

La Biennale di Venezia
57th International Art Exhibition
VIVA ARTE VIVA



Carolee Schneemann
Golden Lion for Lifetime Achievement
of the Biennale Arte 2017

Carolee Schneemann is the recipient of the **Golden Lion for Lifetime Achievement** of the **57th International Art Exhibition of La Biennale di Venezia – Viva Arte Viva**.

The decision was made by La Biennale's Board of Directors chaired by **Paolo Baratta**, upon recommendation of the curator of the 57th International Art Exhibition, **Christine Macel**, who stated:

«Carolee Schneemann (born in Fox Chase, Pennsylvania, 1939, lives and works in the Hudson Valley, New York) has been one of the most important figures in the development of performance and Body Art. She is a pioneer of feminist performance of the early 1960s. She has used her own body as the prevalent material of her art. In so doing, she situates women as both the creator and an active part of the creation itself. In opposition to traditional representation of women merely as nude object, she has used the naked body as a primal, archaic force which could unify energies. Her style is direct, sexual, liberating and autobiographical. She champions the importance of women's sensual pleasure and she examines the possibilities of political and personal emancipation from predominant social and aesthetic conventions. Through the exploration of a large range of media, such as painting, filmmaking, video art and performance, Schneemann re-writes her personal history of art, refusing the idea of an "his-tory" narrated exclusively from the male point of view.»

The acknowledgment will be awarded to **Carolee Schneemann** on **Saturday, May 13th, 2017** at Ca' Giustinian, the headquarters of La Biennale di Venezia, during the awards ceremony and inauguration of the 57th Exhibition, which will open to the public at 10:00 a.m. on that same day.

THE IMAGES for the 57th Exhibition may be downloaded at the following link:

<http://ftp.labiennale.org>

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Biographical note of Carolee Schneemann

Emerging in the early 1960s world of experimental film, music, poetry, dance and Happenings, Carolee Schneemann's work is characterized by experiments in kinetic technologies, as well as research into archaic visual morphologies, pleasure wrested from suppressive taboos and the body of the artist depicted in dynamic relationship with the social body. Using a vivid range of materials and sources, she has incorporated painting, drawing, performance, video and installation in her work. Schneemann has transformed the definition of art, especially in regard to the body, sexuality and gender.

Even if she is especially renowned for her performances, Schneemann describes herself as a painter and she considers her artistic process as having extended her painterly principles off the canvas. Since the 1950s, while studying at Bard College and then at Columbia University, she figures in the pictorial space, introducing objects into the canvas and creating assemblages that developed out of the paintings. Her landmark work *Eye Body* (1963) marks her transition from painting to working with a much wider range of media, such as filmmaking, video art and performance, as well as her role as both image and image maker.

Meat Joy, a 1964 performance, is a landmark work in the development of performance art. This Dionysian work of kinetic theatre, described by the artist as a "celebration of flesh as material", explored the way social dynamics change when cultural taboos and restrictions are lifted.

Her self-shot erotic film *Fuses*, 1968, is composed by explicit sexual images of lovemaking between the artist and her then partner, composer James Tenney. Considered as the first feminist erotic film, *Fuses* is an attempt to dismantle the patriarchal construction of eroticism as well as a strong dedication to sexual freedom. Through superimposition, collage, painting, slicing and burning, *Fuses* extends Schneemann's painterly impulses in an exploration of ecstatic sexuality.

Interior Scroll, 1975, a performance in which Schneemann, standing nude, draws a scroll from her vagina, is an iconic piece of feminist body art, encapsulating the sexual, political, and aesthetic concerns of the movement.

In *Up to and Including her Limits*, 1973-1976, Schneemann translated gesture into performance, using her suspended body as a mark making tool, addressing the male-dominated history of Abstract Expressionism and action painting.

Schneemann's work has consistently contrasted imagery of daily intimacies and the sacred erotic with destruction and war. The atrocities of the Vietnam War dominated the motives of her films and performances in the 1960s, including her film *Viet-flakes* (1965) and the multimedia kinetic performance *Snows* (1967). Through video installation, photography and painting, Schneemann explores the invasion and devastation of Lebanon in the 1980s, the collapse of the World Trade Center on 9/11 and a range of other personal and public disasters. What unites each of these works is not just a visual motive – representation of the atrocities of war – but also the deeply personal, even intimate, nature of Schneemann's eulogies and laments.

During the eighties, Schneemann continued to break down social taboos with *Infinity Kisses*, 1981-88, a series of 140 photographs representing the morning kisses she received from her cats over eight years. Showing the intimacy between the artist and the cat, *Infinity Kisses* questions the central role of the nonhuman in the artist's erotic universe and raises questions of interspecies communication.

Schneemann's challenging of social boundaries persevered in *Vulva's Morphia*, 1992-97, consisting of texts, photos, drawings of prehistorical sculptural representation of vulvas. In the installation text, a vulva's personification discovers that she is subject to numerous prejudices: for example, from a pure biological point of view it is just an "amalgam of proteins and hormones".¹

¹ Carolee Schneemann, «Vulva's Morphia», in *Carolee Schneemann. Imaging her Erotics*, The MIT Press, London, 2002, p. 299.

Later works of the 1990s and the 2000s, such as *Mortal Coils* (1995) and *Vespers Pool* (2000) are centered on symbolic and figurative representations of death, moving between conscious and unconscious worlds. They insist on the function of art objects as mystical channels into the death realm.

The New Museum of Contemporary Art presented Schneemann's first solo museum retrospective in 1996. More recently, Schneemann's oeuvre received new attention through the retrospective *Carolee Schneemann: Kinetic Painting* at the Museum der Moderne in Salzburg (Austria) in 2015. In 2017, the exhibition will travel to the Museum für Moderne Kunst Frankfurt am Main in Frankfurt (Germany) and to the MoMA PS1 (New York).

Schneemann's works are included in major museum collections around the world, such as: Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia, (Madrid), Museum of Modern Art, (New York), Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, (New York), Tate Modern, (London), Centre Georges Pompidou, (Paris), Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, (Washington).

Selection of major exhibitions:

2017: *Carolee Schneemann: Kinetic Painting*, MoMA PS1, New York, United States

2017: *Carolee Schneemann: Kinetic Painting*, Museum für Moderne Kunst Frankfurt am Main, Germany

2017: *Body and Soul: Performance Art – Past and Present* Group Exhibition curated by Elga Wimmer, Collateral event La Biennale 2017, Venice, Italy

2016: *Further Evidence... Exhibit A...Exhibit B...* Double Gallery Solo Exhibition at PPOW Gallery and Galerie Lelong, New York, NY

2016: *Postwar – Art between the Pacific and Atlantic 1945 – 1965*, Haus der Kunst, curated by Okwui Enwezor, Munich

2016: *A Feast of Astonishments: Charlotte Moorman and the Avant-Garde, 1960s–1980s*, The Block Museum of Art, Evanston, IL

2016: *Performing for The Camera*, Group Exhibition, Tate Modern, London

2015: *Carolee Schneemann: Kinetic Painting*, Museum der Moderne in Salzburg, Austria

2015: *Sequences VII*, Biennial Honorary Artist, solo exhibition at Kling and Bang Gallery, Reykjavik, Iceland

2014: *Lost Meanings of The Christmas Tree*, Site Specific Installation and Performance at the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY

2014-2015: *The Artist Institute*, Year Long Artist Residency and Exhibitions curated by Jenny Jaskey, Hunter College, New York, NY

2014: *T-Space*, Rhinebeck, NY: *Flange 6rpm*, Solo Exhibition, Rhinebeck, NY

2014: *Carolee Schneemann: Precarious*, Musée départemental d'art contemporain de Rochechouart, France

Carolee Schneemann: Then and Now, MUSAC, León, Spain

2013: *Then and Now Carolee Schneemann: oeuvres d'Histoire*, Musée départemental d'art contemporain de Rochechouart, France

2012: *Carolee Schneemann: Within and Beyond the premises*, Krannert Art Museum, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, IL

2010: *Carolee Schneemann: Within and Beyond the Premises*, Samuel Dorsky Museum of Art, SUNY New Paltz, NY

2007: *Carolee Schneemann: Breaking Borders*, MOCCA, Toronto, Canada

2002: *Interior Scroll*, Center for Curatorial Studies Museum, Bard College, New York, NY

1997: *Schneemann in Bonn*, Frauen Museum, Bonn, Germany

1996: *Carolee Schneemann: Up to and Including Her Limits*, New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York, NY

1995: *Carolee Schneemann: Compositions with Interior Scroll*, Mount Saint Vincent University Gallery, Nova Scotia
Moral Coils and Up To and Including Her Limits, Kunstraum, Wien, Austria
1988: *Self-Shot*, Emily Harvey Gallery, New York
1986: *Recent & Early Work*, Henri Gallery, Washington, DC
1985: *Recent Work*, Max Hutchinson Gallery, New York
1984: Kent State University, Department of Fine Arts, University Gallery, Kent, OH
Maryland Institute College of Art, Baltimore, MD
Performed Paintings and Works on Paper, Kleinart Gallery, Woodstock, New York
1983: *Recent Work*, Max Hutchinson gallery, New York
Colby-Sawyer College, New London, NH
Works on Paper, Rutgers University, Douglass College, New Brunswick
1982: *Early Work*, Max Hutchinson gallery, New York
1981: *Image/Texts and Debris Grid*, Real Art Ways, Hartford, Ct
Image/Texts, Washington Projects for the Arts, Washington
Fresh Blood: A Dream Morphology, Washington Projects for the Arts, Washington
1980: *Dirty Pictures*, A.I.R. Gallery, New York
1979: *ABC – We Print Anything – in the Cards*, Gallery De Appel, Amsterdam, Netherlands
Forbidden Actions, C Space, New York
Bard College, Annandale-on-Hudson
1977: *Multiples*, Archives Francesco Conz, Italy
ABC – We Print Anything – in the Cards, Gallery De Appel, Amsterdam, Netherlands
1974: *Up To And Including Her Limits*, University Art Museum, Berkeley, California
1964: *Meat Joy*, Festival of Free Expression, Paris
The Sale, Artist's Studio, New York
1963: *Eye Body*, Artist's Studio, New York
1962: *Mink Paws Turret*, Artist's Studio, New York