

carolee schneemann:

Up To And Including
Her Limits

NOVEMBER 24, 1996 - JANUARY 26, 1997

Enclosures:

Installations by
Teresita Fernández,
Nedko Solakov,
and Hale Tenger

TheNewMuseum
OF CONTEMPORARY ART

583 Broadway NYC 10012

carolee schneemann:

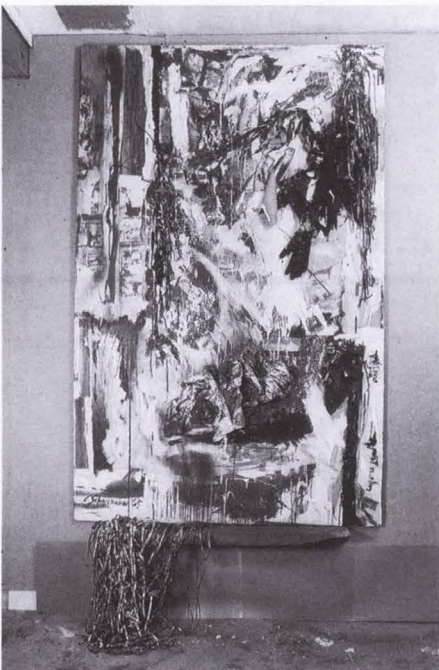
Up To And Including Her Limits

Organized by Senior Curator Dan Cameron

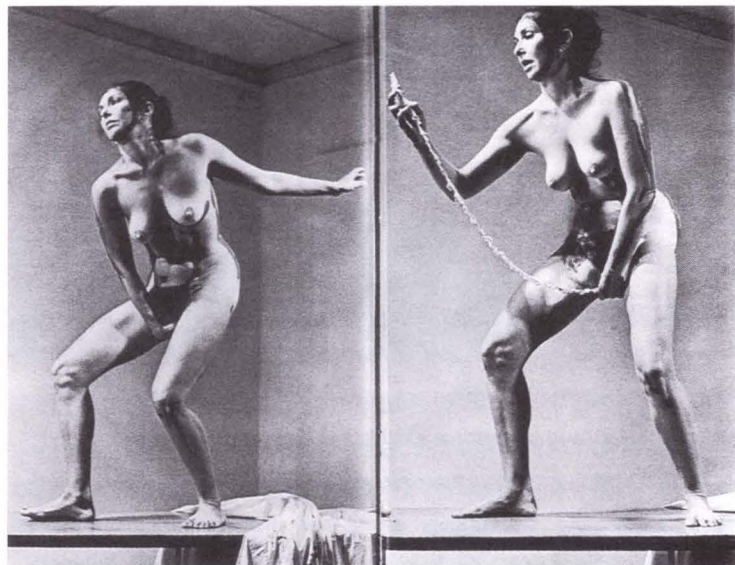
Carolee Schneemann's art has played a fundamental, though largely uncredited, role in one of the broader shifts in American aesthetics over the past several decades. This shift involved a transition from the mining of a largely subconscious agenda during the Abstract Expressionism of the 1950s to a critical use of the media-based languages of self-presentation and reproduction from the mid-1960s through today. A pioneer in the development of genres that would later be defined as body art, performance, and installation, Schneemann has crisscrossed cultural zones that are still considered disputed territory by many viewers. From the deployment of the living body in real space and time—and thereby raising related questions of gender, erotics, and community—to themes of war, death, disease, and the continuing presence of the archaic in everyday life, Schneemann's art has explored difficult and weighty themes with directness, openness, and a spirit of total faith in her own creative vision.

How can I have authority as both an image and an image-maker? When Schneemann posed this question in her journals in the early 1960s, she was on the brink of the most significant transition in her career—from a studio-based maker of objects to a multifaceted creator of diverse events that incorporated sculpture, poetry, dance, music, and, within a few years, film and video. Her use of her own body as the primary vehicle for the

transformation from object into subject was both historically unprecedented and widely influential. This exhibition of work spanning thirty-five years explores many of the issues and media employed in Schneemann's quest to continually answer her own initial question.



Carolee Schneemann,
Letter to Lou Andreas Salomé, 1965.



Carolee Schneemann, *Interior Scroll*, 1975. Photo: Anthony McCall.

Although Schneemann's mixed-media constructions produced between 1960 and 1966 have been seen in occasional exhibitions, and her stated affinity to Cézanne is a widely-published fact, her early paintings and drawings remain virtually unknown. The earliest work in this exhibition, *Landscape* (1959), painted while the artist was still a student, is an early expression of Schneemann's strong desire to break free of the conventions of planar representation. It communicates to present-day viewers a sense of ambiguous play between abstraction and representation prevalent in the wake left by Abstract Expressionism. Similarly, a group of drawings from the 1960s through the 1980s calls attention to the central role that drawing has played in the development of Schneemann's ideas.

In the early box constructions on view—*Native Beauties* (1962-64), *Music Box Music* (1964), and *Pharaoh's Daughter* (1966)—a palpable struggle against the limits of sculptural space can be felt in Schneemann's efforts to capture a sense of fleeting biological time within the literal compartments of the forms. *Letter to Lou Andreas Salomé* (1965), a large mixed-media work on masonite, explores proto-feminist themes in its multilayered evocation of a neglected turn-of-the-century essayist. One of the most striking features of *Letter* is the magnetic recording tape piled at its base, on which the artist has recorded her own voice reading excerpts from Salomé's diaries.

Eye Body (1963), a Happening realized in collaboration with the painter Erró, represents Schneemann's first full-fledged manifestation of herself as the image and image-maker, and it remains to this day one of the most influential works of her career. Represented here for the first time in a complete set of unique prints, the original action consisted of a number of self-transformations undertaken by the artist in a trance-like state in her studio, captured on a single roll of film over the course of a couple of

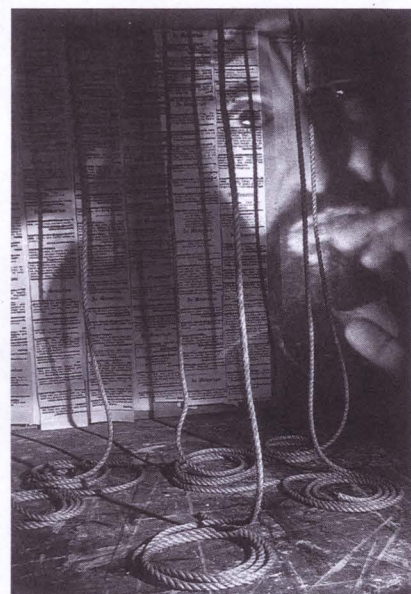
hours. Foreshadowing many of the themes that would occupy her over the following decades, *Eye Body* combines sensuality, myth, humor, and a startlingly prescient evocation of what soon became Schneemann's primary material—her own tangible presence.

Schneemann's signature "kinetic actions" of the mid-1960s—especially *Meat Joy* (1964), *Water Light/Water Needle* (1966), and *Snows* (1967)—are pioneering works from the Happenings-to-performance-art era that continue to shape our understanding of the links between art, public action, and social ritual. While *Meat Joy* raised questions of physical intimacy and body awareness, *Water Light/Water Needle* explored the limits of physical interaction in order to address broader concerns about social interdependence. *Snows*, one of the earlier and most powerful indictments of the Vietnam War, was also among the first performance works to combine film projection, live action, and sculptural environments. Because these works were never intended to take permanent form, their posterior re-assembling through fragments incorporates a constantly shifting emphasis whose open system of cross-reference traces Schneemann's ongoing interaction with her own archives.

Schneemann's work occupies a critical position within the history of experimental film in the United States. In her first completed work in this medium, *Viet-Flakes* (1965), which comprises the film component of *Snows*, the scanning of searing atrocity photos with her camera marks a new direction in the contextualization of current events within an experimental film framework. Her most lasting achievement, however, resides in the combination of penetrating honesty and philosophical insight that permeates her autobiographical trilogy of films spanning a fourteen-year period in her life—the unforgettable *Fuses* (1964-67), and its "sequels," *Plumb Line* (1968-71) and *Kitch's Last Meal* (1973-78).

In the early 1970s, Schneemann underwent a number of personal transformations that resulted in a complete rethinking of her own art. Two of her best-known performance/installation works are a result of this period—*Up To And Including Her Limits* (1973-75) and *Interior Scroll* (1975). Generated in part by the artist's decision to place drawing and writing at the forefront of her activity (partially in order to address the critical misunderstandings generated by her earlier work), these pieces entail an essentialization of female body imagery that the culture at large has only just recently begun to assimilate. Archetypal gestures pulled from the collective unconscious into the present, Schneemann's works of the 1970s remain unparalleled in contemporary art for their communicative force.

Two representative studio works of the 1980s are included in this exhibition to shed light on Schneemann's distinctive amalgamation throughout that decade of performance, eroticism, photography, and a



Carolee Schneemann,
Mortal Coils, 1994, detail.
Photo: Melissa Moreton.

search for historical antecedents to her repertoire of archetypal forms. In *Infinity Kisses* (1982-86), the artist documented the daily kissing ritual of one of her more unusual cats, with each separate image representing a single day in which she was awakened by the sensation of the animal pushing its tongue into her mouth. *Hand Heart for Ana Mendieta* (1986), created in homage to a younger artist influenced by Schneemann who died in a tragic fall, literally documents a private outdoor ritual of mourning that employed ashes, paint, blood, and syrup to create heart-shapes in a field of freshly fallen snow.

Because they represent some of her most substantial achievements and are little-known to a broad public, two examples of Schneemann's room-scale mixed-media installations of the past fifteen years are presented as the summary works of the exhibition. *Video Rocks* (1989), the earlier of the two, is simultaneously a sculptural field of handmade rocks, a rendering of the cyclical movement of human process, and an inquiry into the Impressionist landscape. *Mortal Coils* (1994) is based on the kinetic experience of a space that literally becomes alive with evocations of recently deceased friends. Using photos, spoken words and other sounds, texts, and moving projections to create a space for contemplating the fragility of human existence, Schneemann makes the case that the image of her own form has been supplanted as the central focus of her work by the fleeting essence of life itself. However, along with much of her earlier work, *Mortal Coils* articulates a rich meeting place between art and life that may be even more resonant for generations to come.

Dan Cameron

Enclosures

Installations by Teresita Fernández, Nedko Solakov, and Hale Tenger

Organized by Senior Curator Dan Cameron and Curator Gerardo Mosquera

We live inside Chinese boxes. The concept of openness is a relative one. Even to go outside is to be displaced from one enclosure to another. From the closet to the room to the street to the countryside to outer space, our "liberation" consists in going from smaller to broader confines. Even the seemingly unwallled infinitude of the desert could be, as Borges wrote, the tightest labyrinth.

If the future conveys the idea of infinitude, it has generally been imagined in terms of enclosures—something with which we are increasingly familiar. Science fiction and other prophetic discourses have always imagined the future in terms of cities, inner spaces, and urban-related technology. These narratives of outer space are more concerned with the extremely constricted hi-tech milieu of spacecraft than with the infinite. At present, our greatest paradigm of openness is the Internet. Yet, paradoxically, it depends on the screen, the most pervasive enclosure of our age.

Enclosures are protection and imprisonment, home and grave. They separate us from something outside, from which we want to escape or go back to. The tighter the enclosure, the more powerful the outside and its fascination. Every enclosure implies fear and attraction, narcissism, and voyeurism.

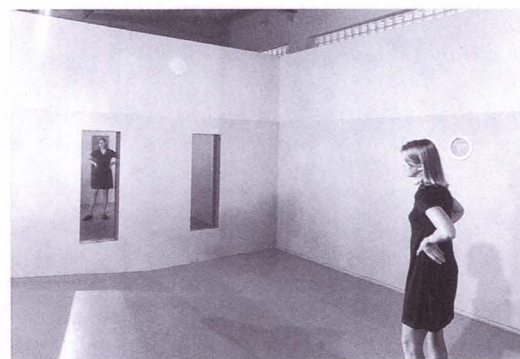


Hale Tenger, *We didn't go outside; we were always on the outside/ We didn't go inside; we were always on the inside*, 1995, detail.

ries. In these locales of tension and exchange, the problems of opening and closing, of what is inside and what is outside, have been crucial. Although these artists do not address issues of "border culture" directly, they do build off of some of the problems addressed by these discourses. Their interest is to work with space, and to discuss what space means both as a notion and for individual existence and subjectivity. But their own experiences make them very appropriate commentators on the uncertainties involved.

The artists in this exhibition live in two very different corners of the world. These worlds share the condition of borderlands between opposite territo-

Teresita Fernández,
Untitled, 1996, detail.



This exhibition brings together three emerging artists to a New York museum for

the first time. Each of the three has already had significant exposure in international as well as regional exhibitions, and is well-known to other artists and critics in each of their respective cities. All three artists work with space as a medium, although calling their work 'sculpture' is a bit misleading. In the case of Nedko Solakov (b. 1957, Tchernven Briag, Bulgaria), the medium in question might be an accumulation of questionable documentary material intended to demonstrate an obscure or inarguable point. Or, as in the present case, it might consist of a flurry of doodles across a tiny room covered in raised floral wallpaper, leaving the viewer to wonder whether the artist has committed an act of domestic vandalism, or if he is layering beauty on top of ugliness.

The customary dialogue in the work of Teresita Fernández (b. 1968, Miami) between interior and exterior space, and between illusion and representation, comes to the fore in her room-like articulation of a space which appears to be tiled (but whose squares are drawn in place). Our perceptions are guided by a system of semi-reflective panels that are constructed to function like windows, but which also act subtly to undermine the room's apparent solidity. The environments created by Hale Tenger (b. 1960, Istanbul, Turkey) often incorporate or focus on objects, but with an engagement of the surrounding space that enhances their air of expectancy. Her work for The New Museum invites us to contemplate a simple arrangement of symbolic and utilitarian forms within a contained, closet-like area, while the subtle manipulation of modes of presentation allow the cumulative impression of the forms to remain open to multiple interpretations.

Dan Cameron and Gerardo Mosquera



Nedko Solakov,
The Wallpaper,
1995, detail.

P u b l i c P r o g r a m s

Unless otherwise indicated, all public programs take place at The New Museum of Contemporary Art at 583 Broadway in SoHo. For additional information, please call 212.219.1222.

Carolee Schneemann

Film and Video Screening

A special series featuring Carolee Schneemann's early film and video work, new collaborations, and New York premieres. At Anthology Film Archives, 32 Second Avenue at 2nd Street. Tickets are available at the box office: \$7 general, \$5 students and seniors, \$4 Anthology members.

Saturday, November 30, 7:30 p.m.: *Up To And Including Her Limits*, 1982, 20 min.; *Fuses*, 1964-67, 18 min.; *Viet-Flakes*, 1965, 7 min.; *Imaging Her Erotics*, 1992, 6 min.; *Interior Scroll—The Cave*, 1994, 12 min.; *Known/Unknown*, 1996, 3 min.

Saturday, January 4, 7:30 p.m.: *Up To And Including Her Limits*, 1982, 20 min.; *Plumb Line*, 1968-72, 18 min.; *Kitch's Last Meal*, 1973-76, 20 min.; *Instructions Per Second*, 1995, 12 min.; *Known/Unknown*, 1996, 3 min.

A Conversation with Carolee Schneemann

Wednesday, December 4, 7:00 p.m., \$5 general, \$3 students & seniors, free for members. Join artist Carolee Schneemann and Senior Curator Dan Cameron in an intimate dialogue about Schneemann's career and art.

Vestigial Notebooks

Thursday, January 23, 7:00 p.m., \$5 general, \$3 students & seniors, free for members. Carolee Schneemann reads from a selection of her writings.

Future Bodies: Performance and Feminist Theory in the 1990s

Thursday, January 16, 7:00 - 9:30 p.m., at the Drawing Center, 35 Wooster Street, \$5. A discussion of feminism and the use of the body in art from the 60s to its current manifestations and beyond with panelists Janine Antoni, artist; Dan Cameron, Senior Curator, The New Museum of Contemporary Art; Bob Riley, Curator of Media Arts, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; Carolee Schneemann, artist; and Jocelyn Taylor, artist/activist.

Enclosures

Space And Its Discontents: Content In Recent Installation Art

Monday, November 25, 7:00 - 9:30 p.m., at the Drawing Center, 35 Wooster St., \$5. Panel discussion with artists featured in *Enclosures*—Teresita Fernández, Nedko Solakov, Hale Tenger; Dan Cameron, Senior Curator, The New Museum of Contemporary Art; and Vasif Kortun, Director, Center for Curatorial Studies, Bard College.

Exhibition Publication

Carolee Schneemann: Up To And Including Her Limits

This catalogue features essays by Dan Cameron, Kristine Stiles, and David Levi Strauss, with an introduction by Marcia Tucker. 68 pp., 41 ills, 10 in color. Available at The New Museum bookstore.

Carolee Schneemann: Up To And Including Her Limits is made possible in part by generous support from the David and Penny McCall Foundation, The Norton Family Foundation, and The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts. The Museum thanks Anthology Film Archives and the Drawing Center for loaning space for the programs. The New Museum is supported, in part, with funds from the New York State Council on the Arts, the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, the Jerome Foundation, and from the Museum's Director's Council, members, and friends. A portion of the Museum's general operating funds for this fiscal year has been provided through a generous grant from the Institute of Museum Services, a Federal Agency.

The New Museum of Contemporary Art

583 Broadway between Houston and Prince Streets in SoHo, New York NY 10012
Information 212.219.1355, Offices 212.219.1222

Hours

Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, and Sunday: Noon to 6:00 p.m.; Saturday: Noon to 8:00 p.m., 6:00 - 8:00 p.m. free; Monday and Tuesday, closed.

Admission

\$4 general; \$3 artists, students, seniors; members and children under 12, free; Saturdays 6:00 - 8:00 p.m., free.

Directions

Subway: Lexington Ave. line (#6) to Spring St. or Bleecker St.; Broadway line (N/R) to Prince St.; 8th Ave. line (A/C/E) to Spring St.; 6th Ave. line (B/D/Q/F) to Broadway/Lafayette. Bus: #1/5/6/21 to Houston St. or Broadway

Group Visits

Guided group visits are available for adults and students (grades 7 through 12) by calling the Education department at 212.219.1222.

Membership

To join and receive information on special events and programs, please call the Membership office at 212.219.1222.