

The Studio Stefania Miscetti presents, for the first time in Rome, a personal exhibition of historical and recent works, the Austrian artist VALIE EXPORT. A feminine protagonist of the international artistic scene, belonging to the generation of the post-war avant-garde.

With her wide, powerful and at the same time aggressive and aesthetically refined work, EXPORT readies the world for the next artists generation by continually challenging limits and certainties with the use of advanced technology, as in her performance at the 2007 Venice Biennale.

Her body of work is composed of performances, documentaries, photos, computer works, laser installations, drawings, objects, sculptures, an expanded cinema theorization of an experimental video series spanning from 1960 until today and since 1973, also contemporary art publications and essays.

Born in Linz, Austria in 1940, she moved to Vienna in 1960 where she graduated in textile design four years later. That same year she started her personal research on experimental American cinema and the European feminist movement, totally absent in Austria at that time.

Her first performances involved the public at a visceral level: she uses her body as a form of communication, a challenge to the hypocritical idea of the woman role as an erotic object in service for a deep male chauvinist society. In 1967 she makes a radical act of auto-determination in an aesthetic, social and political sense, creating for herself a new identity: VALIE EXPORT – written in capital letters – becomes an immediately recognizable product, like the famous Austrian cigarette package *Smart Export- semper et ubique-immer und überall* – sempre e ovunque. It's her logo and the birth of her artistic concept.

Significant in her artistic route is the cross through the *feminist actionism* that has happened through a reflection of how images are transmitted by technology and media. The body gains more importance, the story of its alienation is displayed with it and on it. The field of these explorations is society. We are born in an already existing language system, and we need language, as much as art, as a means of determining the relationship between ourselves. VALIE EXPORT sees this awareness work as something that has to be shown to the public in public actions.

In her recent installations, the voice and some parts of the voice apparatus become a physical and real space. Since 2002 with *Die Macht der Sprache – Il potere del corpo* - until the installation *The voice of performance, act and body, ...turbulences of breath score the banks of my vocal chord...* exposed at the 52nd Venice Biennale in 2007, she represents the body as an imaginary, social or even metaphorical body: she shows a glottis's person image photographed with a laryngoscopia and reads the following words: *il potere del linguaggio continua a mostrare le sue orme per lungo tempo dopo il silenzio*.

In the '70s VALIE EXPORT began a series of photographs situated in urban settings and later also in *nature*. The artist integrates herself, fits in her body to the reality of the constructed, so that the taken positions become a new body language. VALIE EXPORT reverses the idea that through the body positions we are able to understand inner states: she is interested in how our bodies, especially those of women, are shaped by external factors to create conditions or states of mind. From the study of women representations in ancient paintings, she creates experiments using her own body, by for example going to bed with skating shoes, trying to sleep with lead bands.

The action **Tapp und Taskino** of 1968 represent the first expression of what the artist defines *Expanded Cinema*. In fact EXPORT herself becomes a cinema hall and a touchable diva, applying to her naked chest a box with two holes covered by a little leather curtain connected to her breasts. She told the public: “ *this box is the cinema hall... but this cinema is not for looking..it is for touching*”. Again VALIE EXPORT trying to create a contradiction, taking a very erotic part of her body and offering it in the way that she had decided. The box and the impudent offer take away from this situation any sense of eroticism. One of the most important goals that she has achieved with her performances was to separate the female body from an exclusive erotic view. She said: “*I felt it was important to use the female body to create art. I knew that if I was naked I would have really changed the way public looked at me (especially the men). I would not involve any pornographic or erotic/sexual desire, so it was a contradiction.*”

Film Abstract No. 1 of 1968 is the first official work in which simple objects such as water, colours and mirrors alluded to the complex world of special effects technology, simply pouring water and liquids colours on a mirror and projecting them on a screen. For the artist this *live* projection was the reality, as opposed to images on celluloid mediated by a movie camera. She began to call many of her works Anti-Art or No-Art: Her art becomes more and more a political instrument to react against society and the *Establishment*, as she declares: “*For me Expanded Cinema is also a strong rejection of the copyright concept. This is my idea, my thought, but it can be developed anywhere from each of us: everyone can make an Abstract Film. No. 1*”.

In the same period with video **Cutting 1967-1968**, the artist reflects on the importance of the cut technique in cinema. In *opening*, the first part, a window projected onto a paper screen is opened through incisions made

into the screen. The performance ends with an explicit homage to Marshall McLuhan in the cut-out of his famous phrase "*the content of writing is speech*".

Sehtext: Fingergedicht, *Visual text: finger poem*, 1968 – 1973 is a short videotape showing a frontal view of Valie Export's semi-figure as she forms various signs by hand and lines. It is sign language using only the fingers and hands, a poem without words or movement of the lips. At the end, the following German text appears, which – freely adapting the philosopher Martin Heidegger: "*Ich sage die zeige mit den Zeichen der Sage frei nach Heidegger - I say the showing with the signs of the legend -*".

Hauchtext:liebegedicht, *Breath text:love poem*, of 1973 It is also a short videotape in which the artist continues her reflection on the use of language. Again she is the protagonist and with her breath writes a few symbolic sentences on a glass.

On **Remote ... Remote** of 1973 the artist declares: "*Human behaviour – in contrast to that of machines (animals) – is influenced by past events, no matter how long ago they occurred. This has led to the existence of a spiritual para-time that runs parallel to objective time and is constantly subject to the influence of the prayers of fear and guilt, of the incapability to overcome, of deformations that tear open the skin, of visual manifestations. I point to something representing past and present*". Sitting back of a photo showing two children who were sexually abused by their parents, she tortuously cuts into her cuticles until blood drips into a bowl of milk on her lap. On top of the symbolic plane of blood and milk, the physical effect on the viewer of her destructive act of self-mutilation is extreme.

In the performance **Hyperbulie** of 1973 the artist steps inside and moves through a corridor of electrically charged wires. Accepting the challenge with the pain pressed her head against the wires again and again. Society is a closed, structured space, which regulates all human energy through painful barriers. The space delimited by cables represent the society's barriers with we daily enter in contact undergoing a forced normalization of our actions. Only through an effort of will to overcome the pain we can able to achieve a state of free expression.

In **Asemie** of 1973, the artist appears naked, crouched on a table, tying with a thin rope a bird on the table. Then starts to pour some hot wax on it and on her body. Before on her right foot and on her left hand than overturning the wax pot, covers her left hands too. After creating a state of immobility with the wax, begins to rid herself removing the wax with a palette-knife held with the mouth.

In **Raumsehen und Raumhören**, *seeing and hearing space*, of 1974 two video cameras and a mixer make possible a closed-circuit action that demonstrates not only the differences in the way the viewers perceive a person who is physically present in the room and simultaneously electronically reproduced, but also how the image is manipulated by its electronic conveyance. The camera zooms in and out, subjecting the performer's monitor likeness to permanent alteration. Specific synthetic sounds are linked to the picture.

The analysis on communication between the sexes continues in **Body politics** always of 1974. The politics of behavior between men and women can be demonstrated in the movements of a body. A man and a woman connected by a rope rises and falls on two different escalators. The escalator with one moving up and one moving down shows the difficulties of a dialog.

Since 1970 1973 achieves one of the first films **Mann & Frau & Animal**, *man and woman and animal*, the film begins with a catalogue of shots detailing a bathtub's various appliances. From here we cut, quite startlingly, to a woman in masturbating in the same bathtub, using water from one of the previously seen faucets. We never once see that woman's face, and her breasts are covered by her bra, her vagina and clitoris are rendered in stark close-up. The image is more gynaecological than it is pornographic becomes a statement of femininity from a female perspective completely independent of the values and pleasures that identify a woman as an object for male pleasure. On the same concept we can consider the video work **Orgasmus** of 1967.

In the film, **Syntagma** 1984 for the first time VALIE EXPORT is not the protagonist. Her body, a symbol of her research, is replaced with that of an actress. Her body becoming also an icon for the media communication, EXPORT with this gesture underlines the importance of the ideology against the pure aesthetic recognisability.

The film **Ein perfektes paar oder Die Unzucht wechselt ihre Haut**, *a perfect couple or luxury change your skin*, of 1986 ends the serie. The television boom of the eighties was the spread of music video on television. All over the world the music comes to the public not only by radio but instead with pictures. The EXPORT with her research on technological advances related telecommunications, realizes this colour film in 16 mm as a music video on sex and its commercialization. An ironic body-builder uses his body as a billboard, the man trying to persuade a woman to do the same with her body.