

Realized by National Endowment for the Arts grant. Photo: Gwenn Thomas

UP TO AND INCLUDING HER LIMITS



From performance
at Anthology
Film Archives
December 1974.
Double super 8
projections of
"Kitch's Last Meal"
and rope-drawings.

Carolee Schneemann

11
Carolee Schneemann's Up To And Including Her Limits is an installation-performance which ~~invokes and~~ examines a complex fusion of themes. Conditions vary from installation to installation, ~~a circumstance present~~ ^{are accommodated} in the conception of the piece. The work is a multimedia composition of four elements: live action ("trance movements" by the artist); film plus soundtrack (the ongoing super-8 Kitch's Last Meal); videotape ("previous cycles" by the artist); book (copies of the limited edition Parts of a Body House Book). *This is the final version*

The super-8 images are projected one on-top-of the other, rather than one next-to the other. The ^{together} soundtrack is on-tape ~~and functions as an autonomous unit in conjunction with the~~ ^{simultaneous} ~~images~~. This duality of images is actualized by the appearance of the videotapes in the performance piece. *performance also includes* The videotapes are in black-and-white, silent, ^{mostly} ~~and present~~ previous performances of Up To And Including Her Limits.

The immediacy of the cinematic images and the performance is countered by the historicizing of the soundtrack and the book, with the distance of the videotapes as median ground. Considerations of the present are a concern pressuring Up To And Including Her Limits. This welter of allusions, references and associations is what makes Up To And Including Her Limits a disconcerting event. At any given moment, the event seems sparse, austere, stark within any particular element. The combination of any two elements begins a process of combustion in which the prodigality of Up To And Including Her Limits is revealed. Ultimately, Up To And Including Her Limits is a median work. The piece mediates between different forms, different ideas, different media. These divergent elements bring to the performance arena the concordance of history and of myth.

- Daryl Chin

"UP TO AND INCLUDING HER LIMITS"
has been developed through a series
of two day performance installations
over the last year (1974) at:

UNIVERSITY ART MUSEUM BERKELEY, April
LONDON FILM-MAKERS COOPERATIVE, May
ART MEETING PLACE LONDON, June
ARTISTS SPACE, December
ANTHOLOGY FILM ARCHIVES, December

The components of the piece involve:

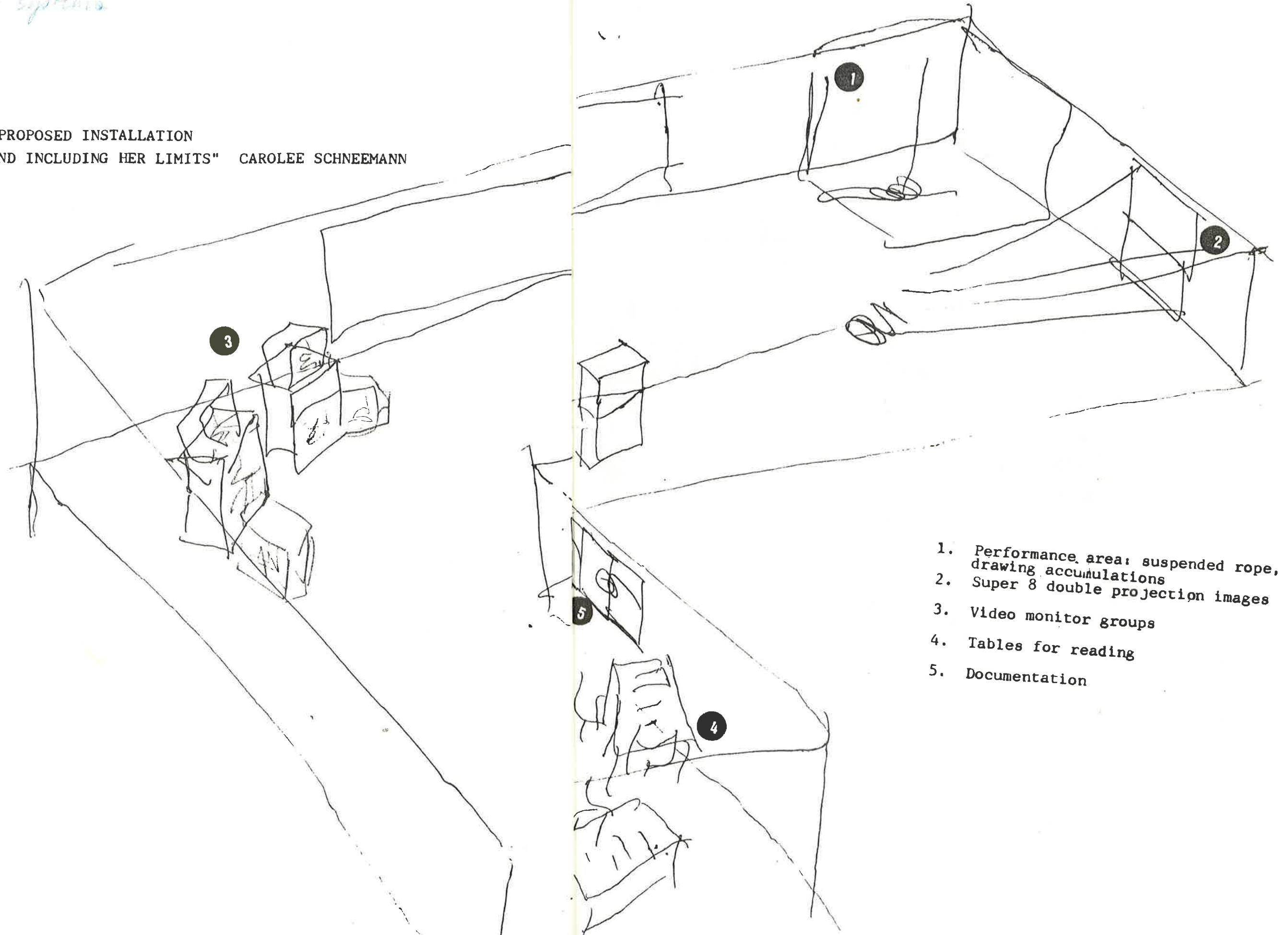
1. Performance area: the suspended rope, drawing accumulations; my performance there at unspecified intervals.
2. Super 8 double reels, continuous projections in proximity to the performance area.
3. Sound striped on the Super 8 cassettes; a commentary with silent intervals.
4. 3 Video monitors grouped together; showing tapes of previous installations and performance.

Note: during the duration of this proposed installation further tapes will be shot and displayed along with earlier ones.

5. A reading area, away from the main installation; displayed on tables -- writings and texts from and related to the work.

5 playble systems

PLAN OF PROPOSED INSTALLATION
"UP TO AND INCLUDING HER LIMITS" CAROLEE SCHNEEMANN



1. Performance area: suspended rope, drawing accumulations
2. Super 8 double projection images
3. Video monitor groups
4. Tables for reading
5. Documentation

Film as Performance



Tal Streeter

Carolee Schneemann in "Up To And Including Her Limits"

Some of the artists currently working and showing film-performance combines and who have been doing so for a decade include Ken Jacobs, Carolee Schneemann and Jack Smith. All three are marvelously multi-talented and multi-faceted artists who have clearly unique personalities.

Carolee Schneemann has an ongoing process called "Up To and Including Her Limits" which is an installation adapted to various spaces over the course of the year, including recent performances at Artists Space and Anthology Film Archives. In each space the proportion and scale of the elements is changed. The cen-

tral element is two reels of super 8 film simultaneously projected...sometimes for as long as twelve hours. The sound is a very personal and immediate statement about material, technique, feminism, sex...things in her environment. The images are a domestic diary of day to day events including: "Kitch's Last Meal", which is a filmed diary of the ordinary course of her week. It centers on an eighteen year old cat that has been with her for that long. Every week she filmed the cat eating. This will continue until the cat dies. The live performance part is Schneemann - nude - suspended on a rope in a very

concentrated state—crayon in hand—gradually the tension between the body and rope creates movement and this is chalked. Fragments of the rope and her nude body are illuminated by the light of a Super 8 projector. All previous performances have been videotaped and become a cluster arrangement in another area of the space. She tries to distribute areas of light with various sorts of information and the audience is free to walk around and at all times to select what interests them, including a Carousel which projects slides of her early "painting constructions". The overall quality of the work is quite stark, with rectangles of illumination perforating the darkness.

Leonard Horowitz

CAROLEE SCHNEEMANN

From Tape #2 for "Kitch's Last Meal"

(continuing Super 8 film: 1973, 74, 75-)

I met a happy man
a structuralist filmmaker
-- but don't call me that it's something else I do --
he said we are fond of you
you are charming
but dont ask us to look at your films
we cannot
there are certain films we cannot look at:
the personal clutter
the persistence of feelings
the hand-touch sensibility
the diaristic indulgence
the painterly mess
the dense gestalt
the primitive techniques

(I don't take the advice of men
they only talk to themselves)

PAY ATTENTION TO CRITICAL AND PRACTICAL FILM LANGUAGE
IT EXISTS FOR AND IN ONLY ONE GENDER

even if you are older than *me* you are a monster
I spawned you have slithered out of the excesses and
vitality of the '60's

he said you can do as I do
take one clear process
follow its strictest implications
intellectually establish a system of permutations
establish their visual set

I said my film is concerned with
DIET AND DIGESTION

very well he said then why the train?

the train is DEATH as there is die in diet
and di in digestion

then you are back to metaphors and meanings
my work has no meaning beyond the logic of its systems
I have done away with emotion intuition inspiration --
those aggrandized habits which set artists apart from
ordinary people -- those unclear tendencies which are
inflicted upon viewers.....

-2-
(...I met a happy man)

it's true I said when I watch your films
my mind wanders freely during the half hour
of pulseing dots I compose letters
dream of my lover
write a grocery list
rummage in the trunk for a missing sweater
plan the drainage pipes for the root cellar
--- it is pleasant not to be manipulated

he protested
you are unable to understand & appreciate
the system the grid the numerical and rational procedures
the Pythagorean cues --

I saw my failings were worthy of dismissal
I'd be buried alive
my works lost.....

he said we can be friends equally
tho we are not artists equally

I said we cannot be friends equally
and we cannot be artists equally

he told me he had lived with a "sculptress"
I asked does that make me a "film-makeress"?

Oh no he said we think of you as a dancer.

CAROLEE SCHNEEMANN

from Tape #2 for "Kitch's Last Meal"
ongoing super 8mm film

THE SNAKE (Anthony & Carolee)

- A. has the snake gone?
C. Oh the snake, the snake! fantastic!
A. What? has it gone home?
C. of course...listen: it occurs to me that this house for 250 years or however long its stood here, has been in the way of an ancient journey snakes have to make, because every summer I find skins, right? at that end of the house somewhere...
- A. in the tree
C. in the tree..well it seemed to be the snake very intelligently went out onto the front porch
A. out the front door? went out the front door?
C. no. it went out onto the roof... actually.....I wonder where it is
- A. how did it go out? which window? the one in the hall?
C. yup
A. It's probably gone down a tree now
C. what do you mean, down a tree? there's no tree touching the roof
A. well it, uhh
C. well its just gone down.....I wish I had seen it. I went out to garden and I missed just the moment when it would have climbed up the window...because when I came back.....
- A. How did it climb up the window?
C. EXACTLY!
A. did you put a chair for it?
C. nooooo

From Tape #2 for "KITCH'S LAST MEAL"
(continuing Super 8 film: 1973,74,75-)

His full identification with us is so taboo, so repellent that he cannot share, extend to us the pronouns for human being. The current cock-eyed twist is this: he remains "cameraman"; you become "cameraperson". Why should he be "cameraperson"? -- he hasn't excluded himself from the language by which his "natural" rights are perpetrated.

He is the chairman, you are welcome as chairperson. The distance is maintained -- snapping mother cunt trying to manipulate big boys, kept at bay!

Artists with tender feelings for their female muse want women artists to understand their exclusions are only loving distances by which they are better able to see us in their own light. We are "poetess", "sculptress" (where we could share a neutral noun) -- a special sort of female artist -- slightly Victorian, set apart from these men who welcome us as fascinating guests in their domain.

* * * * *

.....that "man" is the broken away suffix of "woman"; "male" is the broken away suffix of "female"; "Father" is the variation on "Mother".

(do our own myths accustom us to think of the female as extra, additional!pulled from his rib - phallic fecundity! We have been shamed, humbled at their monumental obfuscations, silenced. But they are born of us, by us, from us. We are the origin -- the source of production and creative will.)

.....when we say "man", "male", "mankind" we salute the truncated suffix as the inclusive receptical of TWO genders.

* * * * *

From Tape #2 for "KITCH'S LAST MEAL"
(continuing Super 8 film: 1973,74,75-)

His full identification with us is so taboo, so repellent that he cannot share, extend to us the pronouns for human being. The current cock-eyed twist is this: he remains "cameraman"; you become "cameraperson". Why should he be "cameraperson"? -- he hasn't excluded himself from the language by which his "natural" rights are perpetrated.

He is the chairman, you are welcome as chairperson. The distance is maintained -- snapping mother cunt trying to manipulate big boys, kept at bay!

Artists with tender feelings for their female muse want women artists to understand their exclusions are only loving distances by which they are better able to see us in their own light. We are "poetess", "sculptress" (where we could share a neutral noun) -- a special sort of female artist -- slightly Victorian, set apart from these men who welcome us as fascinating guests in their domain.

* * * * *

.....that "man" is the broken away suffix of "woman"; "male" is the broken away suffix of "female"; "Father" is the variation on "Mother".

(do our own myths accustom us to think of the female as extra, additional!pulled from his rib - phallic fecundity! We have been shamed, humbled at their monumental obfuscations, silenced. But they are born of us, by us, from us. We are the origin -- the source of production and creative will.)

.....when we say "man", "male", "mankind" we salute the truncated suffix as the inclusive receptical of TWO genders.

* * * * *

28 May 1975 1.

It is all people without intensive relatedness to nature: living in the country, gardening, farming, efforts determined by seasonal necessities which govern and shape the lives of country people -- it is you, who only "visit" the country who anthropomorphize "Nature" -- it ain't me! Seasonal cycles are precise and demanding as any performance production; the stove pipes MUST be cleaned out before the stove is set up; wood MUST be chopped and seasoned in order to heat; the soil MUST be manured and mulched in time for spring rains but not so soon as to leach away; the grounds MUST be given lime and fertilizer before the grass seeds itself; Peas MUST go in before Corn; Juniper MUST not be allowed to grow near Apple Trees; the fish fertilizer MUST be dug in to the roots before spring growth begins; the grasses and weeds MUST be cut before the mosquitoes are breeding; the verge MUST not be mowed while the birds are nesting. To us this is a concentrated inter-locked program of commands; pursued, sustained in independent physical efforts yet linking a community in duplicated concerns. To you it seems lyric, perhaps luxurious. We feel we participate in and depend on the very heart and bowel of life process -- you from the city observing flower and shadowy leaf wonder why we work so hard digging, chopping, planting, plucking, pitting, pruning, in constant labors which show you no direct product and whose effectiveness remains vague.

To feed oneself from three acres of land is as painstaking, engrossing, compelling, effortful and exacting a process as any art work could be. It is NOT romantic, expressive, individualistic, fanciful or even imaginative. Country management is precise, exacting -- the inter-related efforts as critical as those in a production cue sheet.

All the satisfying, sweaty, repetitious, grueling, endless, boring, pleasurable seasonable tasks shown in "Kitch's Last Meal" might seem attractive, or charming to city people who have never scalded their arms in boiling preserving waters, found their minds blank, body aching in a blazing sun under which the hay has to be turned; stiffened their arms to dig - holding back nausea - to clean out the septic pit....(Perhaps its the tricks of color film).

Just 50 people in our hyper-eroticized/de-sensualized culture regard a nude body as a sexual provocation or invitation. I use my nude body in "Up To And Including Her Limits" as the stripped down, undecorated human object; it is not necessarily erotic, comic, cosmic, maternal, poignant, expressive, attractive, repellent, implacable though it might seem any of these things to different people at the same time.

In country work it is weather and managing the land which direct us. We are absorbed within nature. In the city it is our own natures which dominate communication; we say what we see, feel, think; the median-surround is actions and effects made by other artists. In country life we discuss those efforts demanded of

us in order to plant, grow, harvest. I am insisting on all this because all my creative works are linked to my growing up in the country as much as they are to my history as a painter. The automatic conception that Rural/Nature be equated with Romanticism is a measure of the breakdown of integral cultural systems.

A deep and dangerous fetter. As deflating and draining as the clichés: artists should be poor-it keeps them inventive/exceptional women are fulfilled living with Great Men/politicians understand the needs of the people.

This is in response to your notion of Romantic Themes in "Up To And Including Her Limits".

1. nature
2. time
3. re-personalization
- (the self as material)
4. political statement

The soundtrack tape: does NOT DEFINE MY aesthetic! it is the interpretation of my imaginary enemy -- I have put the words into "his" mouth to stand for resistant/blocked perceptions.

Judson: I was a founding member; different from "worked with". And as we have mentioned - the first artist (before Rauschenberg, Morris) to introduce visual consideration and physical materials.

E.A.T.: "Snows" was the first theater piece on which they collaborated. They put a team of engineers at my disposal and provided necessary equipment according to my formulations. Different from "worked with E.A.T."

I have never had an "avowed Abstract Expressionist aesthetic". It is a movement I CAME OUT OF. My God, I'm not some retrograde troglodyte....it is crucial to consider that movement as background, but I was as much working out of as against the precepts and ground rules of that time before me.

My "solitariness of actual performance" is relatively recent; I would emphasize that I had my own performing companies continually from 1964 to 1971 (the last, in London).

Your statements on the use of slides and the book seemed just right.

Again I insist my materials are not fetishistic or romantic but "naturalistic"; I care about their visual functions not their connotations....you have to SEE what they do, not what they are made up of; the materials function as a way to establish certain visual energies. Simply, that they Are. Smashing glass, throwing resins, setting on fire -- these actions were directed to removing or making ambiguous the direct intervention of hand to material -- to combine elements out of which a visual fusion would develop beyond my intentions. (And this relates to my later statements on Kinetic Theater procedures.)

Having dissolved my performance groups, being without access to any technological resources, art media, or funding, and re-entering the New York Art world -- where once my presence was a formative force, to find my reappearance greeted with all the anti-climactic hostility reserved for those presumed missing in action, who return to a new life made on their bodies... and whose relatives and guests are moreover living in the house, wearing the clothes, eating on the dishes of the lost party -- on the basis of all this, I was led to consider what I might further do away with by choice.

My intentions for "Up To And Including Her Limits"

have been TO DO AWAY WITH:

1. PERFORMANCE
2. A FIXED AUDIENCE
3. REHEARSALS
4. PERFORMERS
5. FIXED DURATIONS
6. SEQUENCES
7. CONSCIOUS INTENTION
8. IMPROVISATION
9. TECHNICAL CUES
10. A CENTRAL METAPHOR OR THEME

What I would not do away with was a close and sustained use of my own life as material. There are many reasons for this "sticking close to my bones"; in making my film FUSES (1964-67) I understood that I would no longer be influenced by male artists whose life experience and mythicizing work were in dissimulating variance; that as a woman artist I had to discover, define and defend my own perceptual territories and that current traditions insisted on a masculine bias which I could not trust for myself. Further, I was accepted among artists as an Image, or as an Image-maker, but heavy taboos surrounded merging Image and Image-maker. I was determined to confront and challenge these unconscious conventions. In FUSES I was the camera operator even while making love with my partner. Self-taught, considering film an extension of collage I subjected the film

to intensive tactile mechanical processes which were considered, then, beyond the pale.

(Now Video has made personal-material acceptable but too often it remains diaristic, episodic and obviously dependent on psychological or narrative content.)

The central element of "Up To And Including Her Limits" is the film "Kitch's Last Meal" and its sound tracks. It is only in the film that intention again disposes. Specific conditions are met in the filming and editing, and sustained for a period of several years. Fixing the camera in different areas I assess which recurrent, domestic, ordinary chores define my actions from week to week. (Again as in my previous long works, the cat, Kitch, who has been with me for 19 years functions as the source of self-objectification.) Against the banality and constancy of the super 8 double projection, the sound is made week to week, based on what dominates my thought or environment: one tape is composed of "Sorrows and Outrages" (feminist and political); another is composed of the daily domestic conversations between the couple; another is all the sounds made in the course of preparing a breakfast. Another is made by the microphone hung outside all day and recording sounds of which the cat will be most aware -- many "ghosts" and "invisible" noises.

Installations of "Up To And Including Her Limits" are intended for varying spaces. The rectangles of doorways, windows, the projection frames, video monitors, are repeated in the "performance" area which is illuminated only by a super 8 projector light (without film).

The drawing accumulations which occur during my suspension on the rope are called automatic writing or trance markings. For non-specified durations I turn myself into a randomized drawing machine. The situation seems personal -- being nude, my voice on the tapes, my image in the film -- but while the figure on the ropes is actual it becomes less "real" than the woman of the film. There is no idea of "performance" whatsoever; while working on the rope I may not know if there are spectators or none. The movements and gestures which produce the strokes are controlled by the torsion of my body wound in the rope. My only thought is to be an extension of the rope itself. Until discomfort or loss of concentration occurs I let my entire body function as a pencil.

This may be a fond and ironical re-connection to those painterly origins from which I explored increasing dimensionalities in my Kinetic Theater and film works from the early 60's onwards. Having moved as far away from actually painting on canvas as I could, here I paradoxically ~~enact~~ the body following the eye into physical space, the hand as guide, transmission, marker.

5.

Finally, I realize this is not so much in response to your article itself, but to more generally invite semiological attention to the network of images and interactions you mention. If I am historicizing unnecessarily it will be because since 1962 -- with only two exceptions -- my works have NEVER been reviewed, described, considered in any American magazine or journal of the art community. (It is through the writings of poets, radicals, journalists, disaffiliated artists and in Europe that my work is noted.)

VOICE

the village

MOVIE JOURNAL

BY JONAS MEKAS

I'd like to give voice in this column to two film-makers/artists, Carolee Schneemann and Michael Snow. More precisely, I'd like to print their responses to two columns—December 16 (Snow) and December 30 (Schneemann)—devoted to the discussion of their work.

From Carolee Schneemann:

"I appreciate your recent thoughts about my work. Your comment on the sadness, physical vulnerability in the current film (& performance), in contrast to your remembrance of my previous idealized physicality may be an acute appraisal of the past to the present; still this shadow of the past may be obscuring layers of the present film.

"'Kitch's Last Meal'—the super 8 film (part of the installation: 'Up To And Including Her Limits') is an on-going work, two years of material in process now. Three hours of actual film and sound are completed out of an additional six hours being edited, and the final work may be up to nine or ten hours. Each sound tape "speaks" to another—it would be difficult to characterize the film by any one tape. I assume the tape which affected your consideration was #2-Sorrows/outrage. #1 is sensual, subliminal sounds which envelope the cat's daily awareness—barely audible to us. And tape #3 is composed of silences out of which a couple's domestic conversations emerge—serene, quixotic.

Your notes also led me to think about degrees (a staircase—each step a degree) of attachment/detachment between myself and the work which uses my immediate per-

sonal life as source & resource. 1. Degree of attachment/detachment: as soon as viewers see the film in a generalized-present time, the personal time will have become "the past." (It takes me several years to complete a film.) 2. Viewers may take the psychological atmosphere of the film as "being her life" (an open ended time in their perceptions), but I will have changed & been changed by working on the film; the film will have turned me to other areas. 3. I welcome and trust the familiarity, intimacy of what I experience directly: that my own "life" is available to shape, explore. (And perhaps as a woman excluded, threatened by the strictures of masculine-aesthetic preserves, I have kept to "myself"). 4. The processes of filming itself, editing, and more mysterious collusions cannot be imaged as "real life"—only as "reel life": film, celluloid, emulsion layers, pigmentation, projection beam, lenses, densities of exposure. . . . What IS is barely visible; what is invisible may become clearly visible, what should be clearly visible may become visible. 5. I recognize and detach myself: for the personal instant to be timeless; the specific person an illumination particle. 6. I assume necessary energies move through me. Whatever "I" stand for, function as, belongs to possibilities beyond my conscious (and self-conscious) intentions. 7. As I edit the film I don't think "here is my walk down the porch", but rather "as she walks down the porch, do I increase or decrease the light?" 8. I become She, We become They. 9. The passage of identifications shift with differing considerations. 10. Personal Istory: watching "Fuses," I may indeed think "there we are"—meaning, that was us, in a past time, past relatedness which the film brings vividly to an unobstructed present!

"All of which brings me to particular slants as witness of myself. How I focus on the cat as medium of perception: the couple as core of what is seen; and the hidden, persistent force which has been the greatest influence on how I work: being starved for the precedents of other women artists.

I will try to develop these thoughts at another time. For now my thanks and fond regards."

photograph by GIANFRANCO GORGONI

made possible by The National Endowment for the Arts

Anthology Film Archives
6-10 pm (cont.)
Performance + film installation

800 Wood Street
N.Y.C. 10008

'Up to
And
Including
Her
Limits'

December 1974
12 x 13

CAROLEE
SCHNEEMANN

