



The Kitchen Center
for Video, Music, Dance,
Performance, Film & Literature

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For immediate release

Performance/video pioneer Joan Jonas fuses live performance and video with ancient symbolism to portray female archetypes: her first New York performance in over a decade!

Joan Jonas: *Lines in the Sand: Helen in Egypt*

(U.S. Premiere)

February 19-21 (Thu-Sat), and 24-28 (Tue-Sat) 8pm

Tickets: \$20

TV DINNER NO. 18: Joan Jonas

February 26 (Thu) 6-8pm Reservations required (includes dinner)

Tickets: \$30/\$25 for Students, Seniors, Kitchen Members

\$50 with 8pm performance

New York, NY—Performance/video pioneer **Joan Jonas** returns to **The Kitchen** with the U.S. premiere of *Lines in the Sand: Helen in Egypt*—her first New York performance in over a decade. With this multimedia production, originally presented at Documenta XI in 2002, Jonas revisits the myth of Helen of Troy, using her emblematic vocabulary of ritualized gestures and symbolic objects (masks, mirrors, costumes) mixed with live drawing and video, Vegas kitsch and pre-recorded sound. The performance is presented in conjunction with the **Queens Museum of Art** exhibition *Joan Jonas: Five Works* (until March 14, 2004/ www.queensmuseum.org).

Lines in the Sand is based on the epic poem *Helen in Egypt* written by H. D. (Hilda Doolittle) in 1961, which tells of the seduction and abduction of Helen, suggesting that she remained in Egypt and never set foot in Troy. The myth of Helen as the cause of the Trojan War is a phantasm, and for centuries, the accepted myth—a war fought over a woman—was preferred to a lesser-known version of a woman being absent. In Doolittle's alternate version, it is Helen who constantly questions the reality of her own myth, exploring female character through a complex matrix of meaning. Egypt, like Helen, is represented by a “real” and a “fake”—the fake being Las Vegas and its new casino Luxor, and the real existing in photographs of Egypt taken back in 1910.

In the live performance of *Lines in the Sand*, excerpts from *Helen in Egypt* are intercut with *Tribute to Freud* (1956) in which H.D. describes her analysis with Freud in the 1930s. On the walls are multi-channel projections of the kitsch head of Khafre adorning the Vegas strip, weaved with multiple drawings of the sphinx, pyramids and endless spirals made by Joan Jonas herself (a consummate draftsman). Jonas appears live, narrating or using her body in a kind of ritual dance, crafting the repetitive images of the pyramids with a piece of chalk.

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Since the mid '60s, **Joan Jonas** has continuously fused new technology with ancient symbolism to portray various female archetypes. Along with artists in her immediate circle, such as Richard Serra, Robert Smithson, Dan Graham, and Laurie Anderson, she sited many of her early works at The Kitchen, including *Funnel* (1972), *Juniper Tree* (1979) and the screening of *Vertical Roll* (1972). Moderated by **David Ross**, curator of Jonas' first 1980 retrospective, *TV Dinner No. 18* celebrates the artist's four decade-long career, from her seminal video performance work of the '70s to her later televisual narratives. The informal discussion includes multi-channels screenings and a vegetarian dinner provided by a neighborhood restaurant.

Biography:

Joan Jonas (b. 1936) is one of the most important women artists to emerge from the late 1960s and 1970s. Working in New York as a sculpture, by 1968 she moved into what was then considered new territory—mixing performance with props and mediated images. She received a B.A. in Art History from Mount Holyoke College, Mount Holyoke, MA (1958), studied sculpture at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts from 1958-1961, and received an M.F.A. in Sculpture from Columbia University, New York, in 1965. Her first performance retrospective was at the University Art Museum, Berkeley (1980) (Van Abbe Museum, Eindhoven, 1981). She has exhibited at The Museum of Modern Art, New York; the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; The Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston, MA; The Kitchen, New York, and Pat Hearn Gallery, New York. Jonas has had major retrospectives at the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam (1994), and Stadtsgalerie Stuttgart, Stuttgart, Germany (2000), and was represented in Documenta 11, Kassel, Germany (2002). She has taught at Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge, MA, since 2000.

Funding:

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The Kitchen

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