



THE MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Thursday, December 15, 2022

MOCA PRESENTS *SIMONE FORTI*
Featuring Weekly Live Performances in Grand Avenue Galleries

January 15–April 2, 2023
MOCA Grand Avenue
ADMISSION IS FREE



LOS ANGELES—The Museum of Contemporary Art (MOCA) presents the first museum exhibition on the West Coast to survey the career of Simone Forti (b.1935). The show, *Simone Forti*, presents more than 80 works spanning the artist’s six-decade career, from the early 1960s to the present day, including live performances of her iconic Dance Constructions.

“Starting with her early experimental works from the 1960s, Simone Forti has proved to be a profoundly influential artist who has shaped and then continually reshaped our collective ideas around the relationship between the visual arts and dance,” said Johanna Burton, The Maurice Marciano Director of MOCA. “MOCA has been fortunate to have enjoyed a

long relationship with Forti, and it is our great honor to be able to present this exploration of her storied career at this epic moment in her life and work. In the spirit of the artist's practice, the exhibition will be layered, multidisciplinary, and accessible, and filled with beauty, rigor, feeling, and wit."

While she is widely celebrated as a choreographer and dancer, Forti views herself more broadly as an artist who works with movement, using her own body alongside other materials and media. *Simone Forti* explores the many ways in which her practice addresses movement through archival documentation, sculpture, drawings, and technology, highlighting projects such as her experimental holograms, drawings and videos from her *Illuminations* and *News Animation* series, and drawings and photographs from her lifelong exploration of animal movement and the natural world. Crucially, MOCA will present weekly live performances of three works from her seminal *Dance Constructions* (1960-61) in the exhibition space.

First performed at Reuben Gallery in 1960, with further constructions premiered at Yoko Ono's loft the following spring, *Dance Constructions* are a suite of nine works based on a set of task-based instructions, sometimes undertaken using structures made of simple materials such as wood and rope. With the simple props and pedestrian movement, Forti referenced Minimalism—her then-husband artist Robert Morris was a collaborator on the built structures associated with *Dance Constructions*—and like her avant-garde peers who included Trisha Brown, Steve Paxton, and Yvonne Rainer, rejected the virtuosity synonymous with much contemporary dance at the time. Adamantly shunning traditional concepts of dance and dancers and embracing everyday movement—climbing, walking, standing—and performers without formal training, *Dance Constructions* and Forti's wider body of performances were pivotal to the development of postmodern dance. Central to her legacy, these works have reframed the dialogue between visual art and contemporary dance, significantly influencing both artists of the time and younger generations of artists including Jérôme Bel, Moriah Evans, Gerard & Kelly, and Will Rawls.

Three *Dance Constructions* are included in MOCA's exhibition and performed by a cast of Los Angeles-based artists and creatives, many of whom have taken classes and workshops with Forti. These are sculptural performances that evolve over time as performers with diverse bodies and different experiences take on the work. In *Slant Board* (1961), performers use ropes to move side to side and up and down across a large plywood ramp. In *Huddle* (1961), performers knot themselves together in a single sculptural form as, one by one, each performer climbs wordlessly up and over the group. For *Hangers* (1961), the performers perch in the loops of rope suspended from the ceiling while another performer moves between them.

"Forti's performances are living sculptures. The *Dance Constructions* are meant to be viewed in the round with Forti drawing attention to the weight and mass of bodies in motion," said Alex Sloane, MOCA Associate Curator and co-curator of the exhibition. "This exhibition is a full view of Forti's extraordinary career and her continued exploration of the body in movement, from archival performance documentation, to drawings, video, and holograms, all of which can now be seen in relation to her radical live performances."

Over the years, Forti has returned continually to improvisation, including extensive collaborations with musicians like Charlemagne Palestine and Peter Van Riper. *Simone Forti* charts many of these crucial collaborations, underscoring the artist's longstanding commitment to creativity as a shared process and tracing her large network of Los Angeles-based partnerships with an intergenerational range of artists. Also included in the exhibition are three of the extraordinary holograms Forti made in collaboration with Lloyd G. Cross in the 1970s.

"Forti's medium is movement," said Rebecca Lowery, MOCA Associate Curator and co-curator of the exhibition. "In addition to being a significant survey of an exceptionally influential artist, this exhibition is an exploration of how movement can find its way into all kinds of media, even those we think of as still. Forti finds dynamism in the smallest physical gestures and in the human form, but also in drawing, photography, found objects, and the natural world."

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Born in Florence, Italy, in 1935, Forti emigrated with her family to Los Angeles in 1939. In 1955 she began dancing with Anna Halprin, who was doing pioneering work in dance improvisation in the San Francisco Bay Area. After four years of studying and performing with Halprin, Forti moved to New York, where she studied composition at the Merce Cunningham Studio with educator and musicologist Robert Dunn. In these classes, which focused on the work of John Cage, she met and began working informally with choreographers such as Brown, Paxton, and Rainer.

Forti has performed in many venues around the world, including MOCA; the Louvre Museum, Paris; and The Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), New York. She has had solo exhibitions at the Kunstmuseum in Bonn, Germany, as well as a major career retrospective at the Museum der Moderne, Salzburg, Austria, in 2014. Forti's artwork is in the collections of The Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), New York; the Stedelijk Museum, Generali Foundation; and The Whitney Museum of American Art. Forti has received various awards, including a Guggenheim Fellowship in Dance in 2005 and a Yoko Ono Lennon Courage Award for the Arts in 2011. She is also renowned for her teaching, and was a professor in UCLA's Department of World Arts and Cultures from 1997-2014.

Simone Forti will be accompanied by a robust schedule of public programming; event information will be available on moca.org. A brochure will be released (both in print and online) in conjunction with the exhibition and featuring a conversation between Forti and the curators.

Dance Constructions will be performed by a diverse group of Los Angeles-based artists and creative professionals. All three Dance Constructions will be presented in succession four times a day, three days a week:

Thursdays, 3:30pm, 4:45pm, 6pm, and 7:15pm

Saturdays and Sundays, 12:30pm, 1:45pm, 3pm, and 4:15pm

Simone Forti is organized by Rebecca Lowery, Associate Curator, and Alex Sloane, Associate Curator, with Jason Underhill, Guest Curator, The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles.

Dance Constructions are performed by Loay Al Derazi, Rodrigo Arruda, Alan Duff Berman, Miles Brenninkmeijer, John Brutle, Kyla Carter, Milka Djordjevich, Alexsa Durrans, Gabriela Enciso, Jennifer Galipo, Abriel Gardner, Chelsea Gaspard, Peter Kalisch, Zoe Rappaport, Kim Schnaubert, Michelle Sui, devika wickremesinghe, and Melina Wilcox. Instruction by Carmela Hermann Dietrich.

Performance Coordination by Sarah Swenson.

Simone Forti is made possible by The Friends of Simone Forti:

HOSTS

Laura Donnelley and Good Works Foundation, Betsy Greenberg, Deborah Irmes, and MOCA Projects Council.

SUPPORTERS



PASADENA ART ALLIANCE

PARTICIPANTS

Julie and Larry Blivas in honor of Blake and Ryan Blivas and Alexandra and Danielle Neu, MOCA Projects Council Members, and The Jay and Deanie Stein Foundation Trust.

In-kind support provided by The Box, Los Angeles.

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Exhibitions at MOCA are supported by the MOCA Fund for Exhibitions with generous funding provided by the Earl and Shirley Greif Foundation.

Also Opening:

Concurrent with *Simone Forti*, MOCA will present ***Long Story Short***, a special exhibition of artworks dating from the 1970s to the present day, drawn from MOCA's world-renowned, ever-growing collection of 7,500 objects. Showcased in two parts, the first installment will open on January 15, 2023, and will be joined by additional galleries with the second installment opening April 30, 2023 and on view through January 7, 2024. *Long Story Short* demonstrates the myriad ways contemporary artists have addressed aesthetic, political, and philosophical concerns in the last fifty years, whether by reclaiming public space in guerilla-style street performances, innovating new forms, commemorating loves and losses, challenging the hierarchy of art and craft, or rethinking the conventions of portraiture. By exhibiting artworks that are widely regarded as hallmarks of the museum's collection alongside lesser-known pieces, recent acquisitions, and artworks that have never previously been on view at MOCA, *Long Story Short* reminds us that art history, and history more broadly, is made in the present.

Exhibitions at MOCA are supported by the MOCA Fund for Exhibitions with generous funding provided by Earl and Shirley Greif Foundation.

General admission to MOCA is free courtesy of Carolyn Clark Powers.

These exhibitions are carbon calculated. The museum reduced greenhouse gas emissions through planning efforts and balanced the remaining emissions through Strategic Climate Fund donations. Support provided by the MOCA Environmental Council.

Image credit: Simone Forti, *Planet*, P.S.1, Long Island City, NY, October 1976. Performed with music by Peter Van Riper. Photo by Peter Moore.

THE MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART

About MOCA: Founded in 1979, MOCA is the defining museum of contemporary art. In a relatively short period of time, MOCA has achieved astonishing growth; a world-class permanent collection of more than 7,500 objects, international in scope and among the finest in the world; hallmark education programs that are widely emulated; award-winning publications that present original scholarship; groundbreaking monographic, touring, and thematic exhibitions of international repute that survey the art of our time; and cutting-edge engagement with modes of new media production. MOCA is a not-for-profit institution that relies on a variety of funding sources for its activities.

More Information: For 24-hour information on current exhibitions, education programs, and special events, call 213/626-6222 or access MOCA online at moca.org.

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