

## Simone Forti

(Florence, 1935)

Born in Florence into an Jewish industrial family that emigrated to the United States to escape the Fascist racial laws, Simone Forti was an artist of movement, as she liked to define herself, among the most versatile and influential in the development of contemporary performance practices. Her training in dance began in 1955 in San Francisco, where she took part in the innovative workshops of Anna Halprin and got to know a new approach to dancing and constructing choreography, free from any non-essential element and open to improvisation. In New York four years later, the decisive encounter took place with Robert Dunn, who introduced her to the teachings of John Cage on indeterminacy and freedom of expression. In the city, Forti encountered a lively environment, one primed for the fusion of the arts: these were the years of the happenings, of Fluxus and the Judson Dance Theater. The first results of her research, presented in 1960 at the Reuben Gallery, were an early manifestation of what she would later refer to as 'Dance Constructions'. Determined as she was to free dancers from the rigid constrictions of choreography and stage costumes, Forti developed performances of an extreme simplicity which implied the almost exclusive use of cords, boxes and simple wooden structures. The movements of the performers are prosaic, calling for an effort which is often without a purpose, or which serve to experiment with the body's potential for action in the playful situations of childhood. This is the case of *See Saw*, featuring Robert Morris – her husband at the time – and Yvonne Rainer, performing at the two ends of a seesaw.

A key figure in the spread of dance and avant-garde music in Italy thanks to her long stay in Rome in 1968 and her friendship with the gallerist Fabio Sargentini, Forti never stopped experimenting, often breaking into the field of video, drawing, photography and the written word. However, some of the most meaningful contributions come from the field of sound, where she tested the expressive potential of the graphic stroke, transforming the outline of faces into musical scores and random scores, illustrating together with Charlemagne Palestine the complementarity between sound and movement. In the work in the collection, *Bottom* (1973), each of the four postcards illustrated is associated with a brief audio which does not make any specific reference to the contents of the images: they are whistled melodies, sounds of percussion instruments, the sound of a vacuum cleaner in action and the voice of Forti together with those of La Monte Young and Marian Zazeela. When, in the 1980s, the artist returned once more to focus on movement and physicality, she did so adding a major spoken component to her performances. Initially developed in a spontaneous form under the name *Logomotions*, these works would later be known as *News Animations*, in reference to the issues of current affairs that make up the track along which Forti bases her narrative.

RA