

Organic Honey's Visual Telepathy, 1972

Video, black and white, sound, 17:24 min. Camera: Joan Jonas, assisted by Linda Patton. Component in the multi-media installation *Organic Honey's Visual Telepathy/Organic Honey's Vertical Roll* (1972/1994); also distributed as an independent video by EAI.

See p. 142 for related videos, performances, and installations.

Jonas, Joan. "Organic Honey's Visual Telepathy [Introduction and Script]." In *In the Shadow a Shadow: The Work of Joan Jonas*, edited by Joan Simon and Joan Jonas, 145–151. New York: Gregory R. Miller & Co., 2015.

Organic Honey's Visual Telepathy

The idea for *Organic Honey* was the simultaneity of an audience watching someone perform for the camera and seeing what the camera sees, and the discrepancy between the two. The first presentation of the material for *Organic Honey's Visual Telepathy* (1972) was at 112 Greene Street, New York, where I had what I thought of as a very simple film set: a table made of two sawhorses and a four-by-eight piece of plywood on which I set my props. On the wall behind the table was a Japanese poster, and hanging beside it was a Hopi kachina doll. There was also a video camera on a tripod, connected to a monitor on which the video images were seen.

At 112 I wasn't doing a performance for the public but was using the place to make a video, which I thought of as performing the image making. I invited Sol LeWitt and his class to be an audience. I often did that—I invited friends. This became the independent video *Organic Honey's Visual Telepathy*. When I expanded this piece in 1972 as a video performance for the public at LoGiudice Gallery all of the elements from this situation at 112 Greene were included—the set, the props, the costumes, the gestures, the concept. In addition, at LoGiudice there was a video projection in which all the video images were seen, as well as a monitor that was used at 112. The projector, live camera, and monitor were all connected in a closed-circuit system. Also included were pre-recorded tapes seen on the monitor. There were other performers in addition to me. I also added actions, and the whole piece was performed slightly differently. In short, I expanded it many ways.—JJ

In this tape, Jonas and her masked erotic double, Organic Honey, engage in non-narrative activities that provide natural cuts, distortions, and superimpositions, which are as much about a transformation of filmic devices into video language as about female narcissism. In one sequence, for example, Jonas drops coins into a Mason jar filled with water, her masked face distorted through the glass. In another, her back is to the camera and her face visible in triangular mirrors. After removing each layer of mirror by its apex, as if successively removing her own image, she walks toward the camera, out of focus, creating a natural dissolve.

As in her other work, drawing is an important element in this tape. In one sequence, she dumps out a box filled with objects (a doll, a purse, a hammer, a spoon, rocks, and so forth) and with a Magic Marker traces each object on a piece of paper, superimposing one on top of another.—Berkeley, 1983



Video performance (including live-feed video and Jonas's *Duet* [1972] and Richard Serra's *Anxious Automation* [1971], both performed by Jonas, shown on monitors)

▶ LoGiudice Gallery, New York, February 12–13 and 19–20, 1972. Performers: Suzanne Harris, Joan Jonas, Kate Parker, Linda Patton.

▶ Festival di musica e danza, Rome, sponsored by Galleria l'Attico/Fabio Sargentini, 1972. Performers: Joan Jonas, Linda Patton.

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The performance space: In a room approximately twenty-five by fifty feet, the spectators sit facing the performers but separated from them by video equipment. An eight-by-twelve-foot video image is projected on the back left wall. In the center front of the space, a monitor faces the spectators. A camera is used in the center of the performing area, where, by pans and zooms, it picks up selected images. A second monitor is in the performing space so that the performer/director can observe and control the image making, in order to interact with it during the performance. Bare light bulbs are used at critical performance points.—Berkeley, 1983

For all Organic Honey performances except the first presentation at LoGiudice Gallery in 1972, where the performers themselves handled the video cameras for the live feed, a videographer took part and, following Jonas's prior instructions, shadowed the artist and focused on details of her actions that were seen on a monitor or in projection. These details constituted a carefully composed sequence of images.—JS

Performance

A four-by-eight-foot mirror mounted on wheels is rolled in front of the spectators to reflect their images.

Jonas, standing by table, puts on cheap, erotic plastic mask and sequined jacket—becomes Organic Honey. Sings loudly. Electric fans blow hair. Dons pink feathered headdress, sashays about.

Jonas rips paper off wall. Large oval Japanese head revealed. Reflects mask in a mirror held against print.

Box of objects (magic memorabilia) brought to table—large bottle of water with shot glass in it placed on box.

Honey drops thirty-six pennies, one by one, into bottle. Attempt to ring shot glass.

Performer, with same plastic mask as Jonas's, lies on floor under camera with Honey.

They embrace and roll. Erotic play (self-love).

Mirror on floor covered with white paper—objects beside it (old doll, silver purse, etc.).

Electric eye: beam of light across paper. When circuit is broken by hand or object, a buzzer sounds.

Honey kneels, removes mask, places objects one by one on paper, and draws, watching drawing materialize on monitor.

Drawing ripped away.

Video and Film Images

Jonas, seen from the waist up, dresses.

Tresses, blown by a breeze.
Lacquered mask, feathered headdress.
Image of imitation Bengali goddess.
Jonas frames herself coyly.

Organic Honey and Japanese woman—interplay of erotic imagery.

Bottle fills half of screen.

Shining reflective transparency. Profile of Honey peering into water. Pennies slice and glide through water. Splashing/clinking amplified.

Two doll-like heads upside down (Brancusi).

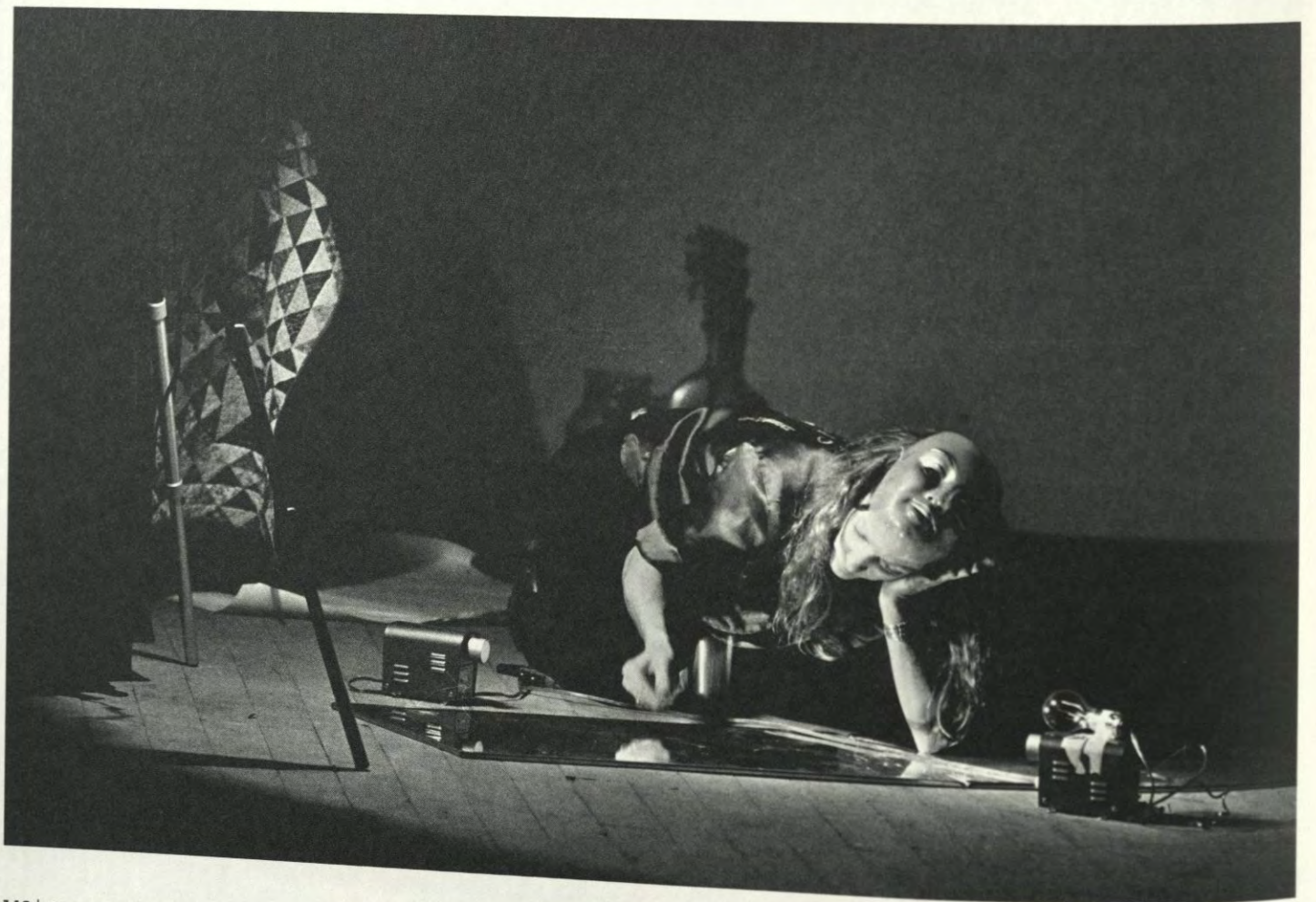
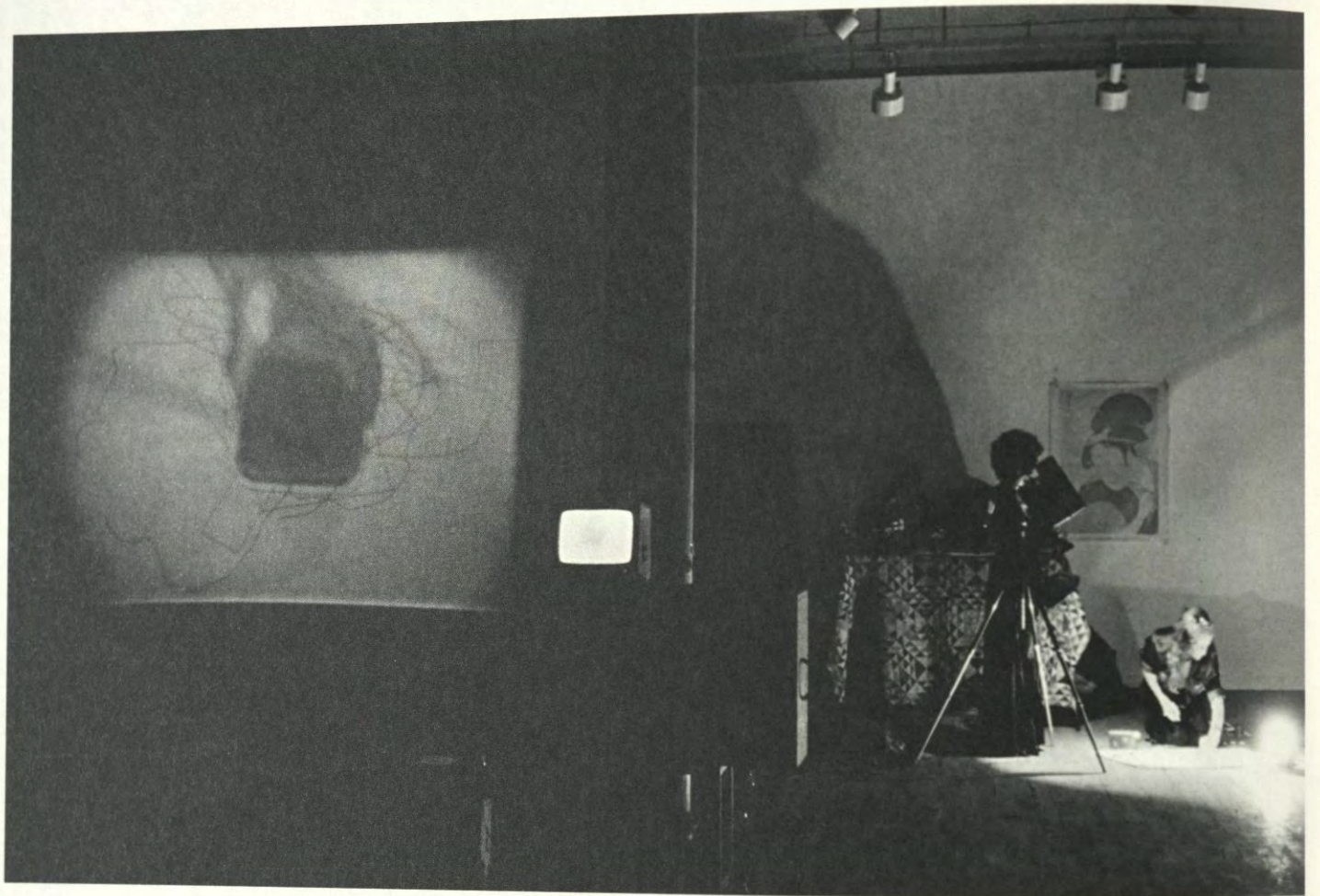
Forms roll, kiss, and touch, shifting about in frame.

Whiteness.

Hand places object on paper, traces a line around it. As each object is delineated, it disappears. Lines collect, making image on the monitor and in projection.

Mirror revealed with reflection of face (no mask).

← Jonas in improvisational rehearsal for *Organic Honey's Visual Telepathy* (1972), LoGiudice Gallery, New York, 1972. Photo: Gianfranco Gorgoni.



Performance

Honey hits mirror obsessively with large silver spoon, trying to break her image. Loud sound echoes in the space.

Activity of performance ceases.

Two cameras side by side switching from one to the other; alternate zooms in and out in relation to series of movements performed by Jonas—perception altered by sudden scale changes—e.g., arms become legs. Rhythmic tapping sounds amplified.

Performer stands on table, contorts her body, bends, twists. Rolls eyes. Rocks in loose mudra.

Performer advances slowly toward camera.

Performers intertwine, sway before lens, fixated by images on monitor.

Performer, close to lens, whispers.

Camerawoman positions performer in the space.

Organic Honey, changing identity, dressed in blue satin robe, black-and-white scarf/turban, mask of different persona. Electronic sorcery.

She slowly glides toward triangular mirror leaning against blackboard.

Pulls back mirror, and replaces it.

Organic Honey, disguised, walks to taped paper blackboard.

Draws, conjuring mystical messages. Something the audience cannot see (symbols from *Nova Scotia Beach Dance*).

Pulls paper off blackboard.

"Sorceress" strolls out front to monitor, which faces the audience, and is placed beside an old TV set with a mirror in place of the picture tube.

Video and Film Images

Silver spoon striking Jonas's image— inward and outward blurred silver hitting itself. Face removed. Spoon continues to bang. Mirror does not break.

Projected image goes blank.
Focus down to audience monitor.

Videotape: *Anxious Automation* by Richard Serra; performed by Joan Jonas; sound by Philip Glass.

Parts of performer's body. Disturbing fragmentation in rearrangement of parts. Legs wrapped around head.

Performer's image becomes blurred.
The soft image of the projection is filled by the V of her neckline.

Alice's change in scale ("Drink me!").
Three beautiful faces moving in and out of view (eight-by-ten-foot heads), concealing, revealing one another/focus/blur/staring eyes.

Huge mouth framed by fingers in triangle mysteriously mouthing message to audience.

Full figure of woman in projected video image same size as woman in actual space.

2,000-watt light bulbs turned on and off repeatedly, washing out projected image and whiting out the monitor image (light meter of camera controlled).

Triangular mirror on black ground with masked face reflected in apex (face looking out from tent).

Arm pulls back mirror to reveal another mirror with same reflection.
As mirror is slowly replaced, it divides into two layers. Clear and opaque magic of material.

White paper.

Hand draws circle and a line, connects circle to line with series of measurement lines, measuring circle against line. Draws circle and line again. Measures line against circle.

Blackboard. White chalk outlines circle. Writes "sun." Erases half the circle. Adds curved line, turning sun into new moon. Alchemical transformation of mandala.

On monitor, a woman howls like a dog.



← Performance views of Jonas (with Linda Patton, top) in *Organic Honey's Visual Telepathy* (1972), LoGiudice Gallery, New York, 1972. Photos by Peter Moore © Barbara Moore/Licensed by VAGA, NY.

↑ Still from Richard Serra, *Anxious Automation* (1971), a video component of *Organic Honey's Visual Telepathy* (1972)



Performance

"Sorceress" howls a duet with tape of Jonas howling like a dog, while she checks herself out in the mirror.

Jonas and another performer carefully manipulate fans for camera. Performer haughtily fans herself snapping fan open repeatedly.

Shadows of fans and women on the wall.

Performer spins an Appalachian Bull Roarer (a stick on a string), making a loud whirring noise.

Organic Honey sits on high wooden electrical throne (bare light bulbs wired). Chair facing camera, Organic Honey's left side toward audience, she plays to the camera, watches image on monitor.

High priestess laughs hysterically at her image for two minutes.

Two-way mirror held in front of face. Laughter suddenly ceases. Sings.

Removes mask, changes identity.

Jonas points to right eye, saying, "This is my right eye", and to her left eye, saying, "This is my left eye."

Points to image of eye on monitor. Repeats action and above phrase with each eye. Looks into mirror over right shoulder. Repeats, "This is my right eye..."

Puts on all four masks of other performers (superimposition of masks).

Covers face with patterned Greek purse.

Covers right side of face with black paper.

Covers left side of face with white paper (addition and subtraction of light affects light meter of camera).

Three bare light bulbs click on and off—produces freeze-frame images of heads.

Video and Film Images

First fan slowly unfolds from the sides and center, revealing 19th-century miniature of pale, indolent Turkish ladies reclining on satin couch, ladies on clouds, minarets and palm trees around them.

Layers of white lace. Movie of intricate detailed surfaces. Gold fan catches and flashes reflections as it fans the lens. Succession of wipes.

A silk tassel bounces in and out from large projection. 3-D effect. Softness/hardness. Sequined spirals of red light.

Masked face, eight by twelve feet.

Mad laughter from the video images. Smiling eyes.

Sudden change. Laughter ceases. Reflective surface fills screen. Slight movements of mirror create illusion of objects and lights flowing across screen. Face visible at times.

Mirror slides off, singing stops. Jonas's face, in eight-by-ten-foot image, looks at audience.

Points to right eye, then left eye.

Finger touches eye in monitor image, while other touches actual eye. Reverses process. Repeats with mirror image.

Masks unfold: peeled off one by one. Each identity revealed, finally Jonas herself.

Black-and-white swastika.

Lord's Prayer repeated rapidly, sound muffled by purse.

Face divides into left side and right side by light and dark center wipes.

Black over right half of face makes left side light.

White over left half of face makes right side dark.

Succession of single-head framed images controlled by light.

← Photograph for poster (never produced) of *Organic Honey's Visual Telepathy* (1972). Photo: Richard Serra.