

ENDURANCE

PROGRAM GUIDE

REEL ONE

Bruce Nauman
Revolving Upside Down
1:00:00 1968

"I wanted the tension of waiting for something to happen, and then you should just get drawn into the rhythm of the thing. There's a passage in Beckett's *Molloy* about transferring stones from one place to another, in the pockets of an overcoat, without getting them mixed up. It's elaborate without any point."

—Bruce Nauman

Nauman's exploratory style and early concern with linguistic and temporal play is reflected both in diverse sculptural works and in video projects that take as their subject mundane, repetitive acts requiring either sustained physical exertion or considerable mental concentration. Nauman's persistent interest in presenting the object as a "stand-in" for an idea, expanding the notion of time as a physical quantity, and striving to erase the distinctive "mark" of the artist, has earned him a reputation as a "proto-conceptualist" in the tradition of Marcel Duchamp.

The **Revolving Upside Down** inverted camera catches Nauman standing at the end of the room, slowly spinning around on one foot, first head down in one direction, then head up in the other direction. The tape seems to be as much a trial of Nauman's endurance as an exercise in becoming a human machine, some type of cog or mechanized weather vane.

Vito Acconci
Waterways: 4 Saliva Studies
22:25 1971

The video projects Vito Acconci produced in the late 1960s and early 1970s sought to transpose to the terms of Minimalism and Process Art, expanding on the fractured, self-reflective nature of video. These works investigate the rift between lived identity and conjured projections of one's identity through social and artistic personae, exposing the co-option of the self. From this early interest in poetry, Acconci moved toward performance, sound and video work in order to "define my body in space, find a ground I had as a poet." Discovering his body as a site and a source for artistic activity, Acconci rose to the forefront of the Body Art movement in the 1970s.

In **Waterways** Acconci explodes the notion of an artist's creation, his creative act being the build-up and discharge of saliva, an activity more properly belonging to the realm of necessary and autonomic bodily functions than art. Positioning himself as a hyper self-conscious artistic subject, Acconci fuses the terrain of body art and process art, formulating the body as process, and art as a natural function of the body.

Gilbert & George
The Singing Sculpture
23:00 1992

Moving with slow, robotic gestures to "Underneath the Arches," a depression-era song about homelessness, the pair alternate roles as gilded men in business suits. Singing Sculpture harkens back to the pathos and desperation of marathon dancing of the 1930s, while also reflecting the alienation of our post-industrial society.

"**Singing Sculpture** documents one of Gilbert & George's most famous 'living sculpture' pieces. Covered in multicolored bronze paint, the artists sing and interchange parts of the English music hall standard 'Underneath the Arches.' Through their stylized performance, Gilbert & George deliberately blur the lines between life and art, reality and contrivance. This ambiguity does not rely on a transformation from living to sculptural form. On the contrary, they have merged the two in order to obliterate, rather than emphasize, the distinctions between life and art."

—Walker Art Center

Dennis Oppenheim
Material Interchange And Nail Sharpening
06:00 1970

In the early 1970s, Dennis Oppenheim was in the vanguard of artists using film and video as a means to investigate themes relating to Body Art, Conceptual Art, and performance. In a series of works produced between 1970-74, Oppenheim used his own body as a site to challenge the self: he explored boundaries of personal risk, transformation, and communication through ritualistic performance actions and interactions.

Material Interchange and Nail Sharpening is an excerpt from the compilation entitled "Aspen Projects". The brevity of these selections give way to the intensity of the action, resonating long after the piece is over. The brevity of these selections give way to the intensity of the actions, resonating long after the piece is over.

Geoffrey Hendricks
Body/Hair (excerpt)
10:00 1971

Geoffrey Hendricks, an American artist associated with Fluxus, has made work over the past thirty years which investigates the body as both a site and as an object from which to transform and transcend. Hendricks' performances adhere to a notion of ritual based in actualities of everyday life. Indeed, Hendricks' better-known performance pieces explore personal experiences. In **Dream Event**, a piece from 1971 which took place at Apple Gallery, New York, the performance took place over a 48-hour period and involved continuous sleep. Upon waking, Hendricks would duly record his dreams in a

journal. Visitors would find Hendricks' prone body, echoing other artists who used public space for sleep, particularly Chris Burden, but with a meditative, not confrontational spirit. Another performance, **Ring Piece** also from 1971, used the occasion of the artist's divorce as the center point of a 12-hour performance. Again the artist used his body to create a meditative, reflective experience that was both personal as well as public.

Body/Hair further challenges the personal/public boundary. In a recent interview with Lars Movin, Hendricks reflected on **Body/Hair** and explained, "Shaving was a private way of saying 'I'm Different, I'm shedding skin, shedding one aspect of myself to become sort of reborn.' I wrote ... 'A snake sheds its outgrown skin. The skin is left in the landscape. What do we remember of the past? Fragments. What do we know of the past? Fragments. A relic is like a dream.'"

Although the artist shaves-off his body hair, he does not shave-off his beard, an omission Hendricks explored next in, **Unfinished Business - The Education of a Boy Child**. Hendricks explained, "In a way the growing of the beard was a declaration of independence, but then the removal of the beard was saying through this skin shedding, I'm accepting myself as a gay male, making that change manifest."

REEL TWO

Bonnie Sherk

Portable Parks 1-3, Sitting Still, Pacing, Public Lunch (ex)

1970-71 14:00 edited excerpts

Since the 1960s, Bonnie Sherk has investigated the relationship between her body and the natural environment. Often, her work points to the tensions between human life and nature. Her projects confront this tension by her situating her body as a mediator between the natural and the man-made. Video documentation from Sherk's early pieces are presented, and include:

Portable Parks 1-3, in which she created parks in "in-between" spaces in San Francisco; and **Sitting Still**, where the artist sat in a garbage dump for an afternoon dressed in an evening gown. Her high style contrasted with the trash, offering a visual and political statement on the environment and the way citizens contain trash. **Pacing**, a thought piece, is structured around the relatively mundane event a pacing, and brings to her art a meditative, wistful gesture. These early, conceptual pieces formed the core of ideas that were later expanded in **Public Lunch**, in which the artist ate a catered lunch in the lion house at the San Francisco Zoo during feeding time. **Public Lunch** led to Sherk's projects involving live animals, work that she continues today in San Francisco and New York.

Carolee Schneemann

Up To and Including Her Limits

1973-1976 10:00 excerpt, archival video

Since the early 1960s New York-based artist Carolee Schneemann participated in art, art happenings, body and performance art. Becoming known as the "body beautiful," due to her use of her nude body, she inspired a dialogue on the female body as a site of action, not objectification. Schneemann's performative experiments utilize the celebration of the body along with a critique of cultural perceptions. The spirit was best exemplified in Schneemann's infamous **Meat Joy** performances of the early sixties in which nude and partially nude men and women moved and writhed around the stage, in a sort of orgiastic Busby Berkeley choreography. **Meat Joy** challenged the social conformity of '50s conservatism, while it also created a new and experimental performative art form. More theatrical than the work of Acconci and Nauman, but with similar attention to repetitive movement, Schneemann describes how she transforms her body in **Up To and Including Her Limits** from an animate state to a mechanical state: "Over the hours drawing accumulates as automatic writing or trance markings. The situation is personal-personal being nude, turning on the rope; my voice on the tapes, image in the film-but while my figure on the rope is actual it becomes less 'real' than the woman of the film. Concentrated on the rope I may know if there are spectators or not. The movements and gestures which produce the strokes occur through the torsion of my body wound, balanced with the rope. Only thought is to be an extension of the rope itself. Until discomfort or loss of concentration, I function as a pencil."

–Carolee Schneemann

Paul McCarthy

The Black and White Tapes

1970-1975 33:00

Paul McCarthy has been an influential figure in the Southern California art and performance scene for the past twenty years. **The Black and White Tapes** derive from a series of studio pieces the artist undertook on an ongoing basis, from 1970-1975. Each piece is conceived for the camera, in a similar spirit to Nauman's work, but with a different emphasis. The artist appears to be sketching out the ideas that later embody his performances. The use of props and absurdity proliferates throughout each short. As described in a recent catalog, McCarthy "Mine{s} the psychological depths of the family and childhood__via kitsch and pop cultural detritus, the body and sexuality__[inhabiting] a violent landscape of dysfunction and trauma."

Michael Cohen in *Flash Art* pondered the work of McCarthy:

"What compels someone to subject himself to degradation and to revel in filth? It is abjection, the revolt of being. What Julia Kristeva described as a threat that emanates from an indeterminable inside and outside. Abjection is disgust, horror, pleasure and disorientation beyond all thinkable limits. The signs of abjection: food, waste. Both suggest the interpenetrability and non-separation of the body's interior and exterior. Bodily fluids, spit, blood, tears, sperm, waste, shit and vomit represented by edibles__ketchup, mayonnaise, hand lotion, hot dogs, raw hamburger, dog food__refuse, industrial utensils, car parts, assorted dolls and stuffed animals all make up Paul McCarthy's material or 'the flux' as he terms it. Disturbingly boundaryless, he incorporates his products into each orifice and excretes them onto his surroundings."

REEL THREE

Kim Jones

San Francisco Walk

1979 6:00 excerpt

Since the mid-1970s artist Kim Jones has developed a performance/action/ritual called **Mudman**.

Writer Angelika Festa describes the Mudman projects as follows:

"The Mudman's mudcaked, nearly nude body is also reminiscent of the Australian shamanic practice of covering the body with mud or feces to signify a return from the netherworld. A mud/dirt/feces covered body is a vegetable symbol suggestive of continual generation and regeneration. While the Mudman's body is covered with and represents the 'made-up,' unborn, and mythical part of the earth__almost to the point of non-differentiation from the earth__the stick structure on his back is by comparison stiff and rigid. It restricts movement, inflicts pain, and has a visual and structural dominance over Jones."

The Mudman is a figure who carries his own destruction upon his back while at the same time promising rebirth by his direct connection to the earth and the undifferentiated. The persona of the Mudman Can be seen as an oppositional structure, the polarity of Eros and Telos, a person possessed by her/his other side, the unconscious and unknown. This two-part image makes Jones the Mudman into a true "threshold figure," symbol of ritual pairs: man-woman, human-divine, fetus-skeleton, life-death.

Linda Montano

Mitchell's Death

1978 22:00 b/w

Although originally trained as a sculptor Linda Montano has been exploring performance for the past 15 years, elaborating themes of duration, transformation, altered consciousness and hypnosis. Her work from the 1970s and early 1980s is of video by and about women. Attempting to obliterate the distinction between art and life, Montano's art practice historically autobiographical and often involved religious discipline. Montano spent two years in a convent and studied Yoga and Zen for many years. Her avowed interest lies in "learning how to live better life-like art works."

Using performance as a means of personal transformation and catharsis, **Mitchell's Death** mourns the death of Montano's ex-husband. Every detail of her story, from the telephone call announcing the tragedy to visiting the body is chanted by Montano as her face pierced by acupuncture needles slowly comes into focus then goes out again. The chanting is reminiscent of Buddhist texts while the needles signify the pain that is necessary for healing and understanding.

Barbara Smith

Becoming Bald, 1974;

Full Jar, Empty Jar, 1974;
The Perpetual Napkin, 1980,
1974-1980 4:09

Southern California artist Barbara Smith's work has concentrated on human relationships, pushing the boundaries of art and life. Smith was among the first female performance artists to emerge during the late 1960s who directly confronted issues of the mind, the body and the spirit. According to Jackie Apple, "Smith's work has explored profound personal and spiritual issues, penetrating the darkest levels of human experience." In **Perpetual Napkin** Smith uses the metaphor of running until exhausted so that she can "expore{e} how life causes shifts in consciousness and growth to new understanding and development." Seeking to achieve higher powers related to "The Magician" or "transformer" the piece becomes a lesson on the levels of how art functions i.e. direct seeing, play, exploration, discovery, skill, and technique and finally shows art and especially the artist as a transmitter of energy as a living icon or *tangka*.

Gordon Matta-Clark
Clockshower

1973 13:50silent
Courtesy Electronic Arts Intermix, New York

Gordon Matta-Clark, better known for his photograph documentation of deconstructed buildings, also left a body of work in film and video. **Clockshower**, originally a film, represents one of Matta-Clark's most daring performances, the artist climbed to the top of the Clocktower in New York and washed, shaved and brushed his teeth in front of the clock. As the art world's answer to Harold Lloyd, Matta-Clark transforms architectural façade to theater.

Skip Arnold
Punch

1992 0:10

Marks

1984 13:00

Los Angeles-based artist Skip Arnold follows in the tradition of Chris Burden and Paul McCarthy. Arnold uses his body as a starting point, making work that evokes forms of power and aggression. Arnold's slight build heightens his physical provocation, as in **Punch** from 1992, where the artist asked an athletic man to punch him in the stomach. There is a brutal simplicity to Arnold's projects as the courts physical risk, and elucidates a punk sensibility. Like his contemporary Los Angelino, Bob Flanagan, many of Arnold's performances take place outside the boundaries of the art world, finding an audience in night clubs and cable television. Skip Arnold conceived of **Marks** as a live performance broadcast on television for MP/TV Los Angeles on Jan. 23, 1984.

"Intent: to use my body to make marks on the walls of an 8 x 8 x 8' white room while an audience watched on closed circuit TV. The piece ended when I lost consciousness."

REEL FOUR

Sherman Fleming

Ax/Vapor

1993 10:00

Performed at Duke University

Washington D.C.-based artist Sherman Fleming Has explored the relationship between psychical endurance and social structures throughout his work. His performances explore the intersection of race and gender. In subjecting his body to a series of "tests," not unlike the repetitious contests in Acconci's early work, Fleming reveals the absurdity and chaos in the attempt to control the inevitable.

"My performance work employs childhood games, ritual dance actions as derived from voodoo religion and African and pre-Columbia cultures. I use traditional artistic methods and non-traditional and utilitarian sources, in concert with quotidian gesture. I believe that I employ uniquely male body actions that exhibit elements of balance, overtime, is the metaphor for the maintenance of a position within culture that may be described as 'impeccable'__meaning the ability to remain self-possessed and authentic within the social and institutionalized construct of racism and sexism. This bodily behavior, which I have defined as 'psycho-physical behavior' operates through the act of repetition; its duration is determined by my body's stamina. My objective is to maintain the quality of stability through the behavioral constructions of rotation, suspension, inversion, and inertia."

–Sherman Fleming

Ax/Vapor is from a performance series Fleming undertook under the name RODFORCE.

Bob Flanagan, Sheree Rose and Kirby Dick

Autopsy

1994 15:40

At 41, Bob Flanagan is among the oldest living survivors of cystic fibrosis, a degenerative genetic illness affecting the lungs and stomach that is usually fatal by early adolescence. Working in collaboration with Sheree Rose for over fifteen years, Flanagan's use of illness symbiotically refers to masochism. Bob Flanagan's performance career began in the late 1970s in Los Angeles night clubs. The early performances involved poetry readings and stand-up comedy. Later, Flanagan incorporated s/m performance-demonstrations which challenged the boundaries for underground sex culture and performance as spectacle. **Autopsy** is the first production of an ongoing video and film collaboration between artists Flanagan and Rose and filmmaker Kirby Dick. The objective of this collaboration is to produce a series of videos and installations that focus on Flanagan's and Rose's themes of masochism, dominance and submission, illness, and death. The final production will be a feature length documentary film about the life, death, and work of Flanagan and Rose.

Linda Montano
Seven Years of Living Art

1995 13:00

Producer/ Director: Maida Barbour

A video Collage of a seven-year performance artist Linda Montano that chronicles the issues and events that arose in Montano's life as she devoted a year to each of the seven chakras. Beginning as a piece devoted to themes of commitment and limitation, the work becomes a fascinating hybrid of art and life as Montano experiences the onset of menopause, her mother's death, her choice to enter and then leave a convent, the suffering of a stroke and thoughts of her own death__all within the structural confines of an intense work of art. Contributors to the work include Ellen Fullman, Gisela Gamper and Annie Sprinkle.

Orlan
Operation Reussie (Successful Operation)

1994 8:00

Since May of 1990, Orlan has been developing a project entitled La Reincarnation de Sainte-Orlan or Image(s)-Nouvelle(s) Image(s). in which she has undergone a series of surgical interventions. Each of these operations is presented as a performance.

Artist's Statement:

"Orlan denounces standards of beauty. Her surgeries are sign of protest of cosmetic surgery. For her surgery in New York she wanted important changes; for example: the bumps she now has on her temples. This performance was broadcast live with the help of the interactive telecommunication equipment in 14 places around the world like the Sanra Gering Gallery, New York, the Centr Georges Pompidou (Paris,Mac Luhan Center (Toronto), Media Art Center (Banff)..."

"As usual Orlan stayed awake during the surgery-performance, while explaining her project, answering questions and comments from the public. The operating room completely transformed becomes her artist studio. In this project, Orlan is asking questions about the status of the body in our society and for future generations via genetic manipulations. She sees the body as a site of public debate that poses critical questions for our time."

"A few words about pain. I try to make the work as un-masochistic as possible, but there is a price to pay...In fact, it is really my audience who hurt when they watch me and these images on video. I compare myself to a high-level athlete. There is the training, the moment of the performance where one must go beyond one's limits- which is not done without effort (nor pain)-and then there is recuperation."

-Orlan