

CENTRE D'ART CONTEMPORAIN GENÈVE

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PRESS DOSSIER

JOAN JONAS

Timelines : Transparencies in a Dark Room
(*1936)

30.04— 29.06.2008

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30.04– 29.06.2008

Opening Tuesday April 29th 2008, 6pm–9pm

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The Centre d'Art Contemporain Genève has the honour of presenting the exhibition of JOAN JONAS. This project takes place exactly thirty years after her first performance in Switzerland at the Centre d'Art Contemporain Genève in the context of the Festival Contrechamp (on the 3rd of February 1978).

An emblematic figure that came to the attention of the New York art scene in the late 1960s, Jonas has developed a constantly evolving multimedia approach to performance and installation, which has influenced subsequent generations of artists worldwide. She was among the first practitioners of performance and video, which investigated new formulations of female identity and offered an approach free from art history traditions as well as from male-dominated structures. Influenced by feminist movements, the artist said in 1995 in an interview with Joan Simon “there is always a woman in my work, and her role is questioned”. Jonas draws on the fields of history, biography, literature, myth and ritual to question identity, using signature elements such as the mirror (to distort as much as reveal) and the mask (to enable shifting personas). Also key to the artist's interests is to reflect upon the experience of time, where ‘de-synchronization’ is, as Douglas Crimp (Professor of art history and art critic) has suggested, an essential experience of her work.

“The Shape, the Scent, the Feel of Things” (2004) is a work in progress consisting of an installation and a performance, initially presented in the Dia:Beacon, New York. Resulting from an ongoing concern with ritual and performance, the project highlights Jonas' basic interest in the beginning of aesthetic expression in other cultures in relation to the Western world. Nowhere else in her oeuvre has Jonas awarded such a pivotal role to narrative and text as in this project. Despite the strong theatrical thrust of the work, it remains poised between theater and performance art. Furthermore, it is partly inspired by a series of events and encounters in the artist's life. Indeed it goes back to a journey made to the Southwest USA in the late 50s, where Jonas had the opportunity to see several Hopi (Native American Indians) rituals. Later in the mid 1980, Jonas came across a reference to these rites in an essay by German historian Aby Warburg, related to his own trip to the Southwest in the 19th century. In his investigations Warburg employed photographs of artworks from different cultures, recombined and cross referenced them to produce, among others, a display of particular gestures as portrayed by Greeks, Romans, Indians and so on. This methodology was particularly inspiring to Jonas.

It is the myth of Helen of Troy as viewed by the Imagist poet H.D. (Hilda Doolittle) which is revisited in “Lines of Sand” (2002) commissioned by Documenta 11, Jonas wanted to reveal the fact that for centuries the accepted myth – a war fought over a woman – was preferred to a more subtle truth. Whilst the original myth tells of the seduction and abduction of Helen, H.D quotes other classical sources, which suggest a different story (that she remained in Egypt, never setting foot in Troy). Jonas first made an installation and then a performance that draw these various threads together into an interlocking series of tableaux, stage sets consisting of video, photographs, drawings and objects.

Finally, “Volcano Saga” (1985-1989) is an older work where Jonas began to distill her ideas around the female character, using the story as a mirror, and the volcanic landscape of an island as a representation of the narrative. “Volcanic Saga” takes place in Iceland, and is

inspired by a 13th century story entitled “Laxdaela Saga”, narrating the tale of a woman who married four times.

JOAN JONAS’ recent performances and installations have been presented to international acclaim in Documenta 11 (2003), Tate Modern (2004), Dia:Beacon (2004), Brooklyn Museum New York (2005) and MACBA Barcelona, amongst other venues.

The exhibition is co-produced with MACBA, Barcelona.

The exhibition is accompanied by a publication, co-produced with MACBA Barcelona, including texts by Katya Garcia-Anton, Bartomeu Mari and Gregory Volk, amongst others.

This exhibition is a partnership with the Biennial of Moving Images, Geneva (Centre pour l’image contemporaine-Saint Gervais Genève) that presents a retrospective of Joan Jonas’s works.

Curator of the exhibition: Katya García-Antón

Supported by :



The Centre d’Art Contemporain Genève is supported by the Ville de Genève, Département de la culture.



« Mirage », 1976 / 2005. Multimedia installation.
Here, performance at the Institute of Contemporary Art, Philadelphia, 1976.
Photo: Roberta Neiman



“Lines in the Sand”, performance, Documenta 11, Kassel, 2002
Photo: Werner Maschmann



«The Shape, The Scent, The Feel of Things», performance Dia:Beacon, New York, 2005. Photo: Paula Court



«The Shape, The Scent, The Feel of Things», video, 2005.



“Lines in the Sand”, performance, Documenta 11, Kassel, 2002
Photo: Werner Maschmann



“Volcano Saga”, 1989, video, MACBA collection.

BIOGRAPHY

Joan Jonas was born in 1936. She works and lives in New York.

SOLO SHOWS

2007

Yvon Lambert New York, New York, USA
Museum of Modern Art, Barcelona, Spain
Wilkinson Gallery, London, England

2006

Galleria Civica, Trento
Rosamund Felsen Galley, Santa Monica, California
Castello di Rivoli, Turin, Italy
Scenes from the Shape, the Scent, the Feel of Things, 2004/2006, I, Yvon Lambert, Paris, France
Reflexion – A Variation on Mirror Pieces 1 and 2, 1968 – 2004, Sigmund Freud Museum, Vienna, Austria
Joan Jonas Two works. Castello di Rivoli, Italy

2005

Joan Jonas: The Shape, the Scent, the Feel of Things, Dia:Beacon, Beacon, New York
Joan Jonas: Small Works 1968-2005, Yvon Lambert; Jeu de Paume – Site Sully, Hotel de Sully; Le Plateau, Paris, France
Wako Works of Art, Tokyo, Japan
Joan Jonas: Moving in Place 1976-2000, Yvon Lambert, New York
Joan Jonas: My New Theater V, Yvon Lambert, Paris
Marking Time, Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions, Los Angeles, California

2004

Lines in the Sand, Norton Museum of Art, West Palm Beach, Florida
Mirror Works 1969-2004, Wilkinson Gallery, London, England
Joan Jonas, John Hansard Gallery, Southampton, England
Lines in the Sand, performance, Tate Modern, London, England
Lines in the Sand; The Shape, the Scent, the Feel of Things, Renaissance Society, University of Chicago, Chicago, Illinois

2003

Five Works, Queens Museum of Art, Queens, New York
Video Retrospective. Museum Carillo Gil, Mexico City, Mexico
Lines in the Sand, Rosamund Felsen Gallery, Santa Monica, California
Joan Jonas, Center for the Arts, Mexico City, Mexico

2001

Performance, Video, Installation 1968-2000, Neue Gesellschaft für Bildende Kunst (NGBK), Berlin, Germany
In the Shadow a Shadow, Moving with No Pattern, Rosamund Felsen Gallery, Santa Monica, California

2000

Performance, Video, Installation 1968-2000, Galerie der Stadt, Stuttgart, Germany
Drawings, Reinhard Hauff Gallery, Stuttgart, Germany
Film and Video Work, 1968-76, DIA Center for the Arts, New York

1999

Moving with No Pattern, My New Theatre III, In the Shadow a Shadow and drawings, Pat Hearn Gallery, New York

1998

Songdelay and New Work, My New Theater II, Big Mirror, Pat Hearn Gallery, New York

1997

Props: Works 1994 - 1997, My New Theatre I, drawings and photographs, Pat Hearn Gallery, New York

Joan Jonas, Reinhard Hauff, Stuttgart, Germany

1996

Mask, Decoy and Other Beasts, Rosamund Felsen Gallery, Santa Monica, California

1994

Works 1968-1994, Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, Netherlands

From Beyond the Pale, Irish Museum of Modern Art, Dublin, Ireland

1992

Revolted by the thought of known places, Kunst-Werke, Berlin, Germany

International Artists Museum, Lodz, Poland

1990

Vanishing Point , Galerie Samuel Lallouz, Montréal, Canada

1984

He Saw her Burning, DAAD-Galerie, Berlin, Germany

1982

Upside Down and Backwards, Documenta 8, Kassel, Germany

PS1 Contemporary Arts Center, Long Island City, Queens, New York

'60/'80: Attitudes/Concepts/Images, Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, Netherlands

1981

Other Realities Installations for Performance, Contemporary Arts Museum Houston, Houston, Texas

1980

Upside Down and Backwards, Museum of Fine Arts, Montréal, Canada

Kunstmuseum, Bern, Switzerland

Music, Sound, Language Theater-John Cage, Tom Marioni, Robert Barry, Joan Jonas: Etchings from Crown Point Press, Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, The Netherlands

Performances/Video/ Installations, University Art Museum, University of California, Berkeley, California

1979

The Juniper Tree, Stedelijk van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven, Netherlands

Whitechapel Art Gallery, London, England

Upside Down and Backwards, Sonnabend Gallery, New York

1977

Drawing Room, School of Visual Arts, New York, New York

Three Tales, Documenta 6, Kassel, Germany

1976

Stage Sets, Institute of Contemporary Art, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

1973

Aspects de l'art actuel présentés par la Galerie Sonnabend, Musée Galliera, Paris, France

COLLECTIVE SHOWS (selection)

2007

WACK! à MOCA-LA

The Shadow by Lea Vergine Palazzo delle Papesse, Centro Arte Contemporanea, Sienne
Primera Generacion. Arte e Imagen en Movimiento. Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia
MNCARS, Madrid

2006

The Power of Women at Galleria Civica di Arte Contemporanea

A Rabbit as a King of the Ghosts Mitchell-Innes & Nash —West Street New York

2005

The Forest: Politics, Poetics and Practice, Nasher Museum of Art at Duke University, North Carolina

After the Act, Museum Moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig, Vienna, Austria

Marking Time, LACE, Los Angeles, California

Grey Flags: Richard Artschwager, Wade Guyton, Georg Herold, Joan Jonas, David Lieske, Seth Price, Friedrich Petzel Gallery, New York

Videographies the early decades, EMET collection, Greece

2004

Minimal artists try to make something look like nothing and conceptual artists try to make nothing look like something, or is it the other way around?, Galerie Yvon Lambert Gallery, New York

Point of View: An Anthology of the Moving Image, New Museum, New York

Videodreams: between the cinematic and theatrical, Kunsthau Graz, Graz, Austria

Flipside, Artists Space, New York

2003

Mirror Tenses, University Gallery, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, Massachusetts

Gloria, Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design, Providence, Rhode Island

Video Acts Single Channel Works from the Collections of Pamela and Richard Kramlich and New Art Trust, PS1 Contemporary Art Center, Long Island City, New York

2002

Lines in the Sand, Documenta 9, Kassel, Germany

Gloria, White Columns, New York, New York

In the Shadow a Shadow, Galerie Yvon Lambert, Paris, France

Great Theater of the World, Taipei Biennial, Taipei, Taiwan

Aquaria, The Fascinating World of Man and Water, Landesgalerie am Oberösterreichischen Landesmuseum, Linz, Austria; Kunstsammlungen Chemnitz, Chemnitz, Germany

2001

Into the Light: The Projected and Interactive Image in American Art, 1964-1978, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York

2000

Century Cities, Tate Modern, London, England

Video / Performance: Open Ends, Museum of Modern Art, New York

Electronic Images: Videokunst 1965 -2000, Villa Merkel /Bahnwaterhaus, Esslingen, Germany

Escape, Media City Seoul, Seoul, Korea

1999

The American Century, Part II: 1950-2000, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York

Circa 1968, Museo de Arte Contemporânea, Fundação de Serralves, Porto, Portugal

In the Shadow a Shadow, Pat Hearn Gallery, New York

The Hundredth Turn, Harvestworks, Digital Media Art Center, New York

SELECTIVE BIBLIOGRAPHY

Joan Jonas. Works 1968-2000. Edited by Jean Simon. Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 2001 (forthcoming).

Joan Jonas: Performances, Film and Video Installations 1968-2000. Stuttgart: Cantz/Hatje, 2000. With texts by Chrissie Isles, Andrea Jahn, and Joan Jonas.

Joan Jonas: Works 1968-1994. Amsterdam: Stedelijk Museum, 1994. With texts by Sweeney Astray, Alvin Curran, Bruce Ferguson, Simone Forti, Rudi Fuchs, Mary Heilmann, Joan Jonas, Dorine Mignot, Susan Rothenberg, Richard Serra, Kees Veelenturf, Alice Weiner, Lawrence Weiner, and Robin Winters.

Joan Jonas. Scripts and Descriptions 1968-1982. University Art Museum, Berkeley and Stedelijk van Abbemuseum,