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performance exhibition series

MIRAGE BY JOAN JONAS

THROUGH MAY 18, 20010
THE YOSHIKO AND AKIO MORITA GALLERY,
SECOND FLOOR

The performance space: A small stage stands in front of a film screen surrounded by black velvet. At stage right is a small blackboard. A twelve-foot-long silver cone lies on the floor in front of the stage. On a stand left of the stage is a large TV monitor turned on its end. A small monitor turned away from the spectators illuminates the stage area with a dim blue light. At various times during the performance, a blue or red spotlight illuminates the entire area.

PERFORMANCE

Two women hiding behind screen argue through cones and laugh. As performance develops it becomes evident that one woman is the shadow figure of the other, operating mostly behind the scene.

Jonas emerges wearing white satin, blue in light against black. Turns on sound of *May Windows* (a man and woman whisper inaudibly, occasional foghorns, sound of boat).

Jonas performs series of ritualistic gestures. Begins making “endless drawing” on blackboard. Alternately draws and erases series of images (heart, cone, sun, moon, rainbow, etc.); this drawing activity continues at various times throughout performance). Laughs insanely through large end of cone. Blows through small end.

Jonas, visible to spectators, has dialogue with another performer hidden from spectators. The two grind stones together in circular motion, like reeling in fishing line. The two move about, alternately, in geometric patterns. Sounds made by hidden performer locate her as she moves from place to place in the dark.

Movie screen changes slowly to tall vertical shape. Jonas sits quietly on stage, her back to the spectators, her shadow cast on the screen by the glow of the TV monitor. She shifts position occasionally, changing the shape of her shadow. She stands and backs to the edge of the stage. A faint light behind the screen illuminates performer walking back and forth, her shadow cast on the side walls of the space.

White spotlight on Jonas bent over, head between legs, hair falling down. Upside down, she stares at spectators as she inches across the stage in this position.

Spotlight off, Jonas jumps to the floor, places silver cone on stage against the glow of the monitor, and sings in a minor key in Spanish.

Suddenly Jonas begins running from the large end of the cone to the small end, picking it up, yelling into it, dropping it, etc.

Backstage light reveals performer rearranging tin and paper cones.

Red spotlight on Jonas kneeling on top of large monitor. Turns on TV. Performs series of gestures in different order: bites hand, hides face, smooths hair, crosses arms. Jonas turns off TV and disappears backstage.

Screen changes to horizontal rectangle. Jonas appears on stage carrying 19th-century Mexican mask with staring glass eyes, mole, and narrow, parted lips. Places mask stage right, sits at edge of stage with silver cone held like an oar, and begins to row. Stops rowing and looks through cone held like telescope. Stands up, looks at mask, looks at small TV, looks back at mask, turns off TV. Lies down close to mask, gazing into its eyes as if in love. Sits up, puts on mask, stares through it at spectators. Stands up, backs up slowly. Another performer appears carrying small tape recorder. Picks up small end of cone and places recorder against it, while Jonas, still masked, directs large end to various parts of the space. The two dance a two-step while moving the taped music around the performance space.

As screen enlarges behind her, Jonas drops the mask, runs in place, and shakes her entire body violently for duration of film. She does a handstand off the stage and then lingers.

Backstage light fades in and out to reveal Jonas and other performer backstage amidst the cones.

Out of sight, Jonas sings duet with audio on monitor as other performer directs the sound by moving large end of cone into which Jonas is singing.

Performer dressed in black dress stands at blackboard in view of spectators. She watches film and writes on blackboard.

Bright lights on, Jonas draws a grid on stage with chalk, adding numbers one through nine like those in the film. Using a staff, she hits each number and hops to that part of the grid. She does this in counting sequence, increasing the tempo until possessed by the momentum.

Standing beside the film image, Jonas performs same movements with a hoop that is seen in the film.

Circle of blue light illuminates the stage.

VIDEO AND FILM IMAGES

Videotape: *May Windows*. Tall window, white frame, bright, late afternoon sunlight streaming in. Except for imperceptible fading of light, picture remains constant.

May Windows ends.

Videotape: *Night Window*. Shot of same window as in previous tape but now seen at night, with white cones standing in the space before the window. Pacing figure dressed in black, flowered kimono whistles “Fatal Flower Garden,” opens window, letting in sound of dogs barking, horns. As she closes window, a man is heard lecturing.

Tape of horizontally rolling image of scene shot from front seat of moving car—continuous journey down tree-lined road.

Silent films of Jonas drawing with chalk on blackboard. Draws circular fence—like a hexagram surrounding two cones.

Documentary film footage of volcanoes: eruptions, flowing lava stream, fire, crumbling architecture, etc.

Videotape: *Good Night Good Morning*

Films showing Jonas drawing large curves in chalk on blackboard—rainbow. Repeats three times.

Film shows longer sequence of drawing and erasing on blackboard. Gestures are completed with no interruptions, and the scale is larger than previous film. Draws circle, labels it “sun.” Erases line and label and makes new moon. Draws cone, heart, comet, star, numbers one through nine in grid. Finally wipes blackboard clean with wet cloth. After buildup of chalk, cleaning renews sense of blackboard/screen surface.

Film of vertical roll in horizontal motion with figure in white stepping through a hoop over and over again. Her movements are punctuated and interrupted by the roll bar. She fits herself into the center of the hoop and rocks back and forth. Image changes to Jonas bent over and looking into camera upside down (as previously performed live). The lighting of the film changes back and forth from light to dark. Jonas slowly disappears behind the bar of the vertical roll.

SOUND

Taped ballad, “Fatal Flower Garden,” sung by Jonas and Lois Lane to fiddle accompaniment: “... it rained so hard all day all the boys in our town came out to toss and play.

“They tossed their ball again so high and then again so low, they tossed it into a flower garden where no one was allowed to go.

“Out stepped this gypsy lady All dressed in yellow and green...”

Whispers, foghorns, sound of boat, etc.

Laughter followed by blowing sounds.

Grinding together of stones.

Whistling, barking, sound of horn.

Hypnotic voice.

Performer reads through cone: “...with another roar, which made the princess shake in her shoes, he flung himself upon foe. In an instant the mirror lay at his feet, broken into a thousand pieces, but as every piece reflected part of himself, the dragon thought that he, too, had been smashed into atoms...”

Jonas sings: “...by the waters of Tolten they came and took away my pony my old and worthless...”

“there's no alcohol says the Indian maiden and starts rubbing her embroidered and black shawl...”

Clattering of cone, yelling alternately amplified and muffled.

Audiotape of crows cawing loudly, incessantly.

Backstage sound of water.

Faint sound of man singing Mayan song.

Audio from video monitor of man singing, with four repetitions, “Ba Ba Black Sheep.”

Behind screen, Jonas makes sound of chalk on blackboard, but out of sync with images in film.

Sound of stick hitting stage increasing in tempo.

Interrupted flute music of Irish song—plaintive melody.

Carnival music heard first on one speaker, then on another, in canon.