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## OUT OF ACTION / OUT OF MIND

**Katy Deepwell**

A review of *Out of Actions - Aktionismus, Body Art & Performance, 1949-1979*

MAK, Vienna in conjunction with MOCA, Los Angeles. (MOCA, Los Angeles 8/2/98-10/5/98 ; MAK, Vienna 17/6/98-6/9/98 ; Museu d'Art Contemporani, Barcelona 15/10/98-6/1/99; Museum of Contemporary Art, Tokyo 11/2/99-11/4/99). Catalogue : Edited by Paul Schimmel, with essays by Shinichiro Osaki, Hubert Klocker, Guy Brett, Kristine Stiles (forward: Peter Noever, Richard Koshalek)

36 Women Artists / 155 Artists in Total = 23%

Marina Abramovic, Vito Acconci, Genpei Akasegawa, Laurie Anderson, Eleanor Antin, Rasheed Areeen, Mowry Baden, Artur Barrio, Jerzy Beres, Mark Boyle & Joan Hills, George Brecht, Stuart Brisley, Robert Delford Brown, Rhet Delford Brown, Gunter Brus, Chris Burden, James Lee Byars, John Cage, Marc Camille Chamowicz, Lygia Clark Pinchas Cohen Gan, Houston Conwill, Paul Cotton, Coum Transmissions, Guy de Cointet, Jim Dine, John Duncan, Felipe Ehrenberg, Roberto Evangelista, Valie Export, Robert Filiou, Rose Finn-Kelvey, Sherman Fleming, Lucio Fontana, Terry Fox, Howard Fried, Gideon Gechtman, Victor Grippo, Red Grooms, Guerrilla Art Action Group, David Hammons, Al Hansen, Maren Hassinger, Lynn Hershman, Dick Higgins, Tatsumi Gijikata, Susan Hiller, Hi Red Center, Rebecca Horn, Tehching Hsieh, Joan Jonas, Kim Jones, Michel Journiac, Akira Kanayama, Tadesuz Kator, Allan Kaprow, Mike Kelley, Jurgen Klauke, Yves Klein, Milan Knizak, Alison Knowles, Gruppe Kollektive Aktionen, Komar & Melamid, Jannis Kounellis, Shigeko Kubota, Tetsumi Kudo, Yayoi Kusama, Leslie Labowitz, Suzanne Lacy, John Latham, Jean-Jacques Lebel, Lea Lublin, George Maciunas, Leopoldo Maler, Piero Manzoni, Tom

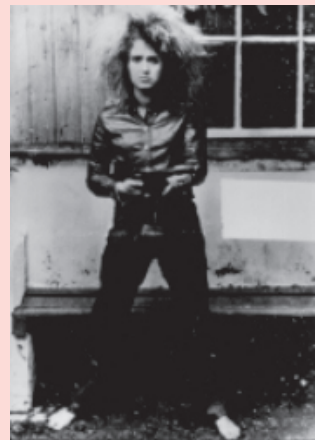
Marioni, Cusi Masuda, Georges Mathieu, Gordon Matta-Clark, Paul McCrthy, Bruce McLean, David Medalla, Cildo Meireles, Ana Mendieta, Gustav Metzger, Marta Minujin, Jan Mlcoch, Linda Montano, Charlotte Moorman, Robert Morris, Otto Muhl, Saburo Murakami, Natsuyuki Nakanishi, Bruce Nauman, Paul Neagu, Senga Negudi, Joshua Neustein, Hermann Nitsch, Helio Oiticica, Claes Oldenburg, Yoko Ono, Orlan, Raphael Montanez Ortiz, Lorenzo Pace, Nam June Paik, Gina Pane, Lygia Pape, Giuseppe Pinot Gallizio, Adrian Piper, Michelangelo Pistoletto, Jackson Pollock, William Pope L., Robert Rauschenberg, Carlyle Reedy, Klaus Rinke, Ulrike Rosenbach, Dieter Roth, Zorka Saglova, Niki de Saint Phalle, Alfons Schilling, Tomas Schmit, Carolee Schneemann, Rudolf Schwarzkogler, Bonnie Sherk, Shozo Shimamoto, Ushio Shinohara, Kazuo Shiraga, Barbara T. Smith, Danial Spoerri, Stelarc, Petr Stembera, Wolfgang Stoerchle, Jiro Takamatsu, Atsuko Tanaka, Mark Thompson, Jean Tinguely, Rasa Todosijevic, Kerry Trengrove, Ulay, Ben Vautier, Wolf Vostell, Franz Erhard Walther, Peter Weibel, Franz West, John White, Hannah Wilke, Emmett Williams, ZAJ.

Another major international touring exhibition of post-war art, another exhibition in which women artists form a minority of the artists. Is there anything new in this exhibition ? A superficial glance across the list of artists reveals some familiar and well-known women artists from different parts of the world - although the emphasis is on women from America. A superficial glance might suggest that women artists have been given their due - a predictable list of high achievers - and the inclusion of some well-known feminist artists.

However, shouldn't we be examining more carefully the ways in which the basis of the exhibition might marginalise the contribution of women in the visual arts, even as it seeks to highlight the history of Japanese performance and its links with



Left: Atsuko Tanaka  
*Denkifuku (Electric Dress)* 1956.  
Right: Valie Export  
*Aktionhose "Genitalpanik"* 1969.





Left: Gine Pane *Le corps presenti* 1975.



Right: Carolee Schneemann *Eye Body* (1964)

America, to look more carefully at the work of Eastern European artists and highlight the work of Latin American artists for the first time in a show documenting performance works.

To analyse the work by country - country defined in terms of where the artist worked for the majority of their lifetime, not nationality - reveals the marginal picture that this show presents of women artists. And the absence of most women artists from the picture presented of the 1950s. Although women are represented who worked in Japan, principally Kusama, the picture of Japanese art is a predominantly masculine one, centred on the Hi-Red Center group and their influence and exchanges through the fluxus movement. Atsuko Tanaka is represented however. From Austria, Valie Export is singularly the only woman amongst the performance artists from the 1960s. In Fluxus, the American women artists, Alison Knowles, Joan Jonas and Yoko Ono are strongly featured, as are any personal, social or professional links by male members of the Fluxus movement to any of the women artists. The percentage of women represented is higher from Latin America where Lygia Clark, Marta Minujin, and Lygia Pape were selected, forming half the number of artists from Latin America and so too from the UK with Susan Hiller and Rose Finn-Kelcey. Add to those already named here, Zorka Saglova, Ulrike Rosenbach, Orlan, Gine Pane, Niki de Saint Phalle, Rebecca Horn, Marina Abramovic and Joan Hills and one recognises that over half the artists highlighted above have worked most of their lives in America. With a nod towards Stellarc, the history of Australian performance art, to name one example, where there were also strong currents of feminist practice, is barely represented. Partnerships between men and women (notably Ulay & Abramovic) are another strong feature of the show - almost as a counterbalance between the masculinism of Japanese action art or American macho heroes from Chris Burden to Mike McCarthy - sorry, I should say in rhetoric

artspeak that they 'deconstruct'/play with conventions of heroic masculinity - and the protests of feminist performance like Lacy & Labowitz.

The history of feminist performance work in California which has been fairly well-documented and resulted in some major books, and this is well represented in this exhibition (by comparison with other areas). The attempt to bring together works which have provoked controversy or stood as key examples of the genre at its best is certainly the aim of this exhibition. However there are also some remarkable examples included by women artists, Zorka Saglova's *Hay-Straw* piece - bales of hay - exhibited for free arrangement by the viewers to the exhibition in Prague in 1965 - which according to the exhibition notes resulted in her being banned from public exhibition for 30 years. Marta Minujin's *Obelisk of 30,000 Panatone* (Pan Dulce/Rosinenbrotchen) in 1979 in Buenos Aires, Argentina is another exceptional piece of work.

However, attempts to broaden the picture of Euro-American art history have been singularly weak when it comes to including the work of women artists in other continents, especially Latin America, Asia and Africa. (If any n.paradoxa readers are writing about these areas, I would be glad to hear from them with a view to publishing their work).

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