

# Stedelijk Museum

Paulus Potterstraat 13  
1071 CX Amsterdam

Postbus 75082  
1070 AB Amsterdam  
Telefoon 020-5732.911  
Telefax 020-675 27 16  
Telex 12830 Stemu  
Telegramadres Stemusea

## JOAN JONAS VIDEOPROGRAM 1973-1988

Since 1972 when Joan Jonas first incorporated video into her performance 'Organic Honey's Visual Telepathy' she has continued to work with the medium in an innovative and idiosyncratic manner. This programme of Jonas' video work, compiled to accompany her exhibition within the museum, demonstrates the substantial contribution to the history of artists' video which Jonas has made during the last two decades. The early videos reveal many of the themes and interests that dominated Jonas' performance work of the 1970s, whilst those produced during the last fifteen years highlight the virtuosity with which the artist has explored the concepts of narrative and time.

In 'Three Returns' (1973) Jonas explores the perceptual relations between sound, image and space as we see a boy playing bagpipes walk into the distance of a rural landscape, the notes of his music fading with his steps. Gradually, the sound of his bagpipes reasserts itself as it becomes apparent that he is returning from an indiscernible point on the horizon. A minimal exercise in the psychology of perception, this work reflects the ideas of Jonas' 'Outdoor Pieces', such as the performance 'Delay Delay' (1972).

Ideas of perception are also played upon in 'Barking' (1973) in which the viewer is presented with an ominous image of a car parked in a rural landscape. A dog is heard barking in the distance, and a woman's voice off-screen comments "She's still barking". The woman then enters the frame, looking for the cause of the dog's attention, ultimately disappearing none the wiser. The viewer is caught up in the moment of this simple scene, and is left with an unresolved sense of anticipation and anxiousness.

Made in 1974, 'Disturbances' and 'Glass Puzzle' are characteristic of Jonas' work of this period in their treatment of space. In 'Disturbances' the screen is filled by the image of a water's surface on which the rhythmic movements of a woman at the water's edge are reflected. Beneath the water, two female figures intermittently swim across creating ripples that dissolve and transform the reflections into abstract patterns. This multilayering of space is further developed in 'Glass Puzzle' in which a sequence of images recorded from one monitor are superimposed onto the tape of another, creating a visual ambiguity and depth which the two-dimensional screen normally resists. The psychological tension and disorientation created by the fragmentation and confusion of images in these works directly relates to the performance pieces in which Jonas used mirrors to the same effect.

'I Want to Live in the Country (and Other Romances)' (1976-77) is Jonas' first colour videotape. It differs from her previous videos by intercutting Super 8 film of scenes shot in her rural home Nova Scotia with video made in a TV studio. With the back of her head facing the viewer throughout the tape, Jonas reads disjointed fragments from her journal whilst a disparate series of props, scenes and figures appear on the screen. A private and esoteric work, suggestions of loss and displacement are made through the stream-of-consciousness narrative which persistently keeps the viewer at an uneasy distance.

In 1976 Jonas was commissioned to create a performance for children which resulted in 'The Juniper Tree'. This marked an important stage in Jonas' work. She now began to work with texts such as stories, tales and myths