

*Organic Honey's Visual Telepathy*, 1972 (video); see pp. 144–45

*Organic Honey's Visual Telepathy*, 1972 (video performance); see pp. 146–51

*Vertical Roll*, 1972 (video); see pp. 160–61

*Organic Honey's Vertical Roll*, 1972 (video performance); see pp. 162–63

*Organic Honey's Visual Telepathy/Organic Honey's Vertical Roll*, 1972/1994 (multi-media installation); see pp. 170–71

*Organic Honey's Vertical Roll*, 1973–99 (video); see p. 162

See also the related videos *Duet* (1972; pp. 158–59) and *Two Women* (1973; pp. 182–83).

↓ Stills from *Organic Honey's Visual Telepathy* (1972)



# Organic Honey

For Jonas "Organic Honey" is a persona as well as an abbreviated reference to the larger Organic Honey project in which she is the featured player of its title. The project is made up of the variant performances *Organic Honey's Visual Telepathy* (1972) (her first performance employing video) and *Organic Honey's Vertical Roll* (1972) and the autonomous videos that were part of the process. In both, she draws on ritual and the magical properties of objects, introduces a masked alter ego in a feather headdress and costumes (whose name "Organic Honey" was appropriated from a jar of honey Jonas had in her loft, while the second part of the title—"visual telepathy"—came from a book on magic), explores questions of female identity, and employs her signature prop of the mirror.

The basic structure of the video performances is that, as Jonas explains, "the audience simultaneously sees the live performance and details of the performance through the live video feed." She introduces her process of drawing for the video camera for live video feeds, in particular drawing her dog Sappho, who was a readily available subject, using the video monitor's vertical roll to divide and reconstitute a whole image.

The independent video *Organic Honey's Visual Telepathy* (1972) was made prior to the performance of the same title, and while it evidences related gestures and costumes, it was not used in the performance. In a conversation with Simone Forti and Carla Liss, Jonas described the process of creating the video:

*About two years ago, after starting to work in video [in 1970] I wanted to do a solo. I decided to explore a female psyche. I felt the desire to be by myself... to work out the piece in solitude. Video lends itself to this; it's an ongoing mirror. And I wanted the imagery to be feminine, although I had no idea what that meant. (By the way, I don't believe in male and female form and in this sense art is androgynous.) So I started the piece by sitting in a big white wicker chair in front of the camera, surrounded by objects and materials. [Looking into the camera,] I showed things to the camera and talked to myself, watching it all on the monitor, playing it back... thinking in terms of how TV differs from film, or how I could create filmic effects... A filmic superimposition was made moving a two-way mirror in front of my face and reflecting things in the room which appeared to be superimposed over my face. I began to see myself in different ways and the idea of the alter ego became apparent.<sup>1</sup>*

Though the video *Organic Honey's Visual Telepathy* was not included in the performance of the same title, the performance, as Jonas notes, "was made up of the same material, plus additional parts." The performance included pre-recorded tapes as well as live closed-circuit video, the latter projected on a wall and also shown on a monitor. In the initial live event at LoGiudice Gallery, the performers worked the video cameras. In later performances of both variants, a videographer followed Jonas, almost performing a duet with her, shooting close-up details of objects or actions that were enlarged at times to the size of the wall on which they were projected and always seen on monitors, as the audience saw the figure



← Jonas performing as Organic Honey in *Organic Honey's Vertical Roll* (1972), Festival d'Automne: Aspects de l'art actuel, Musée Galliera, Paris, 1973. Photo: Béatrice Heyligers.

↙ Stills from *Vertical Roll* (1972)

and her gestures in their entirety. Serving as videographers in different venues were Linda Patton, Roberta Neiman, and Babette Mangolte; in the Organic Honey project Jonas directed their camera work, which was always rehearsed in advance. Jonas followed her own movements within the camera frame as well as movements of the camera itself by continuously checking a small monitor that was part of the set. She performed, as she said, for the camera:

*I thought primarily about how things looked on the TV monitor. The fans, the doll, the stones, the spoon that belonged to me or to my family and I transformed them onto the two-dimensional flat TV image. I had read *The Way of the White Clouds* [1966], which discloses in part the way the Tibetans regard their possessions as having a magical content. This paralleled and reinforced my own idea in relation to the psychic power of an object. When Sappho was a puppy she chewed up the fans and the doll, in a sense absorbing them. In Organic Honey's *Vertical Roll* where I used the vertical roll as a structuring device, the dog image was a continual theme. In the performance *Visual Telepathy* I howled with myself on the monitor from *Duet*, which itself is an image of me howling with myself on a monitor, in *Vertical Roll* I howled with two of myself on the monitor... then howled like a chanteuse into a microphone. The piece evolved with the discarding of the masked persona and the emergence of the instinctual she-wolf. This transformation parallels my life.<sup>2</sup>*



Jonas had in 1976 used her props and stage sets from two performances (*The Juniper Tree* and *Mirage*) to make what she called an "environment," a static sculptural form of her temporal, time-based, live work, titling it *Stage Sets*. For her first retrospective in 1980 at the University Art Museum, Berkeley, she presented a selection of her performances. For the second, in 1994 at Amsterdam's Stedelijk Museum, she translated five of her early performances into what she now calls "installations." Re-creating the atmosphere of a performance, these multi-media installations may incorporate reconstructed sets and furniture as well as original props, objects, costumes, cameras, videos, monitors, drawings, photographs, slide shows, or recorded sound elements. Among these was the composite *Organic Honey's Visual Telepathy/Organic Honey's Vertical Roll* (1972/1994), which was acquired by the Stedelijk Museum. —JS

1 Joan Jonas, in Carla Liss, "Show me your dances...: Joan Jonas and Simone Forti Talk with Carla Liss," *Art and Artists* 8, no. 7 (October 1973).

2 *Ibid.*, 16.



Stills from *Organic Honey's Visual Telepathy*  
(1972)