer* here. He mounted the paper on square cardboard in each of nine square fields. The two variants of the same stag floating in the water, each enlarged to a different section of the picture, illustrate Gerdes's working method and his use of trial and error with regard to motifs in the overall production process. The Stiftung Kunstfonds which administers Ludger Gerdes's artistic estate, has donated the work *Ohne Titel (Schiffskatastrophen)* (Untitled [Naval Disasters]) to the project *Hans Blumenberg. Thinking in Metaphors* as a one-off loan, having already given the LWL-Museum für Kunst und Kultur an extensive collection of sketches and drafts, gouaches, collages, sketch pads and the first of a total of two versions of the model of the *Schiff für Münster* on permanent loan in 2014. Gerdes placed it on the designated meadow to gauge the impact and position of his work. Above all, however, he made the models for presentation to the City and the appropriate authorities. In a letter dated 4 April 1986, he wrote to Friedrich Meschede, the exhibition secretary at the time: "Dear Friedrich, enclosed are two photos of the preliminary model for MS. I'm not going to make a new model until I hear from you definitively whether the thing is a starter or not."[3] At that time, Gerdes was still uncertain whether his project would be approved or rejected.

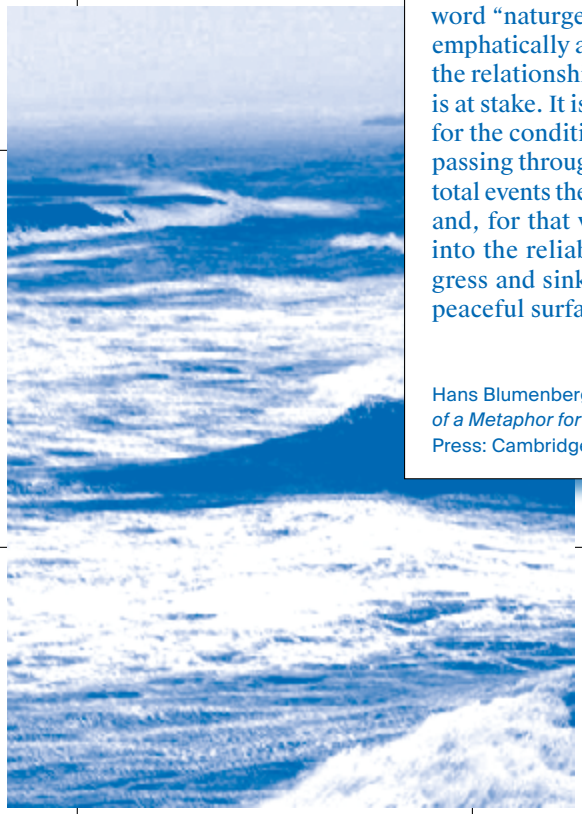
A whole new cosmos in Gerdes's work opens up in his sketch pads. They served as his studio tools in the search for motifs, for the finding of form and as a collection of keywords. While one of the exhibited sketch pads exclusively contains watercolours for his *Schiff für Münster,* the other drawings and paintings in them feature other themes, text fragments, quotations and, alongside the motif of the ship, a number of personal or diary-esque notes using various techniques. Likewise in this miscellany, Gerdes repeatedly tests the interrelationship between images and language, especially their reciprocal effect with regard to the generation of meaning. – Ulrike Hofer, Skulptur Projekte Archives, LWL-Museum für Kunst und Kultur

2 Ibid., p. 100. Translated into English by Tim Connell.

3 Ludger Gerdes's project file, Skulptur Projekte Archives, Pro87G2/97. Translated into English by Tim Connell.

The harbor is not an alternative to shipwreck; it is the site where the pleasures of life are foregone.

Hans Blumenberg, *Shipwreck with Spectator. Paradigm of a Metaphor for Existence,* trans. Steven Rendall, MIT Press: Cambridge/London 1997, p. 35.



What happens on the sea, he [Goethe] says, is as if it did not happen. For this, he finds the metaphor of ships' courses across the sea that disappear without a trace. By means of this metaphor, he indicates the vain historical pride taken by the outgoing century of the Enlightenment in the belief that its accomplishments could not be lost, that its paths, having been found, would be continued. […] One can discern the function of the metaphor of the trackless sea in the fact that the word "naturgemäss" [by the law of its nature] is emphatically added to it. For Goethe, it is always the relationship between history and nature that is at stake. It is only the most general expression for the conditions of this difference that vessels passing through the sea leave no trace on it; thus total events there cannot be surveyed and grasped and, for that very reason, cannot be translated into the reliability of irreversibility. Both progress and sinkings leave behind them the same peaceful surface.

Hans Blumenberg, *Shipwreck with Spectator. Paradigm of a Metaphor for Existence,* trans. Steven Rendall, MIT Press: Cambridge/London 1997, pp. 58–59.

Location

Westfälischer Kunstverein
↘ Project Space
Rothenburg 30, 48143 Münster
Opening times: Tue–Sun, 11 am–7 pm
(After sundown visible from the outside)
Free admission

3 Marcel Odenbach

Westfälischer Kunstverein ↘ Project Space

VIDEO-INSTALLATION
Im Schiffbruch nicht schwimmen können
(Shipwrecked and Unable to Swim) (2011)

The vast room in the Louvre in Paris is deserted, three men enter, sit down on one of the benches and start looking at a monumental painting, centrally placed on the stately museum walls with their sumptuous, red velvet covering. The visitors—all three of whom people of colour—are looking in silence at what is probably the most famous depiction of a human tragedy at sea. Wax prints on the robe and a traditional, differently coloured hat worn by one of the visitors identifies Africa as the protagonists' presumed origin. The artist Marcel Odenbach (b. 1953) creates thus his mise en scène for *Schiffbruch mit Zuschauer* (Shipwreck with Spectator)—and thereby the allusion to the title of Hans Blumenberg's book, which also ponders the position of the viewer.

The camera angle only allows us to see the lower third of the painting above the backs of the three seated men. This section is sufficient, however, to glimpse that the men are looking at an icon among depictions of disaster: Théodore Géricault's *The Raft of the Medusa* (Le Radeau de la Méduse) from 1819. The monumental history painting tells—yes indeed, tells—of an event in French colonial history, the tragic death of many and the desperate survival of a few shipwrecked men on a raft. In June 1816, after the Napoleonic Wars had ended, the French frigate *Meduse* set off to reclaim Senegal, but ran aground off the West African coast. There were only enough lifeboats for part of the crew, 147 people had to save themselves on a raft cobbled together out of wreckage from the stricken vessel before they being left to their own devices on the open sea. Only fifteen of the shipwrecked crew survived this aimless drifting at sea, which went on for days. This is how bourgeois cultural memory reports it, identifying a potent motif for tragedy in the shipwreck and its consequences and invoking both political and ethical critique of Europe's highly questionable colonial history in exemplary fashion. Hans Blumenberg interpreted the complex depiction of the shipwreck as a salient metaphor for modernity.

Unlike Géricault's highly dramatic seascape, Marcel Odenbach's film set confronts us with the safe museum space and the calm, almost uncommunicative demeanour of the three viewers. Their earnest faces

Fig. p. 8: Marcel Odenbach
Im Schiffbruch nicht schwimmen können
(Shipwrecked and Unable to Swim) (2011)
Single-channel HD video, colour, sound, 8:23 min
© Marcel Odenbach
Courtesy Galerie Gisela Capitain, Cologne
Commissioned edition by *Videoart at Midnight*

are attentive and concentrated, yet inscrutable, illegible to us. The two older ones leave the room after a while without a word, leaving only the youngest, rapt in thought. His act of contemplation seems to have travelled from the external view of the depicted event to an interior position, to his memory. We see him in frontal aspect, we hear the sound of the surf growing increasingly loud and finally, in alternating cuts between his face and the painted limbs on the canvas in front of him, we see it too: very close to the shore, the waves are crashing down; in contrast to Géricault's sea, the unpredictable elemental force of nature. We are no longer the spectators looking at another person, but experience a change of perspective ourselves. We are now sharing the first-person perspective of the protagonist, indeed, the same perspective from which the inserted text sequences of his thoughts are written. We see, now with his inner eye, the mighty ocean that separates continents. Thus, Odenbach involves us in the metaphor of shipwreck, which divulges something about our precarious "vantage" point in late modernity.

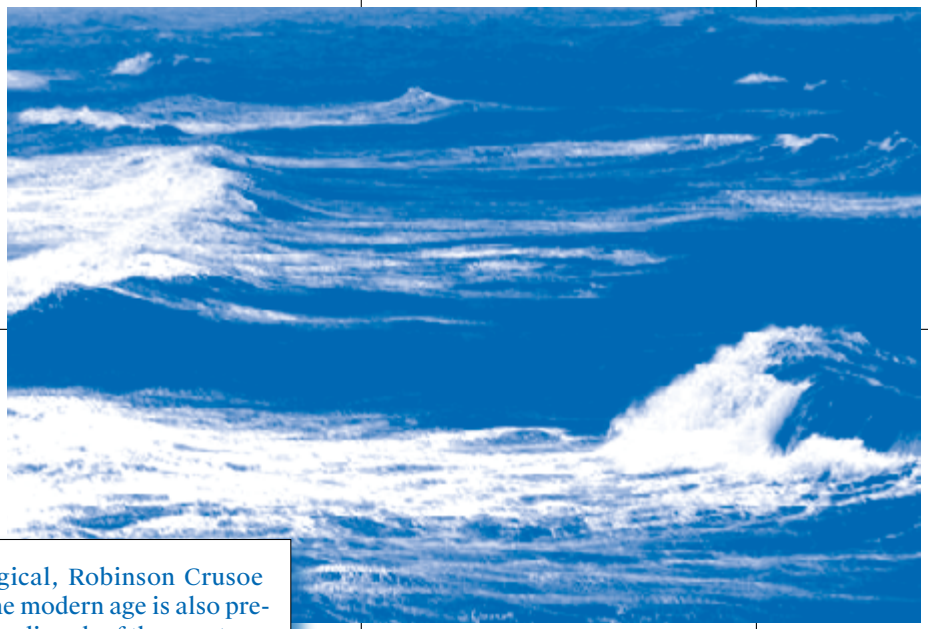
Already the opening scene shows that it is about 'life and death', about surviving: remnants of clothes are draped across the rock in the surf, next to them the shells of dead crabs. However, at the top of the frame another crab is still crawling over the rocks.

The fear of being *shipwrecked and unable to swim,* as the philosopher Hans Blumenberg formulated it in his book *Die Sorge geht über den Fluß* (Care Crosses the River) from 1987, could be the preamble to such a sequence. In Marcel Odenbach's work, this fear becomes a disposition and thus not only invokes a space for emotion and reflection; reality itself catches up with us there.

In Spring 2020, the work has also sadly become an epitaph. Martin Ngnoubamdjum, the eldest of the three protagonists, succumbed to Covid-19 at the end of March.

In his "Metaphorology", Hans Blumenberg developed a reflection on images that man creates for his being in the world. He asked what function images have and what they achieve. For Blumenberg, the metaphor of the shipwreck is an ontological metaphor that concerns major questions of what it is to be human. In the course of human history, Blumenberg observed not only a shift in the interpretation of this metaphor, but also a change in the position of the viewer. His epigram "vous êtes embarqués" (Blaise Pascal) placed at the beginning of *Schiffbruch mit Zuschauer,* to wit "you have embarked", is telling: we, the viewers, are addressed and involved, we no longer stand aloof and distant (any more) and safe on terra firma, but are on board. Lives are at stake, ours too. – Jenni Henke, Westfälischer Kunstverein

Marcel Odenbach (b. 1953) is a video artist and professor for film and video at the Düsseldorf Art Academy. He lives and works in Cologne.



The demiurgical, Robinson Crusoe longing of the modern age is also present in the handiwork of the constructivist who leaves home and heritage behind in order to found his life on the naked nothingness of the leap overboard. His artificially produced distress at sea does not come about through the frailty of the ship, which is already an end result of a lengthy process of building and rebuilding. But the sea evidently contains material other than what has already been used. Where can it come from, in order to give courage to the ones who are beginning anew? Perhaps from earlier shipwrecks?

Hans Blumenberg, *Shipwreck with Spectator. Paradigm of a Metaphor for Existence,* trans. Steven Rendall, MIT Press: Cambridge/London 1997, pp. 78-79.

The metaphorical and the real events of transgressing the boundary between terra firma and the sea beyond blend into each other, like the metaphorical and the real risks of shipwreck. What drives man to cross the high seas is at the same time what drives him to go beyond the boundary of his natural needs.

Hans Blumenberg, *Shipwreck with Spectator. Paradigm of a Metaphor for Existence,* trans. Steven Rendall, MIT Press: Cambridge/London 1997, pp. 28-29.

4 Ludger Gerdes

Location

Public Collection - Outdoors
↘ adjacent to the Kinderbach,
between Horstmarer Landweg and
Mendelstraße, 48149 Münster
permanent installation

Skulptur Projekte
Münster 1987

↘ Outdoors
Near Kinderbach

PUBLIC COLLECTION
Schiff für Münster (Ship for Münster) (1987)

At the close of 1985, Klaus Bußmann and Kasper König invited the then thirty-one-year-old Ludger Gerdes to participate in the *Skulptur Projekte.* The organisers of the exhibition had few guidelines or stipulations on how to go about developing a project proposal: the invited artists were free to determine both the manner, type and location of their respective interventions, although a dialogue with the chosen urban context was a prerequisite. Accepting the invitation, Gerdes came to Münster for several days for a site inspection and chose the "Froschebeckwiese" for his project, at that time situated on the outskirts of the city, adjacent to the Kinderbach on the Horstmarer Landweg. It was here that he built his *Schiff für Münster,* an artificial, walled, grass-covered, 43-metre-long island in the shape of a ship heading for the city centre. Surrounded by a shallow moat, he erected a wooden architecture recalling a Greek temple and, in lieu of sails, planted two poplar trees in front of it. In the run-up to his first major work in public space, the artist had engaged with the city and local conditions intensively. This thorough testing the waters, which went on for one and a half years, can be traced by means of drawings, preliminary studies, a model and plans of the ship documented in the Skulptur Projekte Archives.

When choosing the location for his sculpture, Gerdes was particularly interested in the (at the time still unimpeded) view of the outline of the city centre with its three main churches. After more than thirty years of urban concentration, the original view is now obstructed by buildings and increasingly restricted by proliferating foliage. Even the appearance of the ship itself is subject to change over time and it is increasingly becoming one with the continually burgeoning natural environment. Inasmuch as Gerdes described pictures as "visual narratives" that "play an excellent role [precisely] in the construction of a place, in the construction of a *genius loci"*[1], his contribution to the *Skulptur Projekte* did indeed create just such a new place for the city. He

1 Ludger Gerdes, "Anmerkungen", Klaus Bußmann and Kasper König, eds, *Skulptur Projekte in Münster 1987,* exh. cat., Cologne 1987, p. 101. Translated into English by Tim Connell.

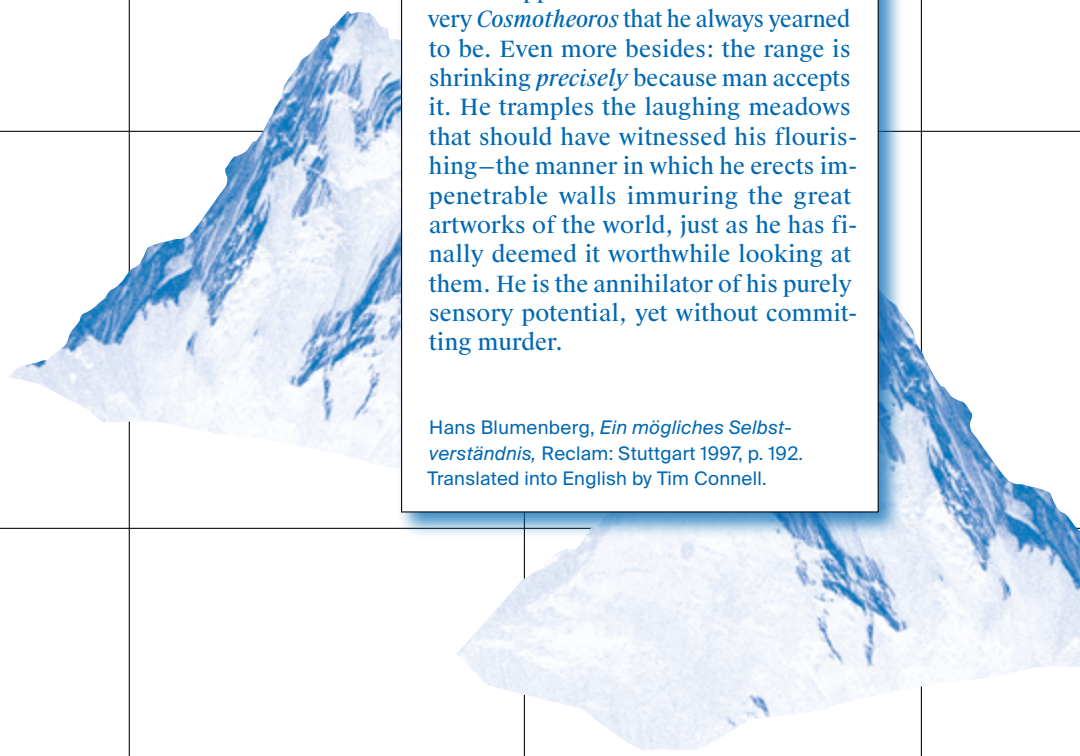
Fig. p. 10: Ludger Gerdes
Schiff für Münster
(Ship for Münster) (1987)
Sandstone, wood, 2 poplars, L 43 m, W 5 m
Width of moat: 4 m, wooden architecture: 4.6 × 4.2 × 7.4 m
Owned by the City of Münster

saw a decided opportunity to make suggestions for improving the world in the design of human habitats through art.

To this day, this site has lost nothing of its topicality. The image of the ship refers back to the timeless and simultaneously contemporary metaphor of seafaring as a symbol of human existence, as the philosopher Hans Blumenberg posits it in his book *Schiffbruch mit Zuschauer* (Shipwreck with Spectator) (1979) in a variety of references to the poetry of classical antiquity.

– Ulrike Hofer, Skulptur Projekte Archives, LWL-Museum für Kunst und Kultur

Ludger Gerdes (1954–2008) was a painter, sculptor and multimedia artist. He taught at the Städelschule in Frankfurt and was professor for painting and multimedia at the Staatliche Hochschule für Gestaltung in Karlsruhe, later professor of painting at the Muthesius Academy, Kiel.



What could become absurd is the fact that the range of goods on offer on the world scene for human beings is decreasing just when man has finally found time to appreciate them: to become the very *Cosmotheoros* that he always yearned to be. Even more besides: the range is shrinking *precisely* because man accepts it. He tramples the laughing meadows that should have witnessed his flourishing—the manner in which he erects impenetrable walls immuring the great artworks of the world, just as he has finally deemed it worthwhile looking at them. He is the annihilator of his purely sensory potential, yet without committing murder.

Hans Blumenberg, *Ein mögliches Selbstverständnis,* Reclam: Stuttgart 1997, p. 192. Translated into English by Tim Connell.

5 Harald Klingelhöller

Location

Public Collection – Outdoors
Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität
↘ Courtyard of the Juridicum, Faculty of Law
Universitätsstraße 14 –16, 48143 Münster
permanent installation

PUBLIC COLLECTION
Die Wiese lacht oder das Gesicht in der Wand
(The Meadow Laughs or the Face in the Wall) (1987)

In his essay "Ausblick auf eine Theorie der Unbegrifflichkeit" (Prospect for a Theory of Nonconceptuality) (1979), Hans Blumenberg addresses the connection between the world of language and the world of things. Signs and meaning are interwoven and the metaphor cannot be completely resolved in or extricated from this amalgam. One of the examples he proffers of this is the metaphorical sentence *pratum ridet* (the meadow laughs). As a symbol, this figure derives from Quintilian's *Institutiones oratiae* and was chosen by Harald Klingelhöller for the *Skulptur Projekte in Münster 1987* as the title of his work situated in the courtyard of the law faculty (Juridicum) of the University of Münster. It is intended to create a spatial presence in which the metaphor can become a palpable experience.

Die Wiese lacht oder das Gesicht in der Wand comprises sixteen yew trees topiared into orb-like spheres, a further five yews cut to resemble a pyramid, as well as a curved railing made of reflective glass. While the plant pyramids stand to one side of the reflective glass balustrade in an even row, the spherical yews form a square. As a whole, the ensemble functions well due to the sheer number of geometric shapes in close proximity. Preliminary versions of the work, albeit conceived for interior display but without organic components, had already been exhibited in the atrium of the Westfälisches Landesmuseum in 1985. For the *Skulptur Projekte in Münster 1987,* Klingelhöller extended *Die Wiese lacht* [...] for display outdoors.

While the reflective railing can best be read as the smile of the meadow and the light reflections may conjure up faces on the walls, the other elements of the work are not directly reflected in its title. The sculptural signs and their signifiers, i.e. the title *Die Wiese lacht oder das Gesicht in der Wand,* do not immediately coalesce in their meaning. The viewer can piece together in his own mind's eye the dot-dot-comma-line shorthand, with which we learned to draw a face as children. To the same extent that the metaphor *pratum ridet* doesn't obtain its meaning from the sum of its semantic components, Klingelhöller's work also

Fig. p. 12: Harald Klingelhöller
Die Wiese lacht oder das Gesicht in der Wand
(The Meadow Laughs or the Face in the Wall) (1987)
Mirror, metal construction (150 × 400 × 20 cm),
21 taxus baccata (European yew)
Owned by the Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität Münster

eschews clear attribution. He emphasises the potential of a visual formulation in Blumenberg's concept of "absolute metaphor" adumbrated in the aforementioned treatise: the work undermines a simple reading and thus enables an active approach to the work. By walking on the adjacent green spaces, the viewers' bodies and faces are reflected in the balustrade. They are integrated into the syntagma and the sculptural system of signs. The balustrade mirrors not only reflect the meadow or the wall, but also the position of viewers in relation to the work as they view it. In keeping with Blumenberg's idea of the fluidity of metaphor, the sculpture obtains various, permeable levels of meaning and, multivalent in essence, is thus subject to multiple interpretations in its respective contemporary contexts over time. – Jana Bernhardt, Art History Department, WWU Münster

The connection between sculpture and language is a central concern in the work of Harald Klingelhöller (b. 1954). He is professor of sculpture at the Staatliche Akademie der Bildenden Künste in Karlsruhe. He lives and works in Karlsruhe and Düsseldorf.

Hans Blumenberg's entire oeuvre—but especially his *Paradigmen für eine Metaphorologie* (Paradigms for a Metaphorology), 1960—did justice to the fact so often overlooked by philosophers: that the image should no longer be viewed as an archaic appurtenance of the concept, as an intuitive or preparatory stage en route to the "proper elaboration of the concept", [...] it is about the fact that images think powerfully.

Georges Didi-Huberman, "Brouillards de Peine et de Colère", unpublished manuscript for a forthcoming publication as part of this project *Hans Blumenberg. Denken in Metaphern* (Hans Blumenberg. Thinking in Metaphors). Translated into English by Tim Connell.

Imprint

This accompanying booklet is published as part of the exhibition project *Hans Blumenberg. Thinking in Metaphors.*

EXHIBITION

Hans Blumenberg. Thinking in Metaphors
11 July–4 October 2020

A joint project staged by the Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität, Westfälischer Kunstverein and LWL-Museum für Kunst und Kultur to commemorate the centenary of the philosopher Hans Blumenberg's birth.

Curatorial team: Jana Bernhardt, Ursula Frohne, Jenni Henke, Ulrike Hofer, Kristina Scepanski, Marianne Wagner

BOOKLET

Editing: Jenni Henke, Kristina Scepanski
Translation: Tim Connell
Design: Helen Stelthove, Büro für Gestaltung
Installation photos: Hanna Neander / LWL-MKuK, Münster

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photos: Hubertus Huvermann (Ludger Gerdes)
and Hanna Neander (Harald Klingelhöller)

THE CURATORIAL TEAM WOULD LIKE TO THANK:

Moritz Baßler, Alfred Boguszinski, Johann Crne, Miloud Darraz, Georges Didi-Huberman, Tono Dreßen, Maria Engelskirchen, Thomas Erdmann, Pia Gamon, Hicham Ghani, Werner Große Enking, Sabine Happ, Ole Herbold, Reinhard Hoeps, Christina Huf, Till Julian Huss, Christian Katti, Marie Kern, Harald Klingelhöller, Eckhard Kluth, Eva Krems, Martin Kreuznacht, Ortwin Lämke, Julius Lehmann, Ludwika Lengert, Martraud Löderbusch, Ralf Mersmann, Norbert Mertens, Werner Müller, Claudia Musolff, Frank Naber, Marcel Odenbach, Tanja Pirsig-Marshall, Shubhangi Prolingheuer, Thomas Püth, Michael Quante, Birgit Recki, Jürgen Uhlenbrock, Jürgen Wanjek, Stephan Schlüter, Reinold Schmücker, Bernhard Sicking, Beate Sikora, Marianne Stermann, Jutta Tholen, Martin Zangl, Michael Zimmermann, the Arts and Culture Advisory Board at the WWU, the Brillux Company for the kind provision of Hans Blumenberg's publications, the company Licht + Werbetechnik Hermann Brück for the production and installation of the wall texts at the Westfälischer Kunstverein.

Supported by

Sparkasse Münsterland Ost

GEFÖRDERT DURCH DEN KULTURFONDS DER WWU

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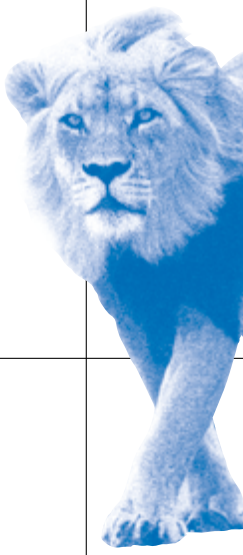
Everything about Futurology. A Soliloquium

– We don't necessarily have to do everything we are able to do.
– No, we don't *have* to.
– But?
– But we *will*.
– And why?
– Because we can't bear the slightest doubt as to whether we really *are able* to do it.

Hans Blumenberg, *Ein mögliches Selbstverständnis,* Reclam: Stuttgart 1997, p. 29. Translated into English by Tim Connell.



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