

Press release
Zurich, 23 March 2017

Kunsthhaus Zürich stages 'Action!' – an exhibition on action art with a wealth of live performances

From 23 June to 30 July 2017 the Kunsthhaus Zürich is transforming itself into a space for live actions and performances. Visitors can also become active participants directly involved in the creation of new artworks, while historical performances are being revived or presented in new stagings. A total of 30 artists are represented, including Yoko Ono and Rimini Protokoll. 'Action!' is inspired by Allan Kaprow (1927–2006) and tackles some of the burning issues of our time.

In recent years, performance art has once again become a significant element of contemporary art production. A young generation of artists are revisiting the heyday of performances, happenings and art actions in the 1960s and 1970s. Why are ephemeral and process-oriented forms of art back in fashion? 'Action!' seeks to answer this question, examining the concept in both its formal and its political sense.

'AGENCY FOR ACTION'

The world of today is undergoing a political paradigm shift. Issues such as the refugee crisis, the rise of right-wing populist parties and the questioning of fundamental democratic values positively demand a reaction – or rather: action. Allan Kaprow's call back in 1967 for the modern museum to become an 'agency for action' is therefore more topical than ever. Kaprow, to whom the exhibition partly owes its name, is of course represented, with a reinterpretation by San Keller of his 'Yard' from 1961. Meanwhile, historical works by Yoko Ono and Adrian Piper are being revived and there are new stagings of historical performances by Trisha Brown and Lucinda Childs. Young contemporary artists will be engaging in dialogue with these historical positions and asking questions about current socio-political issues.

GENDER ISSUES AND THE UNIVERSAL BASIC INCOME

The Guerrilla Girls' striking and now famous statement that only 5% of exhibited artworks are by women but 85% of nude models in paintings are female set the debate rolling back in the 1980s. Given the continuing inequality in the treatment of men and women, that debate is far from over. While Valie Export and Adrian Piper appear as eyewitnesses to history, Sharon Hayes and the Guerrilla Girls carry the discussion on into the present day. Ahmet Öğüt urges us to reflect on the universal basic income, while Boris Charmatz/Musée de la danse presents a

work that explores the fundamental change in people's demeanour in the public space since the Paris attacks.

PUBLIC SPACE AND SOCIAL MEDIA

Here, though, the public space appears not just in its classical incarnation as the street, but also extends into the internet and social media. Alexandra Pirici investigates the flow of information directed by algorithms and filter bubbles. !Mediengruppe Bitnik asks who is responsible for a (political) action when an intelligent household appliance suddenly starts to do things it was never intended for. Cally Spooner revisits scandals that prompted strong reactions in internet forums. Acrimonious comments are displayed via an LED screen and will also be performed live by an opera singer at regular intervals, though the timings will not be announced in advance. The human voice invests these quick-fire, technologically mediated utterances with an emotional and personal message.

(DE)LIMITATIONS: ARCHITECTURE INFLUENCES CHOREOGRAPHY

Visitors are directly involved in many of the works, as they are transformed from passive observers into active participants. At the very start of the exhibition, Lebanese-Syrian artist Mounira al Solh invites them to take off their shoes and don instead a pair of traditional Syrian clogs – of the kind still very often worn by Syrian refugees – before entering. Close by, the celebrated dancer and choreographer William Forsythe presents one of his choreographic objects. The cube suspended in space takes the audience out of their comfort zone. It can only be approached on all fours, crawling or bending down. The installation is a commentary on the increasingly circumscribed scope for action mapped out by present-day political developments.

THROUGH ZÜRICH ON A 'PROTEST BIKE'; A SOUNDTRACK SUPPLIED BY VISITORS.

'Action!' offers a wide range of opportunities for participation; one of the most energetic is undoubtedly Marinella Senatore's 'Protest Bike' (2016), a bicycle equipped with loudspeakers and horns that visitors can borrow and ride around the city. A new work by the Italian-born artist is being created specially for 'Action!', and visitors are invited to participate in its design. Using audio files of various sounds from around the city of Zurich that anyone can record and upload, Senatore is composing a soundtrack for the exhibition that will be played back in a parade in which, in turn, many members of the public and extras can take part. Registration and uploads can be made from April at action.kunsthau.ch. In addition to a wide-ranging calendar of events, the website contains brief biographies and descriptions of the works by the 30 artists whom curator Mirjam Varadinis has selected for this short (five-week) presentation.

ARTISTS

Mounira al Solh (b. 1978), Francis Alÿs (b. 1959), Nina Beier (b. 1975), IMediengruppe Bitnik, Trisha Brown (1936–2017), Tania Bruguera (b. 1968), Lucinda/Ruth Childs (b. 1940), Guy Debord (1931–1994), Valie Export (b. 1940), William Forsythe (b. 1949), Simone Forti (b. 1935), Guerrilla Girls, Sharon Hayes (b. 1970), Adelita Husni-Bey (b. 1985), Florence Jung (b. 1986), Allan Kaprow (1927–2006)/San Keller (b. 1971), Georg Keller (b. 1981), Dieter Meier (b. 1945), Musée de la danse/Boris Charmatz (b. 1973)/Aernout Mik (b. 1962), Yoko Ono (b. 1933), Ahmet Ögut (b. 1981), Adrian Piper (b. 1948), Alexandra Pirici (b. 1982), Rimini Protokoll, Tracey Rose (b. 1974), Tino Sehgal (b. 1976), Marinella Senatore (b. 1977), Cally Spooner (b. 1983), Koki Tanaka (b. 1975)

PROGRAMME AND PUBLICATION

Almost every day of the exhibition has an interactive offering. From the Trisha Brown Dance Company to Zurich's popular local matadors Rimini Protokoll, all are open to the public. However, early booking is recommended. Further information can be found in the online events calendar from April at action.kunsthhaus.ch. An accompanying publication in the form of a newspaper that visitors and purchasers can add to throughout the exhibition is available in the Kunsthaus shop.

Supported by Swiss Re – Partner for contemporary art, the Art Mentor Foundation Lucerne, the artEDU Stiftung and the Dr. Georg and Josi Guggenheim Foundation.

ADMISSION, ADVANCE SALES, OPENING HOURS

Admission to the exhibition including the collection and readmission for a second visit: CHF 26 / CHF 19 (concessions and groups). Children and young people up to the age of 16 free of charge.

Advance sales: SBB RailAway combination ticket, with discount on travel and admission: at stations and by phoning Rail Service 0900 300 300 (CHF 1.19/min. by land line), www.sbb.ch.

Zurich Tourism: hotel room reservations and ticket sales, Tourist Service at Zurich Main Railway Station, tel. +41 44 215 40 00, information@zuerich.com, www.zuerich.com.

Kunsthaus Zürich, Heimplatz 1, CH-8001 Zurich, tel. +41 (0)44 253 84 84, www.kunsthhaus.ch

Opening hours: Fri–Sun/Tues 10 a.m.–6 p.m., Wed, Thurs 10 a.m.–8 p.m.

Current information available on the exhibition website at www.kunsthhaus.ch

INVITATION TO THE PRESS PREVIEW

Journalists and bloggers are warmly invited to the press conference at 11 a.m. on Thursday 22 June. Registration is not required.

Doors open: 10.30 a.m.

Welcome by curator Mirjam Varadinis: 11.00 a.m.

Live performance: 11.30 a.m.

Attendees can then continue their visit on their own.

CONTACTS

This press release as well as images are available at www.kunsthhaus.ch > Information > Press. Please contact us in advance if you wish to arrange extended interviews with the curator or individual artists.

Kunsthhaus Zürich, Press & Public Relations

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