

Joan Jonas

Simple Things



Video still from *Flawless Decoys* 2017
(c) Joan Jonas, Courtesy of Gavin Brown's enterprise, WAKO WORKS OF ART

In commemoration of her receipt of the Kyoto Prize, Wako Works of Art is pleased to present a solo exhibition by the American artist Joan Jonas. The show, Jonas' fourth at the gallery and the first in five years, will be held from Sat., Nov. 17 to Wed., Dec. 26, 2018.

Born in New York in 1936, Jonas has explored the potential of performance art for close to 60 years since the start of her career in the 1960s. After buying a portable video camera (Portapak) on a visit to Japan, Jonas developed a practice that combined new media with physical expression in the early '70s. Jonas also says that Nohtheatre, which made a strong impression on her when she saw it for the first time during the same trip, continues to be an inspiration for her work.

In this exhibition, we present two video works, *Flawless Decoys* (2017) and *Beautiful Dog* (2014), and a video document of one of Jonas' performances, *Reanimation Performance (Milan 2014)* as well as a number of the artist' s drawings. These works will provide an insight in the structural foundations of Jonas' art and the subject matter that has interested her throughout her life.

Ranging from personal interests to geopolitical conditions, *Flawless Decoys* employs the motif of "travel," which has served as the source of a wide range of ideas for Jonas. *Beautiful Dog* centers on a dog motif, a symbol of the mysterious links between people and the world that has often been referenced in art. *Reanimation Performance (Milan 2014)* documents a live performance that was created by juxtaposing several other works and processes. These three video pieces shed light on Jonas' artistic practice over more than half a century and her unique worldview.

Jonas' works have a wave-like structure in which materials such as texture, light, sound, and ideas overlap with meaning as surge up in multiple layers. These images are derived from many different sources, including fairy tales, personal essays, epic myths, and frontier folktales. The complex structure of Jonas' work, which quotes from her past efforts and reintroduces and reinterprets various elements, can be seen as a reflection of the world as she sees it:

"My work is all about layering, because that' s the way our brains function. We think of several things at the same time. We see things and think another, we see one picture and there's another picture on top of it. I think in a way my work represents that way of seeing the world – putting things together in order to say something."

In many of Jonas' works, animals, human masks, mirrors, video screens, shadows, and various moving images are combined with sound. These elements overlap and resonate with each other in a multitude of layers, symbolizing the lives of people dwelling in the world and the complexity of the social structure. With the world as a model, these highly abstract works concretely express our relationship with the world and transform it into a personal narrative for each viewer.

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Closed on Sun., Mon. and National holidays

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