

## VALIE EXPORT

(Linz, Austria, 1940)

In 1967, VALIE EXPORT did away with her original name and replaced it with a pseudonym deliberately written in all caps, creating an outright brand with which she was to apply to all her works. Right from the start, she preferred new forms of expression rather than the traditional art forms: video, photography and performance proved best capable of voicing her feminist demands, allowing her to investigate the power relationships between the sexes, the conditioning of the male gaze on the female body, and the role of the woman in both the domestic and the public arena.

A feature of her work is to return time after time to previous works from which to produce new ones. In this practice of self-citation, a key role is played by her archive in Linz, where she stores parts of installations, videos and photography series, along with drawings and sketches of projects never implemented. Serving at the same time as an atelier and a deposit, this space allows the artist to identify original associations even after decades. *Metanoia* represents this approach very well, bringing together footage from twenty-nine films – ranging from performance recordings, video-poems and experimental film – produced between 1968 and 2010.

It's here that we find *TAPP und TASTKINO* (1968), rightly among EXPORT's best-known actions, whereby she invites passers-by in the city space to put their hands inside a box tied around her body and touch her breasts. Two 1973 films show her instead as she challenges the limits of physical pain: in *...Remote...Remote...*, she procures a number of cuts around her nails before immersing them – still bleeding – in milk, and in *Hyperbulie* she moves completely naked through a structure full of electric cables that give off a shock at the slightest contact, weakening her little by little. From that same year dates her provocative *Mann & Frau & Animal*. While she masturbates in a bathtub under the jet of water, her moans of pleasure soon give way to others, attributable to a man yet more akin to animal grunts; the frame closes in on her pubis, covered in sperm and blood, and then on a bloodied male hand: a clear metaphor for a rape that has just taken place. The collection also includes the heterogeneous montage of *Syntagma* (1983), in which we find references to the photographic notes of her *Body Configurations*, produced in a period when the artist used her body in an almost sculptural fashion, in keeping with the forms of the urban landscape. While in the early days her physical presence thus constituted a key component of her work, since the 1990s, we have witnessed a progressive withdrawal of her image in favour of more installational works. This 'disappearance' is also evident from the most recent video in the collection, titled *Anagrammatische Komposition mit Würfelspiel* (2010), which couples the random element of throwing dice and Mozart's scores on the screen.

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