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Connecting Parallel Lines

Dean Daderko

I

Two artists are born in the same generation. Each one makes foundational contributions to the field of performance art. Both buck dominant trends, producing multimedia artworks with narrative drive. Both are women who have developed respected careers in advance of social movements that advocated for the recognition of women's cultural contributions. What do their works have to do with one another? Everything and nothing.

In her essay "How to Install Art as a Feminist," Helen Molesworth writes "genealogies for art made by women aren't so clear, largely because they are structured by a shadowy absence." She smartly argues that the exclusion of women from historic artistic narratives cannot be neatly repaired by reinserting their work into dialogues with their (male) contemporaries, since these formulations fail to recognize the "absences, repressions, and omissions" practiced on women artists: "Might feminism allow us to imagine different genealogies and hence different versions of how we tell the history of art made by women, as well as art made under the influence of feminism?"[1] Later in the essay, Molesworth identifies "feminism's double bind, its inescapable contradiction" as the fact that it does indeed matter to her if the artists she presents are women, commenting that it's "important even in the midst of not wanting it to be important."[2] Similar feminist sentiment resonates for me in *Parallel Practices*: it is a show of work by two women, and more directly, a show of work by two artists. It is a group show and two simultaneous solo shows, side-by-side, in a shared space. While the inclusion of artworks made more than four decades ago may feel "historic," the vitality of these works today and their relevancy to current dialogues about performance and multimedia practices feels utterly contemporary.

Parallel lines extend in the same direction and remain evenly equidistant, never touching. Joan Jonas and Gina Pane's practices also exist as unique and individual trajectories, and like parallel lines, their careers did not intersect; Jonas and Pane never met, and neither artist saw the other perform. *Parallel Practices* is the first comprehensive presentation of Pane's artwork in the United States. Recognizing that this exhibition would be many individuals' first encounter with her work, I contextualized it by presenting it alongside artwork by one of her best-known American contemporaries. Joan Jonas (b. 1936) and Gina Pane (1939–1990) were born just three years apart. Jonas lives and works in New York City, while Pane lived and worked in

1 Helen Molesworth, "How to Install Art as a Feminist," in *Modern Women: Women Artists at the Museum of Modern Art*, ed. Cornelia Butler and Alexandra Schwartz (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2010), 504.

2 Ibid., 508.

Paris. Jonas and Pane both blazed trails in the field of performance art. They utilized technology, explored narrative strategies, and commented on the social and political realities they saw around themselves in ways that distinguished their work from their Minimalist and Abstract Expressionist contemporaries. By the time the feminist movement was beginning to gather steam, both Jonas and Pane had already gained respect and recognition from their peers; this is no small feat, since their work went against the grain of the moment's dominant styles.

Jonas' works in *Parallel Practices* were made between 1969 and 2010, and Pane's were produced between 1965 and 1986. I made focused selections from each artist's oeuvre in an attempt to survey and present a comprehensive view of Jonas and Pane's individual interests and accomplishments. To discourage qualitative comparisons and avoid establishing a hierarchy between two equally accomplished bodies of work, I divided CAMH's Brown Foundation Gallery in two with temporary walls, in which broad openings allowed clear sightlines from one space into the other. The most apparent difference between the spaces was their architecture. Jonas' video works include soundtracks, so the temporary walls were designed to create autonomous spaces that facilitated focused and immersive viewing experiences. Jonas specifies that her video installation *Reading Dante III* (2010) be installed in a room with slate gray walls. With her permission, I extended this color over the remaining walls in the area where her works were presented.[3] Pane's works were exhibited in an open, white space devoid of additional walls. Hanging in plain view of one another, it was easy to draw visual and conceptual connections between her works.

Another difference involved how supplementary materials were treated in each half of the exhibition. Jonas' space hosted a temporary presentation of archival photographs and a publication produced by CAMH when her performance *Double Lunar Dogs* (1981) was featured in a group exhibition.[4] Labels made it clear that the materials were not artworks by Jonas. Live documentation of some of Pane's performances does exist, though she didn't recognize these documents as "artworks" per se. Instead, Pane invented an artistic form she called the *constat d'action* [proof of action] (which I will discuss later in this essay) to represent her temporal actions to future audiences. Since Pane considered the *constats* autonomous artworks, they were used to represent her performative works in *Parallel Practices*.

3 Jonas's video installation *Glass Puzzle* (1973–2000) was the only one of her works to be presented in a white-walled room.

4 *Double Lunar Dogs* was included in the CAMH exhibition *Other Realities: Installations for Performance* (August 1–September 27, 1981) organized by Marti Mayo.

II

More than a decade ago, during a studio visit with a friend, the cover of a book on her desk stopped me in my tracks. On it was a black-and-white photograph of a person whose raised arm covered her eyes. Two rivulets of blood trickled from a wound on her arm. Printed under this image was the book's title: *Body Art and Performance: The Body As Language*.[5] I was instantly compelled by the urgent physicality of the image and what I imagined to be the dedication of an artist willing to bleed for her work, and I left my friend's studio with her book in my bag. I learned that the image, *Io mescolo tutto* [I Mix Everything] (1976) was attributed to Gina Pane, an artist who I, as an art history geek with a penchant for research, had not heard of. I wanted to know more, but my initial searches yielded less-than-satisfying results. Much of the scholarship on Pane's work was published in French, a language in which I fortunately had some proficiency. More disappointingly, I quickly realized that many of the publications referenced in the bibliographic citations I unearthed were out of print. Investigating Gina Pane's work in any substantive way was going to require a trip to France.

In 2008 I made my first trip to Paris to research Gina Pane's work.[6] Anne Marchand, Pane's partner and the executor of her estate, generously shared personal papers, artworks, and drawings, and made the collections of articles, scholarship, and ephemera that she had amassed over many years available to me.[7] During these first three months of dedicated research, I sought to familiarize myself with the practice of an artist whose physical dedication to her work was matched by its formal and conceptual rigor. As my first visit to Paris drew to a close, I knew I wanted an opportunity to share what I had learned. With Anne Marchand's support, I resolved to present the first large-scale survey of Gina Pane's work in the United States.

Pane was fortunate to capture the interest of the Paris-based art historian Anne Tronche at the beginning of her career. A friend and longtime supporter of the artist, Tronche authored an early monograph

5 Italian critic and art historian Lea Vergine's book *Body Art and Performance: The Body As Language* was published by Skira Editore in Milan in 1974. A second edition was released in 2000 (also Skira).

6 I am grateful to have received a 2008–09 Curatorial Research Fellowship from Étant donnés: The French-American Fund for Contemporary Art, which supported my travel to Paris to research Gina Pane's work.

7 My most sincere thanks are due to Anne Marchand for the generosity, guidance, and insights she provided to me. Without her support, my access to information on Pane's work would have been not only limited, but difficult to access in a convenient and timely way. I additionally owe a great debt of gratitude to Kamel Mennour, Emma Charlotte Gobry-Laurencin, and the staff of kamel mennour, which represents Gina Pane's estate, for their generosity with support and resources. My thanks are also due to the Centre Pompidou: their staff made office space and access to videotapes documenting Pane's *actions* available to me and later loaned works from their collection for this exhibition.

on her work.[8] I am honored that this catalogue includes her essay, which considers two of Pane's iconic works.

Pane began her artistic career as a painter of colorful and compelling hard-edged geometric abstractions. These painterly interests informed a series of welded metal sculptures that were uniformly coated with sprayed-on layers of vibrantly colored enamel paint. The palette for these works included primary red, white, vibrant greens, and oceanic blues. Occasionally, Pane sited two or more of these sculptures in ways that seemed to translate the geometry and color of her earlier paintings into three-dimensional experiences. One senses in these works the stirring of an elemental color sensibility that remained consistent throughout Pane's practice, as Élisabeth Lebovici convincingly demonstrates in her essay for this publication. *Hyde Park Gazon* [Hyde Park Lawn] (1965), for example, is a rectangular block of welded steel sheets that hugs the floor. Its rectangular top face, roughly the size of a beach towel, has a gentle concave curve. Painted a grassy green color, its reference to a lawn becomes more apparent. With a curved surface that seems to invite a figure to recline on it, *Hyde Park Gazon* presciently anticipates Pane's interests in landscape, the body, and performance.

Since Pane's sculptural works were often sited outdoors, her shift to working with the landscape as material is a logical one. Between 1968 and 1970, Pane began photographically documenting activities she performed in natural settings, and combined the resulting images into montages (concurrently, her contemporaries in the United States were creating Land Art[9]). Pane's works are comprised of numerous photographs that, like storyboards, record her efforts as she completed these tasks. Organized into gridded formats, the sequences chart the progress of temporal activities, making it possible for viewers to assess a durational event in a single glance. Pane's decision to record her activities with photography, rather than a time-based medium like film, seems to be an outgrowth of her background in painting, since using still photographs allowed her the greatest degree of compositional control. Importantly, these works began her investigation of a format that she would continue to develop until it was formalized as the *constat d'action*. In *Continuation d'un chemin de bois* [Continuation of a Wooden Railroad] (1970) six black-and-white photographs record Pane walking in and out of the photographic frame as she builds a curving pathway of railroad ties through a narrow valley.

8 Anne Tronche's book *Gina Pane: Actions* (Paris: Fall Édition, 1997) is an invaluable resource for information on Pane's work.

9 In 1968, Dwan Gallery in New York City presented the exhibition *Earth Works*. In 1969, Willoughby Sharp's exhibition *Earth Art* at Cornell University in Ithaca, New York, included works by Walter De Maria, Michael Heizer, Neil Jenney, David Medalla, and Robert Smithson, among others.

The accumulated images tell a story of physical effort; one can imagine the weight of the wooden ties and the time it took to complete this strenuous task.

Pane's earthworks also take poetic and conceptual turns: *Situation idéale: terre—artiste—ciel* [Ideal Situation: Earth—Artist—Sky] (1969) is a photograph of the artist standing in a freshly tilled agricultural field. She's positioned precisely on the horizon line that divides the image into blue (sky) and brown (earth) halves. In this "ideal situation" the artist becomes the connection between terrestrial and celestial realms, and, perhaps, between reality and imagination. The four photographs that together comprise *Enfoncement d'un rayon de soleil* [Burial of a Ray of Sunlight] (1969) document Pane kneeling beside a shallow trench she dug into the earth. She uses a small hand mirror to reflect light into its depths before filling it in with dirt and striding away, as though planting a seed of light. These early photographic investigations marked the beginning of Pane's life-long collaboration with commercial photographer Françoise Masson, who brought her discerning eye and technical expertise to photographically documenting Pane's various performances.

Though Pane extended herself physically creating her earthworks, between 1971 and 1978, Pane began to present the *actions* for which she is best known. In these highly choreographed events, Pane subjected herself to intense physical and mental trials that required her total concentration. This included cutting herself with razor blades on multiple occasions, laying on top of a tubular metal platform with candles burning just inches below her back,[10] and shattering glass and mirrors with her bare fists—all in front of gathered audiences. Pane never re-performed any of her *actions* and did not wound any part of her body more than once. The *actions* seemed equally emotional and cathartic for Pane and for those watching her.[11]

For *Action Escalade non-anesthésiée* [Action Non-anesthetized Climb] (1971), Pane fabricated a ladder-like metal structure whose irregularly spaced rungs were covered with sharp metal points. Mounted on a wall in her studio, Pane—barefoot, bare-handed, and holding a red rose between her clenched teeth—climbed up, down, and across the

10 In 2005, in conjunction with her exhibition *Seven Easy Pieces* at the Guggenheim Museum, artist Marina Abramovic was permitted to present the *mise en condition* [putting in condition] for *Action Autoportrait(s)*, [Action Self-portrait(s)], originally presented by Pane in 1973 at Galerie Stadler in Paris.

11 In conjunction with the *Parallel Practices* exhibition, CAMH presented a conversational series called "The Ground Floor." Artist Malin Arnell was the first presenter. She showed video documentation of an event during which she followed Pane's instructions for *Action discours mou et mat* [Action Soft Matte Discourse]. Watching Arnell use a razorblade to cut her lips and smash mirrors with her bare fists was highly emotional as well as instructive: Pane's iconic still images can operate at a remove from her physical efforts, but Arnell's efforts were a reminder of the reality of the wounds both women inflicted on their bodies.

rungs until she was completely physically exhausted. Françoise Masson, who photographed the thirty-minute event, was the only witness. *Action Escalade non-anetheésiée* was Pane's response to the United States' escalation of war in Vietnam and to what she saw more broadly as the dulling of the population's senses due to the saturation of images of human suffering in the news media. She wrote:

> In April 1971 I performed an action in my studio called *Ascent* [NB: *Ascent* was later re-titled *Action Escalade non-anesthésiée*]. There was an iron ladder with sharp protrusions on each step and I climbed up and down barefoot about thirty times, until I reached my limits of endurance. My hands and feet were bleeding quite profusely. I chose my studio as the setting because I wanted to emphasize the fact that the artist's—as well as man's—relationships are perverted in their rush to achieve a goal, in the frenzy to get ahead. There is not mutual respect or trust. Therefore, every gesture itself is inhuman and people's sensibilities are automatically anaesthetized: they're no longer aware of the effects of their actions. Here I wanted to experience an ascent that wasn't anaesthetized, where I would undergo a great deal of suffering and pain.[12]

Interestingly, Masson remembers the event differently:

> I took photographs as Gina climbed up and down this ladder-like structure she had made. The sharpened edges on the rungs dug into her bare feet and hands. I remember being shocked by her persistence with the work, her moving up and down the structure many times and then the thump of her body onto the studio floor. I remember her panting and being exhausted by the work but going on and on and on. I told her to stop, that she would be hurt. I don't remember her actually cutting herself on the structure, to be sure I've looked again at the photographs and I don't see any blood.[13]

Following this *action*, Pane composed Masson's documentary photographs—close-up shots of her hands and feet climbing on the sharpened points, and images taken from across the room—into a rough grid. Her montage was the same size as the ladder structure and was framed with the same tubular steel used to create the ladder. The rhythmic irregularity of the gridded images in the montage echoes the ladder's uneven rung distribution. Displayed together, these two objects form a

12 Gina Pane and Effie Stephano, "Performance of Concern, "*Art and Artists 8*, no. 1 (April 1973), 21–26.

13 Alice Maude-Roxby, *On Record: Advertising, Architecture, and the Actions of Gina Pane*, ed. Ben Hillwood-Harris and Sharon Kivland (London: Artwords Press, 2004), 30.

diptych that inextricably links action and its documentation; each half describes and completes the other.

Pane was strategic in choosing Masson to document her *actions*: she understood that Masson's precision, expertise, and extensive experience as a commercial photographer would be invaluable as she sought to capture images of her fleeting and singular events. Pane and Masson met prior to the *actions* to review sequences of events, establish lighting plans, and strategize documentary goals. To streamline this process, Pane often created preparatory drawings that noted particular moments, images, or angles she wanted Masson to capture.

By this point, Pane's utilization of Masson's photographic documentation to create montages was formalized as the *constat d'action*. The *constats* are unique photographic montages, occasionally including drawings or textual notations, that function like storyboards. Pane considered the *constats* as autonomous artworks, and not mere documentation. One can imagine how her painterly training and her interest in Renaissance artworks and altarpieces would have led her to produce such compositions. It is also clear Pane understood that the ephemeral nature of her actions necessitated a stable form capable of communicating her activities and their sensibilities to future audiences. Her invention of the *constat* positions Pane well ahead of her time—until more recently, few artists had explored the relationships between events and their documentation with such a sense of subtlety.

One of Pane's most iconic *constats d'action* was produced in conjunction with *Azione Sentimentale* [Sentimental Action] (1973), which took place at Galleria Diagramma in Milan. The audience for this action was limited to women, who listened as two voices read letters written between mothers and daughters, friends, and lovers. Pane, dressed entirely in white, entered with a bouquet of red roses. She performed a series of gestures of offering and taking back the flowers while standing, sitting, and laying on the floor. After removing the thorns from one of the red roses, she pierced them into her arm in a neat line from wrist to elbow. Then, using a razor blade, she cut into the palm of her hand. After inflicting these wounds, Pane repeated the gestures she'd made earlier, this time holding a bouquet of white roses. Pane's forearm—pricked with thorns and "blooming" with blood—had come to resemble a rose of sorts.

The final works Pane produced before her untimely death in 1990 were a series she called *Partitions* [Scores (as understood in the musical sense)]. They mark her transition away from performance, which she felt had become increasingly spectacularized. The *Partitions* are low-relief assemblages displayed on and in front of walls. Combinations of sculpture, drawing, and photography, the *Partitions* are an amalgam of Pane's longtime interests: simple geometry; color and its symbolism; mythical and religious iconography; the physical, mental, and spiritual capacities of the body; and the material transformation of matter. In *Saint Sébastien, Saint Pierre, Saint Laurent—Partition pour trois portraits* [St. Sebastian, St. Peter, St. Lawrence—Score for Three Portraits] (1986), three stacked circular forms each personify a saint and connote the circumstances of their martyrdom: St. Sebastian, shot through with arrows, is a glass target to which a picture of one of Pane's wounds is attached; St. Peter, "The Rock," who was crucified upside down, is represented by craggy hunk of lead inset with cast copper drips running upward; and the circle for St. Lawrence, burned at the stake, joins two half circles of glass and charred wood.

Saint Georges et le dragon d'après une posture d'une peinture de Paolo Uccello, Partition pour un combat [St. George and the Dragon after a Pose in a Painting by Paolo Uccello, Score for a Battle] (1984–85), is a tour de force in which Pane distills the characters in Uccello's iconic painting into a series of geometric forms worthy of Russian Constructivist paintings: the abducted princess, dressed in a gown, is represented by four red felt triangles. Highly polished aluminum ovals indicate joints in the armor of the dragon-slaying knight. The mythical dragon, slayed by an iron lance, is symbolized with angular shards of glass that appear frozen in mid-shatter. Once again, a photograph of one of Pane's bleeding wounds from a prior performance has been laminated to the rear of the glass. It is positioned to appear as though the point of the iron lance has inflicted the wound. At the opposite end of the lance, cast copper lines recreate the rivulets of blood flowing from the wound: a fossilized scar following the passage of time.

III

If the precision and exactitude of Pane's work is structured by her interest in painting and its two-dimensional, compositional possibilities, Joan Jonas' work, by comparison, feels decidedly more fluid. Widely respected as a pioneering figure in the field of

video art and performance, her pieces often explore the medium of video in a process-based way that combines its spatial and temporal trajectories with narrative storytelling. A sense of ongoing transformation animates Jonas' works. She often revisits earlier works, and draws stories, channels of video, or sculptural elements from them, and interprets them in new forms. A piece that first exists as a live performance, for example, might later be interpreted as a single- or multi-channel video installation.

Jonas' investigation of video began when she acquired a Sony Portapak video camera during a trip to Japan in 1970. Her early explorations of the medium often involved connecting the camera to a monitor, enabling her to watch and record actions simultaneously. This loop or circuit combining live action and its simultaneous representation in the flattened space of the monitor is known as a "live feed." Unlike most theatrical presentations, rather than depending on her audience's willing suspension of disbelief, Jonas uses technological media to make reality apparent with live feeds, feedback loops, and interactions between actors and projections. Jonas' fictional narratives are inflected with reality, and her matter-of-fact integration of recording and playback technology into performance situations can effect a sensation of consciousness or self-consciousness in viewers.

If one imagines the artist/recording device/playback monitor as a literal, physical loop, the space this loop encompasses is one of representation. Jonas' work delivers the impression, again and again, that the images we see on monitors continue to be enterable physical places. Our culture has become so used to viewing phone, laptop, and tablet screens that these are often interpreted as windows, even if the worlds they open to are apparently fictional. The shock with Jonas' work comes from her acknowledgment of image creation as a process and content of otherwise narratively driven works. Art historian Kate Mondloch offers the following observation to contextualize early video exploration:

> Minimalism had aspired to overthrow the spatial and temporal idealism associated with modernist sculpture, replacing it with a direct, experiential encounter for the spectator in the "here and now" of the exhibition space. These artworks revealed the exhibition space as material and actual, thereby clearing the way for critical reflection on the physical and ideological constraints of the art gallery. Advanced sculptural practice in the 1960s and 1970s, inspired in part by Minimalism's reductivist and phenomenological approach (and including practices enfolded in

> the categories of postminimalism and institutional critique), was concerned with investigating both physical and psychic-conceptual spatial phenomena in relationship to the viewing subject. As artists sought to rupture the boundaries of the gallery both literally and figuratively in process and concept-based works, space and the spatial dynamics of spectatorship emerged as content.[14]

From early video works like the eponymous *Organic Honey's Vertical Roll* (1972) to the present day, Jonas has used the spaces of representation provided by monitors in performative ways. Audiences at her early performances could watch Jonas on stage, or focus their attention on a live feed provided by a camera trained on a particular detail. Dynamic and dimensional, an audience's perception of staged action is subjective, since their views of a performance are dependent on their position relative to the action. Monitors, however, produce singular, flattened, and objective images—the same image reaches all viewers. In Jonas' practice, the TV monitor or projection surface and the images that appear on it demonstrate how moving images synthesize temporal and spatial impressions. In her essay in this volume, Barbara Claussen eloquently addresses how, in Jonas' practice, space and time infinitely reflect each other like the opposite sides of a hall of mirrors, endlessly producing relative impressions of each other.

In the video *Good Night, Good Morning* (1976), we observe Jonas repeatedly greeting a video camera connected to a live feed after she wakes in the morning and again at the end of her day. As the days accumulate, we see Jonas play with the staging of the areas where she performs these greetings. By turns, she appears in white silk pajamas in a forest of tall white cones; turns lights on and off to produce ghost images; sits in a living room whose open windows suggest that a storm is brewing outside; and speaks her greeting through a long megaphone. Jonas further disrupts our familiar relationship to televisual space by turning the monitor displaying this video on its side, a simple inversion that produces disorienting results.

A sense of fragmentation or split-consciousness occurs not just with video but in other media Jonas uses as well: one senses it in the photograph *Mirror Piece I* (1969). Taken during a performance staged in Annandale-on-Hudson, New York, the image documents a performer seated on the grass. Her bare legs and arms extend from behind a tall vertical mirror she holds upright in her lap. With her identity hidden from view, we see her legs and arms doubled in the mirror's reflection. While it is

14 Kate Mondloch, "Be Here (and There) Now: The Spatial Dynamics of Screen-Reliant Art," *Arts Journal* 66, no. 3 (Fall 2007).

easy to imagine the physical situation that produces such an image, the uncanny relationship of real and reflected images in the photograph gives the impression that the mirror is a portal or hole in the photo, an evacuated space of representation ready to be filled in.

Mirrors and mirror images appear in a variety of guises in Jonas' work. The inspiration to use mirrors in her work came from a literary source: the Jorge Luis Borges short story *The Garden of Forking Paths*. The fictional story describes a world in which all possible outcomes of a given situation occur simultaneously, each one going on to bifurcate again and again as subsequent changes accumulate. In a sense, the mirror operates this way in Jonas' practice: it multiplies the body, fragments, doubles, and frames it. Like she does with closed-circuit monitors, Jonas uses mirrors to translate and transform imagery. In a less literal way, Jonas' work mirrors reality. Jonas welcomes the references and energies around her into her process, where she plays with them and learns from them before re-deploying them, transformed, for her viewers.

In her early performance work *Mirror Check* (1970), Jonas appeared before an audience, disrobed, and used a small circular hand mirror to inspect every visible part of her naked body in its reflection. Presently, Jonas engages and trains other performers to present this work. *Mirror Check* establishes tension by situating the performer's intimate activity in front of an audience. Once again, Jonas addresses a singular point of view—in this case, the performer's own—and its subjective perception by a broader audience. One can imagine the reflection the performer sees as she executes the choreographed action of self-inspection as a movie of sorts. The audience cannot see what the performer sees or know her thoughts during this silent act of introspection. *Mirror Check* mines this psychology precisely. While perceptions of women's roles in culture have undoubtedly changed in the years since this work was first presented, *Mirror Check* changes with them; operating in a present way, *Mirror Check* offers a clear and critical assessment of gender difference and the bias associated with it.

Dissonance and harmony animate *Glass Puzzle* (1973–2000). This piece exists both as a single-channel video and as the multi-channel installation included in *Parallel Practices*. In addition to projecting the black-and-white video footage included in the the single-channel version of this piece, the installation version adds color video footage displayed on a monitor on the floor and a child's school desk with a glowing, illuminated interior. The original black-and-white footage is projected onto a screen of

photographic backdrop paper that hangs freely from the ceiling. Shot by the renowned cinematographer Babette Mangolte, both channels of video capture the movements and interactions of Jonas and her friend, dancer Lois Lane, in Jonas' New York loft. Jonas and Lane freely explore the living space, and the space of the monitor on which they occasionally watch themselves. This work is partly inspired by photographer E.J. Bellocq's turn-of-the-century images of prostitutes in the New Orleans red-light district of Storyville.[15] Jonas and Lane's poses occasionally mimic the poses of women in Bellocq's photographs, and other actions they engage in are more interpretive, and call to mind the kind of lived experience that Bellocq's photographs froze in time. During their interactions in the videotaped footage, Jonas and Lane circulate around a hanging paper screen that is alternately lit from opposite sides. It gives the impression of a figure and its cast shadow, until a change in the intensity and direction of the lighting reveals the shadow figure as a second performer. In addition to these doubles and mirrored bodies, Mangolte turned her camera to capture images of the live feed itself, in real time. In one moment, as Jonas appears in the monitor's image, Mangolte cuts power to the device. Its darkened glass tube acts as a mirror, reflecting other scenes taking place in the loft, including Jonas in a silk kimono; turned back on, Jonas reappears on the screen, her reflection still barely discernable in the monitor. To contemporary eyes, such a complex and layered image may appear digitally manipulated, but the processes that produced *Glass Puzzle* are analogue and direct, and exemplary of the way Jonas plays with images. Jonas seems to welcome outside influences into her work, if only to test and play with them momentarily before reflecting them back to their sources, re-energized and re-framed.

The installation version of *Glass Puzzle* incorporates color video footage. Following the shoot, Jonas shelved this footage, but when she came across it again years later, she was ready to engage with it. Rather than editing the footage, Jonas incorporated it in its entirety as a single loop that screens on a monitor on the floor, just in front of the hanging paper screen. While the black-and-white footage clocks in at just over seventeen minutes, the color footage runs more than thirty-one minutes long. These two looping videos are not synchronized in the installation, so their relationship constantly changes. In their cycles, they occasionally appear to mirror each other. A pleasant cacophony ensues when the audio track on both channels plays a reggae song that played in the loft during the filming: a stuttered echo. Suggestions of symmetry and doubling are again introduced with the appearance of a wind-up butterfly toy,

15 Following Bellocq's death in 1949, most of his negatives were destroyed. The Storyville glass plate negatives, however, were later found and purchased by the photographer Lee Friedlander. In 1970 curator John Szarkowski mounted an exhibition of prints Friedlander produced with the plates at the Museum of Modern Art.

and in moments when Jonas and Lane appear in matching slips and knee-high socks and perform a series of similar gestures in imperfect synchrony. Jonas and Lane are alternately individually recognizable and indistinct stand-ins for one another. Seen alongside their reimagining of Bellocq's portraits of female sex workers, Jonas and Lane's alternating presence as shadowy doubles and distinct individuals effectively critiques the judgments and societal prejudices practiced upon women.

The function of memory in relation to present experience drives the narrative of *Double Lunar Dogs*. This work first existed as a theatrical performance—and was presented at CAMH in 1981 as part of the exhibition *Other Realities: Installations for Performance*. It also exists as the single-channel video exhibited in *Parallel Practices*. The work's narrative concerns a group of individuals aboard a spaceship traveling through the cosmos with no idea of their origin or destination. They exist, in essence, with no memory, in a constant present. The double lunar dog, an unseen character, is depicted in drawings that Jonas paints in the video as well as in the theatrical version of the work. Like the Roman god Janus, the double lunar dog looks forward and backward at the same time; it either lacks a body, or each of its bodies is invisibly contained in another temporality. The meeting point of these past and future temporalities—the present—function like the frames covered with thin layers of plastic sheeting on which Jonas paints during the theatrical performance and video; whichever side we're on, we're afforded a framed view of the opposite position, divorced from the ability to physically experience it.

The presentation of the video of *Double Lunar Dogs* in this exhibition was augmented with a series of framed drawings of its canine subject that Jonas executed in red paint on cream-colored rag paper. The drawings, as a physical manifestation of the form Jonas is seen painting in the video, establish another example of the persistence of particular images, thoughts, and narratives in Jonas's work that manifest in a variety of forms.

In her performance practice, Jonas creates and operates in a constant present. When Jonas' collaborators interact with projections of live video footage, sensations separating the real and the theatrical are intentionally, productively blurred. When Jonas invites the world into her performances, its presence proves the veracity of staged action, as well as the function of myth and poetry in the construction of reality.

Jonas' engagements with narrative and storytelling operate similarly: she seems less concerned with communicating the linear progression of a narrative than she is with establishing what a particular narrative might mean, and what echoes or resonances it produces. Jonas' video installations often communicate her impressions of particular stories in ways that are experiential and episodic.

Her video installation *Reading Dante III* (2010) includes a set group of elements: four channels of video, two paper-covered hanging lamps, a floor lamp, two desks, two long benches, a chalkboard easel, and three wall drawings presented in a room whose walls are painted dark slate gray. The relationship of these components to each other is not fixed but contingent upon the exhibition space they're displayed in, so subsequent presentations of the work continually reinvent their constellation. As with other works, this methodology ensures vitality through a decisive occupation of the present. In Jonas' idiosyncratic exploration of *The Inferno* by Dante, views into a furnace suggest the fires of hell, Cerberus is a collaborator in a green dress wearing a fox-like mask, and the rings of hell are suggested by the projected video image of feedback loop that creates a diminishing visual echo. Recorded sounds animate this environment: the voices of individuals invited to read Dante's words in English and in Italian; a broad variety of vocal modes—from operatic arias to screams—recorded during the theatrical presentation of the work; and instrumental orchestration, including sequences in which collaborators banging on pots and pans and rattling chains create a hellish racket. Three of the video channels weave footage shot during the theatrical performance with other imagery including drawings, film, and live feeds. The fourth shows Jonas repeatedly drawing and erasing images on a chalkboard. A multi-tiered pagoda, full and crescent moons, a wolf's head, and other seemingly cosmological symbols are created and wiped away, again and again. Layers are built vertically, horizontally, and in time, implying duration and direction. By comparison with Jonas' earlier explorations of video and performance that viewed the monitor as a space of representation, *Reading Dante III* immerses viewers in a televisual space by wrapping moving images around us. As an investigation of the space of representation, it inverts Jonas' earliest efforts; it feels as though the world of the playback monitor has cracked open, and its images have flooded out to surround us.

IV

Following this opportunity to intimately acquaint myself with Joan Jonas and Gina Pane's works individually and in relation to one another, I would be remiss if I failed to attempt to characterize some common element they share. Joan Jonas and Gina Pane contributed foundational work to the field of performance, though their approaches to the medium were vastly different; while Pane found ways to fix events and emotions as images in time, Jonas finds ways to loosen time's hold on her work and establish it in a constant present. If I was to suggest that their multimedia practices and interest in narrative was something these artists shared, I would have to ignore the widely divergent ways in which they use materials and tell stories: Pane's use of materials tends toward the elemental and alchemical, and Jonas' matter-of-factness exposes practical magic. Joan Jonas and Gina Pane forged unique and singular practices that draw on personal experience and connect it to a wide variety of interests and social concerns. They eschew hierarchies and put their bodies front and center as both material and example. Jonas and Pane's works are most certainly united in their uncommon generosity of spirit and a deep concern for how they accommodate and engage us, their viewers.