

Yvonne Rainer



Dia:Beacon
Riggio Galleries
3 Beekman Street Beacon New York 12508
845 440 0100 www.diaart.org

Dia Art Foundation presents

Yvonne Rainer

Program 1

Saturday, October 22, and Sunday, October 23, 2011
1 pm and 3 pm

Program 2

Saturday, February 25, and Sunday, February 26, 2012
12 pm and 2 pm

Program 3

Saturday, May 12, 2012
1 pm and 3 pm

related program

Artists on Artists Lecture Series at Dia:Chelsea
Babette Mangolte on Yvonne Rainer
Monday, May 14, 2012, 6:30 pm

Dia:Chelsea

535 West 22nd Street 5th Floor New York City

OBJECTS

	eliminate or minimize	
1. role of the artist's hand		phrasing
2. hierarchical relationship of parts		development and climax
3. texture	variation: rhythm, shape, dynamics	
4. figure reference		character
5. illusionism		performance
6. complexity and detail	variety: phrases and the spatial field	
7. monumentality	the virtuosic movement feat and the fully-extended body	
	substitute	
1. factory fabrication	energy equality and "found" movement	
2. unitary forms, modules		quality of parts
3. uninterrupted surface	repetition or discrete events	
4. nonreferential forms		neutral performance
5. literalness	task or tasklike activity	
6. simplicity	singular action, event, or tone	
7. human scale		human scale

DANCES

Yvonne Rainer

Central to Yvonne Rainer's renowned choreographic practice is an undeniable, wistful rebellion. Immediately upon her emergence as a choreographer in the early 1960s, Rainer distinguished herself by actively challenging the expressive movement conventions and narrative structure popularized by the modern-dance establishment. Inspired by her interest in the everyday, Rainer pioneered an autonomous dance language—rooted in considering the body as material object—that emphasized the nuances of task-oriented movement and brought attention to the physicality of the body.

After training for several years at the Martha Graham Dance School in New York in the late 1950s, Rainer attended what would become an historic summer workshop in San Francisco in 1960 guided by the improvisatory teachings of choreographer Anna Halprin and composer La Monte Young. On her return to New York that fall, she enrolled in a dance composition workshop led by avant-garde composer Robert Dunn at the Merce Cunningham Dance Company studios. Dunn was appointed by his mentor John Cage to teach the now-legendary workshop, which was loosely based on Cage's progressive teachings. It was during Dunn's yearlong course that Rainer choreographed her first solo work, *Three Satie Spoons*, a three-part dance set to the music of Erik Satie. Comprising isolated poses and repeating movement patterns that developed, in Rainer's words "thru a concern that each movement might be seen as more than a fleeting form," *Three Satie Spoons* premiered in July 1961 at the Living Theater in New York.¹ The following year, resulting from Dunn's workshop, Rainer cofounded, with choreographers Trisha Brown, Lucinda Childs, and Steven Paxton, among others, the influential Judson Dance Theater, which would become the nucleus of New York's experimental dance vanguard from 1962 to 1967.

As Rainer's choreographic practice developed during the mid-1960s, her pronounced preference for a neutral persona, coupled with her proclivity for simple, unadorned movements—walking, running, falling, interacting with objects—echoed and provided reciprocal influence on reigning precepts in visual art. Throughout the decade, Rainer continued to immerse herself within a community of artists that included Carl Andre, Donald Judd, Simone Forti, Robert Morris, Richard Serra, and many others who have been associated with a Minimalist aesthetic. Chronicled in Rainer's 1968 essay "A Quasi Survey of Some 'Minimalist'

—Yvonne Rainer, "A Quasi Survey of Some 'Minimalist' Tendencies in the Quantitatively Minimal Dance Activity Midst the Plethora, or an Analysis of Trio A," 1968

Tendencies in the Quantitatively Minimal Dance Activity Midst the Plethora, or an Analysis of Trio A," Rainer directly aligned "tasklike" choreography with the pared-down "literalness" of Minimalism. Later in her essay, she forthrightly addressed her thoughts on dance, stating "the artifice of performance has been reevaluated in that action, or what one does, is more interesting and important than the exhibition of character and attitude . . . one is a neutral doer."² The parallel Rainer sets forth between visual art and experimental dance during this time and their common interests in the simplicity of "what one does" was remarkably evident in the succession of works she created during these years. Her seminal five-minute work *Trio A*, a deftly constructed dance of nonrepeating, incongruous gestures that eventually constituted the first section of the evening-length work *The Mind is a Muscle* (1966), along with the eleven-minute work *We Shall Run* (1963), a task-directed dance in which a group of people run in various yet defined floor patterns, apply a mode of composition that reconsiders the performance of colloquial movement.

By the late 1960s, Rainer's performance work began to incorporate multimedia elements, as evidenced in the two evening-length works *Performance Demonstration* (1968), in which performers dance in front of a projection of still photography, and *Continuous Project—Altered Daily* (1969), which when performed at the Whitney Museum of American Art in 1970, intermixed projected films, including Rainer's own short-film *Line* (1969), with live movement. Within the following two years, Rainer made her first feature-length film, *Lives of Performers* (1972), and soon after she decided to part ways with dance, inaugurating a nearly thirty-year hiatus from live performance in sole pursuit of making films. Following Rainer's departure from dance, much of her choreographic work from the 1960s and early 1970s remained obscured memory, existing only in photographic documentation, including the celebrated images by photographers Babette Mangolte and Peter Moore, and in short fragments of Rainer's films.

The Yvonne Rainer retrospective at Dia:Beacon marks a significant milestone in making much of Rainer's early performance work available for new audiences in the United States. The retrospective program, selected by the artist, presents key works from the 1960s, including *Three Satie Spoons* (1961) and *Trio A* (1966), as well as *Three Seascapes* (1962), *We Shall Run* (1963), and *Chair/Pillow*, an excerpt from *Continuous Project—Altered Daily* (1969). In addition to the earlier

works, the program will feature recent compositions choreographed by Rainer since her return to dance in 2000, including *Trio A Pressured* (1999–2011), *Spiraling Down* (2008), and *Assisted Living: Good Sports 2* (2011), each of which will be performed alongside older compositions.

This presentation of past and present performances simultaneously celebrates an artist revered for her impact on dance and illuminates her influence on visual art practice beyond the 1960s. With each program of selected works, we are given the opportunity to revisit the historical precedence of Yvonne Rainer's early choreographic work, as well as consider the contemporary effects of her career in dance. As Rainer aptly wrote in 1981, "I can't beguile myself into thinking that the world has not been the same since."³

Kelly Kivland, Curatorial Associate, Dia Art Foundation

notes

1. Yvonne Rainer, "Notebook," quoted in Sally Banes, *Democracy's Body: Judson Dance Theater, 1962–1964* (Durham: Duke University Press 1993), p. 15.
2. Yvonne Rainer, "A Quasi Survey of Some 'Minimalist' Tendencies in the Quantitatively Minimal Dance Activity Midst the Plethora, or an Analysis of Trio A," in *Minimal Art: A Critical Anthology*, ed. Gregory Battcock (Berkeley: University of California Press 1995), p. 267.
3. Yvonne Rainer, "Looking Myself in the Mouth," *October*, no. 17 (Summer 1981), p. 67.

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- Rainer, Yvonne. "Looking Myself in the Mouth," *October*, no. 17 (Summer 1981), pp. 65–76.
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- Rainer, Yvonne. *A Woman Who . . . : Essays, Interviews, Scripts*. Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press, 1999.
- Rainer, Yvonne. *Feelings Are Facts*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006.
- Wood, Catherine. *The Mind Is a Muscle*. London, UK: Afterall Books, 2007.
- Lambert-Beatty, Carrie. *Being Watched: Yvonne Rainer and the 1960s*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2008.

biography

Yvonne Rainer was born in San Francisco in 1934. She trained as a dancer in New York at the Martha Graham Dance School and the Merce Cunningham Dance Company and began to choreograph in 1960. She was a founding member of the Judson Dance Theater, a movement that began in 1962 and proved to be a vital force in redefining dance for the following decades. Starting in 1968, Rainer began to integrate short films into her live performances and, by 1975, had made a complete transition to filmmaking. She has since completed seven experimental feature films, and, in 1997, retrospectives of Rainer's films were held at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art and the Film Society of Lincoln Center in New York City.

In 2000, Rainer returned to dance with a commission by the Baryshnikov Dance Foundation for the White Oak Dance Project titled, *After Many a Summer Dies the Swan* (2000). Most recently, she choreographed *AG Indexical, with a Little Help from H.M.* (2006), a reinterpretation of George Balanchine's *Agon*; *RoS Indexical* (2007), after Vaslav Nijinsky's *Rite of Spring*; and *Spiraling Down* (2008), a meditation on soccer, aging, and war. In 2010, *Yvonne Rainer: Dance and Film*, the first major European survey of Rainer's work was presented at the Tramway in Glasgow, Scotland. A premiere collection of Yvonne Rainer's poetry, *Poems* is newly released by Badlands Unlimited (2011): <http://www.badlandsunlimited.com>

Rainer is the recipient of numerous awards, including two Guggenheim Fellowships (1969, 1988), three Rockefeller Fellowships (1988, 1990, and 1996), a MacArthur Fellowship (1990–95), and a Wexner Prize (1995). She currently lives and works in California and New York.

This program is made possible by Yoko Ono and Dia's Commissioning Committee: Jill and Peter Kraus, Leslie and Mac McQuown, and Liz Gerring Radke and Kirk August Radke. Special thanks to the Merce Cunningham Dance Company.

Front Cover:

Yvonne Rainer, *Trio A*, 1966. Performed as part of "This is the story of a woman who . . .," Theater for the New City, New York, 1973.

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