

PICA and Perth Festival present

Joan Jonas
Mirror Piece I & II
(1969-70/2024)



10 February 2024

Exhibition
9 February – 31 March 2024
Performance
Saturday 10 February, 10am and 4.30pm

Credits

Artist: Joan Jonas
Movement Director: Nefeli Skarmea

Performers:
Bianca Perrone
Claudia Alessi
Darcy Wallace
Isabel Wartmann
Jessica Pettitt
Joanne White
Joshua Pether
Lauren Catellani
Kailyn Tang
Nadia Priolo
Meg Scheffers
Muriel Hillion
Sarah Aiken
Stephanie Pick
William Gammel

Joan Jonas at PICA

Joan Jonas: Sun Signals is the first exhibition in Australia devoted to the work of video and performance art pioneer, Joan Jonas. Bringing together various disciplines – ranging from performance, video and sculpture to sound, drawing and installation – the New York artist’s boundary-crossing approach has had a profound impact on generations of artists.

Sun Signals presents a selection of Jonas’ single-channel videos from 1968–1976, focusing on her early productions and explorations of time, space and self-representation. Through an iterative treatment of movement, mirroring and sound, each work builds on the previous one, as PICA’s Central Gallery is transformed into a chamber of unfolding gestures and cyclical compositions. Jonas’ reputation as ‘the digital sorceress’ resonates with the maternal principles of Ngaangk – the overarching theme of the Perth Festival 2024.

Ngaangk refers to sun and mother in the language of the Noongar people who are the traditional custodians of the land on which the city of Perth now stands.

Sun Signals is accompanied by the live performance of Jonas’ iconic work *Mirror Piece I & II* (1969–70/2024) on Saturday 10 February. This 30-minute work takes place in PICA’s Central Gallery with fifteen local performers carrying life-size mirrors in which they create an immersive scene of moving imagery. Guided by the hands of women, the performance is a reclaiming of the mirror as a powerful tool for female self-representation.

About Joan Jonas

Born in 1936 in New York, where she continues to live and work, Joan Jonas is one of the most significant artists in the history of video and performance art. Since the 1960s she has placed female subjectivity at the centre of her work, employing a repertoire of leitmotifs, gestures and iteration in her storytelling.

Jonas' practice is the subject of a major retrospective at the Museum of Modern Art, New York in 2024. Recent solo exhibitions of her work have been held at Haus der Kunst, Munich, Germany (2022), Dia Art Foundation, Beacon, New York (2021) and Tate, London (2018).

Jonas represented the United States of America at the 56th Venice Biennale (2015) and has participated in Documenta several times, most recently in dOCUMENTA(13) in Kassel, Germany (2012).

About the Creative Team

At PICA, Joan Jonas presents a reconfigured staging of her ground breaking 1969-70 performance, Mirror Piece I & II. The first in a series of time-based works that established Jonas as a leading figure in the field of performance art, Mirror Piece I & II was motivated by feminist ideas and explores the power of the gaze and notions of perception and representation.

The performance of this work at PICA has been realised with the generous support of the Joan Jonas Giving Circle in collaboration with Joan's Movement Director Nefeli Skarmea and the participation of fifteen Australian performers.

In Mirror Piece I & II the performers carry out a series of carefully choreographed actions using mirrors and glass that fragment the representation of space and multiply the image of audiences and performers. The experience of overlapping mirrors and reflected images are striking devices and recurring metaphors in Jonas' work. The presence of the mirror, the first prop used by Jonas in her performance works, opens up a discussion on the function of representation and the relationship between artist and spectator, and concepts of reality and reference, image and reproduction.

Nefeli Skarnea – Movement Director

After her education in classical ballet and contemporary dance, Nefeli Skarnea collaborated with several companies and independent choreographers, including Sergiu Matis, Colette Sadler, Russell Maliphant and cie. Alias, among others. As a movement director, she has worked alongside visual artists whose practice incorporates a performative aspect, such as Martin Creed, Cally Spooner and Megan Rooney. In 2018, as part of the major retrospective exhibition dedicated to Joan Jonas at Tate Modern, London, Nefeli led the reconstruction and re-staging of a selection of Joan's early works whose reactivation continues to this day.

Nefeli holds a Masters in Cultures of the Curatorial (2013), which facilitated her engagement as a project and curatorial assistant at dOCUMENTA(13) in Kassel, the Serpentine Galleries' Public Programs in London and the exhibition Dance First Think Later – an encounter between dance and visual arts. Currently, Nefeli is based in Geneva, Switzerland where she works as the coordinator of the cultural programme of the Plaza Foundation, a pioneering hub for cinema and architecture in the making.

Nefeli Skarnea and her relationship with Joan Jonas and her work

“In 2012 I had the privilege of meeting Joan Jonas for the first time during my involvement with dOCUMENTA(13), where I was overseeing the production of her commissioned performance Reanimation. Joan's work was unlike anything I had encountered before. On stage, with jazz pianist Jason Moran, Joan seamlessly wove a captivating narrative around an Icelandic glacier, incorporating elements of speech, sound, painting and movement, live and pre-recorded video, as well as the use of masks and artifacts.

“Our paths crossed again a few years later in London and in 2018 Joan invited me to collaborate with her on restaging some of her early performance works of the late 1960s and 1970s. Working together, we reconfigured Mirror Piece I & II, Mirror Check and Delay Delay by navigating through photographs, texts and video documentation. This undertaking held particular significance as a pivotal part within Joan's extensive retrospective at Tate Modern that year and Mirror Piece I & II has now entered the museum's collection.”

About the Creative Team

Bianca Perrone is an independent dance artist based in Boorloo / Perth. In 2021, she graduated from WAAPA and Link Dance Company with her Bachelor of Arts Degree and Honours Degree. Her career highlights include working with Perth Festival, Scott Elsterman and Breaksea Incorporated.

Claudia Alessi has amassed a diverse and considerable suite of experience over a significant multi-disciplinary career in movement, dance, circus arts, puppetry and film spanning 30 years. She's taught generations of dancers and actors; choreographed and produced significant events; held board positions and continues to champion and mentor dance and physical theatre creatives regionally and nationally.

Darcy Wallace is a British-Australian director, choreographer and contemporary dance artist working across film and live performance. Darcy has performed at Index Gallery (SE), Raven Row (UK) The Venice Biennale (IT), Berlin Arts Week (DE), Tate Modern (UK), Bergen Kunsthall (NO), Hayward Gallery (UK) and Sadler's Wells (UK). She has worked with choreographers Xavier Le Roy, Alexandra Pirici, Simone Forti, Serafine1369, Becky Hilton, Holly Blakey, Pablo Bronstein, Phoebe Berglund, among others. She is currently building a body of work that explores the transitional experience of motherhood, working long term through informal workshops, interviews and performance for camera.

Isabel Wartmann is a contemporary dancer based in Perth. Since graduating from WAAPA in 2021, Isabel has worked as a freelance artist performing in Strut Dance Short Cuts, Co3 Open House, Fringe Festival 2021 and Red Earth Arts Festival 2023.

Jessica Pettitt is a contemporary dance artist based in Boorloo/Perth. She began her contemporary training at WAAPA, graduating from LINK Dance Company in 2021. Since then Jess has engaged in a multifaceted practice, encompassing performance, improvisation, research, teaching and choreography.

Jo White is a performer and teacher with a broad background in dance and movement practices. Some of her professional experiences include the Hamburg Ballet, Phillip Adams Balletlab, Shelley Lasica and Alice, Will Caroline. Jo taught dance for 12 years at the VCA, Chunky Move and Lucy Guerin Inc and recently through Strut. Jo applies her formal knowledge and training into an intuitive, energetic based approach with human connection at the forefront. She is interested in making and collaborating with people and other artists across multiple disciplines.

Joshua Pether is of Kalkadoon heritage and lives and works on Noongar country in Western Australia. He is an experimental performance artist, ritual practitioner and choreographer of movement, temporary ritual and imagined realities. His practice is influenced by his two cultural histories: indigeneity and disability. As a ritual practitioner he has an interest in durational work that allows the body to undergo and manifest energetic transformations that oscillate between the world of now and the hereafter.

Kailyn Tang is an emerging contemporary artist from Boorloo/Perth. Kailyn trained in classical and contemporary dance at WAAPA where she gained a Bachelor of Arts (Dance) and Bachelor of Performing Arts in Honours whilst dancing alongside LINK Dance Company. Kailyn is intrigued by movement choices and intent when supporting and/or articulating ideas and concepts.

Lauren Catellani is an independent artist based in Boorloo/Perth. She works across a variety of disciplines and roles including performer, choreographer, dramaturg, producer, researcher and teacher. Her current arts practice and work emerges through many forms and is situated between dance, visual art and performance art.

Meg Scheffers graduated from the Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts in 2019 where she obtained her Bachelor of Arts (Dance). Meg is currently navigating the independent dance and music sectors in Boorloo. She is passionate about collaborations that result in multi-disciplinary works and the sharing of artistic processes. Meg has performed in works by choreographers including Scott Elstermann, Helder Seabra, Ori Flomin and Lauren Langois, as well as created her own works through her collective TriplOcate.

Muriel Hillion Toulcanon is a Reunionese multi-form artist and researcher based in Western Australia. Her work navigates the complexities of Creolisation in the Indian Ocean using vibrant music, powerful singing, storytelling, truth-telling and captivating choreographed or improvised dance.

Nadia Priolo is an independent dance artist based in Boorloo/Perth. Upon graduating from WAAPA in 2021, Nadia has engaged in a range of independent projects and performed in works for Perth Festival and the Fremantle Biennale.

Sarah Aiken is a dancer and choreographer working nationally and internationally. Her work investigates assemblage, authorship, scale and the self-employing repurposed materials, collage, video, sound and light to distort and manipulate perspectives. Sarah considers performance as a site for empathy and exchange and is co-director of Deep Soulful Sweats, a recipient of the Chloe Munro Fellowship and HIAP/Creative Australian residency. In April her award-winning work Make Your Life Count will be presented at PICA.

Stephanie Pick is a multi-disciplinary creator, physical performer and National Institute of Circus Arts graduate specialising in clown and dance trapeze. She describes herself as a caring, rebellious, loving... bad ass.

William Gammel is a visual theatre maker working in performance, design and production. Living on Whadjuk Noongar Boodjar, Gammel completed his studies at WAAPA in 2021. Since this time, he has worked as a creative on several projects including Pull the Pin (2022), We'll Always have Bali (2023), Much Stuff (2023), Everything Flickers (2023), and Catastrophes (2023).

Supported by PICA's Joan Jonas Giving Circle.

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