

4. “Of the Pure But Irregular Passion”

After hinting at her homosexuality in the column for some time, Jill Johnston came out in *The Village Voice* (“Of the Pure But Irregular Passion,” 1970). She engaged in lesbian-feminist debates, clashing occasionally with mainstream feminist movements. At a book release party for the feminist writer Betty Friedan in the Hamptons, she swam topless in the pool as a provocative reaction to Friedan’s event. Friedan infamously called the lesbian movement the “lavender menace” since its radicalness endangered a wider acceptance of women’s liberation. In 1971 Johnston participated in a roundtable discussion on feminism at New York City’s Town Hall, moderated by Norman Mailer, which came to be known as the “Town Hall Affair”. During her speech, Johnston dropped her key phrase of that time “all women are lesbians except those who don’t know it yet”. Two women sitting in the audience came on stage and started to kiss and roll on the floor with Johnston, before they exited and left behind an outraged Mailer. The event was later turned into a documentary film by Chris Hegedus and D. A. Pennebaker (*Town Bloody Hall*, 1979).

5. Lesbian Nation

Jill Johnston’s monograph *Lesbian Nation. The Feminist Solution* was published in 1973 and marked the climax of her radical lesbian activities. It immediately had a major impact on the lesbian/feminist movement, also outside of the US (it was translated to German in 1977). Johnston was featured as a prominent lesbian figure in mainstream press like *Life*, *Newsweek*, and *Esquire*. At the same time, she participated in community building. Her writing for *The Village Voice* covered some of her own sexual encounters, as well as lesbian/feminist conferences and dynamics, sometimes using her column, now simply titled “Jill Johnston”, as a platform to promote other key figures like Ti-Grace Atkinson or Kate Millett. Johnston became a frequent participant in lecture and workshop circuits at colleges like Berkeley, Sarah Lawrence, and Evergreen State. Her columns reflected on these frequent travels as well as her new role as “mediator.” Looking back at this time, Johnston called *Lesbian Nation* a “period piece.” After ending her regular

column for *The Village Voice* in 1975, her main focus shifted to publishing (auto-)biographical books, including *Mother Bound* and *Paper Daughter*, two volumes subtitled: *Autobiography in Search of a Father*.

6. Fluxwedding

On June 26, 1993, Jill Johnston married her longtime partner Ingrid Nyeboe, in Odense, Denmark. The country had made same-sex marriage legal in 1989, and Johnston was the first foreigner to marry under this law. The time and city coincided with Geoffrey Hendricks’ exhibition at Kunsthallen Brandts Klædefabrik, who transformed the ceremony into a *Fluxwedding*. Joined by other Fluxus artists like Benjamin Patterson and Eric Anderson, the couple and their guests slowly moved in a *Fluxprocession* from the Town Hall to the exhibition space. Guided by Hendricks and his assistant, Kord Schepke, both body-painted (sky)blue, they underwent various rituals. The event mirrored Hendricks’ *Fluxdivorce* on June 21, 1971, when Hendricks and his then-wife Bici Hendricks cut all their belongings in two, and after lived openly as gay and lesbian. Johnston and Nyeboe remained married for nearly twenty years. Their wedding and following celebration in New York was covered by Eileen Myles for *The Village Voice*.

PUBLICATION

Jill Johnston, The Disintegration of a Critic

Texts: Bruce Hainley, Jennifer Krasinski, Ingrid Nyboe
Editors: Fiona McGovern, Megan Francis Sullivan, Axel Wieder
Design: HIT
Published by Bergen Kunsthall, Artists Space, New York, og Sternberg Press, 2019

As part of the exhibition, the publication is available featuring reprints of selected *Village Voice* columns by Jill Johnston, with new contributions by Ingrid Nyeboe, Jennifer Krasinski, Bruce Hainley, and an appendix of documents related to “The Disintegration of A Critic: An Analysis of Jill Johnston” (1969).

Jill Johnston, The Disintegration of a Critic 23. 5. – 11. 8. 2019

The exhibition is dedicated to the cultural critic, writer and lesbian icon Jill Johnston (1929–2010). Starting in the early 1960s, Johnston made a name for herself through a recurring dance column in the New York-based weekly newspaper *The Village Voice*. It soon also chronicled intermedia and other avant-garde activities in the downtown scene. Towards the 1970s, Johnston’s observations expanded to her personal life as well as social and political surroundings, leading to the book *Lesbian Nation* (1973), a radical-feminist classic. Her texts are an outstanding resource that both reflect and embody radical art and politics since the 1960s. Johnston’s approach broke with established notions of criticism and influenced many critics and writers until today.

Focusing on a selection of Johnston’s columns from 1960-1974, the exhibition and accompanying publication considers her shifting positions as a continuously developing work. The exhibition presents artworks that relate to the columns by Andy Warhol, Les Levine, Sturtevant, and others, together with documents and archival materials, and a current video work by Ken Okiishi that responds to her writing. The publication includes texts by Ingrid Nyeboe, Bruce Hainley and Jennifer Krasinski, as well as an appendix related to the show’s title and 1969 panel “The Disintegration of A Critic: An Analysis of Jill Johnston.”

The project is curated by Fiona McGovern and Megan Francis Sullivan with Bergen Kunsthall.

1. “Dance” criticism

Jill Johnston started writing dance reviews for the *Dance Observer* in the mid-1950s. In 1959 she became the first dance columnist for the New York weekly cultural paper *The Village Voice*. She was the central voice of new developments in dance, especially the Judson Church with dancers like Yvonne Rainer, Lucinda Childs, Deborah Hay, Fred Herko and Steve Paxton. She also wrote extensively on activities of the preceding generation of avant-garde artists like Merce Cunningham, John Cage and Martha Graham, and the activities of Fluxus and other intermedia artists, many departing from Cage’s class at the New School of Social Research. Trained in dance herself, Johnston often crossed borders between observation and participation, for example taking part in performances, like Cage’s *Music Walk with Dancer* (1962), the New York version of Karlheinz Stockhausen and

Opens
Thur 23 May 13:00 Free

Tours
Every Sunday 14:00
Every Sunday 13:00 for Families

Design
Blank Blank

Plattform
Fiona McGovern, Megan Francis Sullivan, Axel Wieder, Kristian Vistrup Madsen
Sat 1 Jun 14:00 Free
Concensation

Mary Bauermeister’s *Originale* (1964), and a duet with Yvonne Rainer at Washington Square Gallery in the same year.

2. Culture Hero

During the 1960s Johnston established herself in a scene of artists, writers and dancers in New York, including Robert Rauschenberg, Jasper Johns, Rosalyn Drexler, James Lee Byars, Ann Wilson, Simone Forti, Allan Kaprow, George Brecht, John Giorno, Meredith Monk, Hannah Weiner, Paul Thek, and these feature often in her columns. She was known for audacious actions like crashing parties, hanging from pipes at an opening and wearing extravagant outfits. In the early 1960s Andy Warhol made a series of films with Jill Johnston, one of them together with Fred Herko. She also appeared as a model in George Segal’s plaster casts (*The Dinner Table*, 1962 and *The Girl Friends*, 1969) as well as in Larry River’s painting *Moon Man and Moon Lady* (1965). In 1970, artist Les Levine dedicated a special issue of his magazine *Culture Hero* to Johnston. Under the header “Jill Johnston Exposed. A life dominated by Strange Arts, Consuming Desires, and Auto-Eroticism,” a selection of close friends and acquaintances were asked to contribute a statement about Johnston.

3. The Disintegration of a Critic

“The Disintegration of a Critic. An Analysis of Jill Johnston” was a panel initiated by Johnston that took place on May 21, 1969 at New York University’s Loeb Student Center. The event was announced to be a departure from her role as a critic, but can be also seen as a reflection on the role of discourse within the arts. Johnston had previously expressed dissatisfaction with the supposedly objective role of the critic, for instance in the 1965 column “Critics’ Critics”. The 1969 panel consisted of Charlotte Moorman, John de Menil, Ultra Violet, Gregory Battcock, Andy Warhol, Bridget Polk, Lil Picard, Walter Gutman, and was moderated by David Bourdon. Johnston herself paid a surprise visit. Battcock, who often mentioned Johnston in his own column “The Real Estate” in the *New York Review of Sex* and *vice versa*, saw in her an “anti-worker [who] has to liberate himself from the prevailing terminology, classifications and categorizations.” “In criticism (quiticism),” he continues in his review, “only Jill Johnston and Gene Swenson have, so far, been able to do it.”

Plattform
Chris Kraus
Wed 5 Jun 20:00 Free
Lecture and Reading

Plattform
Petra Bauer
Sat 8 Jun 14:00 Free
Workshop

Curated by
Fiona McGovern and Megan Francis Sullivan with Bergen Kunsthall

Staff
Åsa Bjørndal (Distribution), Oda Førde Braanaas (Prod.), Dino Dikic (Learning), Åsne Eldøy (Tech), Lars Hallaråker (Tickets), Sofia Marie Hamnes (Production Assistant),

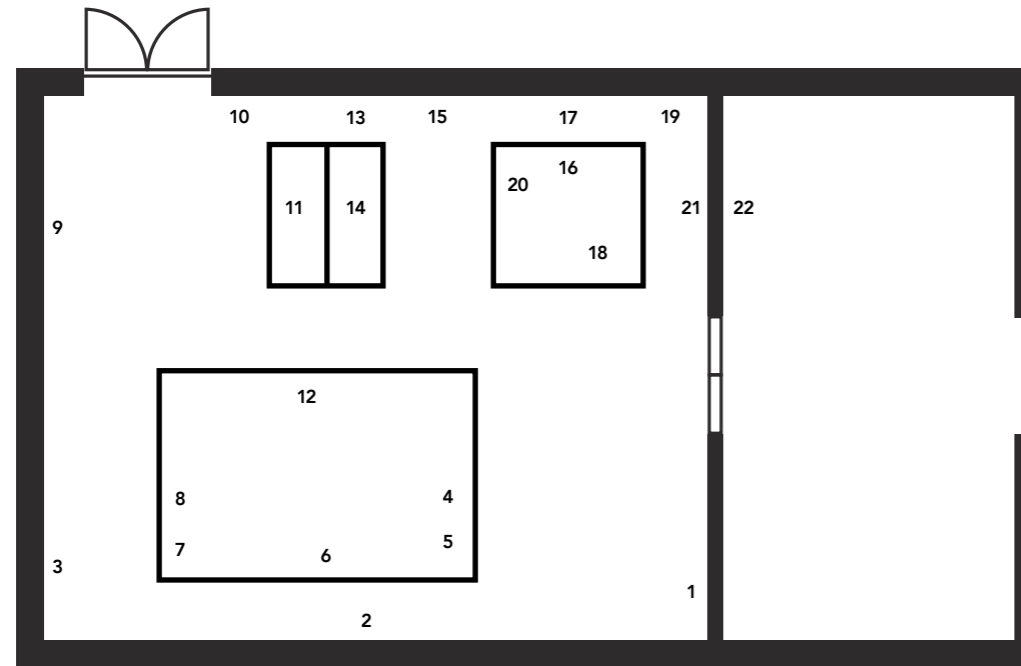
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Einride Torvik (Gallery Manager), Siv Torvik (Cleaner), Vegard Vindenes (Tech), Eric Alvin Wangel (Tech), Axel Wieder (Director), Maja Zahl (Finance and Administration), Mia Øquist (Members), Tord Øyen (Reception), Stein-Inge Århus (Communication)

EXHIBITION MAP

JILL JOHNSTON, THE DISINTEGRATION OF A CRITIC



- 1 Les Levine
Jill Johnston and her son Richard, undated
Black/white photograph
- Jill Johnston with tie*, 1969
Black/white photograph
- Jill Johnston, Ann Wilson and their kids*, undated
Black/white photograph
- Jill Johnston and Peter Schjeldahl*, undated
Black/white photograph
- Courtesy of the artist
- 2 Les Levine
Culture Hero Masterprint: Jill Johnston Exposed, 1970
29 silkscreen prints
Courtesy of Beeler Gallery, Columbus College of Art & Design
- 3 Elaine Sturtevant
Relâche, 1967
Silkscreen ink on paper, edition 7/10
Courtesy of Beth Rudin DeWoody
- 4 Merce Cunningham
Aeon, 1961
Three black/white photographs, photos: Richard Rutledge (exhibition copies)
Courtesy of the Merce Cunningham Trust
- Variations V*, 1966
16mm film transferred to digital file, black/white, sound, 49 min.
Courtesy of Electronic Arts Intermix

- Two pages, ink and colored pencil on notebook paper (exhibition copies)
Courtesy the Museum of Modern Art, New York © 2019.
Digital image, The Museum of Modern Art, New York/Scala, Florence
- 5 Peter Moore
Stockhausen's Originale: Doubletakes, 1964-94
16mm film transferred to digital file, black/white, sound, 30 min.
Courtesy of Electronic Arts Intermix
- Jill Johnston in Originale*, 1964
Black/white photograph (digital exhibition print)
Courtesy of Paula Cooper Gallery
- 6 Documents and material related to "The Disintegration of a Critic: An Analysis of Jill Johnston," 21 May 1969, New York University, Loeb Student Center, New York
Gregory Battcock, Jill Johnston, Lil Picard,
The Village Voice
- 7 Audio track for Les Levine: *Critic*, 1966
Voices of Michael Benedikt, Ted Berrigan, David Bourdon, Nicholas Callas, John Gruen, Jill Johnston, Michael Kirby, Max Kozloff, Annette Michelson, Toby Mussman, Brian O'Doherty, Jean Perreault, Irving Sandler, Peter Schjeldahl, and Gene Swenson.
Audio tape transferred to digital file, 27 min.
Courtesy of the artist
- Contact sheet with analogue video stills from Les Levine, *Critic*, 1966
Courtesy of Columbia University Graduate School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation

- 8 Gene Swenson, "An Art Critic's Farewell Address,"
New York Free Press, 28 March 1968
- Louis Horst, "Paul Taylor and Dance Company Review,"
Dance Observer, November 1957
- 9 Andy Warhol
Jill Johnston Dancing, 1964
16mm film transferred to digital file, black/white, silent, 15 min.
Collection of The Andy Warhol Museum, Pittsburgh
Contribution The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, Inc.
- 10 Two Monitors with films by Andy Warhol
- Jill at Billy Klüver's*, 1963
16mm film transferred to digital file, black/white, silent, 3 min.
- Jill*, 1963
16mm film transferred to digital file, black/white, silent, 3 min.
- Billy Klüver*, 1963
16mm film transferred to digital file, black/white, silent, 3 min.
- Jill and Freddy Dancing*, 1963
16mm film transferred to digital file, black/white, silent, 4 min
- Collection of The Andy Warhol Museum, Pittsburgh
Contribution The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, Inc.
- 11 Documents and materials related to "dance" criticism by Jill Johnston
Aileen Passloff and Co., Robert Morris, Steve Paxton and Alan Solomon, Judson Dance Theatre, Yvonne Rainer, Jill Johnston, *Avalanche magazine*, *The Village Voice*, Robert Morris, Peter Moore, Ultra Violet
- 12 Documents and materials related to Fluxus and intermedia art criticism by Jill Johnston
The Living Theater, Allan Kaprow, Norman O'Brown,
The Village Voice
- 13 Peter Moore
Jill Johnston and Yvonne Rainer Improvising, Washington Square Galleries, New York, 1964
Three black/white photographs (digital exhibition prints)
Courtesy of Paula Cooper Gallery
- 14 Culture Hero: Documents and materials on Jill Johnston in other artists' work
Larry Rivers, George Segal, *The Village Voice*, Andy Warhol
- 15 Megan Francis Sullivan
Untitled (JJ), 2019
Silkscreen
Courtesy of the artist

- 16 "Of the Pure But Irregular Passion": Documents and materials on Jill Johnston's coming out and publicity stunts
Jill Johnston, Betty Friedan, *The Village Voice*, Fred W. McDarrah, *Esquire* magazine
- 17 Les Levine
Chessplayers (Jill Johnston and Lucinda Childs), 1969
Black / white photograph
Courtesy of Galerie M+R Fricke, Berlin
- 18 Lesbian Nation: Documents and materials on the Lesbian Nation years and community building
Jill Johnston *Ms. magazine*, Katherine Gilday, *The Lesbian Tide*, Fred W. McDarrah, *Newsweek*, *Life* magazine, Ellie, Mountaingrove, Phyllis Birkby, The Evergreen State College, *Esquire* magazine, Louise Fishman
- 19 Roz Gerstein
Jill Portrait, 1973
Black/white photograph
- Jill leaning on her BMW*, 1973
Black/white photograph
- Courtesy of the artist
- 20 Documents and materials on Jill Johnston and Ingrid Nyeboe's *Fluxwedding*, Kunsthallen Brandts Klædefabrik, Odense, 26 June 1993
- 21 Columns by Jill Johnston, *The Village Voice*, 1960-1974
- 22 Ken Okiishi
Being and/or Time, 2013-2016
Video, silent, 17 min.
Courtesy of the artist and Reena Spaulings Fine Art, New York
- Archival documents and further works courtesy of Specific Object / David Platzker, Jennifer Sichel, Lil Picard Papers (Special Collections & University Archives, University of Iowa), Columbia University Graduate School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation, Louise Fishman, Spinnboden Lesbenarchiv und Bibliothek Berlin, Lesbian Herstory Archive New York, Phyllis Birkby Papers (Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton), Lesbian Intentional Community: Ruth Mountaingrove photographs (University of Oregon), The Evergreen State College Archive, Brandts Odense