

Joan Jonas
The Shape,
the Scent,
the Feel of Things

With original piano score composed and performed by Jason Moran

Dia:Beacon

Riggio Galleries

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Quotations from Aby Warburg are taken from:

Aby Warburg, *Images from the Region of the Pueblo Indians of North America*, trans. Michael Steinberg (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1995).

Philippe-Alain Michaud, *Aby Warburg and the Image in Motion*, trans. Sophie Hawkes (New York: Zone Books, 2004).

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Dia Art Foundation presents

Joan Jonas
The Shape,
the Scent,
the Feel of Things

A performance based on the writings of Aby Warburg
October 14, 15, 21, 22, 28, and 29, 2006 at 2pm

Dia:Beacon, Riggio Galleries

Conceived and directed by Joan Jonas

With original piano score composed and performed by Jason Moran

performers

José Luis Blondet, Ragani Haas, Joan Jonas

singer

Kate Fenner

live sound

Joan Jonas

producer

Jim Bauerlein

stage manager

Sekeena Gavagan

sound designer

Patrick Heilman

assistant to Joan Jonas

Ragani Haas

Video conceived and produced by Joan Jonas

camera

Joan Jonas

video editors

Joan Jonas, David Dempewolf, Pia Lindman, Trish Maud, Johanna Torkola

video performers

**Ragani Haas, Geoff Hendricks, Joan Jonas, Antonio Rogers,
Sur Rodney Sur, Zina**

Artist's Statement

This project—*The Shape, the Scent, the Feel of Things*—goes back to a journey I made forty years ago to the Southwest, where I had the opportunity to see several Hopi rituals, including a performance of the Hopi Snake Dance. Although I have never used it in performance, this very special experience has inspired my work ever since. About ten years ago, I came across a reference to the dance in an essay by the German art historian Aby Warburg, in *Images from the Region of the Pueblo Indians of North America* (translated and with an interpretive essay by Michael T. Steinberg, Cornell University Press, 1995).

In his investigations, Warburg used photographs of artworks from different cultures, across different cultures, recombined and cross-referenced, to produce a display, for example, of certain gestures as portrayed by Greeks, Romans, Indians, and so on. He made many such displays on boards dealing with various themes. He similarly recombined the placement of books in his library, displays that evoked the different relations between their subjects.

Though his trip to the Southwest (which profoundly altered his view of art history) took place at the end of the nineteenth century, he did not produce his famous text about his experience there until thirty years later, as he was recovering from a mental breakdown at a sanatorium in Switzerland. He wrote it as a cure, or proof of one, to himself as much as to his physicians. Although he did see certain dances and rituals, Warburg never saw the Hopi Snake Dance, but I was struck by his descriptions of it and by the depth of his concern with the culture.

I made another trip to the Southwest in January 2004, with a project like this specifically in mind. I stayed on the Hopi reservation in Arizona, and began a dialogue with people in the community, but I did not wish to impose on, or take away from, the Native American people.

I decided instead to return to Warburg's writing. For instance, I found myself focused on Dürer's *Melancholia*, reproduced in Steinberg's essay in the Warburg volume. To me, *Melancholia* evokes memories of history as it impacted the American landscape.

In a sense, I am approaching an old experience, as Warburg did, decades later through new work, for which the words are not yet completely present. This work-in-progress also builds on *Lines in the Sand*, which I made in 2002 for Documenta 11. That piece crosscut Helen in Egypt, the Helen of Troy myth as viewed and reviewed by the Imagist poet H. D. (Hilda Doolittle) with the narrative of her analysis with Freud (*Tribute to Freud*) just before World War II, an experience that included writing sessions. There are many obvious parallels between the H. D. corpus and that of Warburg. The title of this new work, *The Shape, the Scent, the Feel of Things*, is quoted from H. D.'s text.

This project is a result of an ongoing concern with the subject of ritual and performance. One of the underlying themes of my work has been my involvement with the beginnings of expression in other cultures in relation to my own. There is not always a direct relation between the image and the source, but, of course, the performance is totally inspired by these sources, while it takes form within and is a response to a very particular space.

Art historian **Aby Warburg**, born in Hamburg in 1866, studied archaeology and art history, as well as medicine, psychology, and the history of religion. After completing a doctoral thesis on Sandro Botticelli's two paintings *The Birth of Venus* and *Primavera*, Warburg worked in Florence, where he further explored Renaissance art. During Warburg's travels to North America in 1896, he conducted research on the Hopi Indians. Upon his return to Europe, he founded a library, the Kulturwissenschaftliche Bibliothek Warburg, to serve both as a private collection and as a resource for public education.

In 1921, Warburg, suffering from depression and symptoms of schizophrenia, was hospitalized in Ludwig Binswanger's neurological clinic in Kreuzlingen, Switzerland. He was released in 1924, after demonstrating his sanity by giving an extended academic lecture and slide presentation, "Images from the Region of the Pueblo Indians of North America," to doctors and fellow patients. He returned to work at his library for the remaining five years of his life, producing preliminary material for the never-completed *Mnemosyne Atlas*, a thematic system for the study of images.

Biographies

José Luis Blondet is the administrator of education programs at Dia:Beacon. He graduated from the Center for Curatorial Studies, Bard College, in 2003.

Kate Fenner has been singing and touring since she was a teenager in Toronto, Canada, where she formed a soul/r&b band that toured through Canada for ten years. After moving to New York City, Fenner made albums for the next eight years with former band member Chris Brown, including *Go On* and *Songs*. Her debut solo album, "Horses and Burning Cars," was released in 2003. Her new album is due out in the fall of 2006.

Ragani Haas, former student of Joan Jonas, is a visual artist and a performer. She also teaches at the Landesakademie Schloss Rotenfels in Karlsruhe and is part of the art-research group "forschungsgruppe_f" in Switzerland. Since 1999 she has performed in the work of Jonas in Germany, Holland, Poland, England, Canada, and the United States. Haas lives and works in Stuttgart and New York.

Joan Jonas was born in 1936 in New York, where she currently lives and works. She received a B.A. in Art History from Mount Holyoke College, in Massachusetts in 1958, and studied sculpture at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts from 1958 to 1961. She received an M.F.A. in sculpture from Columbia University, New York, in 1965. Since 2000, Jonas has taught at Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge. Her first performance retrospective was at the University Art Museum, Berkeley (1980). Since the late 1960s, her work has been exhibited internationally, including at the Museum of Modern Art, New York; the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; the Institute of the Contemporary Art, Boston; The Kitchen, New York; and Pat Hearn Gallery, New York. Jonas has had major retrospectives at the Queens Museum of Art, New York (2003); the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam (1994), and Stadtsgalerie Stuttgart, Stuttgart, Germany (2000), and was represented in Documenta 11, Kassel, Germany (2002). Her most recent one-person museum exhibition was held at the Jeu de Paume in Paris. She is currently working on a show for the spring of 2007 at MACBA, Barcelona.

Born in 1975 in Houston, Texas, **Jason Moran** began studying the piano at age six, a reluctant student until he experienced the sounds of jazz legend Thelonious Monk, an early role model in his creative development. Moran went on to attend Houston's High School for the Performing and Visual Arts and the Manhattan School of Music, drawn there by the prospect of studying with pianist Jaki Byard. He signed with Blue Note Records in 1998 at age 23. Moran's latest album is called *Artist in Residence*, which is his seventh release with Blue Note Records. This album features three commissions from American arts institutions: The Walker Art Center in Minneapolis (MILESTONE), Jazz at Lincoln Center (RAIN), and Dia Art Foundation through Joan Jonas (*The Shape, the Scent, the Feel of Things*). *Artist in Residence* features guest appearances by artists Joan Jonas and Adrian Piper. Moran was recently awarded the 2005 Pianist of the Year and Small Ensemble of the Year (*The Bandwagon*) by the Jazz Journalist's Association and the first-ever 2005 Playboy Magazine Jazz Artist of the Year.