PRESS RELEASE

**Kunst Meran / Merano Arte**

**February 6 to Sunday, April 10, 2016**

**Exhibition**

**gestures- women in action**

**Press conference:** Friday, February 05, 2016 at 11.00 a.m.

**Opening reception:** Friday, February 05, 2016 at 7.00 p.m.

**Curated by:** Valerio Dehò

With the exhibition "**gestures – women in action**" that will be held from **February 6 to April 10, 2016**, Merano Arte presents **40 works** – photographs, videos, objects, collages – that are a representative cross-section of female Body Art from the 1960s until today. The works explore the complex topic of the female body that is used as a primary means of expressing protest and insubordination against the prevailing values. Not only works by the main exponents of the 1960s and 1970s Body & Performance Art will be shown - **Yoko Ono**, **Marina Abramovic**, **Valie Export**, **Yayoi Kusama**, **Ana Mendieta**, **Gina Pane**, **Carolee Schneemann**, **Charlotte Moorman**, and **Orlan** - but also those by the contemporary artists **Sophie Calle**, **Jeanne Dunning**, **Regina José Galindo**, **Shirin Neshat**, **Silvia Camporesi,** and **Odinea Pamici**.

Many of these works are fleeting and meant to be so, as they are closely related to the here and now of their making, not only embedded in a specific temporal and socio-cultural context and thus essentially conceptional works that have lasted as representations in the form of photographs and films or objects used for actions. The exhibition traces the intricate paths of an approach with which the protagonists of the Body Art movement changed the course of contemporary art decisively.

It was important to lift the borders between theater, actions, messages, and art in order to reveal the various facets of the living conditions of women in the world. Through Body Art, women have established themselves as major protagonists of this cultural revolution and underscored their presence in the world of art by communicating their political decision in favor of gender equality during the height of the women's liberation movement all over the world. With their working approach, they intended to eliminate the distance between the artist and her audience, thus turning art into the basis of social communication, into a mirror and laboratory of the changes that were taking place. The audience was no longer a crowd of passive viewers, but an essential element of the work of art.

The exhibition is chronologically structured. except for the works in the entrance and along the apron that leads into the exhibition rooms: the cello of the American artist and musician **Charlotte Moorman** and a video of her performance with her instrument. On the large wall that reaches from the ground floor across all three levels of the exhibition hangs resplendent a large-format photograph of **Marina Abramovic** from the 1994 theater performance *Delusional*.

The first exhibition room presents a row of pictures and videos by **Yoko Ono**, a pioneer of Body Art. She was already active in the Fluxus movement during the 1950s, which formed the basis for the development of Body Art. On show are photographs as well as the famous video of the performance *Cut Piece* (1965), followed by shots that were made during the performance *Bed In* (1969) with her husband John Lennon.

Subsequently, we will see several photographs and videos by the artist **Marina Abramovic** who is famous for her extreme performances in which she fathoms the limits of the physically tolerable as well as the potential of the mind and concentration. Then there is a video and photographs of Mario Carbone from the performance *Imponderabilia* which Abramovic made in 1977, together with her companion, the artist Ulay.

The second exhibition room presents the performance *Blood sign* (1972) by the Cuban artist **Ana Mendieta**, whose works reveal the ritual character of ancient indigenous cultures and strong transcultural roots, but also the permanently experienced loneliness of the body that is exposed to its surroundings and to the elements of nature. A photograph from *Azione sentimentale* (1973) by **Gina Pane** - one of the major proponents of Body Art - enters into a dialog with this work. Pane's work is manifold and complex. She uses various techniques and is always in search of a dialectical balance with the audience, which is involved physically and, above all, mentally.

The Japanese artist **Yayoi Kusama** – now known for her obsessive-hallucinatory pictures and installations – was active in the late 1960s in New York as a performer and artist who wore revealing outfits and was close to the hippie movement. A performance shown at the exhibition dates back to that period.

The exhibition is continued with a work, the poetry of which circles on the feminist protest against mental and physical violence against women, including the violence against the Austrian artist **Valie Export** herself, who exchanged the surname of her father and that of her husband by a pen name that refers to the Austrian cigarette brand "Export Smart". Another important artist who became famous with her works on the topics of body, sexuality, and gender is the American **Carolee Schneemann**. The exhibition shows a row of photographs that document the performance *Ice naked skating* (1972) as well as the unusual series *Eye Body* (1963). In the middle of the room there are two large-format photographs by the French artist **Orlan**, who became famous for her facial plastic surgery and her other cosmetic operations with which she turned her own body into the raw material of art and into her object of reflexion on the hybridization of nature and technology.

On the third floor, the visitor will notice a small, precious photograph by **Sophie Calle**: *Mon ami* (1984). With her slightly voyeuristic works, the French artist examines the topic of female identity and intimacy, trying to find the border between public and private experience. The large hall holds a picture of the performance *Balkan Baroque*, for which **Marina Abramovic** received the Golden Lion at the Venice Biennale in 1997: she sat on a pile of beef bones for several hours a day, cleaning them and singing Serbian songs of death. This overwhelming photograph is juxtaposed with a small work by **Jeanne Dunning** from the series *Long Hole* (1995–96). Here, the American artist reflects an individual's unique relationship to her own physiognomy, identity, and sexuality, exploring the moment of discarnation that occurs when we are confronted with another person. The Iranian artist **Shirin Neshat,** on the other hand, points to the role of women in today's Muslim societies. A still from her short movie *Pulse* from 2001 shows a dark, intimate appearance. It is followed by a work by the young Italian photographer **Silvia Camporesi** entitled *Il sale della terra* (2006), in which the artist creates a filigree, poetic cosmos, a kind of intimate, almost theatrical interior that she herself lives in. **Odinea Pamici** from Triest is more physical and provocative; in *Ballo per Yvonne* (2005), she plays with stereotype attributions, the symbols of marriage, and with the kitchen as the traditional place of female activity. In the last exhibition room, there are a number of works by the artist **Regina José Galindo** from Guatemala. In her performances - she calls them "psycho-magic actions", referring to the emotional burden and the suffering they present - the artist aggressively deals with her own physical and mental limits, turning her body into a stage of permanent conflict.

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**Artists:**  Marina Abramovic, Sophie Calle, Silvia Camporesi, Jeanne Dunning,   
 Valie Export, Regina José Galindo, Yayoi Kusama, Ana Mendieta,   
 Charlotte Moorman, Shirin Neshat, Yoko Ono, Orlan, Odinea Pamici,   
 Gina Pane, Carolee Schneemann

**Exhibition period:** February 6 – April 10, 2016

**Venue:** Merano Arte – In the Sparkasse building

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