

MIT List Visual Arts Center  
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[listart.mit.edu](http://listart.mit.edu)

# Joan Jonas: Selected Films and Videos, 1972–2005

April 7–July 5, 2015

## PUBLIC PROGRAMS

### Conversation with Renée Green

Thursday, April 9, 2015

Bartos Theatre, E15 Lower Level

5:30 PM Artist Renée Green, professor in the MIT Program in Art, Culture, and Technology (ACT) in the School of Architecture and Planning, and curator Henriette Huldisch discuss Joan Jonas's work.

### Reading Group: How Forms Begin

Wednesday, June 10, 2015

6 PM This reading group will discuss a selection of texts examining Joan Jonas's early film and video works in relation to her new work made for the US Pavilion as part of the 2015 Venice Biennale.

Advance registration is required. To register for this event, contact Jeffrey De Blois ([jdeblois@mit.edu](mailto:jdeblois@mit.edu)). All reading materials will be sent electronically in advance of the session.



FRONT Still from *Songdelay*, 1973, 16mm to video, b&w, sound, 19 min.

INSIDE Still from *Mirage*, 1976, 16mm to video, b&w, silent, 31 min.

Still from *Volcano Saga*, 1989, video, color, sound, 28 min.

*Lines in the Sand*, 2002, performance at Documenta 11, Kassel  
Photo: Werner Maschmann

All stills courtesy Electronic Arts Intermix (EAI), New York



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# Joan Jonas: Selected Films and Videos, 1972–2005

Bakalar Gallery April 7–July 5, 2015

In conjunction with the presentation of Joan Jonas's *They Come to Us without a Word*, a new work made for the US Pavilion as part of the 2015 Venice Biennale, the List Center presents seven of the artist's seminal film and video works spanning the breadth of her career in performance, video, and installation. Immersed in the post-minimal experiments of New York's downtown scene, Jonas developed her distinctive performances drawing on dance, ritual, and various theater traditions in the late 1960s, and soon began to incorporate video in her work.

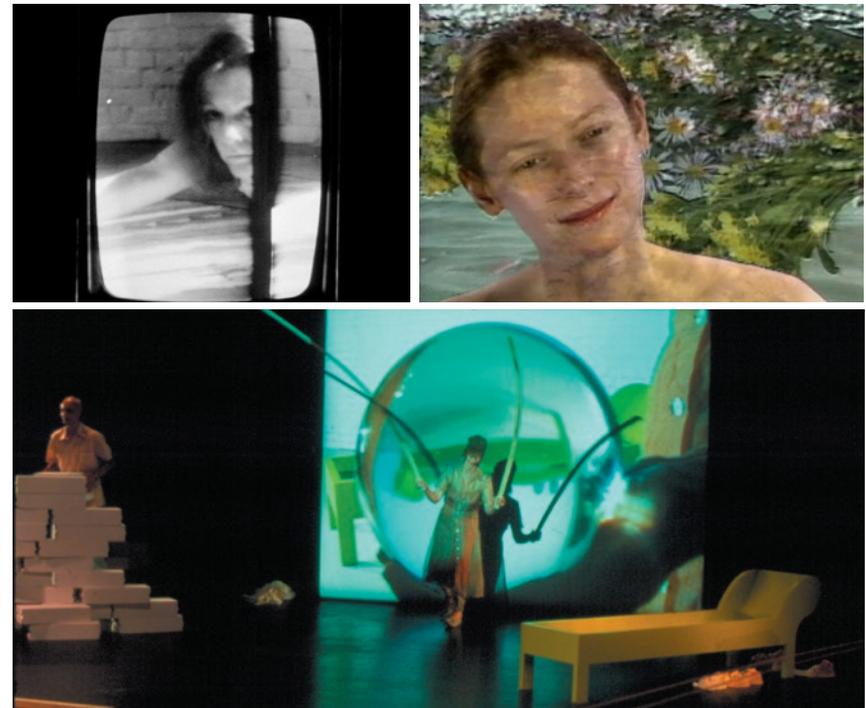
Two of Jonas's early conceptual videos probing the new medium's particular properties, such as instant playback and duration, are displayed continuously on monitors near the entrance of the gallery. *Organic Honey's Visual Telepathy* (1972, 17 min.), based on Jonas's first performance to employ video, signals her inquiry into the representation of femininity carried forward throughout her work: Jonas portrays her fictional alter ego Organic Honey wearing a mask and feather headdress while scrutinizing her own image on a video monitor. For *Good Night Good Morning* (1976, 12 min.), she recorded herself greeting the camera twice daily over three different periods of time, thus employing the mechanism to chart a mundane ritual that is rendered simultaneously intimate and distanced, public and private.

Inside the main gallery, a program of four films and videos is projected sequentially.\* *Songdelay* (1973, 19 min.) depicts a performance on an empty lot in Lower Manhattan viewed by the audience at a distance from a rooftop. Drawing on diverse influences like Japanese Noh theater and circus shows, performers carry out ritualized actions, such as clapping large woodblocks over their heads or spinning in a gymnastics wheel. The film *Mirage* (1976, 31 min.) shows the artist executing a number of signature, enigmatic chalk drawings and erasing them immediately after, "all to be read as a kind of sentence with no fixed meaning," as Jonas has said. A shorter version of the film is part of her performance of the same name, a strategy she has pursued throughout her work.

Beginning in the mid-1970s, Jonas turned towards more narrative forms inspired by antique myths, fairy tales, and literature. Using a range of stylized special effects, *Double Lunar Dogs* (1984, 24 min.) is based on a science fiction story by Robert Heinlein and envisions a post-apocalyptic spaceship lost for generations whose inhabitants no longer have any memory of their mission or where they came from. *Volcano Saga* (1989, 28 min.), originally produced for television broadcast, stages a retelling of the ancient Icelandic Laxdæla saga. The artist focuses on the female protagonist Guðrún and the foretelling of her four marriages, interweaving the story with surreal depictions of Iceland's landscapes and Jonas's own account of driving and being blown off one of the country's remote roads by the wind.

The exhibition concludes with a video documenting *Lines in the Sand* (2002–2005, 48 min.), Jonas's multimedia performance first mounted for Documenta 11 in 2002. The work uses two poems written by H.D. (Hilda Doolittle)—*Helen in Egypt* (1955) and *Tribute to Freud* (1944)—as source material, transposed to present-day Las Vegas, and subtly alludes to the political context on the eve of the US invasion of Iraq.

\*The screening program is 120 minutes long and starts at 12 pm, 2 pm, 4 pm, as well as 6 pm on Thursdays.



## ABOUT THE ARTIST

Joan Jonas (b. 1936, New York, NY) lives and works in New York City. She is professor emerita in the MIT Program in Art, Culture, and Technology (ACT) in the School of Architecture and Planning.

*Joan Jonas: Selected Films and Videos, 1972–2005* is curated by Henriette Huldisch, Curator, MIT List Visual Arts Center.

This presentation of work by Joan Jonas is in recognition of her representation of the US at the 56th Venice Biennale, organized by the MIT List Visual Arts Center and on view in Italy from May 9–November 22, 2015.

## SUPPORT

Support for this exhibition has been generously provided by the Council for the Arts at MIT, the Office of the Associate Provost at MIT, the Massachusetts Cultural Council, the MIT List Visual Arts Center Advisory Committee, and the Friends of the List.

