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SFMOMA PRESENTS *IN COLLABORATION: EARLY WORKS FROM THE MEDIA ARTS COLLECTION*

The San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (SFMOMA) is pleased to present *In Collaboration: Early Works from the Media Arts Collection*, on view in the fourth-floor galleries from March 22 through June 8, 2008. Organized by Rudolf Frieling, SFMOMA's curator of media arts, this group exhibition features seminal works from the 1970s, drawn primarily from SFMOMA's collection, including pieces by Vito Acconci, Dara Birnbaum, Peter Campus, Dan Graham, Nancy Holt and Robert Smithson, Joan Jonas, Dennis Oppenheim, Richard Serra, and Katharina Sieverding.

The first major presentation of SFMOMA's media arts collection in the Mario Botta building, the exhibition features several installations that have not been on view at the Museum for a decade. SFMOMA began collecting and exhibiting time-based media works of art in the early 1970s. The museum established its department of media arts—one of the first of its kind in the United States—in 1987, in recognition of the importance of electronic media in contemporary art. Dialogue between the artist and viewer in early media art and conceptual performance art, whether explicitly stated or merely implied, was instrumental in setting the stage for the more openly interactive and participatory works that eventually would be produced and come to define strategies in new media.

The selection of works gathered for this exhibition reflects on various notions of collaboration. "The collaborative aspect of key works in our collection is highlighted in a range of media, from live camera installations to film, video, or slide projection," says Frieling. "The selected works stage, explore, and play with delayed sounds and images, with a grammar of image production, using still and moving images to sharpen our perceptual senses in an experiential way."

Following the thread of collaboration, the selection will concentrate on two main thematic sections: the exploration of feedback situations—specifically in closed-circuit installations—and the range of recorded collaborative performances. Graham's *Opposing Mirrors and Video Monitors on Time Delay* (1973/94) and Campus's *dor* (1975) both emphasize the discontinuities between physical reality and depiction on a monitor or in a projected image. Acconci's *Command Performance* (1974) is another artistic situation that stresses the



Katharina Sieverding, *Transformer*, 1973/74; courtesy the artist; © 2007 Katharina Sieverding, Klaus Mettig, VG-Bild Kunst

psychological dimension of being both actor and observer. From a video monitor positioned at the base of a column, a reclining Acconci taunts and entreats the viewer to replace the artist by stepping into the metaphorical and literal spotlight. A video camera records an illuminated stool, while other viewers voyeuristically watch the recorded subject on another monitor. *Command Performance* signals the end of Acconci's live performances and appearances before the camera, integrating his investigation of the public and private realms from his performance pieces while anticipating his subsequent interactive architectural installations.

The second section of the exhibition features powerful documents of collaborative performances between artists concerned with investigating characteristics of time-based media relating to perception, feedback, and delay. Frieling elaborates: "Artists shared not only the same concerns and interest in process- and time-based and work in the early 1970s, but they also often participated in each other's projects. There was a productive network of relations, which indicates the fertile climate of collaborative authorship and the spirit of discovery of the time."

Jonas's *Songdelay* (1973), Serra's *Boomerang* (1974), and Holt and Smithson's *Swamp* (1971) address the processes of recording and communication, themes furthered in the video documents of Oppenheim's *2-Stage Transfer Drawing* performances in 1971, enacted in collaboration with his son. Birnbaum's rarely seen first media-based work *Attack Piece* (1975) juxtaposes still and moving imagery, exploring the improvised and immediate use of recording devices. Filmed outdoors in Halifax, Nova Scotia, *Attack Piece* focuses on a playful confrontation between Birnbaum and different artists (including David Askevold and Graham) as they physically approach and film the artist, who from her position on the ground reciprocates the gaze by photographing the participants. The installation of two facing videos is drawn from the original material of Super 8 film and 35 mm slides. In *Transformer* (1973/74), shown for the first time on the West Coast in its original large-scale format, eight slide projections rotate through variations of hybrid portraits of Sieverding and her collaborator and partner Klaus Mettig, playing on the continuum between masculine and feminine. *Transformer* foreshadows the use of large-scale prints in the artist's self-portraits and the field of contemporary photography.

Investigating characteristics of time-based media, such as the repurposing of surveillance technology and the possibilities of social interaction, the historic and seminal works from the SFMOMA media arts collection gathered for this presentation paved the way for important contemporary directions in media art.

Public Programs

ARTIST TALK

Foto/Film

Rudolf Frieling, curator of media arts, SFMOMA; Katharina Sieverding, artist

Thursday, March 20, 6:30 p.m. • Koret Visitor Education Center

Free with museum admission

Join Frieling and renowned German artist Sieverding, who is featured in the current exhibition *In Collaboration: Early Works from the Media Arts Collection* for a discussion of Sieverding's career over the last four decades. Since 1967 she has created several series of self-portraits that demonstrate an interest in the connections between media—from film to photography, slide projection to video. In this talk she addresses the cinematographic impulse and relations within her photography and film works.

FREE TUESDAY PROGRAM

This Is No Joke

Rudolf Frieling, curator of media arts, SFMOMA

Tuesday, April 1, noon–1 p.m. • Phyllis Wattis Theater

Museum and program admission are free. Seating is first come, first served.

This April Fool's Day videoart program showcases the absurdist and parodic critique artists employ in their deadpan investigations of perception and meaning. The selection includes 1970s comedic performance videos by John Baldessari, Nancy Holt and Robert Smithson, Martha Rosler, and William Wegman, among others. Brace yourself for a glimpse of whom and what they captured.

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Museum hours: Open daily (except Wednesdays): 11 a.m. to 5:45 p.m.; open late Thursdays, until 8:45 p.m. Summer hours (Memorial Day to Labor Day): Open at 10 a.m. Closed Wednesdays and the following public holidays: New Year's Day, Fourth of July, Thanksgiving, Christmas. The museum is open the Wednesday between Christmas and New Year's Day.

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Admission prices: Adults \$12.50; seniors \$8; students \$7. SFMOMA members and children 12 and under are admitted free. Thursday evenings after 6 p.m. admission is half-price. The first Tuesday of each month admission is free.

SFMOMA is easily accessible by Muni, BART, Golden Gate Transit, SamTrans, and Caltrain. Hourly, daily, and monthly parking is available at the SFMOMA Garage at 147 Minna Street. For parking information, call 415.348.0971.

Visit our Web site at www.sfmoma.org or call 415.357.4000 for more information.

The San Francisco Museum of Modern Art is supported by a broad array of contributors who are committed to helping advance its mission as a dynamic center for modern and contemporary art. Major annual support is provided by Koret Foundation Funds, the Evelyn and Walter Haas Jr. Fund, and Grants for the Arts/San Francisco Hotel Tax Fund. KidstART free admission for children 12 and under is made possible by Charles Schwab & Co. Inc. Thursday evening half-price admission is sponsored by Banana Republic.

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