
HAVING IT ALL, ALL, ALL

21 February – 10 May

FREE

ANA MENDIETA CUBA/USA
CHRISTA SCHADT CANADA
HANNAH WILKE USA
HOWARDENA PINDELL USA
JANICE TANAKA USA
MARTHA ROSLER USA
NIL YALTER TURKEY/FRANCE
PIPILOTTI RIST SWITZERLAND
YOKO ONO JAPAN/USA

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INTRODUCTION

Having it all, all, all brings together international artists whose work has been pivotal for the re-evaluation of female subjectivity in art. Spanning the 1960s to 1990s, this exhibition of select video and performance art delves into the activism and identity politics associated with Second Wave Feminism and its critics. When the autonomy of individual bodies remains subject to debate and co-optation by oppressive political agendas, we consider the legacies of key works that have contributed to a dialogue of reclamation and empowerment.

Challenging the objectification of women's bodies was pivotal to the Feminist refrain "the personal is political," with artists centring their body in their work as a means to destabilise voyeurism. Hannah Wilke was instrumental in the development of a radical form of Feminist art that was bound to the body with what she termed 'performalist self-portraits,' leaving an indelible mark on art history. In the 1970s, Nil Yalter was fearless in her exploration of taboo topics relating to women's erotic desire and the evolution of her practice has continued to challenge grand historical narratives through the subjective experience.

Both physical and spiritual connections through the body are explored in Ana Mendieta's pioneering *Siluetas Series*, in

which she signifies a return to a metaphorical womb and her native Cuban homeland. The inclusion of Yoko Ono's *Cut Piece* marks 60 years since it was performed at New York's Carnegie Hall. Preceding the emergence of a Feminist Art genre, Ono's message of resilience and peace remains piercingly relevant to our contemporary times. Janice Tanaka is informed by personal experiences in her observations of womanhood and family, and Howardena Pindell reveals the social and racial biases of the wider women's movement that she experienced coming of age in the United States.

Parody and humour have been key tenets employed by artists to challenge a dominant patriarchal culture with ingrained roles for women. Martha Rosler deconstructs the messages of the fashion industry with deadpan wit, and in her seminal work *Semiotics of the Kitchen* (1975) parodies television cooking demonstrations from the 1960s. Christa Schadt uses popular music to undermine traditional power dynamics while Pipilotti Rist's blend of fantasy and reality suggests the concept of para-feminism through an immersive and embodied gaze.

Having it all, all, all provides insight into the practices of nine female artists whose work and commentary invites renewed attention through a contemporary lens.

MARTHA ROSLER

USA

Semiotics of the Kitchen

1975

video, sound

6 minutes, 33 seconds

In *Semiotics of the Kitchen*, Martha Rosler parodies television cooking demonstrations popularised by American chefs like Julia Child in the 1960s. In the performance, Rosler presents an alphabet of kitchen utensils which become vessels for expressing her anger and frustration at the oppression of women within the home.

Rosler moves through the alphabet, assigning a letter to each of the kitchen hand tools and demonstrating their function. As she jabs with a fork and stabs the air with a knife, her gestures become increasingly abrupt and her irritability more noticeable. By the last few letters, Rosler's kitchen tools have been replaced by gestures, her body becoming yet another instrument in the semiotic system of the home.

Rosler emphasises the intrinsic danger and violence of the kitchen, rejecting the dismissive assumption that cooking is soft work and therefore a feminine domain. Some of the items which Rosler presents are particularly labour intensive

to use, hinting at the often-invisible domestic labour typically assigned to women by default.

Semiotics of the Kitchen also questions the opportunities of expression afforded to the traditional housewife, revealing the extent of patriarchal authority within the language of domesticity. Rosler states that "when the woman speaks, she names her own oppression."

In 2003, Rosler announced an open call for a live restaging of *Semiotics of the Kitchen* as part of an exhibition on performance art at the Whitechapel Art Gallery. The restaging featured 26 women who participated in a rotating performance of the work.

This year marks the fiftieth anniversary of Rosler's landmark performance. The continued relevancy of Rosler's social critique is further reiterated by the persistent cultural prominence of traditional homemaking celebrities such as Martha Stewart and the recent popularity of 'tradwife' social media influencers.

ANA MENDIETA

1948 – 1985, Cuba/USA

Fundamento Palo Monte: Silueta Series (Gunpowder Works)

1980

film, colour, silent

5 minutes, 56 seconds

***“Through my earth/body sculptures,
I become one with the earth.”***

Fundamento Palo Monte is one of Ana Mendieta's *Siluetas*, a pioneering series of over 100 works made between 1973 and 1980.

Mendieta created *Fundamento Palo Monte* in Iowa, where she lived in exile with her sister from the age of 12 following the Cuban Revolution. She was unable to return to Cuba until the 1980s, and her creation of the *Siluetas* between Iowa and Mexico were a form of reclamation in her search for a transcendent sense of belonging to time and place.

In the *Siluetas*, Mendieta laid down in natural landscapes or covered her body in organic matter such as moss, sticks, flowers and grass. With each work, she carved and shaped her figure into the earth and then often activated the work through the addition of elements like fire, water and blood. She recorded these performative acts and resulting imprints of her body through photography and Super-8 film which she viewed as standalone artworks.

The title *Fundamento Palo Monte* references an African diasporic religion founded in Cuba that combines elements of Catholicism and the Kongo religion of Central Africa. In this work, Mendieta fills the hollow figurative form in the earth with gunpowder and places three stones to symbolise a human heart. On lighting the gunpowder, the fire consumes the silhouette from the base to the head, leaving a charred and ashen residue in the soil. What remains is the work of earth, fire and air.

Mendieta often said that she wanted to return to the land. The *Siluetas* signify this return to the metaphorical womb and her native Cuban homeland. In *Fundamento Palo Monte*, Mendieta's earth sculpture signifies a genderless human form. Throughout her practice, Mendieta's exploration of representation was based on an intersectional understanding of identity where race, gender, political status and class operated simultaneously.

YOKO ONO

born 1933, Japan/USA

Cut Piece

1964/1965

16mm film, black and white, mono

Filmed by Albert & David Maysles

Performed by the artist in New Works by Yoko Ono, Carnegie Recital Hall, New York City, March 21, 1965

8 minutes, 27 seconds

2025 marks sixty years since Yoko Ono performed *Cut Piece* at New York's Carnegie Hall. Performed a total of six times in Japan, America and England, Ono has restaged it once in Paris in 2003.

In *Cut Piece*, Ono sits on stage as members of the audience are invited to cut small pieces of clothing from her body with a pair of scissors. For each of the performances Ono wears her best clothes and begins seated in the Japanese *seiza* position, a pose associated with politeness and submission.

As the performance progresses, the initial hesitancy of the audience to cut away Ono's clothing are replaced by bolder actions as larger and more forceful cuts are made. During the Carnegie Hall performance shown here, a man chooses to reveal the front of her bra, with the cutting of her bra straps causing Ono to flinch in reaction and raise her hands to cover herself.

Cut Piece was originally conceived as a protest against war and the catastrophic atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945. Many have connected the cutting of Ono's garments to the scraps of clothing left on the bodies of women and children impacted by the bombings.

For Ono, *Cut Piece* is an exploration of cultural and gendered violence. By addressing the vulnerability that accompanies female gendered experience, Ono enacts a resilience against the violence, objectification and subjugation of women worldwide.

There have been many interpretations of *Cut Piece* and it is regarded as an iconic work of Proto-feminist performance art. *Cut Piece* continues to be performed by others, fulfilling Ono's invitation for it to be re-enacted as one of her Instruction Pieces.

NIL YALTER

born 1938, Turkey/France

Harem

1980

video, sound

54 minutes

Harem is a performance work made for video which features the artist as narrator and performer. The video is set within the cloistered rooms of an Ottoman seraglio and draws on centuries-old texts of harems in the Ottoman Empire. Through the performance, Yalter relays a day in the life of two fictional female odalisques called Naksedil and Dilaver who must adhere to the rules of a harem in Topkapi Palace in Istanbul. The video is itself a meditation on the enclosed space of the harem and the isolation of the female slaves who tend to the sultan's desires.

Yalter uses various visual strategies including repetition and screens-within-screens to blur the boundaries between reality and representation. In *Harem's* opening sequence, Yalter appears with her hands over a television monitor showing a close-up of a female eye which is then mirrored in

two images of diminishing sizes to create a kaleidoscopic effect.

Throughout the video, visions of eyes, legs, lips, feet and breasts appear extricated from the body. In one scene, Yalter stands legs aslant over a monitor displaying an image of painted lips baring teeth, recalling the vagina dentata myth. By employing these visual devices, Yalter seeks to dissect the experience of female entrapment within physical spaces and institutional systems.

Yalter ends her performance with images of a contemporary televised debate on abortion and sexist discrimination. By collapsing class, racial and time-based distinctions, she points to the systems of control which dominate female life in the harem and the continuation of similar systems of control in modern-day Western society.

HOWARDENA PINDELL

born 1943, USA

Free, white and 21

1980

video, colour, sound

9 minutes, 52 seconds

Free, white and 21 is a deadpan account of the racism Howardena Pindell experienced coming of age as a black woman in America. She states,

"I had faced de facto censorship issues through my life as part of the system of apartheid in the United States... In the tape, I was bristling at the women's movement as well as the art world."

In the video, Pindell is herself and plays the character of a white woman artist by donning white make-up and a blonde wig. In response to Pindell's claims, the white woman artist who is deemed 'free, white and 21' responds with disparaging remarks and asserts that Pindell must be paranoid as she doesn't share her experiences.

As Pindell recounts the many instances of racism she and her mother experienced, she

interrupts this narrative by wrapping her head with a gauze bandage – a powerful gesture that mutes her voice and envelops her in swathes of white. Later in the video she peels a translucent film from her face, drawing attention to her skin colour and the beautifying products marketed to women.

In a 2023 interview, Pindell spoke of the continued relevance of her video's commentary in the context of widespread racism fuelled by recent political agendas in America. She said, "I think, to my amazement, *Free, white and 21* is very much alive."

Pindell was the first African American curator at the Museum of Modern Art. She is a renowned painter, writer and curator, and in 1972 she co-founded A.I.R Gallery in New York - the first all-female artists cooperative gallery in the United States.

HANNAH WILKE

1940 -1993, USA

So help me Hannah

1982

video, colour, sound

29 minutes

Hannah Wilke used her body as a tool to address issues of feminism, sexuality and femininity that related to her experiences as a Jewish American woman. She put her body at the centre of her practice, often staging provocative physical poses to explore gesture in relation to gender and power.

So help me Hannah is a collaboration with the artist's husband and photographer Donald Goddard that originated as a series of photographs called *Snatch-shots with a ray gun* in 1978 and then later as a live performance at A.I.R Gallery in 1982. The title references the oath 'So help me God' and is perhaps a reference to Wilke's own relationship with her mother.

For the performance, Wilke is nude aside from a pair of high-heeled shoes. She stalks the space carrying a small gun and is followed by two cameramen who record her every move. Wilke's physical gestures are

accompanied by dissonant music and a voiceover text about art, violence and power. Professor Amelia Jones notes how Wilke's performance inserts women into male history in a dramatic way by seamlessly combining Wilke's confident female posturing with the intellectual content of the chosen male thinkers.

Wilke's attractiveness was seen as problematic by some who misinterpreted her self-portraits and poses as narcissistic rather than an intentional reversal of voyeurism. This changed when in the early 1990s, Wilke began documenting her illness ravaged body to lymphoma in her last photographic series *Intra Venus* (1991-3).

In response to a critic who commented on her body being too beautiful for her work, Wilke said "People give me this bullshit of, 'What would you have done if you weren't so gorgeous?' What difference does it make?... Gorgeous people die as do the stereotypical 'ugly.' Everybody dies."

MARTHA ROSLER

USA

Martha Rosler Reads "Vogue"

1982

video, colour, sound

25 minutes, 22 seconds

"What is Vogue? It is photography, it is voyeurism, it is mystification, it is fascination, desire, and identification. It's the look, the pose, the skin, the luxury. It is money, it is luxury. It's having it all, all, all!"

Martha Rosler Reads "Vogue" was originally performed for Paper Tiger Television, which created a public-access cable channel in New York in 1981. In the work, Rosler deconstructs the messages of the famous fashion magazine and its advertising. Her critique of the fashion industry and its reduction of women to simple objects of desire is articulated with deadpan wit and humour.

The video begins with Rosler flicking through the pages of *Vogue* magazine, its glossy fashion adverts delivering an artificial promise to its consumers. Rosler's effusive narration critiques the surface-level lifestyles which the magazine purports to sell, hinting at their futility.

Rosler recounts a salacious story about media mogul Condé Nast who owned *Vogue*, *Glamour*, and *Vanity Fair*, among other magazine

outlets. In her critique, Rosler notes how Nast pioneered the so-called 'class magazine.' Her analysis extends to a scrutiny of male power over women's bodies and how this forms the bedrock of magazines like *Vogue*.

The video moves to a slideshow of sexualised adverts of women's lips and mouths as sources of pleasure used to sell products like lipsticks. Rosler repeats the refrain, "It is the power of the phallus to transform and fascinate."

In a later segment, working conditions inside a sweatshop garment factory in Manhattan's Chinatown show the female workers fabricating clothing for manufacturers. Revealing the gulf between those producing luxury goods and those who consume them, Rosler points to the class exploitation hidden beneath *Vogue's* glamorous façade.

Courtesy of the artist and Electronic Arts Intermix

NIL YALTER

born 1938, Turkey/France

The Headless Woman (Belly Dance)

1974

video, sound

23 minutes, 41 seconds

Nil Yalter is considered a groundbreaking figure in video, feminist and socially engaged art. *The Headless Woman (Belly Dance)* is the first video Yalter made and it is regarded as a major work of French contemporary art.

In the 1970s Yalter's art broke taboos that would still be considered controversial today. In her video, Yalter explores sexuality and female genital mutilation through a performance that involves her inscribing a passage by the French poet and historian René Nelli across her bare torso.

The excerpt is taken from *Érotique et Civilizations* (1972) in which Nelli writes about the clitoris as the centre of female sexual pleasure and the persistent practice of cutting it. In the text, Nelli further refers to female sexuality as both 'convex' and 'concave,' which Yalter chooses to emphasise in her work. As she performs a belly dance, her movements cause the handwritten text on her torso to warp and twist.

Born in Egypt, where belly dancing originated, Yalter moved to Paris in 1965. In *The Headless Woman (Belly Dance)*, she combines her cultural background with French intellectualism to explore a cross-cultural experience of femininity and sexual expression under patriarchy.

Yalter notes how her video received different reactions with men feeling attacked by it and Feminist groups criticizing her for using a male writer's text on female sexuality.

The Headless Woman (Belly Dance) represents the contrast between the oppression of female sexuality and the aggressive pursuit of erotic delectation by men. By confronting the systems of control which place the female body as a site of consumable sexual pleasure, Yalter protests the violence enacted in denying women any participation in their bodies' own erotic capacity.

CHRISTA SCHADT

Canada

Stand by your man

1981

video, sound

5 minutes, 18 seconds

Stand by your man juxtaposes Tammy Wynnette's famous song with archetypes of masculinity. Released in 1968, the song received criticism from the women's liberation movement who deemed it too conservative, while for others the song made Wynnette a sympathetic spokesperson for working-class housewives experiencing marital disappointment.

In the song, Wynnette, who was married five times, advises women to forgive their husbands of their indiscretions, "Cause after all, he's just a man." In her video work, Schadt undermines this endorsement of traditional gender dynamics by picturing a series of male torsos. The men flex and tone their muscles, and over the soundtrack male voices repeat sexist comments, "I come for the slam, I have women for my dinner."

Stand by your man is one of Schadt's earliest works. Made in 1981, it comes in the wake of Laura Mulvey's seminal 1975 essay *Visual Pleasure in Narrative Cinema*, in which Mulvey coined the term 'the male gaze' to describe the sexual objectification of female bodies in film and television. In her video, Schadt inverts this power dynamic by subjecting male bodies to the gaze, disarming the paradigms of masculinity by making them seem performative and absurd.

Through parody and humour, Schadt confronts gender stereotypes which continue to hold relevance today. By using Wynnette's song, Schadt highlights the divisions in female circles of the time and the changing roles for women in the 1970s.

JANICE TANAKA

USA

Duality, Duplicity

1980

video, colour, sound
6 minutes, 10 seconds

In *Duality, Duplicity* Janice Tanaka explores the tensions between what she describes as life's basic dualities: male/female, past/present, known/unknown. The video draws on Tanaka's own experience of maturing into womanhood and in one part of the video, she repeats the phrase 'I my mother, my mother I.'

Through her video collages, Tanaka brings together social and political observations with personal introspection, exploring Asian American identity through her own family history. *Duality Duplicity* is an early work of Tanaka's that incorporates original footage, appropriated media images and hyper-saturated colour.

The video has a painterly sensibility, and the artist uses collage and montage techniques to transform the image sources, giving it a dream-like quality that is

enhanced through the narrator's soft voice. A photo of Tanaka as a child with her parents appears fleetingly, its momentary presence reminiscent of a flashback or memory lapse. Later in the video, Tanaka uses a mirroring technique to duplicate her own portrait while musing on the construction and staging of identity.

Tanaka is considered a pioneer in the use of processed images within experimental narrative form and *Duality, Duplicity* contains one of the first examples of flicker editing. Tanaka's aesthetic has a visual connection to later works by Pipilotti Rist, whose filmic approach to nature and the body coalesce through a contemporary awareness of Feminist paradigms.

PIPILOTTI RIST

born 1962, Switzerland

Ever is over all

1997

two-channel video, colour, sound

4 minutes, 7 seconds

Pipilotti Rist is best known for her experimental video environments of hyper-saturated worlds that blend fantasy with reality.

In the video, a young woman (played by filmmaker Silvana Ceschi) strides down a street brandishing a red hot poker flower while a field of the same blooms appear on the adjacent screen. Smiling gleefully, the protagonist swings the flower back and forth and, when sure of her aim, forcefully hits a car window with the flower causing the glass to shatter dramatically. The woman resumes her position on the street and the sequence repeats, her seemingly destructive act turned into a gesture of liberation.

Dressed in a blue dress and red shoes like Dorothy from the Wizard of Oz, the woman's innocence is masked by the materialization of her inner anger. A soundtrack of feminine voices humming a tune accompanies her movements which have been slowed to a hypnotic pace. Rather than

her actions inducing negative reactions from passersby, the protagonist is greeted cheerfully by onlookers including a female policewoman who salutes her.

The narrative of *Ever is over all* is informed by a real-life encounter that the artist had with a magazine editor who prevented Rist from putting an older woman on the cover.

Rist's work draws on the history of feminist video art to create worlds that explore erotic feminine sexuality in ways that are joyful, sensuous and empowering. She often fuses imagery of bodies with nature and employs different camera perspectives to destabilize voyeuristic viewing. Rist's artistic approach encourages an immersive and embodied gaze. *Ever is over all* is an example of what Professor Amelia Jones has termed "parafeminism."

Rist is one of few video artists to cross over into the realm of popular culture, with Beyonce's video *Hold Up* (2016) an homage to *Ever is over all*.