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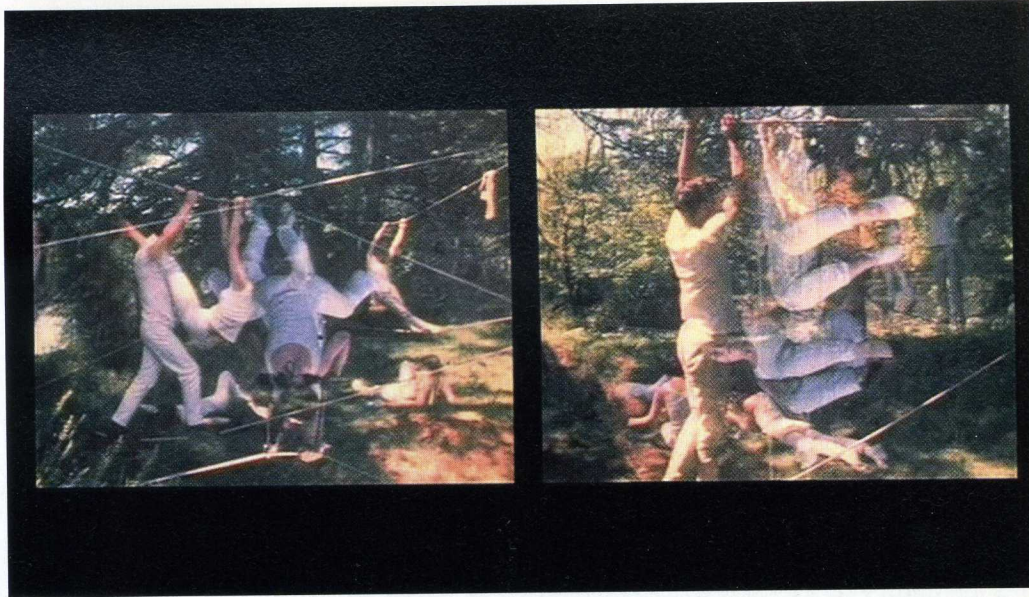
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Carolee Schneemann, *Water Light/Water Needle* (1966)

Carolee Schneemann *Water Light/Water Needle*

Hales Gallery, London, UK

Carolee Schneemann's *Meat Joy* is one piece of 1960s live art that has entered the wider consciousness. The New York artist's 1964 performance piece, in which a group of male and female performers writhed amid chicken carcasses, sausages and fish, has come to illustrate the broad strokes in which gender politics were expressed at the time; synonymous with simplistic ideas about female bodies and their objectification and consumption, not to mention of Schneemann's work more generally.

It might have eventually become a millstone, but *Meat Joy* got Schneemann invited to the 1964 Venice Biennale where she was struck by the "anti-gravitational frame" and altered perspective created by the magical meeting of city and water, an experience that inspired her to create another group work, *Water Light/Water Needle*. This was performed in 1966, once in New York's St Mark's Church and then in an idyllic lakeside setting in New Jersey. Both

happenings are represented at this show, with photos from the New York performance and preparatory drawings surrounding a split screen film of Schneemann's 16 mm documentation of the outdoor version, re-edited by the artist for this show.

Water Light/Water Needle's participants navigated a system of ropes and pulleys strung across a space, intending to make real Schneemann's impressions of Venice. As performers encountered each other on the ropes, they were required to interact in a kind of contact improvisation to help their progress across the ropes be as fluid as possible – a tactile, co-operative human system evoking something sublime.

That it doesn't really work is one of *Water Light/Water Needle*'s great charms. Or perhaps it did work in situ, but its flow doesn't translate to the grainy black and white photographs, nor to the film, where attention drawn not to shape and movement so much as to the details of human faces and bodies. Feet clad in dirty ballet slippers, hands in protective gloves; a hole in the armpit of an off-white T-shirt; sunlight

through leaves on long hair; an awkward smile as one performer's head ends up between another's legs: these are not the weightless figures of Schneemann's imagination but real men and women, some – a young Meredith Monk stands out, and Schneemann's then partner, James Tenney – more graceful than others. Schneemann's soundtrack hints that she is not unaware of this paradox. Mixed into warped sounding fragments of organ music, in a reference to the organist of St Mark's who played a Vivaldi concerto during the piece's first performance, are clanks and whirrs from the ropes and pulleys, an acknowledgment of the machinery driving the illusion, as well as perhaps the imperfect mechanisms of human bodies. There is a quiet voice – presumably Schneemann's – describing elements of the work, but this is muted and swallowed by the noise. (The St Mark's performance included Philip Corner on electronics; it's not clear if this forms part of the Hales show's soundtrack too.)

The sun-dappled bodies in *Water Light/Water Needle* bring to mind *Fuses*, the

film Schneemann made in 1965 showing herself and Tenney having unhurried sex one afternoon. *Fuses* is sexually explicit but it's also highly romantic and normative, and *Water Light/Water Needle* puts forward an equally attractive view of parity and togetherness embodied by these photogenic young people. Prior to the performance itself, Schneemann has her group emerge naked from a lake and run joyously towards the camera. While this is and always was one of Schneemann's less critical works, this moment is somewhat corny, made more by the piece's repackaging for the gallery and for sale, divorced from the original's radical charge as well as its ephemerality. But then how should one go about presenting performances like *Water Light/Water Needle* in galleries, 50 years after they were created? Perhaps the answer is to not even try, and to let them remain as elusive as the Venetian vision that inspired this one, but that would require an ephemerality in our own thinking that seems increasingly remote and now almost taboo. Frances Morgan

Sexing Sound: Aural Archives And Feminist Scores

CUNY The James Gallery, New York City, USA

At the end of February, the noisy Fifth Avenue entrance to The James Gallery at The Graduate Center in New York City was transformed by the uncanny long tone voices of Marina Rosenfeld's *Teenage Lontano In 49 Voices And 12 Photographs* (2008/2014), a sound installation based on György Ligeti's composition *Lontano* (1967). As a form of remaking, the piece acted as a point of entry into Sexing Sound: Aural Archives And Feminist Scores, curated by Katherine Carl, Valerie Tevere and Siona Wilson. The exhibition cut through the historical narratives that separate punk from the avant garde but also institutional archives from communal memory. In what the curators call "sound waves", the exhibition combined materials from ABC No

Rio, the Fales Library at New York University, Franklin Furnace, Her Noise in London, the Interference Archive, the Museum of Modern Art Archives and Ubuweb.

An energetic all day symposium moved through screenings, performances and listening sessions, while scholars and artists like Maria Chavez and Xaviera Simmons discussed feminist turntablism and punk. While many women artists were included, a provocative critique emerged in the exhibition's arrangement, which the curators called "the provisional, 'wild' (incomplete and disordered) structure of the archive". In contrast to neat chronologies of second and third wave feminism between the 1960s and today, the exhibition pointed to the often difficult to narrate cross-sections of feminist practice that include collaborations between men and women.

The exhibition's centre was a hands-on

laboratory that included a computer connected to the Her Noise living archive and copies of key texts in women's thought, from Kaja Silverman's *The Acoustic Mirror* (1988) to Daphne Oram's *An Individual Note* (1971). In a live performance, GBT + EH unlocked the sacred vitrines. Wearing carpenter's costumes, the duo handled, described and videotaped objects, demonstrating a feminist mode of contact that brings history into the tactile present.

MoMA provided materials from the not yet fully catalogued Franklin Furnace arts organisation's folios, and while old event calendars marked the past, unopened packages marked a history still in the making. Some MoMA objects were facsimiles, but the Interference Archive in Brooklyn provided original flyers, raising questions of institutional access. One theme of the exhibition was how artists

themselves documented their own work – cassette copies of *Live To Air*, *Audio Arts Magazine* being one nostalgic example.

The very title of a 1975 collection of scores, *Women's Work* (edited by Alison Knowles and Annea Lockwood), provided a different trajectory for the cut and paste craft of DIY. In an entryway collage by the curators, a 1975 concrete poem by Beth Anderson made entirely of the letter R resonated with the 'grrr' of Riot Grrrl 20 years later, while a 1975 Pauline Oliveros score asked you to "keep the next sound you hear in mind for at least the next half". In the graphic score *The Mark*, A Zen Drawing, composer Wendy Greenberg imputes two anonymous female subjects in a gestural call and response, resonating with the many women trading gestures across the archives.

Julie Beth Napolin