

VW (VeneKlasen/Werner) is pleased to present *Shakers & Movers*, a group exhibition, curated by Birte Kleemann, which explores performance art and actions within the context of the political situation in Germany during the 1960s and 1970s. *Shakers & Movers* includes works by Mary Bauermeister, Joseph Beuys, Sylvano Bussotti, James Lee Byars, John Cage, VALIE EXPORT, Jürgen Klauke, Yoko Ono, Nam June Paik, Karlheinz Stockhausen and Ulay.

The post-World War II period saw the development of new approaches to artistic expression and political activism. The new generation of artists emerging in West Germany experimented with performance and collaboration and incorporated media from beyond the traditional boundaries of studio practice, such as sound and film. One consequence of this new approach was an increasing awareness of the body as a tool both for expression and criticism within the public realm. A new identity of the artist is asserted in which the *self* is measured in the interaction with the *other*, both mirroring and questioning societal norms. Within the context of social and political developments in the young democratic Germany, and against the backdrop of a lingering Cold War, the exploration of new territories in art, literature, theater and music are a form of Brechtian catharsis. *Shakers & Movers* presents a brief and selected history of the performances and actions triggered by renewed social awareness in an era of lost innocence.

*Shakers & Movers* takes as its starting point the beginnings of the Fluxus movement and the multimedia “happenings” created at Mary Bauermeister’s studio, the most important of these being the *Originale*, composed by Karlheinz Stockhausen. International and cross-cultural collaboration is a hallmark of the artistic activities of this period and participants in the many actions at Bauermeister’s studio included Sylvano Bussotti, John Cage, Nam June Paik and David Tudor, among others. *Originale* was later brought to New York City and re-staged there on the invitation of Charlotte Moorman, who from then on collaborated with Paik on numerous projects.

Following the student demonstrations of the late sixties and amidst increasingly political instability within West German society, more overtly politicized artistic actions emerge. Joseph Beuys’ *Ausfegen*, enacted on the Karl-Marx-Platz in Berlin following the labor day demonstrations of 1972, highlighted the gap between leftist political ideologies and their real-world manifestations. One month later, at Documenta 5 in Kassel, Beuys installed an office of his Organization for Direct Democracy by Referendum as his contribution to the exhibition. James Lee Byars’ performance *Calling German Names* was also presented at Documenta 5: from the roof of the Kunsthalle Fridericianum, the artist, shrouded in red fabric, shouted common German first names through a golden megaphone; he was alternately cheered and jeered by student demonstrators below. Ulay’s highly charged *Irritation...There is a Criminal Touch to Art* also went beyond mere symbolism,

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Meanwhile, other artists increasingly moved toward an introspection of the self. Jürgen Klauke worked to negate fixed gender identity. His *Illusion* of 1972 is a reduced, ambivalent self-portrait in which the artist poses a simple, provocative question. VALIE EXPORT strives for a new understanding of gender roles in society. Her 1977 work, *DELTA. Ein Stück*, which appeared at Documenta 6, investigates the disparate role assignments of male and female and argues for a change in the public consciousness toward feminist goals. The exhibition closes with Yoko Ono's *Blue Room Event* of 1966, subtly engaging the audience through a series of written directives.

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