

In the œuvre of Günter Brus, these two energies become mingled in a violent, combative clash marked by tumultuous and dynamic developments, as well as by his exuberant, audacious, and experimental curiosity. His brilliant and sharp mind, his radical, excessive, and dramatic emotionality engender explosive, anarchic entities. He knows much, he is an expert of the human condition, and he attempts to show, and familiarize himself with, all mental and psychological mechanisms. He will balk at nothing, on the contrary: driven by an almost pathological obsession and curiosity, he pursues the motions of ambivalent and unfettered passion and the manipulation of lies. He wants to shed light on everything the indomitable, dark, and demonic powers inherent in human beings just as much as the destructive, manipulative, and repressive strategies devised by those holding power. His exaggerations and dramatic excesses give free rein to imagination, but this imagination is closely connected to our experiences with social, cultural, public, ideological, mental, and historical realities. And this is exactly the dramatic and enlightening character of Brus's works: his radical and taboo-breaking exposure of the links between personal, intimate, hidden, and pathological moments and public, social, cultural, conventional, ostensibly well-functioning mental structures legitimized by traditions and moral principles. Thanks to the artist's astute observations, their dysfunctions and pathologies are mercilessly exposed.

Günter Brus walks the precariously thin line between methods still under control, still held in check by analytical reason and the utter chaos of obsessive, excessive, pathological, and destructive mechanisms that he is keen to disclose while being in an "unprotected" state. This allows him to detect their concealed structures, to reveal their secrets, and to identify their effects while fighting and neutralizing them. And this is precisely the most dramatic and decisive question: Where and how are these mental, psychological, and emotional energies trans-

formed, how do these tormenting, radical, obsessive, emotional, and intellectual perspectives evolve so that they can liberate humans from repressive hierarchies or, conversely, dominate them by resorting to manipulative mechanisms? Günter Brus devotes all of his attention to this bitter, never-ending, obsessive, and excessive search for hidden mental, social, and cultural mechanisms, and he wants to experience and try out everything. This obstinacy invariably entails self-destructive elements, the dangerous act of playing different roles, ranging from that of the perpetrator to that of the victim. Cruel, destructive, cynical, pathological, hegemonic, and manipulative aspects are exposed in a radical and uncompromising fashion, and excessively explored. This is done to elucidate their dark, dangerous, obsessive, and demonic qualities, to give them a recognizable shape, and to disclose them in the process. By doing so, the artist jeopardizes his distance and autonomy, he runs the risk of hurting and losing himself in this dangerous game of self-identification. Hence, his actions are accompanied by fear, and his fear and anger form an explosive, pathological, anarchic, cathartic, seductive, and intriguing whole.

Brus's radical, unconventional, activist, invariably stimulating, impetuous, and pugnacious humanism unveils cruelty, ugliness, brutality, pathology, pettiness, and stupidity. The artist hates hypocritical pseudo-morality, repetitive, insipid, and numbingly soothing attempts at beautification, as well as intellectually scandalous half-truths. He wants to capture the genuine and authentic, and his approach involves the disclosure of gruesome and unbearable repressions and lies. In his œuvre the act of liberation is boisterous, brimming with rage, fury, hatred, irony, and refusal. His excessive longing to wipe out the spurious values he so abhors as well as these disgusting, seemingly innocuous lies is a self-critical reflection of his own bitterness and ruthlessness. By taking on the role of a destroyer, by playing it in a seething and raving state of mind