

Whitney Museum of American Art 40

The New American Filmmakers Series

EXHIBITIONS OF INDEPENDENT FILM AND VIDEO

Dorit Cypis

"X-Rayed," 1987

Slide/audio installation. On view continuously.

Components

Multiple slide projectors, slides, theater curtain, projector stands, plaster casts, props, and audiotape.

Credits

Conceived, photographed, and directed by Dorit Cypis. Performance: Leeny Sack. Photographic models: Anita Habermas-Scher, Leeny Sack. Sound composition: James Harry. Taped vocals: Marilyn Habermas-Scher. Production Manager, Minneapolis: Judy Kepes. Electrical engineering and construction: Thomas Briggs. Prop construction: Allison Deller, David Swanson. Projection dissolve programming: Bruce Clark, Russell Manning Productions.

The notions of integrity and closure in a text are like that of virginity in a body. They assume that if one does not respect the boundaries between inside and outside, one is 'breaking and entering,' violating a property.

—Jane Gallop, *The Daughter's Seduction*

"X-Rayed" is the fourth in a series of multiple slide and sound pieces by Dorit Cypis that began with the 1986 installation *Love After Death*. With these projects, which include the performances *Love After Death: A Renaissance* (1986), and *A Phantasmagoria* (1987) with Leeny Sack, Cypis exhumes the ghosts of dreams, stories, and history that resonate in the densely textured images and sounds. Her work involves the projection of emotionally and psychologically "loaded" images—variously drawn from Northern Renaissance painting, haunting old family photographs, and images of the female body—onto scrims, screens, and other surfaces. Through the use of slide dissolves, and through the spectator's (or performer's) presence, which interferes with the throw of the projection beam, the spectator is engulfed in a collision of constantly shifting visual planes.

A theatrical curtain, onto which large slide images are projected, hangs at the entrance to "X-Rayed." The act of walking through the curtain into the space shatters the photographic illusion, and, in the process, breaks down distinctions between inside and outside, viewer and viewed.

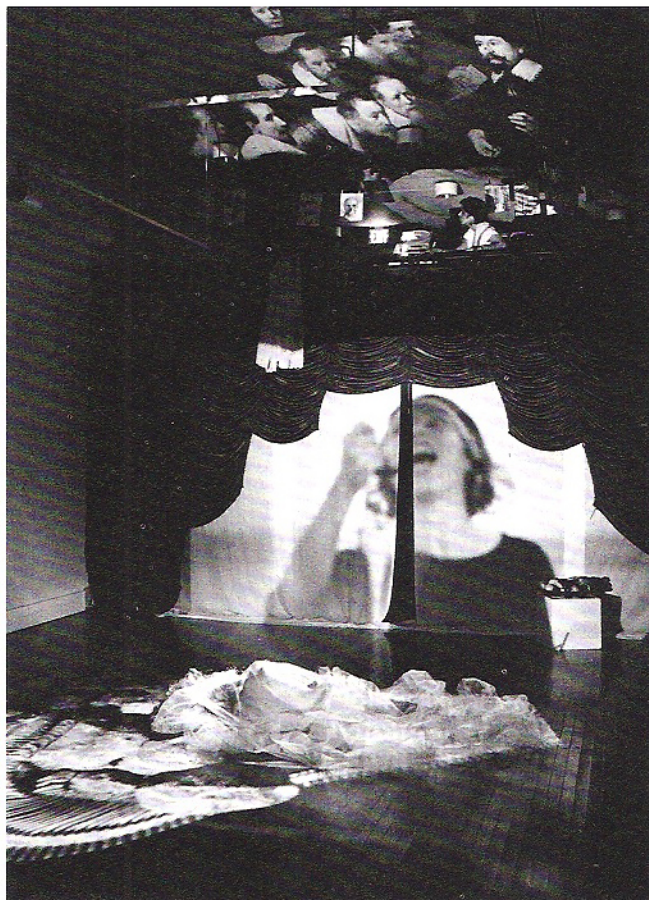
In "X-Rayed," Cypis uses five slide projectors, one of which slowly sweeps around the gallery walls and ceiling, causing the images to continually mutate, overlap, and wash over the viewer. The mechanics of slide projection become a metaphor for the mental activity of psycho-

January 9–February 7, 1988

Gallery talk, Tuesday, January 19, at 2:00.

Dorit Cypis will be present.

Performance on Saturday, January 16, at 2:00.



A Phantasmagoria, 1987, with Leeny Sack. An installation and performance at the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, Halifax. Photograph by David Miller.

logical projection, whereby complex feelings of anxiety are externalized as hostility, blame, or guilt. Together, the props, sounds, and large-scale images function as provocations, as sparks. The primary images, seen on the central screen in the gallery, are of a woman (Leeny Sack) looking at and touching her body; these acts are meant to symbolize the attempt at self-possession and self-knowledge. They portray a female, not offering herself up as a passive object, but as an active subject or, as Cypis puts it, "a woman daring to imagine herself."

The attempt to reclaim the female body from its status as an object of male consumption has been central to Dorit Cypis' work in photography, installation, and performance since 1981. She seeks to affirm female sexuality in response to those who have denied its centrality in women's lives. Her work is also rooted in debates about the representation of the female body and the psychological and ideological construction of meaning. Rather than set out a series of fixed meanings, Cypis attempts to make the viewer conscious of these processes.

Lucinda Furlong
Assistant Curator, Film and Video

"X-Rayed"

A woman has been hunted, sought, pursued, accused of crimes she herself did not commit, stripped of her body, denied of self, sacrificed for the crimes of others. She has arrived full circle between womb and tomb, bordello and funeral parlor. The choice is hers . . . defeat or reclamation, victimization or will, repression or transformation.

"X-Rayed" is evidence of her decision to uncover roots, to evoke memory, stir emotion, possess her shame and fear, reclaim instinct, to birth her "essential self." On her journey she must confront her abandoned selves, her predators, her ancestors, her sexuality, her death. She must repossess her own body from the inside out. She must awaken from the dead.

"X-Rayed" is a theater of mutability, a device for transformation, where the simultaneous and continuous movement of image, sound, prop, light, body, voice, language, and environment together create an evocation. The point of departure is the image, presented here in multiple slide projection, with devices of performance used to evolve and restructure the image, distorting and illuminating the boundaries of 2-D, 3-D, and 4-D, simultaneously fragmenting and reassembling new meanings. The source of content lies in the emotions and memories of the body as mutually inter-reflected in history and contemporary culture. The mythlike fictions are grounded in a self-conscious attention to form and environment, acknowledging the space they occupy, the interacting audience, and themselves as fictions. The audience is embedded in this environment, challenged to become active perceivers. I intend to evoke in the viewer a physiological sensation of "seeing," where their own dreams, memories, projections, emotions, desires are restimulated, where they recollect themselves, experiencing the mind of the body.

It is through the body that transformation occurs, where energy, that essence of self, creates and recreates skin, muscles, bones, organs, and fluids—breathing in the environment of history, family, culture—channeling experience, storing memory, evoking emotion, challenging understanding. It is the repression of this energy which, in denying sensation and expression, blocks the body and kills the self.

Dorit Cypis

Biography

Dorit Cypis was born in Tel Aviv, Israel, in 1951. She studied sociology at Sir George Williams University, Montreal, and graduated from the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, Halifax (B.F.A. and B.A., 1974) and the California Institute of the Arts, Valencia (M.F.A., 1977). She has received grants and fellowships from the Canada Council for the Arts (1972), the National Endowment for the Arts (1979, 1983, 1985), the Minnesota Arts Board (1985, 1987), and the Jerome Foundation (1987). She has taught at Otis Art Institute of Parsons School of Art and Design, Los Angeles (1983), the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design (1987), and has been on the Fine Arts faculty of the Minneapolis College of Art and Design since 1984. Cypis lives and works in Minneapolis.

Selected One-Artist Exhibitions

Thomas Lewallen Gallery, Los Angeles, 1978; Foundation for Art Resources, Los Angeles, 1979; White Columns, New York, 1981; Véhincule, Montreal, 1982; Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions, 1982; California Institute of the Arts, Valencia, 1983; Apollonhuis, Eindhoven, The Netherlands, 1983; Thomas Barry Fine Arts, Minneapolis, 1987, in collaboration with John Schlesinger.

Selected Group Exhibitions

The Clocktower, Institute for Art and Urban Resources, New York, "State of Emergency," 1983; Artists Space, New York, "Dark Rooms," 1983; Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions, "Together We Are a Part: A Tropical Blend," 1984; Aorta, Amsterdam, "Talking Back to the Media," 1985; Film in the Cities, St. Paul, Minnesota, "Ex(centric) Lady Travelers," 1985; Palais de Beaux-Arts, Brussels, "Exposition D'Adieu de Karel Geirlandt," 1986; The Queens Museum, Flushing, New York, "The Real Big Picture," 1986; The New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York, "Three Photographers: The Body," 1986; Baskerville + Watson Gallery, New York, "Heavenly Embrace," 1987; CEPA Gallery, Buffalo, New York, "Sexual Difference: Both Sides of the Camera," 1987 (traveled).

Selected Installations

All slides are projected simultaneously, unless otherwise indicated.

Through This Opening the Ni . . ., 1978. Props, lighting, 30-second audio loop.
The Quest of the Impresario:

A Reconstruction, 1981. Overhead projector, theater spotlights;

A Re-emergence, 1982. Overhead projector, wall mural, 12-minute audio loop;

Courage, 1982. Photo marquee, 3 slide projectors, slides, 3-minute audio loop;

Still to Be Seen, 1983. Photo marquee, 3 slide projectors, slides, 3-minute audio loop.

Still Cinema: Talking Pictures, 1983. 4 slide projectors, slides, scrim, two 6-minute audio loops (simultaneous).

Vanity: Just a Split Second Away, 1985. 2 slide projectors, slides.

Body Talk: The Panorama Story, 1986. 1 slide projector, slides.

Incantation, 1986. 3 slide projectors, slides, furniture, back-lit transparencies, 3-minute audio loop.

Love After Death, 1986. 5 slide projectors (3 simultaneous, 2 continuous dissolve), slides, theater curtain, scrim, 12-minute audio loop.

Selected Bibliography

Cypis, Dorit. "His Story Is Real." *High Performance*, 3 (Fall/Winter 1980), pp. 28–29.

———. "Death Masks." *New Observations*, 44 (Winter 1987), pp. 6–8.

Hanhardt, John G. "Re-forming Cinema: Film as Installation." In *Dark Rooms* (exhibition catalogue). New York: Artists Space, 1983.

Norkun, Kathi. "Fascinating Incompleteness." *Artweek*, 14 (April 23, 1983), p. 8.

Riddle, Mason. "Dorit Cypis." *Artforum*, 25 (March 1987), pp. 135–36.

Solomon-Godeau, Abigail. "Sexual Difference: Both Sides of the Camera."

CEPA Quarterly, 2 (Spring/Summer 1987), pp. 17–24. Exhibition catalogue.

Three Photographers: The Body (exhibition catalogue). Essay by William Olander. New York: The New Museum of Contemporary Art, 1986.

Whitney Museum of American Art

945 Madison Avenue

New York, NY 10021

Hours: Tuesday 1:00–8:00

Wednesday–Saturday 11:00–5:00

Sunday 12:00–6:00

Film and video information: (212) 570-0537