

Vito Acconci

(New York, 1940 - 2017)

Currently an architect interested in working in the public sphere, Vito Acconci started out as a poet, using the space of the page as a place for words to perform. He shifted his activity from the realm of writing to that of three-dimensional reality in the late 1960s and developed a series of performances and related works in photography, film, and video, where he is both the subject and the actor. In certain cases he attempts to modify his own body, studying how it adapts to or opposes resistance to possible stimuli. In this process, vulnerability is understood as an element allowing him to open himself up to viewers. Spread over a chronological time span from 1969 to 1971, the works in the collection are structured in photographs and texts with notes by the artist, related to performances carried out both in the urban space and in the museum setting. *Traffic Light Piece*, for example, was created on the afternoon of 23 November 1969, when Acconci stood on a street corner, facing a traffic light. Coordinating his movements with the operation of this external agent, Acconci took as many photographs as possible at the moment the light turned red. The four black and white photos in this piece are the result of this process. In *Arm Bending Piece*, created that same afternoon, Acconci forces his own body to deal with a different constraint. In this case, the two photographs are the consequence of two different points of view tied to respective positions that Acconci imposes on his arm and hand while holding the camera. Following a series of works in which he focuses on his physical self, Acconci explored interpersonal dynamics in performances executed between 1970 and 1971. In *Proximity Piece*, 1970, shown at the Jewish Museum in New York, the artist wanders through the museum, approaching individual visitors, violating their personal space. In *Directions*, 1971, at the Rhode Island School of Design, Acconci, blindfolded, is stretched out on a platform positioned on the floor. After turning over several times, using words and actions, he tries to turn over his own exhaustion to the audience. (MB)