

The bang of one spoon rolling

After seeing Joan Jonas's "Organic Honey's Vertical Roll" at the Leo Castelli gallery, I understood why her promotional poster featured a wolf with two sets of eyes. Only he could have seen both the live performer and the televised image of her which was often shown simultaneously. I had to keep looking back and forth between the stage and the closed-circuit monitor.

The piece experimented with the contrasts between the means of seeing things. When Jonas sauntered out wearing a 1920s costume and a lacquered transparent mask, the effect was intensely theatrical, but on the monitor the impression seemed more mystical, more surreal. I'm not sure why, but I think with the stage version I was aware of the entire environment: Jonas, lighting, stage space, and even the audience. But television, like film has the ability to move freely through time and space, producing images not unlike those in dreams. The camera focuses our attention, allowing us subconsciously to block out our environment and submerge ourselves in the image. The selectivity of the camera can also make us more aware of detail, like the textures and patterns of an exquisite fan Jonas held, which was televised in extreme closeup. The fan was disembodied from its environment and made larger than life by the camera, thus seeming somehow more real than the original one.

Sometimes what we saw was not real at all. On the monitor, someone was hitting two silver spoons together. But when I looked, Jonas was on the floor banging one spoon against a mirror. The picture began to roll vertically and when Jonas sat under a drawing of a wolf's head, the image on the screen was part wolf, part human, the successive black horizontal lines dividing

(or, in this case, joining) the two halves. The same technique was used with an image of clapping hands coming together at the rolling black lines. Once again Jonas was on the floor, arms crossed, each hand clapping emptiness.

There were many other loosely associated episodes. I particularly liked the sequences Jonas performed without video, like the opening episode in which she stood naked, interminably examining her body with a hand mirror, and the closing section when she stood wearing a simple black dress and creating the sound of a pack of wolves using voice and amplifier. And I found her preoccupation with reality and illusion and her experiments in how the medium alters or interprets reality fascinating.

—Robert J. Pierce



Voice: Fred W. McDarragh

JOAN JONAS

the village VOICE, January 18, 1973

MIRRORS AND TV ACT AS DANCE ELEMENTS

Even if I hadn't enjoyed it, Joan Jonas's work "Organic Honey's Visual Telepathy" Saturday evening at the LaGiudice Gallery would have deserved points just for the titling. She is a designer of movement and tableaux who shows a deep interest in surface textures and in their images, whether reflected or televised.

Miss Jonas and her team of three, Suzanne Harris, Kate Parker and Linda Patton, alternately donned and doffed plastic masks of kewpie doll cuteness, shoved mirrors in front of the audience and themselves and recorded all with a video camera. The images were seen on small monitors as well as projected on the wall. It was a piece that consumed itself by delivering all objects and persons into the electronic furnace, where they lost their substance as images. But the choice of looking at the event or its televised actuality was offered, the latter proved more compelling.

"Organic Honey" is a piece that interestingly combines the finished product and the raw material with a nothing-up-the-sleeves confidence. There are no tricks, just stylized activity in which light, both dazzling and dim, carries the message. It is image-making of imaginative variety.

DON McDONAGH.