

Joan Jonas

Organic Honey

1972 - 1980

Photographs, drawings, posters, photographic contact sheets from the artist's archive

Courtesy of the artist

Joan Jonas's archive of her iconic performance *Organic Honey* consists of over a hundred photographs, five videos, sketches, scripts, drawings and posters accumulated between 1972 and 1980. During these years, twelve different chroniclers, including the artist herself, documented *Organic Honey* over its six performances. Jonas considers *Organic Honey* to be one project with several variations. The first version (*Organic Honey's Visual Telepathy*) and the final version (*Organic Honey's Vertical Roll*) were developed throughout 1972 and 1973 both as live video performances and multimedia installations, and included a wide variety of props, costumes, videos and images.

Through Jonas's performative treatment of masking, gesture, and visual mirroring, *Organic Honey* occupies a special place in the history of performance art. These actions were then echoed before the eyes of the spectators using a broad range of medial translations, including a live camera feed and works on monitors. Jonas was among the first artists in the late 1960s to address the correlative relationship between the immediacy of the performance and the live continuity of video. The act of simultaneously recording and playback was part of the performance, occupying a place not on the margins but rather in the center of the action, offering the possibility of multiple points of view.

In the past, only a few carefully chosen images have been at the heart of performance art's historization. Since the late 1990s, the ongoing institutionalization of performance art and its various forms of documentation have resulted in an increased interest in the archives of numerous chroniclers and artists, such as the one on display. These archives offer insight into the significance of performance, not only as a tool and a method of working, but also as a meta-genre that functions increasingly like an umbrella, framing interdisciplinary practices concerned with the idea of presence and immediacy in the visual arts.