

Simone Forti

Kunsthhaus Baselland

17 May – 7 July 2019

Simone Forti (b. 1935 in Florence, lives in Los Angeles) has, since the 1960s, been one of the most avant-garde international performance, dance and video artists. At the end of the 1930s she had to flee from Italian antisemitism, emigrating with her family to the USA via Bern. There she decisively marked Postmodern dance and has, ever since, been called one of the trail-blazers of Minimal Art. Forti describes herself less as a performance artist but rather as a movement artist. At the centre of her work is the idea of what we might know about things through our bodies. Alongside mentors Anna Halprin, as well as Robert Dunn, a student of John Cage, Forti engaged intensively with questions of corporal perception as well as challenging the influence of composition on series of movements – mostly movements taken from everyday life. Central for her work are experimentation and improvisation, which can emerge from the moment.

Collaboration with artists, such as musicians including Charlemagne Palestine, Peter Van Riper, Steve Paxton and Yvonne Rainer and others, is a continuous thread through her practice. In her work, which continues to develop to this day, and which consists of film, video and photography, as well as installation, drawings and text, she continually returns to the question of one's own movement in space. In the process, within this body work, she tests how we engage with media and politics and questions the behaviour we engage in when in direct interaction with one another. The performances are usually marked by requiring only minimal equipment, such as steep ramps, ropes and simple wooden constructions, which are moved and activated by the co-performers. Simple movements and the accidental too play as important a role as the relationship between body and object – therein Forti already anticipated the key thrust of Minimal Art. The situations thus brought about by the artist enable a new perspective on the relationship between sculpture and movement, body and object, as well as the history of dance and art.

In her performance *Huddle*, one of her most popular works, which will be shown during the exhibition at the Kunsthhaus, a group of people forms a sculpture in which the combined strength comes into play. Among her best-known works are minimal objects in simple materials, the famous *Dance Constructions* (1960/61), which were first performed in New York and which, in the meantime, have become part of the Museum of Modern Art in New York's collection. As Simone Forti can no longer carry out her performances herself, Claire Filmon and Sarah Swenson, who have studied with Forti for many years, have trained local dancers or art and dance students in these performances and will perform them together. For Forti this is an opportunity to communicate her work and experience to a younger generation and bring it into the future.

Although Simone Forti has always had an important connection with Switzerland, her work has to date only been shown in group exhibitions. The Kunsthhaus Baselland is now honouring her with a first solo exhibition in Switzerland. A broad spectrum of works in video, drawing and installation will be shown, complemented with performances.

Performances by Simone Forti at the Kunsthhaus Baselland

Huddle, Slant Board and Platforms

Wednesday 12 June, 12 noon, Saturday 15 June, 10 am, Wednesday 19 June, 6.30pm

Performed by artists and dances from Basel

Performance coordination and instruction by Sarah Swenson

For further information about events and art education see kunsthausbaselland.ch

Quotes from the exhibition: Simone Forti, *Handbook in motion*, 1974

Performances and Exhibitions (selection): 2019, Simone Forti, Kunsthaus Baselland, Muttenz/Basel, Switzerland; Forti, Paxton, Rainer Read Their Writings, Danspace/St. Mark's Church, New York; 2018, On An Iron Post, Galleria Raffaella Cortese, Milan, Italy; Simone Forti With Obstructions by Robert Morris, Castelli Gallery, New York; Time Smear, The Box, Los Angeles, CA; Inaugural exhibition of Reading Room, Melbourne, Australia; 2017, Rematch, Highways Performance Space, Santa Monica, CA; Radical Bodies, The Kaye Playhouse; Performance Now, KCHUNG radio program, The Getty Center, Los Angeles; Radical Bodies, Art, Design & Architecture Museum, University of Santa Barbara

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