



VALIE EXPORT

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Bilder der Berührung [Images of Contingence]

Installation view at Belvedere Vienna (detail), 2010, photo: Markus Krottendorfer (front and back cover)

A front figure in contemporary art since the 1960s, the Austrian artist VALIE EXPORT has played a pioneering and vital role in the development of performance, feminism, and activist strategies as well as conceptual photography and film. In 1967, the artist adopted an artistic identity with the name VALIE EXPORT, always written in capital letters, as an act of self-definition, and thus pointing out an objective which pervades her oeuvre. *Aktionshose: Genitalpanik* [Action Pants: Genital Panic], 1969, defines an active femininity which acts both politically and sexually. In one of her first films, *Selbstportrait mit Kopf* [Self-Portrait with Head], 1966, the artist's face merges together with, but also detaches from the image of an expected femininity, here expressed in a classical sculpture of a woman's head. *Mann & Frau & Animal* [Man & Woman & Animal], 1970-73, is an act of sexual self-definition but then also a survey of the relation between image and representation, something that reappears throughout her artistic career, beautifully expressed for instance in her film *Syntagma*, 1984.

VALIE EXPORT very early on recycled images and sequences from her own production into new works, an artistic strategy that questions the traditional idea of the image's authenticity. She investigates the body as a membrane between society and identity, a membrane which is also image and sign and where the female body is inscribed into the structures of society. In *Body Sign Action*, 1970, the artist tattoos a suspender on her thigh, an image of female submission and seduction. Through appropriation and renegotiation of a generally accepted image of femininity and sexuality, *Body Sign Action* proposes a different and more active definition. VALIE EXPORT has from her very early works on used the image of herself in her production, for example in large numbers of performance works and in photography which through the usage of her own body also is based on performative actions.*

VALIE EXPORT's works create a dictionary of the iconography of the human body, particularly a woman's body, e.g., its meaning, symbols and delivery. Individual parts of the body transmit messages, but the capacity to "touch" is even more telling: it is a testimony not only of carnality, intimacy and sensuality, but also of aggression and violence.

The exhibition held by ŽAK | BRANICKA highlights the artist's groundbreaking expressions of physical contact and its implications in various mediums, including installation, drawing, photography and archival materials. The title of the exhibition refers to VALIE EXPORT's installation *Fragmente der Bilder einer Berührung* [Fragments of Images of Contingence] from 1994. The light bulbs suspended on steel tubes are rhythmically immersed into cylinders filled with milk, used oil or water. This rhythmic movement is employed again in a second installation, *Die un-endliche/-ähnliche Melodie der Stränge* [The un-ending/ -ique melody of cords] from 1998. Here, the movement of the sewing machine's needle is just as piercing, or stabbing, and disturbing as the light bulbs immersed in the liquid in *Fragmente der Bilder einer Berührung*. The motif of physical touch appears as well in VALIE EXPORT's series of drawings from the beginning of the 1970s. Aside from the before mentioned works, photographs and videos created in various decades of the artist's long-standing career and glass cases filled with archival materials and documentation from VALIE EXPORT's oeuvre compliment the exhibition.

*first part based on a text written by Hedwig Saxenhuber, 2009



EROS/ION, 1971, Körper – Material – Interaktion

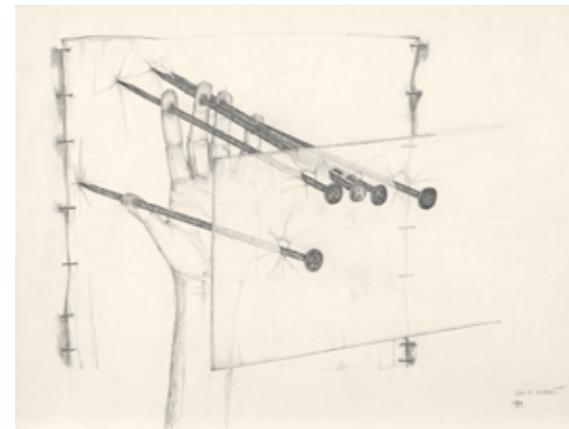
[Body – Material – Interaction], b&w photo

Exhibition view arts lab, London, photo: Mel Clay, London, 1971

Tableau V.E. 1: Hyperbulie, 1973

Tableau, b&w photographs, photo graphics, concepts (compilation on occasion of the exhibition *VALIE EXPORT Archiv* at Kunsthaus Bregenz, 2011, photo: Markus Tretter)





Phalanx, 1973, pencil on paper, 53,5 × 70,5 cm and *Zwang [Constraint]*, 1974, pencil on paper, 44 × 58 cm

Die un-endliche/-ähnliche Melodie der Stränge [the un-ending/-ique melody of cords], 1998
video installation; exhibition view at Belvedere, Vienna 2010 (detail), photo: Markus Krottendorfer



Körperkonfigurationen - Handfigurationen



Sehtext: *Fingergedicht* [Visual Text: Finger Poem], 1968
video 1968, video DVD 2011, b&w, PAL 4:3, 1:20 min

Tableau V.E. 35: *Körperkonfigurationen – Handfigurationen*, 1972-74
Tableau, b&w photographs, photo graphics, concepts
(compilation on occasion of the exhibition *VALIE EXPORT Archiv* at
Kunsthau Bregenz, 2011, photo: Markus Tretter)



TAPP und TASTKINO [TAP and TOUCH CINEMA]
1968/1969, video still



BODY TAPE, 1970
video still



METANOIA, 2011
video DVD-Edition

As see-through Plexiglas object, chiseled straight on one side, rounded off on the other. It consists of a row of identical-looking DVDs that shimmer through the transparent sides; the box includes 29 film and video works entitled *METANOIA* by VALIE EXPORT.

METANOIA is a concept that VALIE EXPORT was already using in 1976 in a text about her film, *Unsichtbare Gegner* [Invisible Opponents]. It was then that she wrote about how “the idea and the desire to form these social structures (high voltage current) and norms (mutilation) of life, these invisible opponents, the constraint of sense, in a Metanoia of cinematographic images had solidified” in her. The word Metanoia originates from the Greek words meta (for “over” or “beyond”) and noia (from noun: “sense”). It has a long semantic history and roughly means, among other things, “rethinking” or “beyond thinking”. The melodic sound of the term played an important role for VALIE EXPORT during the titling of the work. The *METANOIA* edition can be seen in many

ways as a special occasion because the bulk of VALIE EXPORT’s film and video work has been brought together for the first time. The artist herself noted that “through this summary, [she] would like to make note of the various works that are central parts of [her] entire body of media work”. The box makes the multifacetedness and the complexity of the EXPORTistic film and video accomplishments visible. It shows her range and includes avant-garde films such as *Syntagma* (1983), structural films like *Interrupted Line* (1971/72) and *Schnitte/Elemente der Anschauung* [Cuts/Elements of Observation] (1971-74) that deal with time and space structures, documentations of video and body actions, such as *DELTA. Ein Stück* [DELTA. A Piece] (1976/77) or *TAPP und TASTKINO* [TAP and TOUCH CINEMA] (1968-69/1989), performance films like *I turn over the pictures of my voice in my head* (2008), as well as video poems like *Sehtext: Fingergedicht* [Visual Text: Finger Poem] (1968).

VALIE EXPORT (Prof. Dr. h.c. media)

Born 1940 in Linz, Austria, as Waltraud Lehner. Lives and works in Vienna. In 1967, she invented her artist name VALIE EXPORT, an artistic concept and logo to be written in capital letters only. She is one of the most important pioneers of conceptual media art, performance and film. Her artistic work includes video environments, digital photography, installation, body performances, feature films, experimental films, documentary films, “Expanded Cinema”, conceptual photography, body-material interactions, Persona Performances, laser installations, objects, sculptures, texts on contemporary art history and feminism. Since 1975, she is committed to curatorial projects, international symposiums, exhibitions and film programmes. She was professor for multimedia performance at the Kunsthochschule für Medien (Academy of Media Arts) in Cologne from 1995 to 2005.

Since 1968 she has presented her work internationally including: Pompidou Centre, Paris; MoMA, New York; 39th Venice Biennale (Austrian Pavilion), Venice 1980; documenta 6 (1977) and 12 (2007), Kassel; MOCA, Los Angeles; Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam; MUMOK, Vienna; Generali Foundation, Vienna; P.S.1, New York; Tate Modern, London; The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Guggenheim Museum, New York; de Appel Foundation, Amsterdam; Whitechapel, London, Kunsthau Bregenz.

Her works are included in several international collections including: Pompidou Centre, Paris, Tate Modern, London, Museo Nacional Centro de Reina Sophia, Madrid, MoMA, New York, MOCA, Los Angeles.

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