

Carolee Schneemann: Body Politics Symposium

Supported by the Centre for American Art

Programme

09.30	Arrival
10.00	Introduction: Rachel Warriner and Lotte Johnson
10.30	<p>Panel One</p> <p>Victoria Horne, 'Paper Politics'. Schneemann insisted, 'I'm still a painter and I will die a painter'. Yet she tore her paper substrate from the walls and made it into a field of action, pressing at the conceptual edges of painting, drawing and writing. Paper recurs as a motif in Schneemann's art-making throughout the 1960s and 1970s – in crumpled newspaper environments, sheets to be marked and drawn upon, and as a folded manifesto pulled from the body itself. In <i>Body Collage</i>, Schneemann paints her naked body with glue before rolling exuberantly in piles of loosely shredded paper. This joyfully sensual encounter between body and paper is one that the artist returned to, investigating the boundary between subject and historical record. For as Derrida reminds us 'the body of paper is close to our own bodies', its history is 'entangled with the invention of the human body... protect[ing] our subjectivity'. This presentation takes paper as a point of entry into considering embodiment, materiality, history and knowledge across <i>Newspaper Event</i> (1963), <i>Body Collage</i> (1967), <i>Up to and Including Her Limits</i> (1971-76), and <i>Interior Scroll</i> (1975).</p> <p>Biography Victoria Horne is a senior lecturer in art and design history at Northumbria University in Newcastle. Her open access article "'the personal clutter... the painterly mess...': Tracing a History of Carolee Schneemann's <i>Interior Scroll</i>" was published by <i>Art History</i> in 2020.</p> <p>Catalina Cherñavsky Sequeira, 'Fuses: Transhemispheric Encounters' Carolee Schneemann's focus on the body through film revolutionized the interplay between the material object and the human. Her manipulations of the film strip expanded limits of objectivity, calling into question the boundaries, if any, between the artificial machine and the organic being. In <i>Fuses</i> (1964-1967), the mechanical processes of film are reflected in exercises of the body, stripping the corporeal form of its humanness and replacing it with artifice. What Roland Barthes examines through "The Reality Effect," Schneemann develops through film. She rejects Barthes' signifier, eliminating the existence of the denotative image and leaving the viewer only with what is "real." For Schneemann, the formal component of the film brushes up against the visualized erotic, layering</p>

	<p>perceptions of intimacy with the structures that shape montage. This essay serves as a case study through which to examine Fuses as a zenith of formal experimentation and the impact it had on artists who later revolutionized the practice of experimental film during extreme political and social repression in Argentina. Through artistic networks of the underground film scene, Schneemann’s influence reached all the way to the southern hemisphere. Her technical innovations are reflected in works made nearly a decade later by members of a small but impactful group of artists, El Grupo Cine Experimental, practicing in Buenos Aires during the 1970s. These transhemispheric connections merit further exploration, shedding light on the crucial contribution Schneemann made to the global developments of experimental film.</p> <p>Biography Catalina Cherñavsky Sequeira is a second-year doctoral student in Art History at the University of Texas at Austin, specializing in Modern and Contemporary Latin American Art. Her research is centered around experimental art forms including film, video, and performance in Argentina and Brazil during the latter half of the 20th century. She focuses specifically on transregional artistic networks, systems of circulation, and phenomenological shifts that occurred as countries in South America transitioned out of dictatorship and into democracy. She holds an MA in Art History from the Courtauld Institute of Art and a BA in Art History and Psychology from Yale University.</p>
11.30	Coffee
12.00	<p>Panel Two</p> <p>Amy Tobin, ‘Carolee Schneemann’s Feminism’ Carolee Schneemann’s artworks have been exemplary objects for feminist art history. Her experiments in film and moving image, her body art and her publications all transformed the aesthetic possibilities of art, sometimes even enacting the critical moves of feminist art historians and film theorists – materialising visual pleasure, undoing of gendered binaries like body and mind, intervening in the gendering of artistic greatness – avant la lettre. But Schneemann’s relationship with women’s liberation politics, the women’s art movement and with other feminists has been less easy to claim, whether because of other women’s critical reactions to her work, her own ambivalences, or the towering presence of other lovers, friends and collaborators in the histories of her work. In this paper, I propose retracing Schneemann’s feminism through her ‘Feminist Research Files’, part of the collection of her papers held at the Getty Research Institute. Ranging from her interest in Brigitte Bardot and Simone de Beauvoir, her collating of materials for the Right Censorship Group, to her investigations into Goddess culture and her incisive letters of complaint, critique and correction, I will connect these material remainders to</p>

Schneemann's works of the 1970s, pointing to an extended field of feminist praxis that her work – conceived of in its broadest terms – made possible.

Biography

Amy Tobin is Assistant Professor in the History of Art at the University of Cambridge and Curator, Contemporary Programmes, Kettle's Yard. In 2021–2 she received a Leverhulme Research Fellowship to complete her book on art and feminist togetherness in the 1970s, forthcoming with Yale University Press.

Tamsin Hong, 'Revisiting Naked Ammunition: Carolee Schneemann and the Body 1958-1970'

In my 2010 thesis titled *Naked Ammunition: Carolee Schneemann and the Body 1958-1970*, I argued Schneemann used her body as a strategy against the prevailing patriarchal power structures. Researching Schneemann's performance-based works had a profound effect on me and pivoted me towards a career as a curator specialising in performance. In the 12 years since, the literature and curatorial support for Schneemann has expanded exponentially, as exemplified with Schneemann's career acknowledged with a Gold Lion for Lifetime Achievement at the Venice Biennale in 2017 and the current exhibition *Carolee Schneemann: Body Politics* at the Barbican. However, in reviewing my research on Schneemann, I realised two critical elements: first, the influence 20th Century feminist work has had on me as a curator, and second, how I had developed a problematic relationship to this work by not critically engaging with an intersectional understanding of Schneemann as a cis-white woman. The latter resulted in me writing a significant part of my perspective as a member of the global majority out of my own work. In this paper, I will revisit my research in two ways: I will examine the context of the particularities, complexities and privileges of Schneemann as a white, middle-class, heterosexual woman; and simultaneously reflect on why I had written this out in the first place as a symptom of the university education I had received, the research I had undertaken, and why I ultimately misunderstood my own role as a researcher and eventual curator. In doing so, I aim to provide alternative understandings of Schneemann's influence and reflect on my own agency within the expanding field of research on Schneemann's influential career.

Biography

As Assistant Curator, International Art I work on Tate Modern's performance and live programme which has included works such as Boris Charmatz '10,000 Gestures', the 2020 Live Exhibition featuring Faustin Linyekula, Okwui Okpokwasili and Tanya Lukin Linklater, and recently Lee Mingwei's 'Our Labyrinth'. I also co-curated the current exhibition at Tate Modern 'A Year in Art: Australia 1992' which explores how artists have acknowledged the continuing relationship Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have with their lands, as well as the ongoing impact of colonisation and the complexities of representation in Australian society today. My research interests include the connection between the body, ritual, women's knowledge systems and image-making which also extends to my activities working on African Acquisitions.

13.00	Lunch (provided for speakers)
14.00	<p>Panel Three</p> <p>Marita Fraser, Carolee Schneeman’s Feminist Frottage: “Speaking With” Parts of a Body house</p> <p>This performative paper examines the conditions through which Carolee Schneemann’s texts operate as feminist scores. The term ‘score’ accounts for textual artworks, as noted by Liz Kolz(2001) , that arose around the time of John Cage’s 4'33" (1952), a musical score of performed silence described textually, without musical notation. Scores, as art practice, materialised as printed text, verbal instructions, poetically or diagrammatically described, asking to be read, performed, heard – and through these actions, reiterated and re-enacted. This presentation examines how Schneemann’s scores locate us as readers, listeners, audience in radical proximity to a multitude of bodily spaces that resist patriarchal and capitalist structures, bringing us into engagement with textual bodily spaces that resist stasis and refuse fixed representation, fusing cavities, bodily processes, imaginary bodies, her cats, her own body, bringing us very close, at times locating us inside and moving through, in encountering her work.</p> <p>Through my own practice of performance writing and lectures, and in articulating my proximity to my research subjects through a method I describe as “speaking with”, I look to come close to Schneemann’s haptic thinking, foregrounding methods of proximity, touch and digestion as processual feminist methods of radical making in “speaking with” her text <i>Parts of a Body House</i> (1957-1967) and film <i>Kitch’s Last Meal</i> (1976) amongst other works. What does it mean to come close, to rub up against Schneemann's radical feminist bodily thinking in the present, and what does it offer as methods to create radical spaces to hold feminist, intersectional, queer, thinking today?</p> <p>Biography</p> <p>Marita Fraser is an artist, writer and researcher exhibiting and performing internationally, including projects with Kunsthaus Vienna, Städtisches Museum Engen, Atelierhaus Salzamt Linz, and Perth Institute of Contemporary Art. Recent publications include the article ‘Careless Reply’, Careless, Blackshaw, G. and Kivland S. (eds), MA Bibliothèque, London, 2021, and co-editor of <i>I care by...</i>, RCA Communiqué, 2022. In 2016 she was artist in resident at Museums Quartier Vienna (Q21) and in 2017 she was awarded the ArtReview Casa Wabi Residency Award. She is a Lecturer at The Glasgow School of Art on the Fine Art Practice post-graduate MLitt programme and is currently completing a PhD by practice at the Royal College of Art titled <i>Speaking With: New Forms of Notation for Scoring Excess</i>.</p>

Catherine McCormack, Serpents, Vulvic Space and Reintegrating Medusa's Matriarchal Time in Carolee Schneemann's work

As a student in the 1960s, Carolee Schneemann explored archaic serpent symbolism gleaned from histories of mythology and folklore, using it to inform the conceptualisation of one of her prevailing aesthetic concerns: what she described as 'vulvic space', an interior female space of embodied knowledge, sexuality and creative potential that had been repeatedly disavowed and misinterpreted by frameworks of patriarchal knowledge production, from religion, to mythology and psychoanalysis. However, this investment in the contentious and routinely degraded 'goddess feminism' of the 1970s has meant that these aspects of her practice have either suffered bitter critiques in their contemporary moment or have been overlooked in the historical remembering and analysis of her work.

This paper will situate Schneemann's use of serpent/ goddess imagery as a cipher for exploring the transformation of archaic serpent symbolism once seemingly associated with a 'sacred erotics' of embodied female agency, to one connected with malevolent femininity and pernicious, shameful or subaltern forms of knowledge (for example in the figures of Eve, Lilith, Medusa).

The second part will problematise the rejection of the aspects of Schneemann's aesthetics inflected by archaic goddess feminism, with the aim of making space for its reintegration into valid feminist discussion on less simplistic and binary terms that go beyond its association with exclusory and essentialising feminist discourses. I will end by arguing for Schneemann the artist as a Medusa-like figure embodying the monstrosity and abjection of female knowledge.

Biography

Dr Catherine McCormack lectures at Sotheby's Institute of Art and the University of Oxford (Department of Continuing Education). Recent publications include a museum catalogue essay ('Here's Looking at You, Maillol) for the forthcoming Aristide Maillol exhibition at the Kunsthhaus Basel (Autumn 2022), and another museum catalogue essay for the forthcoming *Femme Fatale : Gaze-Power-Gender* exhibition at the Kunsthalle, Hamburg (Winter, 2022) plus reviews in the *Women's Art Journal* on Cecilia Canziani, Lara Conte, Paola Ugolini, (eds), 'Io Dico Io – I Say I' (Winter 2022) and F.Hofrichter and M. Yoshimoto (eds), *Women, Aging and Art: A Cross-Cultural Anthology*, (Winter 2021).

In preparation is an article from the symposium proceedings of the University of Dundee's symposium on Violence Against Women in Art History. In 2019-20 Catherine curated the two- part show *Matrescence and Maternity* at Richard Saltoun gallery as part of the 100% Women programme. She is the author of the non-fiction title *Women in the Picture : Women, Art and the Power of Looking* (WW.Norton and Icon Books), and holds a PhD in Art History from University College London.

	<p>Giulia Rho, ‘An Interspecies Love Affair: Visions of the Cat/Film’</p> <p>Cats feature prominently in Carolee Schneemann’s oeuvre. The long-lived Kitch particularly influenced Schneemann’s sensibility, providing a radical otherness with whom to collaborate. Schneemann wrote that her cats “clarified the motion between domestic worlds and a scale of landscape inaccessible to humans; ...enlarged and shifted [her] scale of perceptions” (1981), helping her make visible the invisible details of life that patriarchal culture overlooked. Unlike Derrida, who is halted by his “little cat” seeing him naked (2002), Schneemann enthusiastically devises visual practices of inter-species communication. She embraces a different “becoming-animal” from Deleuze and Guattari (1980), rethinking space and time together with her pets. Kitch’s spectral cinematic presence, and later cats Cluny’s and Vesper’s, anchors Schneemann’s work to specific periods of her life, but also brings it “vividly to an unobstructed present” (2018). The cats’ witnessing and mediating of Schneemann’s everyday “act as a kind of well in which testamentary feelings gather and take shape” (Clark 2015), becoming a source of dilated temporality and offering new affective possibilities for political thought. This paper explores how Schneemann, through her film works <i>Fuses</i> (1967), <i>Kitch’s Last Meal</i> (1978) and <i>Infinity Kisses: The Movie</i> (2008) and her writings, positively responds to Haraway’s question: “What if work and play, and not just pity, open up when the possibility of mutual response... is taken seriously as an everyday practice...?” (2008: 22). Schneemann’s work is approached as a deeply intimate example of a post-humanist feminist imbrication of animal and human life and, in a way, of animal ethics.</p> <p>Biography</p> <p>Giulia Rho is a PhD student and Teaching Associate at Queen Mary University of London’s Film Studies department. Her research covers women artists of the New York Avant Garde and LA Rebellion, as well as Post-structuralist Feminist Philosophy. Her MA dissertation entitled <i>Speculum of the Other Cinema</i> explored Carolee Schneemann’s Autobiographical Trilogy through Luce Irigaray’s philosophy. This Spring she visited Electronic Arts Intermix and Filmmakers Coop in New York City, and the Getty Research Institute, Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences and UCLA archives investigating overlooked 1960-70s filmmakers. Her writing has appeared in <i>Frames Film Journal</i> and <i>Film-Philosophy</i>.</p>
15.30	Break
16.00	<p>Book launch: <i>Carolee Schneemann: Body Politics</i> (Yale University Press) with speakers Karen Di Franco, Emily LaBarge, Cash (Melissa) Ragona, Alison Green</p> <p>Accompanying the Barbican’s exhibition, the publication <i>Carolee Schneemann: Body Politics</i> traces six decades of the feminist icon’s diverse, transgressive and interdisciplinary expression through Schneemann’s experimental early paintings,</p>

	<p>sculptural assemblages and kinetic works; rarely seen photographs of her radical performances; her pioneering films; and groundbreaking multi-media installations. Contributors shed new light on Schneemann's work, which addressed urgent topics from sexual expression and the objectification of women to human suffering and the violence of war. An artist who was concerned with the precarious lived experience of both humans and animals, this book positions Schneemann as one of the most relevant, provocative and inspiring artists in recent years. With contributions by Jo Applin, Chris Bayley, Karen Di Franco, Jennifer Doyle, Elena Gorfinkel, Alison Green, Lotte Johnson, Emily LaBarge, Thomas (T.) Jean Lax, Eileen Myles, Melissa Ragona, Amy Sillman and Kenneth White.</p>
17.00	<p>Keynote: Lucy Bradnock Details to be confirmed</p>
18.00	<p>Drinks reception – all welcome</p>