INVISIBLE SCARS: THE FEMINIST RHETORIC OF VALIE EXPORT

By

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ABSTRACT

Valie Export is one of Austria's leading multimedia artists. This thesis explores her feminist rhetoric as expressed in the body of her artistic and cinematic works during the 1960s and 1970s. I recount the artistic development of Export through her association with the Viennese Actionists (1964-1969) and the multimedia artist Peter Weibel. In this thesis I attempt to distinguish Export's unique brand of feminism from that prevalent in America and the rest of Europe by placing it within the regional and historical context of post-Nazi Austria.

Valie Export used her body to present images meant to challenge contemporary Austria's strict gender roles and conservative artistic traditions. Export's feminism has often fuelled debate around the question: if all women could relate to being powerless individuals in society, could they understand the implications of being victims of fascism? A lucid narrative of Export's feminist aesthetic emerges when examining works like Tapp und Tast Kino (Tap and Touch Cinema) (1968) and Aktionshose: Genitalpanik (Actionpants: Genitalpanic) (1968). I expand upon why Export used powerful images in her actions to shock her viewers out of their state of indifference. My thesis also explores why Export pushed her body to physical extremes to stress the importance of her feminist aesthetic during the 1970s. I examine Export's involvement in performance art through two, of what she labels, body-material interactions entitled Eros/ion (1971) and Hyperbulie (Hyperbole) (1973). In these actions I consider the masochistic bond between performer and viewer as more than a 'Contract with the Skin' as expressed by the art historian Kathy O'Dell.

Finally, I reveal Export's preoccupation with Freud's studies of female hysteria and psychoneuroses as found throughout her most influential film entitled Unsichtbare Gegner.
(Invisible Adversary) (1976). Anna, the film’s main protagonist, is revealed to embody the myth of the psychotic Viennese woman, simultaneously revealing that she is an allegory for the struggle of Austrian feminists against the Nazis ideal of womanhood, and an icon for women’s alleged inability to be separated from sign and meaning. The last chapter of this thesis examines how Anna is continually looking for objective validation of her subjective perceptions. In view of this, Export’s film is an especially poignant investigation into the multi-layering of visual signs and codes. Finally, what emerges during the course of this film is that invisible adversaries are eventually made visible. Export opened up questions and challenges with this film to probe inter-human relations, their social encodedness and cultural language, which communicated not only a sense of social alienation, but also a troubled post-war Austrian society.
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The image has always been handled as the double of the real. As image, woman became a victim of the phallocultural strategies of representation. The rejection of the representation of the body through the image, the hiding of the body (or the excessive exposing of the body) and the denial of the image therefore belonged to the emancipating art forms of the feminist aesthetic.¹


Valie Export, Self Portrait, 1972

Valie Export: An Introduction

The Austrian filmmaker Valie Export (b. 1940 Linz, lives in Vienna and Cologne) has pursued an array of artistic endeavours: she photographs, draws, sculpts, arranges video installations and has used her body in a series of performances, which she labels body-material interactions. Export's work is about power. It is about questioning who makes the rules, and who is in control of artistic creativity from within and beyond the art world. Export's own body, or its generalised abstraction, remains a consistent theme throughout her work. In the

1960s and 1970s, Export's artistic agenda was to use her body in her feminist performance-orientated events as a way of rejecting museum-embraced modernism and challenging Austria's ultraconservative social and artistic attitudes. By escaping the confinements of the studio and gallery she took her interaction-performances out into the community to confront Austrians, who held limiting artistic and gendered conventions about private versus public spheres. She performed several of her actions on the streets of Vienna and Munich, but also within the gallery space to use the gallery system against itself. How else could she shake up this institution? Therefore, I assert that at the core of Export's own particular brand of feminism and provocative body-material actions is her direct rejection of Austria's post-war provincialism. Export not only wanted to shock her audience out of its state of social and artistic anaesthetisation, but she also wanted to challenge Austria's post-war mood of self-imposed submission. Export used her work to break away from formulaic female roles within Austrian society, and its regional feminist movement, by transgressing the boundaries through the use of her own body as a site, or visual text as it were, for her prolific artwork.

Valie Export was born Waltraud Lehner on May 17, 1940 in Austria's third largest city Linz, a city on the Danube. Linz, located between Vienna and Salzburg, has grown to become a centre for modern and avant-garde art. Export's mother was a teacher and her father, who was a headmaster, was killed in Africa in 1942. Export's artistic genesis began with her education, which was in a convent where she was schooled until the age of 14. It is due to her experiences here that the Catholic religion played an important part in her artwork, which centred on an obsession with God, the body of Christ, and the Virgin Mary. In the late 1950s and early 1960s she relocated to Vienna and attended the National Technical School, studying textile design, painting and drawing. During this time she fell into the Austrian traditional role
of wife and mother. She was married from 1958 to 1960 and has a daughter named Perdita. Export eventually divorced her husband returning to art school in the early 1960s. In 1963, while working on a school project entitled the *Hundertwasser Tapestries* with her classmate Ingrid-Schuppan-Wiener, she was introduced into Vienna artistic circles.\(^2\) By 1967 she began to use the pseudonym Valie Export. She developed her name by expropriating Wally from her given name Waltraud and altering it to Valie. Export was taken from a popular brand of Austrian cigarettes.\(^3\) This shift in Export's identity can be translated as the artist's first aesthetic, social and political action. Taking on this new identity also meant that her artwork, though it held historical and social significance, was not a personal history. Appropriating this logo was also a "perfect expression of my desire to export my inner ideas outside into the world."\(^4\) She no longer wanted to be associated with her father or her ex-husband.

I did not want to have the name of my father [Lehner] any longer, nor that of my former husband [Höllinger]. My idea was to export from my 'outside' (heraus) and also export, from that port. The cigarette package was from a design and style that I could use, but it was not the inspiration.\(^5\)

During the 1970s Export's artwork explored the female body and the possibilities of female representation and how these different themes intersected. Export's feminist interests were directed at how women reacted against forced subordination within society. Export saw local problems and global realities, and the fight against the oppression of women on a

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Austrian Export was the cheapest and most smoked brand of cigarettes in the country. It was the Austrian version of the French Gauloise.


\(^5\)Stiles, 26
transcontinental scale, as a central concern for all Austrian feminists. Export's feminist convictions have been a prevalent part of her artistic exploration, and as a result, Export wrote extensively on Feminist Actionism and women's contribution to art history in *Aspects of Feminist Actionism* published in the *New German Critique* in 1986. In this article she examined feminine and masculine aesthetics, made critiques on the institution of art, and women's social and political responsibilities. Yet, in her manifesto Export never acknowledges or reveals the extent that Austria's social scars, which were deepened by years of Fascism and Nazism, contributed to her Feminist Actionism. American art historians such as Kristine Stiles, Chrissie Iles, Roswitha Mueller and Amelia Jones, have all ventured to analyse Export's actions by exploring the ways in which she attempted to reclaim her female body. They sifted through Export's well-defined feminist rhetoric, characterised by the blending of old and new artistic expressions, to question women's subordination in art history. Stiles, Iles and Mueller introduced their theories around the argument that because Export is a female artist she had to use her body aggressively to free women from pre-established socialisation and cultural misconceptions. Iles cites Export's radical artistic expressions in terms of the artist's personalised feminist voice. Mueller, who has written a comprehensive and extensive study of Export's work, argued for a continuity between the artist's theories of self-imposed cultural imprints and her strong social criticism of women's rights over their own bodies.

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8 Stiles, 17
Mueller and Jones have all examined the importance of Viennese Actionism (1964-1969) in relation to Export's Feminist Actionism, and as a result they have stressed that the group's frenzied environment eventually lead Export to develop her own distinct form of artistic and feminist expression. The aesthetic aim of the Viennese Actionists was to develop new art by concentrating on the process of creating, which they felt had the potential of being hindered by analysis or the need to understand the end product. However, Stiles, Iles, Mueller and Jones never reveal the details of how Export performs her artistic or feminist transformation. The primary and often belaboured question by those who interview Valie Export is; where does she locate herself and her art within an international feminist movement?

I wanted to express myself first in an artistic way, to use the body as a raw material and as an artistic material. And secondly, I was interested in socialisation from a feminist point of view. I always felt like a political artist and the female body is the means to feminist art and feminist politics. And so I carried out various action-performances.

However, the question they should really be asking is, where does Export place herself within the Austrian Feminist Movement and Austria's conventional art culture? Examining how Export's feminist actions reflected an Austrian post-war mentality wanting to forget or work through its fascist past is not only complex, but perhaps one way of understanding the evolution of Exports Feminist Actionism. Export's body-material interactions represented a demand for female aesthetic productivity, and the need for women to change patriarchal and traditional values and its limiting dogma. Export also challenged culturally constructed gendered bodily expressions, which have been historically exploited within Western culture and the Western art world. However, by building on the writings of these American scholars, I

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12Sandra Frieden, Richard W. McCormick, Vibeke Petersen and Laurie M. Vogelsang. Gender and German
argue that they underestimated, and at times misinterpreted, the range of Export's artistic and cultural intentions owning to their unfamiliarity with the traumatised terrain of Austria's post-war society and its history of social repression. Accordingly, I will explore Export's struggle to articulate Austrian women's social resentment and discrimination experienced under the Nazi regime.

I have divided this thesis into three chapters. The first chapter examines Austrian victimisation during the Third Reich. It cannot be denied that Nazism is part of Austrian history and this is part of being Austrian. The Allies, who were determined not to blame all Austrians for waging war or committing aggressive crimes against humanity, helped establish the country's fragile identity and inferiority complex during the initial post-war years. Women in Austria after 1945 were slowly starting to challenge social and civic policies. Accordingly, by the late 1960s a climate of change would strongly connect Export's artwork to an expanding regional feminist movement as opposed to an international feminist campaign. Export's exposure to the expanded cinema projects staged with Peter Weibel, and the theories and events surrounding Viennese Actionism, was her point of entry into performance art. Appropriately, I analyse Export's Feminist Actionism through a reconsideration of the history of performance art in Austria and Germany during the 1960s and 1970s. I look at how Export introduced elements of narration into her artwork as a way of linking her body-material interactions closer to performance. Finally, I examine several prominent questions throughout this thesis: how did Export use the remnants of a Nazi past in post-war Austria in her artwork? What was the significance of her collaboration with Peter Weibel in expanded cinema, and to

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what extent did the aesthetic strategies of Viennese Actionists influence her artistic endeavours and films?

In Chapter two, I delve into how Export used her body-material interactions to make political, feminist and artistic statements. My approach in this area is to explore how Export's expanded cinema pieces entitled Tapp und Tast Kino (Tap and Touch Cinema) (1968)\(^{13}\) (Figure 1) and Aktionshose: Genitalpanik (Actionpants: Genitalpanic) (1968)\(^{14}\) (Figure 2 & 3), and her actions like Eros/ion (1971) (Figure 4) and Hyperbulie (Hyperbole) (1973)\(^{15}\) (Figure 5) critiqued the status quo of women in post-war Austrian society. In this section, I use the work of the art historian Kathy O'Dell. In O'Dell's book Contract with the Skin: Masochism, Performance Art and the 1970s (1998), she debates the paradoxes of sadomasochism spotlighting performance art during the 1970s in relation to Freudian theory. O'Dell gives some colourful examples of what fabricates a contract of self-imposed violence, and the obstacles faced by practitioners of self-mutilatory performance art or what she designates as endurance art.\(^{16}\) Although, O'Dell never mentions the work of Export, who used the cycle of


Tapp und Tast Kino, Expanded movie, social action, skin screen. Mobile movie considered to be the first true women's movie. Tapp und Tast Kino is an example of audience activation via new interpretation of the screen. Tactile instead of visual communication.


In 1968 she performed Aktionshose: Genitalpanik in Munich, Germany. In 1969 a series of photographs were taken by Peter Hassmann. One of the photographs was made into a poster, which Export had plastered around the streets of Vienna and Berlin.


Eros/ion body-material interaction was performed at Experimenta 4 in Frankfurt Germany and at the Electric Cinema in Amsterdam in 1971. The body action Hyperbole was performed in Vienna in 1973. The materials Export used for the Hyperbole action consisted of the following: a corridor of lives wires, 4 metal rods mounted on wooden crosses, and 2 car batteries. The word hyperbole means an exaggerated statement not meant to be taken literally.

\(^{16}\)Kathy O'Dell. Contract with the Skin: Masochism, Performance Art and the 1970s (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998):8
wounding in several of her actions like Eros/ion and Hyperbolie, her critiques on the radical French performance artist Gina Pane are quite insightful. When we apply O’Dell’s theories to Export’s actions, what develop are some unique explanations for Export’s aggressive acts of voluntary mutilation. Export used the open handling of her breasts in Tap and Touch Cinema, the premeditated cutting of her body on broken glass in Eros/ion, and deliberately placed herself in danger of being slowly electrocuted in Hyperbole to negate elements of visual pleasure through the representation of pain. However, Export’s methodology, which is accentuated in these quasi-ritual acts of self-mutilation, is often overshadowed by negative viewer response. While providing the impetus for artistic awakening, Export carried out actions that were not only painful to her, but also disturbing to watch thus disrupting the potency of visual and exhibitionistic pleasure. Her powerful political and aesthetic strategies often becoming totally obscured by controversy. Export’s body-material interactions would eventually forge further alienation not only between the audience and artist, but also between Austrian reality and fiction, and the history of representation within the Austrian art historical canon. Consequently, Export’s artistic and feminist endeavours have resulted in her work being easily misinterpreted as carefully engineered acts of self-promotion. As problematic as Export's actions are, I believe that her methods of expressing a troubled post-war Austria and the Austrian feminist movement's growing unrest with its government during the 1960s and 1970s, are equally complex and need to be explored further.

Chapter three considers how Export questions the feminine body not only as a social construct, but also as a site for post-Freudian analysis. Export's study into psychoanalytic feminist theory reveals her obsession with the myth of the psychotic Viennese women, whose ancestry is entrenched in Freudian theory. In Export's pivotal film entitled Unsichtbare
Gegner (Invisible Adversary) (1976) she challenged and probed feminist ideologies around psychological neurosis. Throughout the film, what becomes apparent is that Austrian men, who are in control, repress women. This concept is intrinsic to the schizophrenic idiosyncrasies of Anna (played by Susanne Widl), the main protagonist in her film. Invisible Adversary brought to the forefront the threatening patriarchal notion of power in Austrian society, which still obstructed European women in 1976, when they released this film in Europe.

In the conclusion, Export's artistic strategies are shown to be based on her own particular cultural tactics, which were in reaction to an ultraconservative post-war Austrian mentality still in place at the end of the 1960s. In her search for artistic individuality, growing self-consciousness, and a sense of independence she challenged codes of cultural representation and ideologies about the body by shattering the boundaries of a wounded Austrian identity. Finally, Export's attempt to acknowledge the many facets of patriarchy and its mechanisms of control, while simultaneously disturbing the structures of Austrian artistic tradition, reveal how she used her body as the site for her own unique style of Feminist Actionism.
Chapter 1:

A Social History of Post-war Austria and its Effects on Feminism
An Overview of Post-war Austrian History

The official sanction of Post-war Austrian culture has often been characterised by the presumption that its people were 'the first victims of Nazi aggression.' On January 30, 1933, Hitler came to power in Germany. The Republic of Austria, which was established after World War I in November of 1918, eventually collapsed on March 13, 1938 when German troops marched into the country. Strategically, Hitler incorporated Austria into the German Reich so quickly that the world accepted the country's withdrawal as an independent state almost immediately. With Austria's government overthrown and under Hitler's control, Czechoslovakia soon followed, giving the Third Reich an obvious passage to Southeast Europe. Because, the legal and state system of Hitler's regime resulted in the destruction of Communists and Social Democrats in Germany and Austria, they have often been considered the first victims of Reichstag aggression. Hitler had conquered the German people with nationalism, pride, pomp and ceremony. The Führer used Anti-Semitism and the barbaric persecution of the Jews, which was a fundamental part of his programme, to illuminate and amplify all the misfortunes of the German people. Hitler's massive cleansing campaign and the Nazi party's anti-Jewish smear tactics would become part of his social edge. In this sense, Hitler successfully gained support from the petty bourgeoisie who were politically disorientated and financially frustrated during Germany's great economic depression. The Nazi Party, whom the government backed, mounted an open pogrom against all Jews. On

18Walter B. Maass. Country Without A Name: Austria under Nazi Rule 1938-1945. (New York: Frederick Next Page for Continuation of Footnote
September 15, 1938, the Reichstag passed the Reich Citizenship and the Anti-Semitic Nuremberg Laws reducing Jewish natives to the ranks of second-class citizens.\textsuperscript{19} On January 30, 1939, Hitler threatened to exterminate all Jews in Europe in the event of war.\textsuperscript{20} In Austria economics also played a fundamental role for the apathetic attitude of its citizens. Before the Second World War the country's poor financial situation and political upheaval created a desperate situation. Years of mass unemployment and mass poverty began to reflect the desperate mood of the people. Austrians were tired of their constant economic struggle. They were disillusioned about politics and overwhelmed by German strength.\textsuperscript{21} To many Austrians the political stability of Nazism was a certainty, which they embraced both fiercely and fearfully. However, the price for assimilation would be high.

\textit{Anschluss} and the historical events surrounding Austria's inclusion into Hitler's dominion lead to the country's people being labelled unwilling participants of Nazism by the Allies. In Austria many of its citizens were deeply absorbed in Germany's political unrest, and with the feverish activities of the Austro-Nazi party. Germany's escalating political crisis captivated them as old powers began to collapse, and new social and political intensity was on the rise.\textsuperscript{22} This reveals the dichotomy found within the Austrian people and their political psyche. Austrian citizens were, however, also powerless to withstand Hitler's infiltration and his great German war machine. The rationality for the confused status of Austrian nationalism was also said to be in part due to Britain and France's relative indifference to the country's

\textsuperscript{20}Schoenberner, 9
\textsuperscript{22}David F. Good, Margarete Grandner and Mary Jo Maynes eds. \textit{Austrian Women in the Nineteenth and Next Page for Continuation of Footnote}
economic plight between 1933 and 1937 when Mussolini abandoned his agreement to protect the country financially. Therefore, Nazism strongly characterised Austrian nationalism between 1938 and 1945.\textsuperscript{23}

In November of 1943, to encourage Austria to separate from German support, the Allies formulated the Moscow Declaration. This proclamation gave all Austrian citizens a moral escape route by claiming that they were the first casualties of the Third Reich. The Allies conveniently chose to believe that Austria had succumbed to the powers of Germany, rather than the ideology of the Nazi movement. The United States Government, as part of a propaganda strategy, issued a postage stamp that year displaying the Austrian flag and proclaiming the republic as a \textit{captive nation}, and as a result the Allies never bombed Austria during the war.\textsuperscript{24}

On May 8, 1945 Dönitz, Hitler’s successor, surrendered to the Allies. This public relinquishment of power would be the beginning of Austria’s mounting inferiority complex. Austria had to admit publicly that forming any internal anti-fascist or anti-Nazi resistance movement on its own was not possible. After 1945, Nazism was a crime against the State, a national betrayal or completely ignored. Austrians considered themselves non-Nazi rather than anti-Nazi after the war, an ambiguous political position that suggested a compromise. The reactionary period in Austria from 1945 into the 1960s was one of historical forgetfulness and prolonged, embarrassed silence. In contrast to Germany, where a critical history of the phenomenon of Nazism was established, no such reflection on culpability took place in


\textsuperscript{24}Twentieth Centuries: Cross-Disciplinary Perspectives. (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 1996): 215
Austria. By collectively attempting to forget the years of German occupation the Austrian people in the end formed a cultural vacuum.\textsuperscript{25}

The Social Environment of Women in Austria and Germany After 1945

Austrian women since the early 1930s have been enormously influenced by a Nazi ideology of gender, resulting in women being reduced to the role of wife and mother. Nazi convictions and politics concentrated on the exclusive \textit{Volksgemeinschaft} (\textit{National Peoples Community}). Nazi dogma was not only racist, but also sexist in the extreme. The propaganda for procreation within Hitler's framework of racism and eugenics meant that women were to remain in the political background.\textsuperscript{26} In 1934, in his speech at Nuremberg Hitler proclaimed the following,

\begin{quote}
For her the world is her husband, her family, her children and her home. But where would the greater world be if no one cared to tend the smaller world? ... We do not find it right when the woman presses into the world of the man. Rather we find it natural when these two worlds remain separate ... to one belongs the power of feeling, and the power of the soul ... to the other belongs the strength of vision, the strength of hardness ... The man upholds the nation as the woman upholds the family. The equal rights of women consist in the fact that in the realm of life determined for her by nature she experiences the high esteem that is her due ... Feeling in contrast is much more stable than reason and woman is the feeling and therefore the stable element. The message of women's emancipation is a message discovered solely by the Jewish intellect and its content is stamped with the same spirit.\textsuperscript{27}
\end{quote}

The reconstruction of Germany after 1945 was arduous, since it was mainly left up to the women, children and pensioners. However, restoration of a country by the women did not alter the social structure. The cities needed to be rebuilt, and so, they became filled with

\textsuperscript{24}Parkinson, 34
\textsuperscript{25}Parkinson, 330
\textsuperscript{26}Ute Frevert. \textit{Women in German History: From Bourgeois Emancipation to Sexual Liberation}, (Oxford, St. Martin's Press, 1989): 255
\textsuperscript{27}Elizabeth Miller Walsh. \textit{Women in Western Civilization}, (Cambridge: Schenkman Publishing Company, Next Page for Continuation of Footnote
women performing most of the renovations. Compulsory service was required and women, who eventually became known as Trümmerfrauen (Rubble women), undertook the job of reassembling a nation. Women were now performing construction work, which had previously been designated as a male occupation. Well-defined gender structures, which had been in place before the war, were now being temporarily disrupted, but not transformed. Despite the work of the Trümmerfrauen, Austria was influenced by anti-feminist policies and gender specific dichotomies that remained unchanged when the troops and prisoners of war returned home. By 1947 women were gradually released from their civic duties, and pushed out of the workplace to make room for the men.

Austria in the 1950s and 1960s, as elsewhere in Europe, was a period of rebuilding. It was also an era of political restlessness against conservative post-1945 governments. In the rush to restore post-war lives, groups of artists were busy reviving art movements eradicated or almost completely lost to the Austrian people. Countless artists were determined to overcome the shame of fascism. In their attempt to decanonize conventional aesthetic traditions of art this generation of post-war artists was on a counter cultural mission. Groups of intellectuals and artists alike were determined to disrupt the country's stranglehold of authority by acting as revolutionaries and deconstructionists. Neo-avant-garde movements such as the Vienna Group (a circle of experimental writers and intellectuals like Friedrich Achleitner, H.C. Artmann, Konrad Bayer, Gerhard Rühm, and Oswald Wiener) and the Viennese Actionists (Günter Brus,

Inc., 1989): 277

28 Frevert, 257


30 Frevert, 26

Nearly 4 million German and Austrian men had died in battle, and by 1945 there were 11,700,000 prisoners of war. Next Page for Continuation of Footnote
Otto Muehl, Hermann Nitsch, Rudolf Schwarzkogler and others) broke with the codes and rules of representation by blatantly exposing their aggressive views toward bourgeois cultural values. Vienna in the 1960s, like the rest of Europe and the United States, was a time of political opposition, student revolts and a growing sexual revolution. The student riots in America inevitably influenced Austrian intellectuals and artists all over Europe, but especially those taking place in Paris and Berlin in the spring of 1968. As a result a Viennese generation of post-war avant-gardists staged their own socio-political, performance-oriented actions. In Germany and Austria the main issues seized upon by many art movements was to come to grips with the Nazi past. Dealing with the past meant being freed from civic expectations enforced by their parents who had failed to act during the Anschluss. At an early stage Austrian and German women began to rebel against the repressed fascist convictions of their parents. In Germany, feminist activists were getting organised and forming groups like the New Women’s Movement, which originated in West Berlin. One of the most heated debates since its inception was the idea that German female sensibility and aesthetics were both powerful and expressive tools that needed to be used positively. The Tätigkeitsrat für die Befreiung der Frauen (Action Council for the Liberation of Women), with its anti-authoritarian agenda, was founded in 1968 by women of the Sozialistischer Deutscher Studentenbund SDS (Socialist German Student Federation). At the centre of their campaign was the concept that It would take 10 years for the last of Hitler’s troops to return home.

33 Parkinson, 11
34 Kolinsky, 19
"women with children have the strongest aggression and are at the same time the least articulate, and therefore their readiness for solidarity and politicisation is at its highest."\textsuperscript{35} In the wake of German feminism a rising tide of Austrian feminism began to emerge. Austrian women gained equal political rights during the First Republic (1918-1933). Both German and Austrian women had obtained the right to vote in 1919 and could run for office or be nominated for governmental positions.\textsuperscript{36} However, the impact of the world economic crisis on Germany, and subsequently Austria, would transform the rights of European women under Nazi rule. The often prevalent and condescending attitude toward women who attempted to reject pre-established roles set into motion by the Third Reich would eventually shape the development of the autonomous feminist movement in Austria and Germany at the beginning of the 1970s.\textsuperscript{37}

On the whole being a feminist in Austria meant above all holding onto a vision of new social order, cultural regeneration and the need for a fundamental break with conventional notions of womanhood. However, the differences between German and Austrian feminism become apparent through an examination of their distinct political feminist visions. Feminist activities and situations in Austria at the beginning of the 1970s seem very similar to those in Germany. However, Austrian feminism can be viewed as polarised and resembling party politics.\textsuperscript{38} If a generalisation were to be suggested about what constitutes feminism in Austria,

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{35}Ingeborg Drewitz, ed. The German Women's Movement: The Social Role of Women in the 19th Century and the Emancipation Movement in Germany, (Bonn: Hohwacht Verlag, 1983): 108
\item \textsuperscript{36}Günter Bischof, Anton Pelinka and Erika Thurner. Women in Austria, (London: Transaction Publishers, 1988): 105
\item \textsuperscript{37}Brigitte Young. Triumph of the Fatherland: German Unification and the Marginalization of women, (Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 1999): 48
\item \textsuperscript{38}Harriet Anderson. Utopian Feminism: Women's Movements in Fin-de-Siècle Vienna, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992): x
\end{itemize}
it would be to state that as a movement it was quite disconnected. Although, many Austrian feminist artists worked together in groups organising exhibitions, they rejected the idea of forming close-knit art communities or establishing influential feminist organisations like Germany's *Action Council for the Liberation of Women*. Austrian feminist artists felt that the idea of noncommittal art produced new and liberating tendencies.39

Accordingly, the American art critic Lucy Lippard, in her attempt to express and promote the activities of feminism in the Western world in her anthology *Get the Message? A Decade of Art for Social Change* (1984) questioned the early struggles of European feminist sensibilities in relation to American feminism. Lippard argued that women working as artists in America during the 1970s promoted a feminist consciousness, which she said was rooted in autobiography, images of the self, performance and the tradition of art history. In contrast, Lippard revealed that European feminists stressed a more universalised psychopolitical theory.40 Austrian women, like their German sisters, both staunchly fought for their political rights and eventually emerged as liberators battling and promoting the emancipation of women throughout many German-speaking countries.41 During the early stages of the New Women's Movement a generation of German and Austrian women began to openly admit that their parents had been active party members, who were deemed the backbone of the Nazi state. What needed to be addressed was the following; that by the 1970s there was still a generation of Germans and Austrians who refused to recognise the repercussions that Nazi politics and its

41Anderson, 193
gendered ideology had on women. German and Austrian women shared many privileges under Hitler's regime, but the accountability of guilt by women would be distinctly different from that of men. What remained open for discussion well into the 1970s was the question of culpability and shame, which is often historically inconsistent. Women involved within the New Women’s Movement fought for the emancipation of German-speaking women in order to try and end cultural blindness. Obviously, the rebellion of the daughters, who formed the New Women’s movement, was directed against male power structures, but also against the restoration of any form of Nazi ideology, which had the potential to reduce women to the role of housewife and mother. German-speaking feminists had to admit and recognise that their mothers, who were involved in fascism, could never maintain a state of complete innocence. By the mid-1970s this acknowledgement would change the way Austrian women confronted their past and articulate their feminist beliefs. They began to lay the basis for governmental reform by taking responsibility for their own political rights.

It was against this backdrop that Valie Export stole the stage and acquired a reputation as a militant artist with a strong feminist voice. Export was not only looking at what it meant for Austrian women to be powerless non-subjects in Western society, but also victims and perpetrators of fascism. Only knowing what went on in the wake of the German Wehrmacht was not enough. Export felt that Austrians had acted as voyeurs, passively watching or simply tolerating those who committed Nazi crimes. She felt that this passiveness did not exonerate

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them for failing to act during the Third Reich or after the war ended.\textsuperscript{45} It is not surprising to discover that Export, initially misunderstood by a post-war European audience, would be isolated in her attempt to provoke societal change or alter prevailing attitudes towards Austrian women.\textsuperscript{46}

Austrian female artists like Valie Export, Friederike Pezold, Maria Lassnig and the German filmmaker Ulricke Rosenbach, who were born before or during World War II, were dealing with shifts in post-fascist ideologies.\textsuperscript{47} Nevertheless, who were the significant Austrian and German feminist thinkers, and writers? The names of certain active women, although they continually spring up in many texts on the history of feminism in German-speaking regions, never persist as the dominant voice in the feminist debate. Austrian feminists, unlike their Anglophone and Francophone counterparts, did not have influential art critics like the American, Lucy Lippard. Although Austria and Germany on the surface seemed to lack a feminist intellectual tour de force, several significant individuals deserve mention. Gunhild Feigenwinter was a dynamic force who held a one-woman action in 1962 campaigning for female autonomy. Feigenwinter was the first woman in Germany to pass out pamphlets protesting the country's parliamentary decision prohibiting women from obtaining legal abortions. Her demonstration would be one in many pro-abortion campaigns suggesting that German feminists felt socially strangled by the idea that they had virtually little control over

\textsuperscript{45}Friedrich Stadler and Peter Weibel. \textit{Vertreibung Der Vernunft: The Cultural Exodus From Austria}, (Wien: Springer-Verlag, 1995): 315


Valie Export and Maria Lassnig represented Austria at the 1980 Venice Biennale. The Austrian art community felt that these two artists were of equal importance, and therefore, both represented Austria's avant-garde movement.
their own bodies. To many German and Austrian feminists this was a serious obstacle that needed to be overcome. Feigenwinter, who was the editor of *Hexenpress (Witches press)*, also played a central role in the *New* Women's Movement in Germany during the 1970s. 48 Karin Jušek, an Austrian professor at the University of Gröningen, who has written extensively on the relationship between the rhetoric of motherhood, the stern codes surrounding prostitution, and the morality of the Catholic Church in Austria's history, argues that contemporary Austrian women were still subject to the status of humiliating roles under the watchful eye of the Church, and that rejecting moral authority became a central motivation for women's political activism in that country by the mid-1970s. 49 Jušek attempts to explain why contemporary Austrian women were struggling to understand the predicament of their mothers during and after the war, and alleges that women under Hitler's rule felt morally and politically restricted in their fight for equality. 50 The American scholar Amelia Jones has cited Silvia Bovenschen as a writer whose projects act as thoughtful investigations into female aesthetics. Bovenschen published *Die imaginierte Weiblichkeit (The Fantasised Femininity)* in 1979. 51 Bovenschen, who also wrote *Is There a Feminine Aesthetic?* published in the *New German Critique* (1976), openly argued that not much had changed since the post-war era regarding the status of women in Europe. Barbara Frischmuth is often mentioned in many scholarly texts stressing her concerns around Austrian women's legal rights and the need for better job opportunities and

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50 Good, 23-24

improved wages in that country for women. Austrian women by the 1970s were activity
fighting for equal rights and the freedom to make their own choices and adopt alternative
lifestyles. They wanted to learn for themselves the lessons of emancipation while rejecting
traditional roles such as motherhood and being a homemaker. However, women were still
struggling against oppression, exploitation and degradation by the end of the 1970s. To
Austrian feminists reactivating memories was central to their public dialogue. They wanted to
stamp out the negative legacy that their mothers had left them to deal with. This new
generation of feminists, women activists, writers, filmmakers, artists and critics, who
confronted the under-representation of women in Austria, looked to old political and cultural
doctrines to create new and provocative, as well as lasting statements of rebellion.

An Austrian Feminist Aesthetic

At the end of the 1960s Austrian feminists, compared to their contemporaries in
America, Britain and France were grappling with similar, but also very different battles for
equality. The New Women's Movement in Germany was targeting the potential restoration of
traditional gender relationships. Simultaneously, both Germany and Austria's regional feminist
movements were struggling against ultraconservative societies. They were also concerned
with concrete changes in terms of economics and equal rights for women in all German-
speaking regions. A major issue at the time was the idea that they should abolish unpaid
domestic labour known as invisible labour. Austrian feminists believed that housework should

52 Good, xix
(Vienna, Federal Press Service, 1996): 27
55 Lamb-Faffelberger, 9-10
be seen as a profession, and that women should demand wages for all the work that they performed. Austrian women were beginning to question their cultural and traditional female roles, which had lingered after the war. Also, like their American contemporaries they wanted to obtain complete rights over their own bodies.\textsuperscript{57} The rigid abortion laws in most German-speaking countries troubled many women involved in the New Women's Movement. European women were prohibited from obtaining legal abortions, and the number of illegal and unsafe abortions was a growing health and social concern. By the mid-1970s both Austrian and German women were actively battling for abortion rights and struggling against the moral views of the Catholic Church.\textsuperscript{58} The Action Council for Women's Liberation, whose writers, critics and actionists included outspoken women such as Christa Wolf, Irmtraud Morgner, and Sarah Kirsch stressed the necessity for regional political reform. They concentrated on women in post-war socialist societies, who needed to be emancipated from the politics of patriarchy. Furthermore, Austrian women were searching for their own voice to articulate the realities of their lives. During the 1970s the Action Council for Women's Liberation was actively attacking women's subordinate positions in all areas of male dominated institutions. The Council, which was regarded by a conservative Austrian society as a threat, was in constant battle with the establishment. However, a large obstacle faced by many Austrian feminists was the country's social isolation, making it difficult for Austria's regional feminist movement to establish a strong connection with international feminism.\textsuperscript{59}

\textsuperscript{56} Vansant, 1-3
\textsuperscript{57} Frevert, 292-294
\textsuperscript{59} Lamb-Faffelberger, 7
Women challenging regional issues established themselves as a strong political force within the international feminist movement. For many Austrian feminists the views and opinions of American, British and French feminist theorists, historians and social critics were obscured. One predominant reason for the apparent lack of voice on the world stage was the inadequate amount of translated texts and material into the English language. However, by the early 1970s this would begin to change as numerous feminist writings were translated into German. However, to many German-speaking women the translated material of feminists such as Germaine Greer, Kate Millett, Betty Friedan, Simone de Beauvoir and Luce Irigaray were seen as hermetic, rhetorical and difficult for Austrian women to relate to. Unfortunately, the writings of German-speaking activists were not so quickly translated into English or French -- a problem that is still prevalent today. In spite of these language barriers the ideologies of American feminists, their active public demonstrations for equality, and their involvement in the civil rights movement during the 1970s, would influence countless Austrian and German feminists.

However, an important point needs to be addressed in order to have a better understanding of Export's own artistic expectations, and that is; who were Export's artistic contemporaries active in Austria during the 1960s and 1970s? Friederike Pezold's (b.1945 Vienna) early work focussed on the aesthetics of a feministic body, which she used in several

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62 Hoshino-Altback, 6
of her video pieces. Pezold stacked video monitors on top of each other to emphasise her fragmented self, and to describe a divided female body in relation to the mechanics and segregation involved with video production. Pezold's premise for several of her video pieces like *Die Personifizierte Zeichen-Sprache eines Geschlechtes nach den Gesetzen Der Anatomie, Geometrie und Kinetics (The Personified Sign-Language of a Sex after the Laws of Anatomy, Geometry and Kinetics)* (1973) (Figure 6) is her attempt to incorporate a language based on European mythology. Pezold also abstractly merged materials such as photographs, video and film, and by blending fractured images of her face, shoulders, elbows, breasts, vagina, thighs, knees and feet she was able to evoke incredible images of sensuality. Pezold's early work in video and multi-media has been praised for keeping the female aesthetic of beauty in her feminist thematic. However, in contrast to the work of Export, Pezold did not take into consideration the after effects of post-Nazism in Austria. Pezold's imagery attempts to define and illustrate her association with a gender-related sign language based on anatomical and geometric patterns of the body. Export describes her connection with Pezold in *Aspects of Feminist Actionism* (1989).

Beginning in 1973, Friederike Pezold had developed a 'new, living sign language of gender based on principles of anatomy, geometry and kinetics.' It consisted of a series of photographs and video pieces with titles such as *fußwerk* (foot work), *scham werk* (public work), *nabel werk* (navel work), *mund werk* (mouth work), *arm werk* (arm work), etc. and was rooted in her *Sinnliche Architektur (Sensual Architecture)* of 1969, in which 'the female body is the measure of all things.'

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64 Unfortunately, the documentation available on Pezold, who is often mislabelled as a German artist, is sparse in comparison to Export.


66 Bäumer, 48
Pezold uses the detached hardware of video as an intimate tool for observing herself, and like a personal diary, she recorded her environment and her private emotions and feelings. In such works Pezold could manipulate sequences of events that collided with her body movements, thus establishing a complex relationship between the viewer and technology. The interchange created by the works of Export and Pezold were meant to represent a feminist struggle against a visual system, where women's bodies were seen as sites to be colonised and exploited by male viewers.68

Another of Export’s contemporaries is the German artist Ulricke Rosenbach (b. 1943 Bad Salzdetfurth, Germany), a student of Joseph Beuys; she was a dynamic member of Germany’s New Women’s movement. During the 1970s Rosenbach travelled to America to take part in the numerous activities staged at the Women's Building in Los Angeles. Her performances examined the effects of patriarchy in art history and its methodological representation of women in Europe as found in her video performances like Tanz feur eine Frau, (Dance for a Woman) (1975) (Figure 7).69 In reference to Rosenbach, Export wrote about their artistic bond for Discourse: Theoretical Studies in Media and Culture (1992).

Ulrike Rosenbach and I gave rise to a disintegration of the body as pure nature, a dematerialising of that body alongside the simultaneous material presence of the body in the performance when they pursued a conception of women's body in historical images of women. By using mediated images of women in these performances during the 1970s, the body was both thematised and brought into question as the locus of woman's identity.70

Export felt that the artworks created by Pezold and Rosenbach allowed them to establish strong connections between the history of art and the history of Actionism in Austria and Germany. They each possessed powerful feminine personas that could transform the female body into influential visual materials. Export, Pezold, and Rosenbach, along with a number of other women artists, did not merely correct pre-established images of women within the tradition of art history; they attempted to deconstruct the cultural codings of a male language, which they felt did not articulate the body-material or body language of women.\textsuperscript{71} Since the 1970s the women's liberation movement in Austria has paved the way for many of its women filmmakers, like Karin Brandauer, Ruth Beckermann, Margareta Heinrich, Kitti Kino, Friederike Pezold, Käthe Kratz and Susanne Zanke.\textsuperscript{72} However, the differences between these artists and the artwork of Valie Export lies in the fact that they never used methods of tactile disruption found in her expanded cinema pieces like \textit{Tap and Touch Cinema} (1968) or \textit{Actionpants: Genitalpanic} (1969), nor did they touch on the subjects entrenched in Export's highly sensitive themes involving political unrest, and the emotional instability of women in Austria after 1945.

\textbf{Valie Export, Peter Weibel and the Viennese Actionists}

In 1967 Valie Export met the multimedia artist Peter Weibel in Sweden. Weibel would subsequently influence her early artistic projects, politics and theories.\textsuperscript{73} The first series of joint actions involved several expanded films and live-events meant to challenge the limits and

\textsuperscript{71} Valie Export, \textit{Aspects of Feminist Actionism}, New German Critique (Vol 47, Spring-Summer 1989): 83
\textsuperscript{72} Lamb-Faffelberger, 233
\textsuperscript{73} Karin Hanta, \textit{Exporting Export}, Austria Kultur, (Vol. 10, No. 1, Jan/Feb 2000): 15
theoretical principles of technology, film and video, along with aspects of spectatorship and performance. Their visual point of view was to use expanded cinema to manipulate multimedia events and structures of information used in normal cinema. Export wrote about her early collaboration with Weibel for Discourse: Theoretical Studies in Media and Culture (1992).

In the mid-1960s, Peter Weibel and I established the link between the action-event and film; expanded by cinema, these events were among the first media performances to be consciously and explicitly implemented.

Weibel and Export's experimental films entitled Instant Film/Object Film (1968) and Das Magische Auge (The Magic Eye) (1969) (Figure 8) were intended to dissolve pre-established boundaries between viewing and audience participation. Both expanded cinema pieces also articulated the deterioration between film production and its consumption in the tradition of Duchamp and Dadaism. Instant Film, which was a pun on the instant food industry's growing popularity in Europe during the 1960s, was a film made-up of a sheet of clear plastic wrap. The premise was to have the audience take home the film and create a movie out of their own experiences by looking through the plastic. The sheet was to instantly become the projector, screen and filmstrip. Weibel and Export wrote the following about Instant Film in 1968, which was later re-published in JAM Magazine (1991).

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74 Ruth Askey. Interview with Valie Export: Vienna September 18, 1979, High Performance, (Spring 1981): 77
One of the most outrageous actions they performed together was War Campaign where they hurled barbed wire at the audience while shouting obscenities. Images of this appear in their film and accompanying book Wien (1970).

75 Phillip Drummond. Film As Film: Formal Experiment in Film 1910-1975. (London: Hayward Gallery, 1979): 151

*Instant Film* is a meta-film that reflects the system of film and reality. After the development of instant coffee and instant milk, we have finally succeeded in inventing the "instant film," which is screen, projector and camera in one. Assembling them is a matter for the viewer. He or she can hang the foil at home on their own four walls, on four screens, or on different coloured backgrounds, they can place the foil in front of an object and in such a way design his/her own collage.78

In comparison with *Instant Film*, *The Magic Eye* involved a more complex demonstration of technology with its theoretical principles based on electronically prepared screens and light-sensitive frames. The shadows and different fluctuations of light caused by an audience or accompanying filmstrips were translated into sounds. In 1969 Weibel and Export were using video, slide projectors, photography, and polaroids to reduce the production of film to an art object.79

During the 1960's the artistic output of Peter Weibel, Valie Export and the Viennese Actionists understandably shocked ordinary Austrian citizens, whose understanding of art had been shaped by a conservative society and National Socialism before the 1930s. Weibel, who first coined the term Vienna Actionists for an article in Protokolle (1970), did not focus directly on the work of Otto Muehl, Hermann Nitsch, Günter Brus and Rudolf Schwarzkogler, whose names have become synonymous with the term.80 Weibel used the idiom Vienna Actionism to describe a broad field of activities, beginning in the 1950s with the work of the painter Arnulf Rainer. In this lengthy article he also discusses the *Literary Cabarets* of the Vienna Group, which included such writers as Friedrich Achleitner, H.C. Artmann, Konrad

77Mueller, 7
76Mueller, 9
Bayer, Gerhard Rühm and Oswald Wiener. Eventually, Weibel conceded to more than 30 artists to describe the term Vienna Actionism. However, the outlandish actions and exploits of Muehl, Nitsch, Brus and Schwarzkogler, which frequently ended-up in the daily newspapers, tended to upstage the actions of the other participants. Actively immersed in all the negative press coverage, Muehl, Nitsch, Brus and Schwarzkogler used it to explore Austria's ultra-conservative social and artistic identity. Although these artists came from different backgrounds and did not form a homogeneous group, they did regularly work and perform together. Brus, Muehl, Nitsch and Schwarzkogler published the only manifesto-like statement printed in *Le Marais* in July 1965, where Brus defined the group as the *Wiener Aktionsgruppe* (*Viennese Actiongroup*) for the first time. The public events of the Actionists revealed their mistrust not only with Austrian politics and the Roman Catholic Church, but also with the country's history, which they all felt had been tainted by the effects of the *Anschluss*. The activities of the Actionists were meant to be deliberate and made to represent the escalation of Austria's social anxiety. The Viennese Actionists were actively motivated and repulsed by war, politics and Christian tradition. They also wanted to embellish aesthetically that years of Nazi domination needed to be stressed as the lowest point in Austria's cultural and artistic history. Austrian artists were constantly struggling to overcome indifference, but after the war they openly sought to reintroduce modern art through new levels of radicalism to the point of

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82 Brus Muehl Nitsch Schwarzkogler, 237

In *Wiener Spaziergang* Brus talks a bit about the launch of *Le Marais* by Mautner. "I believe he was a student at the university. He wanted to produce a new periodical with *Le Marais* (The Marsh). The first issue, which was already a special one, acted as the catalogue to my exhibition *Painting -- Self-Painting -- Self-Mutilation*. I used the opportunity not only to include my own activities, but also those of my friends (Muehl, Nitsch, Schwarzkogler, Priessnitz, Schürrer).
The constant fear that the work of many Austrian artists would be creatively butchered was an anxiety amplified during the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Eventually, aesthetic unrest became an integral part of an Austrian artistic culture. The Viennese Actionists deliberately gave their events a mood of revolutionary intensity, since they felt that no social or artistic revolution had ever occurred in Austria when its government was overthrown in 1938. Hermann Nitsch's early works were conceived as a form of written preparation for the staging of a large-scale Gesamtkunstwerk (synthesis of the arts). In his pursuit of Gesamtkunstwerk, Nitsch orchestrated works where he or other actors appeared to be dressed in quasi-religious garments, or were naked and covered with buckets of red paint and/or animal blood. The materials from these actions would be splashed onto massive canvases as found in the series of images of Nitsch's Action 4 (June 28, 1963) photographed by Ludwig Hoffenreich (Figure 9). Nitsch claimed that his actions could provide the necessary stimulation both physical and psychological, which had the potential to enable his actors and audience to experience, in varying degrees, a transpersonal consciousness. These events recall the spontaneity of psychological free association and Rorschach inkblots. The actors used a combination of conventional painting supplies, and some materials that were a bit less orthodox in nature; these ranged from lamb's blood and pig entrails to eggs, milk, flour and goose feathers.

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83 Stadler and Weibel, 314-315
Hermann Nitsch's *Orgies' Mysteries Theatre*, as a six-day festival, was first envisioned in 1957. He wanted to combine Dionysian orgiastic themes with Christian notions of guilt, redemption and purification. Nitsch further emphasised the idea that repressed feelings and emotions in his actions stemmed from the psychoanalytic term abreaction.\(^86\) In 1893 Freud explained the concept of abreaction in his paper *On the Psychical Mechanism of Hysterical Phenomena*. Freud revealed that abreaction is the method used by a subject in response to particularly disturbing or traumatic events. Abreaction functions like an emotional discharge that changes depending on the individual and the extent of their particular phobic symptoms. At the core of abreaction theory is the idea that an emotional purging must be powerful enough to release a subject from the cause of their pathological condition in order to produce the much-needed cathartic effect.\(^87\) Nitsch established and secured this effect through the means of purification, purging and liberating the mind through the eruption of the artistic body.\(^88\)

Nitsch was the first of the Viennese Actionists to used abreaction theory and aspects of psychoanalyses aesthetically, but also ideas of Art Informal or Tachisism pushed to an extreme.

The concept is derived not only from the artistic end product but also from the way it was produced, and then transferred to human excitement, whether it be artistic or instinctive. Tachisme becomes a psychotherapeutic act of liberation, art becomes its aborted afterbirth. The other kind of cure for this compulsive behaviour, brought on by unconscious energies (neurosis), can be found in the abreactive possibilities of the O.M.


Abreaction/Abreagieren = Emotional discharge whereby the subject liberates himself from the affect attached to the memory of a traumatic event in such a way that this affect is not able to become (or to remain) pathogenic. Abreaction may be provoked in the course of psychotherapy, especially under hypnosis, and produce a cathartic effect. It may also come about spontaneously, either a short or a long interval after the original trauma.

\(^{87\text{Laplanche and Pontalis, 1}}\)

\(^{88\text{Brus Muehl Nitsch Schwarzkogler, 15}}\)
Theatre (OMT) and its analytical form of Tachisme. Through art it allows us to give free rein to our impulses even to the extent of exploring the depths of sadism.\textsuperscript{89}

In his attempt to find a definitive vehicle for this type of experience, Nitsch drew upon ideas developing from his studies of Schopenhauer, Nietzsche and Heidegger, into areas of classical Greek mythology and philosophy.\textsuperscript{90}

The Viennese Actionists were not only interested in exposing Austria’s narrow-minded provincialism, but religious themes also captivated them, particularly Nitsch and his crucifixion fascination. Nitsch used the symbolism of the Eucharist, a divine aspect of Church ideology, in his artworks as a way of heightening or celebrating forms of purification and abreaction. In order to comprehend Nitsch’s first substantial and theoretical proclamation his \textit{O.M. Theatre Manifesto} deserves to be cited at length.

On 4 June 1962 I shall disembowel, rend and tear apart a dead lamb. This is a manifest act (an ‘aesthetic’ substitute for the sacrificial act), which a closer study of the scientific bases of the O.M. Theatre project will reveal as both meaningful and necessary . . . Histrionic means will be harnessed to gain access to the profoundest and holiest symbols through blasphemy and desecration. Blasphemous provocation is tantamount to worship. It is a question of attaining an anthropologically determined view of existence in which grail and phallus are two mutually dependent extremes . . . As a consequence of this viewpoint, the sacrifice (abreaction) must be seen as the concern of ecstasy and the zest for life . . . This almost perverse ecstasy of our feelings puts our minds in a state where tensions are released -- a state which, prior to its discovery, was primarily abreacted in mythical excess-situations and sadomasochistic paradoxes (such as the cross, the rending of Dionysus, his castration, the blinding of Oedipus, and totemic meal. Etc.).\textsuperscript{91}

Nitsch manipulated Christian iconography and ritual in his \textit{O.M. Theatre} project by using real animal's blood and lamb's flesh along with a diverse array of foodstuff. \textit{Asolo Raum} (1970) (Figure 10) reveals how Nitsch used the symbolism of the Eucharist in his work. In 1966

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{89}Schwarz, 91-94
\textsuperscript{90}Schwarz, 122}
Nitsch went to court for performing his *16th Action*, where he displayed a visual collage of the "*First Holy Communion* consisting of examples of sanitary towels and religious symbols, resulting in a six months suspended sentence for offending religious sensibilities."\(^92\)

In November of 1964 Günter Brus executed his first self-painting-action *Selbst-Anstreichen 1: Anstreichen mit der Hand, Anstreichen durch Kopf, Anstreichen Der Kopf (Self-painting 1: Painting by Hand, Painting by Head, Painting the Head)* (1964) (Figure 11). Brus covered himself with white paint and drew a large black line or crack down the centre of his body. Brus conceived of his actions in terms of paintings, where the body occupied the centre of a clearly defined space. Monodramas like Brus' body paintings resulted in degrading the foundation of abstract painting almost to the point of destruction. In Brus' *Viennese Spaziergang (Viennese Walk)* (1965) (Figure 12) as part of his *selfpresentationallanguage*, he expressed a need to move away from abstraction, which he felt was emotionally empty, by exploring the effects that self-mutilation and self-degradation had on his body.\(^93\)

Otto Muehl's actions involved an expressive use of the male and female bodies, both of which he subjected to a variety of ritualistic physical abuses. Muehl used the visual and social meaning of the body, which had become more objectified, as part of a still-life in a series of actions never intended to be acted out, but were meant for photographic documentation like *Materialaktion Nr. 30 (Material Action No. 30)* (1963) (Figure 13).\(^94\) Muehl, who was drafted into the German army, transformed his social anxiety into a campaign against the violence of war. In the early 1970s he established the Actions-Analytic Commune (AA Commune). The

\(^{91}\)Brus Muehl Nitsch Schwarzkogler, 132-133
\(^{92}\)Brus Muehl Nitsch Schwarzkogler, 15
\(^{93}\)Brus Muehl Nitsch Schwarzkogler, 29
AA Commune was organised around the utopian idea that communal living, free sex and the collective raising of children could be established around a democratic system. Ironically, Muehl and his common-law wife, Claudia, were incarcerated in 1991 for child abuse.\textsuperscript{95}

Rudolf Schwarzkogler's work often featured images of wounded or healing individuals like those found in his \textit{Action 4} (1965) (Figure 14). He embraced the theme of castration using the Austrian photographer and friend Heinz Cibulka as his model. Images of Cibulka bound in gauze, or naked with his genitals wrapped in bandages, are quite numerous. He was usually impeded with surgical instruments, tubes, and wires as seen in \textit{Action 2} (1965) (Figure 15). Events surrounding Schwarzkogler's life have been obscured in myth, and repeatedly distorted owing to Robert Hughes' review in \textit{Time Magazine} (1972), which asserted that Schwarzkogler had died of self-inflicted wounds due to a castration performance.

Schwarzkogler seems to have deduced that what really counts is not the application of paint, but the removal of surplus flesh. So he proceeded, inch by inch, to amputate his own penis, while a photographer recorded the act as an art event. In 1972, the resulting prints were reverently exhibited in that biennial motor show of Western art, Documenta V at Kassel. Successive acts of self-amputation finally did Schwarzkogler in.\textsuperscript{96}

In fact what really happened to Schwarzkogler was that he died of injuries suffered after a fatal fall from his apartment window on June 20, 1969.\textsuperscript{97}

\textsuperscript{94}Schwarz, 281
\textsuperscript{95}Stiles, 688
\textsuperscript{97}Stiles, 689
Valie Export's Feminism in the Aftermath of Wien

Export and Weibel became the Viennese Actionists' unofficial historians. In this collaboration she spent a year working with Weibel on Wien (Vienna) (1970) a documentary film and accompanying book that ended in the Viennese courts. Essentially, Wien is about the staged events performed by several artists of the Viennese Actionists. Throughout Wien's pages Austrian women are seen as important actors in the political and economic sphere who have suffered, not only under bourgeois sensibility, but also under restrictive ideologies and social conditions. In trying to understand what Export and Weibel were attempting to achieve with this project, Wien offers some compelling perspectives on the experiences of those individuals who participated in Viennese Actionism. Scattered throughout this book's pages are photos of Export giving Weibel a blow-job. Wien also contains anonymous women in various compromising positions. Part of comprehending Export's complexity as an Austrian feminist and artist is trying to understand the intricacies surrounding her public identity with Weibel. Through the act of giving Weibel oral sex in Wien, she suggestively reveals the complex nature of patriarchy and Austrian gendered relationships. However, by participating in Weibel's action, Export constructed a wider range of contradictory messages, which also encompasses many of the staged events of the Actionists. In this way she outwardly performed

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Export's contribution to Wien. Bildkompedium Wiener Aktionismus und Film (1970) resulted in both her and Peter Weibel being sentenced in 1971 for offending the Pornography Law intended for the protection of children and young people in Austria.
oral sex not only to challenge and shock society, but also to assist Weibel in using his action to express the ambiguities of culture within a public setting. This egregious action not only transcends the period of sexual revolution, but it would undoubtedly have the same shock value today. As Weibel remarked "the scandal exploded when the naked body appeared in a social space." 99 Weibel and Export were attempting to tear apart the foundation of sexual intimacy in this public act.

However, what is most disturbing and haunting about Wien is the placement of images of murdered children juxtaposed with carefully documented pictures of Nitsch's actions. Photographs of dead children, which are strategically set-up along side blood-soaked pseudo religious actions have the tendency to take on a burlesque perversion. 100 However, these powerful images were meant to personify the deepest moments in the human subconsciousness. By applying Nitsch's philosophy around abreaction theory the idea of a cultural cleansing emerges with the potential for unified absolution. Simultaneously, both artist and viewer needed to go deep within the essence of his/her own being to achieve a state of catharsis. 101 The children were meant to represent various events within an individual's psyche. Abreaction was needed as part of Nitsch's artistic process. In terms of their placement in the book, the children were a central part of his drama, since they facilitated an easy transition from guilt to abreaction because of their ability to shock and produce the effects of unconscious purging. 102

99 Brus Muehl Nitsch Schwarzkogler, 15
100 Peter Weibel and Valie Export. Wien: Bildkompendium Wiener Aktionismus und Film (Verlag: Kohlkunst Verlag, 1970): 97-114
101 Brus Muehl Nitsch Schwarzkogler, 15
I find it particularly fascinating that images of children continually turn up in Export's artistic projects, and found that they stem from her interest in human behaviour. *Remote...Remote...* (1973) (Figure 16 & 17) was a filmed performance, which dealt with the mother and child relationship. In the documentational stills there are enlarged police archive photos of two children projected behind Export. The images have the ability to transform the viewer into witnesses, who authenticated the appalling conditions that these children were living in. In front of the screen Export aggressively cuts and jabs at her cuticles with an exacto blade. The Austrian State police took these children, depicted in the photos, away from their parents because of physical abuse. In Export’s film, *Unsichtbare Gegner (Invisible Adversary)* (1976), Anna (the main protagonist) ignores the fact that a baby is crying in her refrigerator (Figure 18). Anna is not only reacting against culturally defined roles and rules placed on Austrian women, but also on the limitations and social anxiety which have historically constricted them.  

This image also acts as a kind of future female body double of Anna. In another scene Anna is wandering the streets of Vienna looking for things to photograph. At a shopping arcade two children are standing in front of a shop that sells electronic equipment. The young boys, who are without adult supervision, mimic what they see on television. They fiercely attack each other by punching and striking in reaction to the violence they see on the screen.

Austrian society placed a great deal of importance on its nation's mothers, and those who worked were constantly under civic scrutiny. In Austria being a feminist meant that a

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104 *Unsichtbare Gegner (Invisible Adversary)* (1976) 16 mm feature film (112 Min.). Produced and directed
woman was at risk of jeopardising her status as a good mother and protector of the family.\footnote{Good, xxii} The interconnecting themes of motherhood and recurring images of children within Export's work function like messages; they also act like childhood memories that are simultaneously disjointed and disturbing. Furthermore, they operate like Freudian insights of infantile sexuality, and like “infantile sexual sensations [these images] prefigure later aesthetic sensations, that infantile sexual curiosity is the model for all later intellectual work.”\footnote{Sigmund Freud. The Mind of the Moralist, trans. Philip Rieff, (New York: Doubleday & Co., 1961): 47}

Wien's strategic placement of psychologically penetrating images also articulates how Weibel, Export and the Viennese Actionists used physical mutilation as a metaphor for social mutilation. They wanted to negate the art of Austria’s cultural elites in order to destroy any antiseptic and delusional visions of patriotism that Viennese art may have held during Hitler's regime. They also wanted to establish a link with Austria's innovative artistic past. The Actionists did this by aligning themselves with a group of Austrian painters who broke away from academic and stylised painting of the 19th century. The Actionists re-examined the works of Klimt, Schiele and Kokoschka through their use of an expressive gestural language found in the paintings and drawings of the Secessionists.\footnote{Schwarz, 91} Gustave Klimt (1862-1918) was the art movement's first president and Joseph M. Olbrich (1876-1908) designed their Exhibition Hall in 1897.\footnote{Bäumer, 6-8} Egon Schiele (1890-1918) and the Expressionist painter Oskar Kokoschka (1886-1980), both pupils of Klimt, were influenced not only by the psychoanalysis of Freud, but also by the highly ornamental elements and one-dimensional aspects of Japanese
prints as seen in images such as *Judith I* (1901) (Figure 19). Like Klimt, young elegant women captivated Schiele, who provided him with significant stimuli to create stylised images fluctuating between reality and symbolism. In 1912 Schiele was imprisoned for seducing a young woman below the age of consent. The police seized more than a 100 drawings which they considered pornographic, socially sadistic and morally degrading like his *Seated Girl* (1911) (Figure 20). Kokoschka's paintings were also tremendously scandalous because of their violence, apparently irrational structure and unconventional psychological images as found in his *Die Windsbraut* (*Bride of the Wind*) (1914) (Figure 21). In 1909 Kokoschka gained a reputation as a notorious artist for staging an Expressionist play in Vienna called *Mörder, Hoffnung der Frauen* (*Murderer, Hope of Women*). The cast, who had only one rehearsal, ran around with expressive gestures on a makeshift stage to strange high-pitched music. The premise was an aggressive battle between the sexes. At the climax of the play the man attacks the woman, ripping her dress. In her defence the woman counterattacks with a knife, and fake blood oozes out of his body. This Expressionist production was an affront to the public morals of a conservative Viennese society. Viennese art critics labelled Kokoschka a "Bourgeois-baiter and common criminal." However, Kokoschka articulated his views concerning his Austrian detractors by declaring that, "its people lived in security, yet they were all afraid. I felt this through their cultivated form of living which was still derived from the Baroque; I painted them in their anxiety and pain." The pro-Nazi press also attacked Kokoschka, who had formed a left-wing Bohemian artist group in the early 1920s in Germany.

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109 Bäumer, 9
In 1937 he was declared a 'degenerate' artist by the Nazis and had to flee Austria, immigrating to England in 1938.\textsuperscript{112}

In the wake of Austria's political division following the war, artists found themselves vulnerable to conflicting political ideologies. Viennese Actionists needed to redefine their artistic positions within the country's art scene. They could do this through actions that revealed their outward disgust at being left to deal with Austria's post-war heritage, and this resulted in some very haunting and alluring art. Issues of Catholicism, national identity and the trauma of Austro-Fascism lead several Actionists to oppose the Catholic Church's ambiguity when Hitler was in power. In attempting to clarify the Church's blurred position between victim and aggressor, the Actionists performed endless acts of violence focussing on religious iconography and the cruelty of war. We can argue that the Catholic Church in Austria did hold anti-Nazi views, but for the most part they remained quiet during the \textit{Anschluss}. Austrians felt that the Church was in allegiance with Hitler, because it chose to view the war as a Holy War and a fight against the potential invasion of communist heretics and Jews.\textsuperscript{113} Austria's inability to define the nature of their relationship between victimisation, perpetrator, Church morality, and Nazism is what really inflamed these Viennese artists. The political aim of the Actionists was to devise public scandals to provoke a rethinking of historical and cultural dogma. Weibel, in an interview with Gerhard Petak for \textit{R&D Group 28 Magazine} (1985), stressed that actions were meant to separate art from illusion. The Austrian public needed to be jolted out of their impartial status and feel uncomfortable with what they saw.

\textsuperscript{112}Bäumer, 10-11
\textsuperscript{113}Parkinson, 322
When I am performing an action in space and time in front of an audience, the audience is able to see and control anything. When I'm cutting my breast, I'm really cutting into my breast, one can see it. When Brus is cutting his head, one can see it. When Valie Export is sucking my cock, one can see it. There is no difficulty when I'm doing and photographing it in my apartment. It's important to go into the public, into the audience, to go into space and time.¹¹⁴

The events staged by the Actionists were interpreted as offensive and excessive, with good reason. The authorities retaliated with censorship and police officers stopping most of their public displays.¹¹⁵ Several artists had to leave Austria, most moving to Germany because they feared incarceration, but also due to the press-induced hysteria leading to open and hostile public abuse and a torrent of hate mail. This anxiety over imprisonment recalled memories of Hitler's Gestapo (The German Secret Police - Geheime Staatspolizei) and Austria's lack of political control during the war. A perfect example of the public's growing anxiety came with the enormous amount of press coverage that Günter Brus received after he was arrested for his part in an action he performed for Art and Revolution (Figure 22) at the New Institute building of the Vienna University on June 7, 1968. Brus sang the Austrian national anthem naked while smearing his excrement over his body and masturbating. Understandably, he was found guilty of disturbing the peace and public indecency. Several local newspapers like the Die Neue Zeitung (The New Newspaper) and the Unabhängige Kronen Zeitung (The Independent Crown Newspaper) ran headlines such as: "Leaders of the Revulsion Orgy Are Not Students" or "The University-Pigs Arrested At Last!" During Brus' court proceedings many published letters contained the following hostile notes:

¹¹⁴Gerhard Petak, Rudolf Schwarzkogler, Edited by David Minshall and John Sanders. R&D Group 28, (Vienna, April 17, 1985): 1
¹¹⁵Stadler and Weibel, 315
Mr. Günter Brus! We have found out everything about you! You are a workshy individual, but undressing like an ape in front of young girls (at the university) and playing with your genitals, you have no problems doing that! You open your bowels publicly in a place of culture! ... Hopefully you will find an understanding judge who lands you the maximum penalty and then expels you from Austria. A filthy pig like you cannot be an Austrian!116

The performances of the Actionists struck a nerve with many Austrians. Many articles appeared in the country's daily newspaper sensationalising the antics of the Viennese Actionists. Günter Brus, after his participation in Art and Revolution and subsequent arrest, often became the focus of attention in Die Kronen-Zeitung (Figure 23).

**Unprecedented Scandal Friday Evening at Vienna University Before 500 People**

Outrageous incidents occurred in a lecture room at Vienna University last Friday evening. About 500 people had gathered for an event by the SOS, a radical leftist student organisation. The topic was supposed to be "Art and Revolution." The evening turned into a scandal. First, shameful insults were hurled at the Kennedy family, which met with applause. Then six young men undressed. Completely naked, they performed actions that cannot be described in detail.

**Excesses at the University: "We Were Showing Direct Art."**

Yesterday the onanist and excreter Günter Brus described his revolting exhibitionist presentations at the Vienna University as a branch of modern art: fellow defendants Otto Muehl, who whipped a young masochist with a leather strap before 500 students, stated to the civil court: "We are really excited about our art!" The events occurred on 7 June, when dissatisfied students held a meeting in lecture room 1 of the Vienna University. Before the end of the rally the Viennese man of letters, Oswald Wiener, suddenly appeared in the lecture room with the two "artists" Günter Brus and Otto Muehl. Wiener contented himself with a woolly lecture on the "Psychology of thought and speech;" but Muehl and Brus presented the students with a spectacle the likes of which were hitherto unknown in the halls of academe ... A few days later the three actors were remanded in custody and yesterday they were brought before the civil court. They were charged with defaming Austrian symbols, defaming the institution of marriage and the family, actual bodily harm and offence to public morals ... Brus and Muehl admitted the facts

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116Brus Muehl Nitsch Schwarzkogler, 59-64

Full versions of this letter and others can be found translated in this publication. It is also interesting to note that the University of Vienna gained considerable notoriety in 1898 when Gustave Klimt was commissioned to paint a series of murals representing Philosophy, Medicine and Jurisprudence. Instead of the familiar historical figures Klimt wanted to create masses of naked forms symbolising the desperate human conditions of Austria at that time. He called attention to individuals with diseased flesh and moods of despair. The imagery was far too brutal, macabre and sexual for the academic faculty, and so they rejected the murals.
but explained that they had merely presented a form of "Direct Art." "We are painters, but have long since liberated ourselves from the canvas. The focus for us is the human body. For those who are pure everything is pure, everything we showed is permissible from an artistic standpoint!" .... Brus was sentenced to six months Muehl to four weeks. Wiener was discharged.\textsuperscript{117}

Ironically, the press did not challenge Brus or Muehl's aesthetics of art, but questioned their place in contemporary Austrian society. Staberl, a reactionary journalist writing for \textit{Die Kronen-Zeitung}, described these artists as individuals trying to tarnish the character of Austria abroad by projecting ideas and behaviours that were simply theoretically and artistically perverted.\textsuperscript{118}

Muehl, who performed a series of endlessly repetitive and violent acts of self-mutilation, continually reinforced the notion of phallic male subjectivity while conspicuously amplifying female objectivity. Export wanted to articulate that unacknowledged female participants needed to be given a voice, which was something that was lacking in many of Muehl's performances. Export's artistic acknowledgement toward Muehl's actions, where he used anonymous female bodies to represent a form of contaminated and corrupted society, is quite revealing.\textsuperscript{119} However, for my argument, I directly confronted Export. I wanted to understand the dynamics of her work in relation to the performances of the Viennese Actionists. I proposed to read the violent struggles of Actionism by attempting to unravel why these artists used a discursive system of male superiority. I wanted to understand; why the female participants involved in the actions staged by the Viennese were always represented as objects and never deemed as subjects. Furthermore, I sought to grasp why Export used aspects

\textsuperscript{117}Brus Muehl Nitsch Schwarzkogler, 59
\textsuperscript{118}Brus Muehl Nitsch Schwarzkogler, 67
\textsuperscript{119}Amelia Jones and Andrew Stephenson. \textit{Performing The Body/Performing The Text}, (London: Next Page for Continuation of Footnote)
of the Viennese Actionists methodologies as a springboard for her feminist critique when this
group of artists appeared to indulge in sexist behaviour? However, Export responded to my
questions by simply stating “I never mentioned that Viennese Actionism has been a thesis for
my Feminist Actionism.”¹²⁰ We can argue that such ideological grounding depends on
Export’s connection with the Viennese Actionists’ reputation and lack of official recognition by
museums or galleries. In this context, I felt that translating how Export’s work went beyond
provoking the canon of art history and viewer reaction in her attempt to breakdown artistic and
cultural restrictions of modernism in Austria was crucial to her brand of Feminist Actionism
and artwork. In several interviews when Export is directly questioned about her early
connections with the Viennese Actionists, she denies using any part of their strategies as a
thesis for her work revealing that,

I never participated in an Actionist performance because they had a different concept,
but perhaps the most important thing was the feeling that everybody was in revolt
against the status quo. The climate in those days supported everybody, including me.¹²¹

It is more like that Export’s statement reveals her efforts to preserve her artistic intentionally.
Actionism did play a role in influencing her artwork. Furthermore, by distancing herself from
the group, and eventually the work of Weibel, Export could extract certain aspects of their
symbolic language. She pushed her own body beyond, to a point of physical extremes, and by
using the body’s vulnerability, she also sought to express the extent to which she could use her
art to express her political limitations and rebelliousness as an Austrian feminist artist. Export
has always been interested in appropriating and manipulating female objective and subjective

¹²⁰ Valie Export, e-mail to Gwendolyn Adams September 11, 2000.
roles in her artwork. In relation to Muehl's actions, she felt the need to reveal that transgression could be established through a reinterpretation and re-appropriation of a strong Austrian female body through an authoritative feminist viewpoint. It is fitting to see that an integral part of Export's early artistic projects intersected with the Actionists proclamation that collective, and political activism was the responsibility of all individuals in all levels of society.\textsuperscript{122}

One component that intermeshes Export's artwork with that of the Actionists was the way she expanded upon and distorted their theories around confined female bodies. In the street-action \textit{Aus der Mappe der Hundigkeit (From The File of Doggishness)} (1968) (with Peter Weibel, \textit{Communication Action}, Vienna) (Figure 24), Export focussed on her body as one material among many. What is suggested in this event is that an owner or domineering figure has the potential to reinvent the identity of those who tend to be submissive. In a series of photographs published in \textit{Wien}, Export leads a roped Weibel who is crawling on all fours like a dog across Vienna's busy streets. In this action there is no question that Export used the Viennese Actionists methods to provoke spectators in an attempt to break down social, sexual and cultural restrictions. Weibel, who is wearing a black trench coat and dress pants, slowly follows Export who is clothed in a white fur coat. Ironically, Export is wearing the animal pelt that is missing from Weibel's body. In the image several uncertain bystanders glance at them, and numerous people stop and gawk at this bizarre street performance. Export's body, and the positioning of Weibel's, function like visual expressions revealing the need to change socially specific rules and rigid gender relationships. In the role of the henpecked husband Weibel

\textsuperscript{122}Mueller, xv
succumbs to Export's authority. He no longer fights the concept of a male control ideology.\textsuperscript{123} In *From The File of Doggishness* what transpires are changing perspectives and shedding new light on the power of contemporary Austrian feminism.

Chapter 2:

Feminist Actionism: Representation of the Female Body
Performance and Body-Material Interactions

Performance art, as a movement developed differently in Japan, the United States and Europe after the Second World War. Japan's Gutai group led by Jiro Yoshihara included important artists such as Akira Kanayama, Sadamasa Motonaga, Shuso Mukai, Saburo Murakami, Shōzō Shimamoto, Kazuo Shiraga, Atsuko Tanaka and others. Gutai, which means 'concreteness and embodiment', composed body performances during the 1950s ending in 1972 with Yoshihara's death.\(^{124}\) The influential action-oriented Gutai works emphasised art's materiality; the final products were paintings or objects.\(^{125}\) In America, performance art of the 1960s was seen as a revolt against the art object and the art institution. Initially performance artists used their bodies to eliminate dealers, critics and curators. However, this evolved as they realised the potential of the body to convert art back from precious collectible objects to a form of communication.\(^{126}\) In the 1960s artists like Allan Kaprow, along with Jackson Maclow, George Brecht, Al Hansen and several others staged in a series of New York Happenings. The phrase 'happening' according to Kaprow, was meaningless and intended to be "something spontaneous, something that just happens to happen."\(^{127}\) Kaprow's performances were personalised artistic expressions. He used his live events to present iconographic and symbolic images with the audience now having to take responsibility for understanding their meaning. In the spirit of the German artist Joseph Beuys, Kaprow's

\(^{125}\)Schimmel, 124-146
\(^{127}\)RoseLee Goldberg. Performance Art: From Futurism to the Present. (London: Thames and Hudson, Next Page for Continuation of Footnote
principle suggested that "the line between art and life should be kept as fluid, and perhaps indistinct, as possible." In 1962 a series of Fluxus events were performed in Wiesbaden with George Maciunas, Nam June Paik and Alison Knowles, to name only a few of the group's active participants. Fluxus concerts had an interdisciplinary set of ideas and aesthetic values. Performance and chance, improvisation, music, dance, poetry, and humour all came together in a spontaneous mixture of artistic creativity in the spirit of Marcel Duchamp and Dada.

However, European countries like Germany and Austria found that the term performance did not fit the artistic mood, and so, it did not become an art movement during the 1960s and 1970s. Executing an action was deemed a more viable artistic expression, since it reflected how many European artists felt in the wake of the war's destruction. Taking social responsibility and targeting concrete political issues, which affected the establishment and the institution of art, was more important than remaining politically impartial within insulated studios. Joseph Beuys was a perfect example of this ideology. He believed that the art object should not be the core of the artwork, but that art should be able to transform people's everyday lives. He stated that "we have to revolutionise human thought. First of all, revolution takes place within man. When man is really a free, creative being who can produce something new and original, he can revolutionise time."
The performance-actions of the Gutai group, New York happenings and Fluxus events, along with European Actionism, may have differed in content and style, but they can all trace their ancestry to the works of the Futurists, Dadaists and Surrealists. In *Aspects of Feminist Actionism* (1986) Valie Export linked her artistic pedigree in terms of how the early performances of the Futurists, Constructivists, Expressionists, Dadaists, Surrealists, Art Informal or Tachisme (gestural, expressive abstract painting) and Bauhaus artists all influenced her early actions and artistic language. The Viennese Actionists, who incorporated aspects of the Dadaists anti-establishment artistic values, were presenting public displays of aesthetic revolution. The live events they staged were often dramatised by individuals who held strong manifesto-like ideologies, which referenced their particular cultural circumstances or social demands. These ideological underpinnings are absent from the actions of the Gutai group, the concerts staged by Fluxus members or the Happenings of Allan Kaprow. The Viennese Actionists wanted to give object-making back its narrative, which they felt was something that Abstract Expressionism had removed from artwork. Disillusioned with both materialism and existentialism the Viennese Actionists used the body as an exaggerated metaphor of painting. They wanted to expand their artistic expression by declaring the body a form, and giving the human subject authority over the object. The reason that the Viennese Actionists, Weibel and Export conducted live-events with such assertiveness, were because

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133 Goldberg, 130
135 Brus Muehl Nitsch Schwarzkogler, 15
they felt that actions were able to hold strong artistic intent, and powerful social, cultural and political critiques.\textsuperscript{137}

**Feminist Actionism and its Enigmatic ‘Contract with the Skin’**

Valie Export developed her own brand of Feminist Actionism, partly in response to Viennese Actionism, but mainly to question women's isolated position in relation to the production of art in Austria. Scholars like Stiles, Iles and Mueller have categorised Export with female performance artists such as Ana Mendieta, Gina Pane, Adrian Piper, Ulrike Rosenbach, Carolee Schneemann and Hannah Wilke.\textsuperscript{138} However, these artists embraced autobiographical themes revealing intimate information about themselves, and establishing a personal relationship between performer and audience. Female autobiographical artists by nature upset the notion of "the viewed entity as passive object via the active presentation of their bodies as a chief artistic material."\textsuperscript{139} The ways in which they do, however, are not so clear cut. Export's actions are radically different from the artworks of these female performers, because she removed any traces of her personal experiences and individuality. Stiles, Iles and Mueller seem to connect Export with these artists, because they all used their own bodies in their work with the desire to disrupt social boundaries and break away from the language of patriarchy.\textsuperscript{140} What makes Export's work consistently unique was how she

\textsuperscript{136}Jappe, 59
\textsuperscript{137}Brus Muehl Nitsch Schwarzkogler, 15
\textsuperscript{139}Kathy O'Dell, *The Performance Artist As Masochistic Woman*, *Arts Magazine*, (Vol. 62, No. 10, Summer 1988): 97
confronted Austria's hegemonic social environment, and how she actively challenged female subjectivity and objectivity in search for her own artistic legitimisation.141

Export incorporated the Viennese Actionists strategy of demanding that anyone entering the environment where their staged events were taking place had to simultaneously accept the responsibility of being both participant and performer. This can be found with the work of Hermann Nitsch who advocated for new dimensions to his actions by having the 'participants spectators [become] the heroes of the drama.'142 The concept that an audience was linked to an action meant that they were part of a collectively larger scheme of things.143 Kathy O'Dell in *Contract with the Skin: Masochism, Performance Art and the 1970s* (1998) challenges issues of subjection and objectivity in performance art as something that originated with the need to know "oneself as both subject and object in relation to one's surroundings."144 O'Dell goes on to clarify that artists, who pushed their bodies to extremes, were also aware of the importance of their environment, which was often culturally overlooked or assumed.145 However, Export's artistic and feminist interests are much more than simply appropriating both the objective and subjective roles, or even amplifying the tensions that exist between the two, thus allowing her to be both the author of meaning and the object of the audience's gaze. Export used her body in acts of self-mutilation to explore aspects of Nitsch's theory of abreaction and its therapeutic nature to release pent-up energies embedded deep...
within the human psyche. In O'Dell's 1988 article in Arts Magazine entitled The Performance Artist as Masochistic Woman, she writes how performance artists during the 1970s dealt with the burden of representation through acts of masochism.

By forcing the issue of masochism to the performance level, the artists were attempting to trigger a questioning of the whole structure of masochism from the world of fantasy (which includes all visual matter, all art) on up through the contractual (which puts each and everyone one of us into the picture).

In Freud's paper The Economic Problem of Masochism (1924), he discusses masochism in relation to gender theory. Masochism was seen by Freud to consist of three parts: primary or eroticogenic masochism leading to two derivative forms, and the moral and the feminine. The eroticogenic is defined as a condition imposed on sexual excitation, or pleasure-in-pain, the moral as a norm of behaviour or an underlying sense of unconscious guilt, and the feminine as an expression of nature. Freud writes of feminine masochism that "... the obvious interpretation, and one most easily arrived at, is that the masochist wants to be treated like a small and helpless child, but, particularly, like a naughty child." O'Dell argues that because Freud saw masochism in a feminine way and as the most accessible to observation it was the least paradoxical. O'Dell goes on to discuss how masochism could be described as "all those things we do to ourselves out of guilt of really wanting to do them to someone else, done in the name of maintaining a stable environment, whether it be our domestic space, workplace, or

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146 Brus Muehl Nitsch Schwarzkogler, 19
149 Freud, 162
Freud states that "feminine masochism, which we have been describing, is entirely based on the primary, erotogenic masochism, on pleasure in pain," and that the situation of the subject within masochistic fantasies had to be ultimately female, because it was the least problematic. Freud goes on in this paper to emphasise masochism's close connections with sadism, and how with the aid of sexual thrills, the sadist becomes libidinously bound and is transformed into the original erotogenic masochist. However, there are hazards in applying such broad areas of psychoanalyses to the work of Export. By accepting Freudian theory in relation to the development of subjectivity, her work then becomes an open reading through a purely Freudian rhetoric of masochism, and this can be viewed as particularly damaging and misleading.

Export's performances, like Eros/ion (1970) (Figure 4) and Hyperbole (1973) (Figure 5), refer to body-material interactions that produce elements of abreaction theory. They are live-events that were meant to traverse the threshold between the interior and the exterior of the physiological being, seducing viewers into witnessing pain and suffering. During Eros/ion Export slowly cuts her skin as she rolls over shards of broken glass. The undercurrent of this performance conjures up the Night of the Broken Glass, a state-organised pogrom against the Jews in Germany carried out by SS officers in civilian clothing in the district of Geldern on November 14, 1938. In Eros/ion Export marks a white sheet of paper with her blood,

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150 O'Dell, 96
151 Freud, 162
152 Freud, 162

The following order resulted in the burning of synagogues and Jewish-owned shops, which were completely destroyed or ransacked.
leaving smudges on its surface to evoke memories of terror and a night of blood and broken windows caused by a gauntlet of German Stormtroopers. In this action Export also uses the stains that her blood makes as a response to Yves Klein's body painting *Anthropometries of the Blue Period* (March 9, 1960) performed in Paris (Figure 25). Export reconsiders her blood traces by simultaneously transforming herself into an image and maker of images within the framework of art history. Yet, *Eros/ion* is also about healing; it involves pain (the process) and ecstasy (the completion). Hidden in this body-material interaction is an Austrian post-war narrative based on duality, lies and amnesia. While I believe that Export was successful in generating a discourse through her use of violence on her own body, I also think that this dialogue of violence was indeed problematic. The point here is that despite the levels of alienation and detachment that masochism produces in the public, the ritualistic self-mutilations found in *Eros/ion* and *Hyperbole* is inseparable in my mind from some form of exhibitionistic pleasure for herself and voyeuristic pleasure for her audience. How does Export resolve this problem? *Eros/ion* and *Hyperbole*, when performed live, coerce her viewers into understanding visual and emotional variations found in Austria's confused identity. During *Hyperbole* Export is obstructed from her viewers by two rows of electrically charged wires, evoking images of the barbed wired fences of concentration camps. Gradually, Export slows her pace as she presses against the wires repeatedly. The viewer can see her struggle to reach the end. As she leaves the space she is exhausted and has to crawl on her hands and knees.

I step inside and move through a corridor of electrically charged wires, constantly experiencing painful shocks and sinking to the floor. But I accept the challenge and, in a somewhat pathological increase in willpower, I press my head against the wires again and again. Society is a closed, structured space, which regulates all human energy

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through painful barriers. Only through an effort of will to overcome the pain (which is at the core of society) is one able to achieve a state of free expression (free-flowing energy).  

What remains essential to understanding the underlying structural compositions of *Eros/ion* and *Hyperbole* is that these actions display a sense of controlled human behaviour. However, one has to ask the obvious question, why would any artist push their bodies to such points of physical and psychological extremes? I would like to think that such intense acts of endurance and self-mutilation encompass Export's need to challenge political and artistic connections in Austria following a period of near-despair after World War II. Yet, the fact remains that her actions reflect an intense masochistic bond, which she has created between herself and her audience. By slowly hitting the electrically charged wires or cutting into her skin with broken glass, Export attempted to achieve a form of cathartic relief or artistic abreaction to try and solve the issue of exhibitionistic pleasure. In Freud's publication *Studies on Hysteria* (1895), the idea that painful, abusive experiences needed to be uncovered and remembered was noted as the subject's way of riding the memory of a traumatic event, "the memory may be integrated into a series of associations which allows the event to be corrected - - to be put in its proper place." 

In part, Export used Freud's theory in these actions to evoke disturbing memories in the company of others in order to classify her action as cathartic and not exhibitionistic in nature.

Valie Export, the French performance artist Gina Pane, and the American male performance artist Chris Burden all at one point have rolled in broken glass, challenging

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157 LaPlanche and Pontalis, I
Freud’s gendered theory of masochism. Pane used self-torture to slice her feet and hands as a symbolic attack on the numerous injuries directed toward women and their status within society. In her three part performance entitled *Autoportrait(s)* held at the *Psyche at the Galeria Stadler* in Paris (1973) Pane cut her face with broken glass in *Autoportrait(s) Transfert* (1973) (Figure 26), and sliced her feet with razor blades in *Autoportraits(s) Le Corps* (1973) (Figure 27). In the last segment entitled *Autoportrait(s), Rejection* (1973) (Figure 28) she took large mouthfuls of milk, spitting it violently out into a glass until she opened a cut on her lip, mixing her blood with the liquid. Blood, the universal symbol of female adulthood, was interpreted by Pane as a form of transference. The term transference demonstrates how “the terrain on which all the basic problems of a given analysis play themselves out: the establishment, modalities, interpretation and resolution of the transference are in fact what define the cure.” Pane used the blending of her blood with milk as a metaphorical refusal of her childhood; this rejection can be seen as an interpretation of Pane’s denial to accept the role of objecthood and acceptance of her subjectivity.

Male performance artists working in America during the 1970s also challenged Freud’s theory of gendered masochistic roles. O’Dell has analysed the work of Vito Acconci and Chris Burden in a more positive light through her use of Freud’s paper *Instincts and Vicissitudes* (1915), where he calls masochism "sadism turned round upon the subject's own ego [in this

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What is noteworthy about Gina Pane's heritage is that her mother was Austrian. Pane considered her family lineage as part of her cultural partition. Her paternal side was a division between Northern and Southern Italy and her maternal side connected between her Tyrol and Austria origins. Pane's mother immigrated to France in the 1930s after she fled from Nazism. Even though Pane was born in France she considered herself an Italian. She left Turin in 1960 to attend the Beaux Arts in Paris. Pane would remain working and living in Paris until her death in 1989.

159 LaPlanche and Pontalis, 455
turning around the] active voice is changed, not into the passive, but into the reflective, middle voice." In the Freudian sense masochism is based on gender theory, but this is not the autonomous entity that Freud would have us visualise. There are many more points that could be made, not the least of which is that defeminising masochism is precisely what Burden and Acconci had in mind when they staged performances of a self-attacking nature. Export, Pane, Burden and Acconci intended to push their bodies to extreme points of physical and psychological limits in order to challenge the confines of gender, and to confront the bonds that restrict the performer and audience.  

Vito Acconci, whose work can be linked with the provocative performances of the Viennese Actionists, performed his most notorious body action entitled Seedbed in 1971 (Figure 29). In this site-specific event Acconci constructed a ramp at the Sonnabend Gallery in New York. Visitors to the installation walked over the ramp while Acconci masturbated below recalling Günter Brus' most famous action performed for Art and Revolution (Figure 22). As I have mentioned already, Brus, standing naked on a chair is masturbating while singing the Austrian national anthem in front of an audience of university students. Burden, who asserted that his early artistic influences and affinities were due to Gina Pane and Acconci, pushed his body to its limitations in order to reflect American social and political unrest. Some performance pieces by Burden are hauntingly similar to the body-material interactions of Export. Doorway to Heaven, performed on November 15, 1973 (Figure 30) is like Hyperbole

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160 O'Dell, 48
162 O'Dell, 96
(1973) (Figure 5) and Burden's *Through the Night Softly* performed on September 12, 1973 (Figure 31), can be contrasted with *Eros/ion* (1970) (Figure 4). In Burden's *Through the Night Softly* he wears a swim suit, and with his hands held behind his back, he crawled through 50ft of broken glass, which had been strewn across a parking lot in Los Angeles.\(^{164}\) *In Doorway to Heaven*, while standing in front of his studio door, Burden pushed two live electric wires onto his chest accepting the challenge that an increase in willpower would be needed in order to endure the process of self-inflicted pain. Curiously enough, Burden was not electrocuted during this performance, because the wires crossed and exploded, only slightly burning him.\(^{165}\)

In this action, the use of electrically charged wires, as found in *Hyperbole*, obviously released painful shocks to the body. It suggests the personification of psychological experimentation, while exhibiting the manifestations of painful human barriers. These performances and actions reveal that the body is an autonomous material-object, which can hold a political subtext. In this regard, *Shoot*, considered one of Burden's best-known pieces, is about the collaboration between the viewer who has been transformed into a co-performer.\(^{166}\) Burden stood in front of a wall in the F Space in Santa Ana California and had his friend fire at him at point-blank range (Figure 32). Burden had requested the shooter to only graze him, but the bullet went into to his arm much deeper, and was severe enough to warrant medical attention. The intersection between pain and reality displayed in this performance reveals the extent of social and political powerlessness on artists during a turbulent period in American history. From this standpoint, Burden's performance also exposes the extent of the psychotic nature of American art during

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\(^{165}\) Ayres, 64
the 1970s. Burden's explanation for such performances was his attempt to close the gap between art and everyday life. This statement reveals the influence of the New York Happenings, which were eventually overtaken by student unrest, and the ideas of Joseph Beuys. Beuys, who was seeking a contemporary and momentary definition, used the concept of the action like an object-based art piece or action-work performance. Therefore, Burden's actions can be considered concepts or events that simultaneously belonged to the streets, but could also be transferred to a gallery space because of their object-action qualities.

In part, Vito Acconci's work during the 1970s focussed on the dilemma of masculinity, but also the various guises or contracts that could be established between an artist, viewer, scholar and critic. The art historian Amelia Jones in Body Art/Performing the Subject (1998) argues that while many male performance artists active during the 1970s -- from Burden to the Viennese Actionists -- subjected themselves to masochistic violence, Acconci's performances were exceptional and unusual because he pushed the sadomasochism dialectic of the self/other, masculine/feminine to such an extreme. In order to project his body as gender neutral, Acconci burned sections of his body hair, hid his penis between his legs, and pulled at his breasts in an attempt to destroy any traces of his maleness. Acconci arranged these acts of self-aggression in order to allow himself to simultaneously become the victim and masochist. In

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166 Performance and Its Objects, Arts Magazine (Vol. 65, No. 3, November 1990):41
167 Ayres, 53
168 O'Dell, 11
171 Amelia Jones. Body Art: Performing the Subject. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998): 125
opposition, Export's work is not about the complexities of holding a neutral position; it is about taking an aggressive attitude and accepting responsibility for your social actions. Export's artworks are quite different from those of Pane, Burden or Acconci, because she used aspects of Nitsch's abreaction theory in her work. Export wanted to confront her viewers with extreme behaviour and visceral acts in order to release confined energies that could stretch the boundaries of her live performances.

Export understood that to achieve a form of catharsis she had to slash, systematically jab, scorch, probe, and push her body to the ends of its physical capabilities. She felt that acts of self-inflicted violence and psychotic behaviour were needed to make her audience undergo a sensation of awkwardness with her intimate body performances. Export's live actions allowed her spectators to achieve a state of abreaction or unconscious liberation. In the end, Export used the motif of brutality and pain as a form of historical and ideological recollection. It is not surprising that public reaction to her spectacular events were not only extremely mixed, but also highly emotional. When she was questioned about the turbulent nature of several of her performances she revealed, "I am not a masochist, because I am an artist, I must use powerful visual symbols, not words, to portray the intensity of my message." O'Dell is adamant in her belief that artists who injure themselves for their art are not masochists in relation to Freud and his theories. As a result, O'Dell coerces her readers into believing that

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Valie Export's assertive actions often provoked aggressive reactions. Christian Kravagagna writing for the magazine 'Texte zur Kunst' (No. 22, 6/1996, p. 45), stressed that several times Export had been both verbally and physically attacked in public. In an interview for Angry Women (Re/Search Publications, 1991, p. 188-189) Andrea Juno asked Export about the reception of some of her early performances like Touch Cinema (1968). Export replied that after her first performance the newspaper had declared, that 'we cannot burn witches because it's forbidden now, and we cannot burn celluloid because it doesn't burn well, so we also cannot burn Valie Export.'

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acts of masochism usually command some kind of contract, either with another individual or with the self. If we apply O'Dell's theory to Export's actions then the idea that the body can be manipulated or displayed in an experimental way to make a social or political assertion emerges. Rather than state that Export's actions are purely voluntary acts of self-attacking, what transpires is the idea that they are forms of communal psychological purging or in keeping with Nitsch's theory a form of collective abreaction. Export is conscious of a need to liberate the spectator from a state of passivity and inhibition in order to achieve insight into the phenomenon of violence. In the words of Nitsch, as explained in his book *Orgies, Mysteries, Theatre* (1969), 'we create wars to have abreactions.'

Export used pain to evoke visual memories and to make public statements against Austria's history of suppressing conservatism, and phallocultural restraints on women. In *Aspects of Feminist Actionism* (1986), Export clearly made the distinction between sadomasochistic acts and women who use self-mutilation as a form of artistic expression:

Cuts, deformation, and blood can also be found in Feminist Actionism, but not as reflections of sadomasochistic deeds of abnormal drives. They are historical scars, traces of ideas inscribed onto the body, stigmata to be exposed by actions with the body. If they are interpreted as pathologies of self-hatred, poor self-esteem, sorrow, subjugation, or even identification with the oppressor, then they are part of the truth of women's history.

It is my contention that Export assimilated the Viennese Actionists strategy of accelerating individuals into her artistic environment in order to accelerate spectators into a state of abreaction. O'Dell would call this arrangement a contract between the masochistic

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performer and the audience. O'Dell attempts to outline complex relationships between performer and viewer with this agreement, but this is not so clearly defined. In Burden's *Shoot*, the contract is between the artist and his friend who fires a bullet into his arm. Pane, in *Nourriture, actualités télévisées, feu* (1971), establishes a contractual agreement between the artist and the audience members who deposit at least 2% of their salaries into a safe at the entrance of the gallery space. The performance then continues with Pane forcing over a pound of raw hamburger into her mouth. She then spits it out while watching the news with a bright light blinding her eyesight. The final phase of the event is Pane using her feet to stamp out small fires ignited in a nearby pile of sand. In *Trademarks* (1970) (Figure 33) Acconci marked up his body in a contractual way by biting parts of his exposed flesh. The prints he left or *marks for trade* were considered economic agreements between himself, his viewers and the art magazine that published the photographs of the event. O'Dell's hypothesis requires the idea of a 'Contract with the Skin,' and if one is lacking it negates an important element of her argument, which is the justification of unresolved acts of aggression. In this context the political and feminist claims that Export imposes on her viewers are a social message meant to establish an understanding without letting the representation of violence distract the viewer. However, by performing an action in front of an audience, whether in the public sphere or in the gallery space, Export's actions in reference to O'Dell's theories, function not only metaphorically but also metonymically as a contract between the performer and viewer.

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176 O'Dell, 2
177 O'Dell, 4
178 O'Dell, 5
179 O'Dell, 4
Debating the Social Body: *Tapp und Tast Kino (Tap and Touch Cinema)* and *Aktionshose: Genitalpanik (Actionpants: Genitalpanic)*

In one of Export's most remarkable and provocative street actions entitled *Tap and Touch Cinema (1968) (Tapp und Tast Kino)* (Figure 1), she established herself as a dynamic female artist whose goal was to challenge the frame, screen and canvas. In *Tap and Touch Cinema* Export created a public persona; wearing an old-fashion style cardigan and a blond wig, she strapped a simple styrofoam box to her naked chest and, with the help of Peter Weibel, she invited people to come and experience her cinema. In the brief film (16 mm. 15 min., filmed in Vienna in 1968) of *Tap and Touch Cinema*, Export passively stands while men reach into the box and grope at her concealed breasts. Weibel is heard on a bull horn announcing that Valie Export is an artist and that the public is allowed to come and put their hands through the curtained box and touch the screen. A shaky hand-held camera manoeuvres around to reveal passers-by stopping to see what is going on. In the background, Viennese police monitor the event. They had been tipped off and given photographs of Export in order to watch for her and observe her actions. In the crowd there are several men and women, but the men are seen approaching Export in the film. They place their hands in the box and appear embarrassed; their expressions are more revealing than Export's. They look ridiculous as the tables are turned and they become the exposed voyeurs. Export greets each person, times them for 12 seconds with her wrist watch, tells them when the duration is up, and utters thank-you as they exit her cinema.

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In 1968 a video of this performance was filmed by Peter Hajek and Helmut Dimko.

In Tap and Touch Cinema as the screen becomes the body, and seeing gives way to touching, the voyeur is transformed into a participant and the object is converted into the subject. Of all Export's actions Tap and Touch Cinema is the most problematic aesthetically, because she set out to disrupt the techniques of film, artistic form and materiality. But, she also wanted to examine the female body as a source of painterly gesture in Western art history. This work, inspired by Nitsch's search for a Gesamtkunstwerk (complete Artwork), is instantly confrontational, producing an analytical development-expanding cinema into a synthesis of theatre, spectacle and film. Export tried to create a contradiction by taking a coveted part of the female body and offering it up to the Viennese public. What emerged were tactile instead of visual communications, and a sense of sexual uncertainty and social splitting. In Aspects of Feminist Actionism (1989) Export explains that,

_Tapp und Tast Kino (Touch Cinema)_ captures the violence of the patriarchy through acts of self-chosen demonstration. In this "expanded cinema," the code with which she counters the frustration induced by the media is quite evident. However, this campaign of women's sexual self-determination, which clearly demonstrates the shift in the relationship between the sexes, occurs at the expense of the woman actionist.183

_Tap and Touch Cinema_ shared the Viennese Actionists notion of an anti-aesthetic focusing on the body, but also revealing Export's preoccupation with Nitsch's abreaction theory. This principle required Export's viewers to experience a sense of shock in order to purge and release energies buried deep within the psyche, in order to move her films to expand into the art of healing.184

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183 Valie Export, _Aspects of Feminist Actionism_, New German Critique (Vol 47, Spring-Summer 1989): 90
184 Brus Muehl Nitsch Schwarzkogler, 19-20
Resistance, invasion, and the provocative pushing of social boundaries are communicated in the visible language of *Tap and Touch Cinema*. Because Export openly accepted the challenge of voyeurism, she could raise questions surrounding pre-established Austrian social codes, which were specific to her own cultural heritage. *Tap and Touch Cinema* interfered with the language of film: its signs and syntax. The open handling of Export's breasts was used as a means to guard against the deceit of succumbing to the easy pleasures of voyeurism. This performance must also be understood as an active site of female resistance, because it raised questions about the feminine body. However, Export's participants were transformed from voyeurs to performers thoroughly dissolving all feelings of intimacy in film, audience placement and social neutrality. Export, by taking her portable cinema out into the community, openly disrupted Austrian cultural rules and laws.\(^{185}\)

*Tap and Touch Cinema* (1968) and *Actionpants: Genitalpanic* (1968), an action that directly followed, functioned on several levels. These actions shifted between the body, society and the environment, which enabled Export to question pre-existing Austrian social boundaries. Chrissie Iles, who has examined Export's early demonstrations of feminist consciousness-raising, looked at Export's actions as her way of securing an artistic space for women in Austria.\(^{186}\) The Austrian public, more often than not, misunderstood export's performances. Her proposal to reconfigure elements of traditional cinematic and social structure, and her intention that those who witnessed her actions would experience some form of abreaction, was often misinterpreted. When *Tap and Touch Cinema* was presented at the

\(^{185}\text{Kerner, 91-92}\)
Viennese Film Festival in November 1968 "a film director rushed onto the stage and attempted to pull off the box tied in front of the protagonist's breasts."\(^{187}\) Export is often asked about the public response to *Tap and Touch Cinema*. In 1979 Ruth Askey, who interviewed Valie Export for *High Performance Magazine*, asked Export to describe this action when it was first performed in Vienna.

*Tapp und Tast Kino* deals with erotic hypocrisy. When audiences see breasts within a dark theatre context on film, they are distanced from their sensuality or physicality. When you expose breasts openly and people can touch them publicly, everyone is ashamed. I first performed it in Vienna and it was being filmed. I wore a box over my breasts with a curtain in front of the box. Peter Weibel had a megaphone and called out "you can touch her breasts, here's your chance but you must do it here and now." It was very strange. Women with children took them away. The children wanted to touch because they're naturally curious. The fathers with children would say, "O.K., I'll do it first and then you can do it." I explained to them that the breasts were erotic symbols, seen and touched within the intimate sphere of everyday. Now they were able to touch breasts publicly. Other people could observe their hands and faces while they did so. It makes a strong statement. Society used the body to fit people into its mythology of structure by equipping them with signs of belonging to a sex, class, territory and breed. It lasted just a few minutes before there was a fight. A man wanted to destroy the box. He said it was pornographic.\(^{188}\)

In 1968 Export took *Tap and Touch Cinema* to Munich. She also performed *Actionpants: Genitalpanic* (Figure 2) for the first time in a theatre where pornographic films were being screened. With the crotch cut out of her jeans, Export went through each row offering the film-viewing public concrete and visual contact with an actual female body. In *Actionpants: Genitalpanic* Export flaunts her femininity like a weapon. She confronted the pornographic reduction of women's genitals from a passive representation to an aggressive one.

\(^{186}\)Iles, 35-36
\(^{188}\)Ruth Askey. *Interview with Valie Export: Vienna September 18, 1979*, *High Performance*, (Spring Next Page for Continuation of Footnote*
This action also exposes Export's social message and personal expression as an object in space. This action broke through the one-dimensional nature of the structure of cinema. *Actionpants: Genitalpanic* uncovered Export's ability to question the fundamental elements of film and performance. In fact, in order to deconstruct *Actionpants: Genitalpanic*, a dialogue between an active artist and inactive viewer was not only breached, it was also altered. Export, in keeping with O'Dell's theory, made her viewers both partners and participants in this cinematographic performance forming a 'Contract with the Skin.'


> I moved down each row slowly, facing people. I did not move in an erotic way. I walked down each row. The gun I carried pointed at the heads of the people in the row behind. I was afraid and had no idea what the people would do. As I moved from row to row, each row of people silently got up and left the theatre. Out of film context, it was a totally different way for them to connect with the particular erotic symbol.

At the time of this performance many Austrian men felt that a regional feminist movement was simply a group of women who were collectively anti-men. The Viennese press openly reinforced this concept. Die Presse blatantly played up the idea that being a feminist in Austria meant that you were a man-hater and against men in general. Die Presse trivialised and attempted to discredit this potentially powerful movement in Austria. The work of such

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organisations like the Tätigkeitsrat für die Befreiung der Frauen (Action Council for the Liberation of Women) was constantly questioned.\textsuperscript{191}

Those women's libbers are concerned with neither moral sentiments as such nor the social perniciousness of pornography. The fight against sexism is simply a fight against the world of men, a fight against what these women's groups see as the given fact of discrimination against the entire female sex in a society whose power structures in their opinion cement the exploitative domination of men over women.\textsuperscript{192}

\textit{Actionpants: Genitalpanic} explored the politics of behaviour. Export's study is a metaphor for socially fixed points, which surround and penetrate the cultural exploitation of women and her need to break social taboos. In this action, by revealing the actual physical site of her sex, Export confronted previous female representation, and aggressively advocated for women's rights over their own bodies. The photograph of Export in her \textit{Actionpants: Genitalpanic} (Figure 2) outfit is a powerful image of female autonomy. Her hair is wildly teased out. A pronounced triangle is cut out of her crisp new blue jeans. She is wearing a glossy black leatherette shirt, and is confidently holding a machine gun. The symbol of the gun is a fetishistic representation of power and male authority, and when a weapon is placed directly into the hands of a woman it takes on new meaning. In this action Export was able to introduce direct political challenges to the abstract objectification of the female body as a fetish.\textsuperscript{193} The reason that Export holds a weapon, her imagined penis, was not only to emphasise a general social mood in Europe during the late 1960s, but also to represent Austrian feminism's political dissatisfaction. In her dual role as the assassin/artist Export is the

\textsuperscript{190} Schimmel, 266
\textsuperscript{191} Frevert, 273-274
\textsuperscript{192} Arbeitsgruppe Frauenmaul, Ich hab' Dir keinen Rosengarten versprochen ... Das Bild der Frau in vier österreichischen Tageszeitungen - eine Dokumentation (Vienna: Frischfleisch und Löwenmaul, 1978): 104-105
castrating mother figure, and as such she is attempting to battle Austrian cultural restrictions. However, in the role of the glitzy revolutionary Export is also seen here as a dangerous and sexually threatening female who defies letting Austria continue on its path of post-war disillusionment. After Export performed *Actionpants: Genitalpanic* in Munich a rumour developed that she had actually fired off her gun. Export was intrigued by this kind of public hearsay, and in response she made a series of posters of herself in 1969 with her *Actionpants: Genitalpanic* get up (Figure 3). In the poster Export is shown recreating the first action by wearing the same glam revolutionary get-up and posing with a semiautomatic gun. This image further dramatises the confrontational nature of the action, and the extent of her psychological experimentation with symbols and behaviour. Images of Export dressed up as militant artist would also anticipate extensive press coverage of a group of radicals known as the Baader-Meinhof gang, a band of leftist extremists from West Germany that organised an underground urban guerrilla movement. They claimed that they were fighting fascism, imperialism and capitalist exploitation. In 1970 the Red Army Fraction (RAF) raided banks, murdered, kidnapped and bombed the streets of Germany and Italy before the police captured several of their members.

Valie Export, in the role of the beautiful and dazzling artist/extremist, also anticipates images of Kathleen Cleaver, a member of the Black Panthers, (Figure 34) or Angela

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196 Becker, 1

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Davis$^{198}$ (Figure 35), a militant activist who gained an international reputation during her imprisonment and trial on weapons charges in 1970-72. The *Actionpants: Genitalpanic* poster also has an uncanny resemblance to later video surveillance stills of the radical debutante Patty Hearst (1974) (Figure 35). (Hearst was photographed during a hold-up of a bank carrying a submachine gun in the persona of Tania for the SLA).$^{199}$

In *From the Centre* (1976), Lucy Lippard wrote that, "men can use beautiful, sexy women as neutral objects or surfaces, but when women use their own faces and bodies, they are immediately accused of narcissism."$^{200}$ A recurring theme in feminist art and theory is the myth of narcissism, which seems to be part of the narrative of female self-awareness or need for self-exploration. Since the feminist art movement of the 1970s began, feminist critics like Lippard observe that "when women use their own bodies in their art work, they are using their selves; a significant psychological factor converts these bodies or faces from object to subject."$^{201}$ However, throughout Export's artistic career, she has actively asserted the need to stop reinforcing the idea of a passive woman within Western society.$^{202}$ Her artworks were conceived as complex visualisations of psychological states and conflicts. Export's Feminist

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Kathleen Clever was married to Edridge Cleaver, a member of the Black Panthers and author involved with Malcolm X.

$^{198}$What is noteworthy is that Davis travelled to Germany in 1960, where she spent two years studying at the Frankfurt School under Theodor Adorno.

$^{199}$Stiles, 19

She was given the name Tania by members of the Symbionese Liberation Army to celebrate the Bolivian woman who had died with Ché Guevara. Hearst became a member of the very same group that took her prisoner in 1974. Two months after the kidnapping Hearst/Tania was photographed during a SLA hold-up of a San Francisco bank carrying gun.


$^{201}$Lippard, 126

Actionism is always a synthesis of aesthetic form and an exploration into the art of healing. According to Nitsch, "artistic form without abreaction would be a dangerous affair."\(^{203}\)

Performances like *Tap and Touch Cinema, Actionpants: Genitalpanic, Eros/ion* and *Hyperbole* have never been about Valie Export. Export manipulated the female body to decode its social constructs. In her artistic discourse Export's approach is to raise questions and provoke responses about pre-established gendered references. Her artwork examines the female body by destroying perception, while her body functions metaphorically by expressing textures of pain and fragments of memories.\(^{204}\) By appropriating both the objective and subjective roles, Export liberated herself and brought into question Austrian attitudes toward female servility. However, one definite theme constantly reoccurs throughout Export's work, and that is; she always returns to or alludes in some way or another to the female body, but never to her individuality.

\(^{203}\)Brus Muehl Nitsch Schwarzkogler, 20
Chapter 3

*Unsichtbare Gegner (Invisible Adversary) (1976)*
Valie Export's first full-length feature film entitled *Unsichtbare Gegner (Invisible Adversary)* (1976) was best known in Austria because of the scandal and negative public reaction it generated. The initial response to her film by the press was anything but satisfactory.

*Invisible Adversary*, a feature-length film made in 1976 on a grant from the Austrian government, horrified the authorities with its feminist position, visceral sexual imagery and negative critique of Viennese society. The filmmaker was subjected to a police investigation; the scandal has guaranteed the film a long run in Vienna.  


It begins showing a girl on a bed. She hears on her radio the announcement that Hyksos have come to occupy the land, not peacefully but with aggression. The girl wakes and doesn't know whether what she heard was true or not. She's a photographer, a video reporter and wants to make documentaries. She feels that Vienna is a kaput town and begins looking within herself wondering if she is crazy or if it is the world around her. She is unsure of reality and sees that everything is wrong. I built up this idea in the film. For example, meat is an animal killed by man, prepared by woman and then eaten by man. In the film the girl suddenly realised that animals are killed by man and she must prepare them for her friends. She takes her house pet, a bird, and kills it. Everyone thinks she is crazy, but she isn't. She's not sure if she is hallucinating or if the people around her are. At the end of the film she puts on lots of warm clothes and goes

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Andrew Horton and Stuart Y. McDougal. *Play It Again, Sam: Retakes on Remakes*. (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1998): 218
to bed. Bed acts as good medicine for the sicknesses of life and is the place for dreams.²⁰⁶

Throughout the film Anna is convinced that many of her fellow citizens have gone mad, and so, she falls into a downward spiral of psychological disintegration. Anna is certain that Hyksos,* hostile alien forces, are invading people's bodies and are responsible for Vienna's architectural decay and rising social violence. Export scatters broadcast segments throughout the film to illustrate the legitimacy of Anna's internal condition and mounting self-doubt as an artist. Some segments are as follows:

Attention population: there is well-founding suspicion of an invisible adversary, a foreign, perhaps otherworldly power ... an invisible adversary occupies the city and transforms people ... Hyksos are hardly distinguishable from real humans ... anyone could already be a Hyksos ... either he does not know it or it is already too late ... Beware of communication ... Hyksos are contagious ... You are alone ... The Hyksos recognise one another and destroy all who have not yet joined them ... The change comes about through radiation which permeates the brain of people ... Their goal is to destroy the earth through increased aggression.²⁰⁷

The film has several angry broadcast interludes about Austria's social and artistic history. They function like painful memories accentuating the importance of the after effects caused by Nazism. These lecture-like interludes probably reflect Export's personal views.²⁰⁸

Vienna's history is oblivion and deceit ... The cultural climate of the Second Republic has intensified this continuum of corruption by its banality ... How does this Second Republic honour 'Austria's Great Sons?' Mozart's rooms are now inhabited by Emperor

²⁰⁷Unsichtbare Gegner (Invisible Adversary) (1976) 16 mm feature film (112 Min.). Produced and directed by Valie Export. Screenplay by Peter Weibel with Valie Export, based on an outline by Valie Export. Translated from the subtitles in the film. To put an interesting twist on this broadcast -- alter Hyksos with Nazis.
Haile Selasse's ex-mistress . . . From 1938-45 Austria produced revoltingly dishonest films, known typically as 'Viennese films' and the elite of the Burg Theatre acted in them. After the war the same crew produced those popular rural and folklore films. The smooth transition from Nazi Austria to the Second Republic is typical of the hypocritical mentality of this country.²⁰⁹

Invisible Adversary also weaves into its schizophrenic narrative a love story that quickly disintegrates into an acrimonious relationship with her companion (played by Peter Weibel) marked by bitter arguments and periods of haunting silence. Anna, confused and trapped in a relationship with Peter is pushed to the edge of madness, establishing him in her mind as the classic emblem of female oppression.²¹⁰ Export presents the end of this relationship as a metaphorical splitting-up, or in a Freudian sense the splitting-up of a personality.²¹¹ These Invisible Adversaries produce vicious internal changes in normal Viennese people. Not even Peter is immune to the growing levels of human aggression. Export draws upon the main character's paranoid schizophrenia to reflect a series of internal juxtapositions. Because Anna is a photographer, she can see the world through a filtered reality. Export's visual language in this film reflects the disruption of cultural conventions and female individualities. In one of the film's fight sequences, Peter yells at Anna. 'What do women want?' However, he quickly comes to the conclusion that 'women are parasites.'²¹² For Anna the central question is "when is a human being a woman?"²¹³ The answer to this dilemma never seems to get resolved. Anna believes that "if you're creative in Vienna, the

²⁰⁹ *Unsichtbare Gegner (Invisible Adversary) (1976) 16-mm feature film (112 Min.). Produced and directed by Valie Export. Screenplay by Peter Weibel with Valie Export, based on an outline by Valie Export. Translated from the subtitles.
²¹¹ Mueller, 142
²¹² Mueller, 134
²¹³ Mueller, 134
police suspect you.\footnote{Unsichtbare Gegner (Invisible Adversary) (1976). 16 mm feature film (112 Min.). Produced and directed by Valie Export. Screenplay by Peter Weibel with Valie Export, based on an outline by Valie Export. Translated from the subtitles.} But, who is Anna referring to, technology or man in the generic sense? What about the role of women? The explanation to Anna's problems can be found in Export's article \textit{Das Reale und sein Double: Der Körper} (1988). Export considers Freud's famous passage in \textit{Civilization and Its Discontent} (1930) regarding the foundation for the theory of media, and its relationship to the body and technology.

In the photographic camera he has created an instrument which retains the fleeting visual impressions, just as the gramophone disc retains the equally fleeting auditory ones; both are at bottom materialisations of the power he possesses of recollection, his memory . . . Writing was in its origin the voice of an absent person; and the dwelling-house was a substitute for the mother's womb.\footnote{Sigmund Freud, \textit{Civilization and Its Discontent} (1930), The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Words of Sigmund Freud, trans. and ed. James Strachey, (London: Hogarth Press, 1960: 90-91} Export ventured to challenge socially restraining visual codes and issues, confronting misogynist gender politics around mental health, and Austrian society weaken by the aftermath of war. An important part of Export's work is the externalisation of internal psychic moods. Psychoses can be understood in many ways. Individuals suffering from schizophrenia, narcissistic disorder, manic depression or paranoia try and resist the parameters that make-up a so-called normal identity.\footnote{Michelle Boulous Walker. \textit{Philosophy and the Material Body.} (New York: Routledge, 1998):50-51} What is implied throughout this film is the fact that Anna may or may not be delusional. Anna constantly struggles with invasion fantasies involving supernatural forces, which she thinks are influencing her work, thoughts and actions. Anna is marginalized because she demonstrates classic symptoms of a mental breakdown. Her hallucinations, especially the auditory ones, are like those common in schizophrenics.\footnote{Michelle Boulous Walker. \textit{Philosophy and the Material Body.} (New York: Routledge, 1998):50-51} Export emphasised Anna's distorted thinking and perception by explicitly inserting a series of...
cues, such as abrupt audio and visual affects. Anna's intellectual capacities are constantly in doubt, revealing cognitive deficits throughout *Invisible Adversary*.

The artistic characteristics of Anna reflect the physiological and artistic interests of Export, who delves into themes such as schizophrenia or madness to formulate Anna's creative behaviour. *Invisible Adversary* suggests to the viewer partial and contradictory answers to this question. Theoretically, schizophrenics are openly hostile or violent, revealing feelings of mistrust, paranoia and helplessness. The name Anna is familiar to readers of Freud. Anna O. (whom we later discovered that was Bertha Pappenheim) was originally Josef Breuer's patient (Freud's mentor) taken over by Freud. Her case was described in *Fragment of an Analysis of a Case of Hysteria* (1905). Anna, who is responding against culturally defined roles and sites found within gender politics, also reflects on the history of Austrian women under patriarchy. Her maniacal perceptions are shown as ever-increasing states of identity confusion. The social dilemmas, which she encounters when interacting with Viennese citizens, Austrian officials and everyday objects, add to her growing anxiety as her world crumbles around her. She constantly moves between the tangible and the imagined. Throughout *Invisible Adversary* Anna's mental stability is always challenged, revealing her as both neurotic and creative. Many sequences, which have Anna placed within strange pictorial spaces, seem to represent her schizophrenic positioning. Shifts in meaning assigned to voyeurism and paranoia play an important part in the film's visual and audio composition. *Invisible Adversary* unlocks repressed assumptions while it opens feminist psychoanalytical reconsideration of a regional

female identity. The viewer is led to believe that Anna's real invisible adversaries are Viennese police officers, store owners, city officials, psychologists, and her own boyfriend. But, Anna's true invisible adversary is found within herself. She is the personification of female duality, simultaneously human/Hyksos, split/doubled, subject/object, participant/voyeur, innovative and mentally disturbed, and finally perpetrator and victim.

In *Invisible Adversary* Anna's disintegration is represented in this series of violently edited montages and ear-splitting sounds. She repeatedly moves between private and public spaces, which are represented by black and white photography mixed with colour images and video clips. Throughout the film Anna is documenting extreme moments of visual free association as a therapeutic technique to maintain her sanity. This appears in a series of cinematic cross-cuttings. A perfect example of such visual manipulation is the scene where Anna is in her kitchen chopping up food (Figure 37). The moving back and forth from Anna cutting up live animals to dead ones was meant to express her building fear and anxiety. It also reveals the paradoxical status of contemporary Austrian women.\(^{220}\) This scene parallels Anna's emotional demise, which collapses as the camera toggles from one of recognition to the realisation that nothing is real or concrete and that everything is imaginary. Export leads Anna along a trail looking for cultural imprints. Anna, who represents the flawed Austrian woman, is able to transfer her societal female frustrations into deep-seated psychological disturbances.

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\(^{219}\) Harden and McDougal, 219-221

Anna is attempting to slice through signs of provincialism through a series of jump cuts. This sequence represents a process of reversing. The mixture and probing of material and social signs were meant to reveal the invisible adversaries encoded in this film.\footnote{Frieden, 245}

**Images of the Madonna and Configurations Female Body Positions**

*Invisible Adversary* (1976) incorporated a performance/video piece called *Stille Sprache (Silent Language)* (1976) (Figure 38), which acts as a fascinating compilation of her work. But, it also examines the history of women's body language in art and life. It acts as a documentation that little has changed in women's battle for artistic control in contemporary Austria.\footnote{Frieden, 245} Export weaves in many of her early performances and photographs in *Invisible Adversary* so that they become part of the narrative. Numerous images of Madonnas, modelled after Michelangelo's Pietà, appear during *Silent Language*. However, used here; they reveal Export's preoccupation with female body doubles, schizophrenic cultural behaviour, and media technology rather than actionism. This short film within a film is about female identity and representation within traditions of Western art history. Women are shown cradling various housewifery items, exposing powerful and determined images of women, but women confined to a material and cultural economic identity.

The concept of a woman restricted to either the mind, home, appliance, job or relationships are themes that run throughout this sequence. In images such as Export's *Geburtsmadonna (Birth Madonna)* (1976) (Figure 39), *Stricken Der Madonna (Knitting Madonna)* (1976) (Figure 40) and *Madonna mit einem Vakuum (Madonna With A Vacuum)* (1976) (Figure 41) she used homemaker tools like weapons symbolising the foundation of
traditional roles in Austrian society. These images not only explored the body's cultural meaning, but they evoked women's objectification, her susceptibility to the processes of economic profit and loss. The German model of economic and industrial growth known as the Economic Miracle also hit Austria during the 1950s. Social justice and protection for the worker/consumer enabled people to fulfil their private dreams of owning a house, a car or going on vacation. The washing machine became a symbol of Austria's economic triumph. Refrigerators were crammed with consumption goods that corresponded to the wave of cultural gluttony, which glorified the homemaker as a model consumer.

Ultimately, a great deal of Export's energy was spent in search of a cultural and metaphorical language represented through these contemporary Madonnas, who held their glaring economic symbols triumphantly at their breasts. They functioned like icons of Hitler's Nazified plan to conserve an archetypal mother of the German race. Knitting Madonna, inspired by Botticelli's Madonna of the Pomegranate (Madonna and Child and six Angels) (1487) (Figure 42), divulges Export's preoccupation with the cycle of images within images. In this process of video overlaying, Export visually merges a woman's body onto a painting by Botticelli. The collage of the video-recordings in Silent Language reveals how Export used the iconography of the Madonna to express Anna's affliction. If the model Austrian woman was defined as the perfect wife and mother, then where did that leave liberal women who wanted to enjoy social independence? In Anna's continual search for herself she reveals:

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222 Harden and McDougal, 221
224 Carter, 288
225 Good, 31
It frightens me to see my latest pictures and the change in subject matter and their content. But if the subject were not there, I could not make these pictures, so they show me a change also in my environment. I feel a need to check up objectively, to see if something is changing outside, or just in me. Pictures pierce me like psychic meteors. They reflect a paranoid reality. Are the photos a defence mechanism against fear or do they produce fear? I don't want to protect myself against fear with methods associated with fear. Like a line becomes a circle.226

In the 1970s the multi-media artist Ulrike Rosenbach embarked on a similar search as Export. Both artists were looking for answers to several similar feminist questions like "what is a woman?" and "what would one discover at the beginning of history as the essence and substance of female nature?"227 Rosenbach began looking at matriarchal cultures and the cult of the Great Mother. By superimposing historical images onto herself, and then on to a video screen she transformed herself into a new image of a woman. She used her body in Glauben Sie nicht, dass ich eine Amazone bin (Don't Believe I'm an Amazon) (Figure 43), which was in a performance given at the Paris Biennale in 1975. In Don't Believe I'm an Amazon Rosenbach confronts the stereotypical image of women -- the pure Mother/Madonna with a strong Amazon woman. Rosenbach is shown shooting arrows at a target covered with photographic images of a reproduction of a Madonna and Child.228 During the performance a video of Rosenbach is superimposed on the image of the Madonna. Rosenbach becomes both the Madonna and the Amazon. Her body corrupts the view of the Madonna, disrupting the viewer's sense of voyeuristic pleasure.229

226Unsichtbare Gegner (Invisible Adversary) (1976) 16 mm feature film (112 Min.). Produced and directed by Valie Export. Screenplay by Peter Weibel with Valie Export, based on an outline by Valie Export. Translated from the subtitles in the film.
227Lewis Biggs. Art From Köln, (Liverpool: Tate Gallery Liverpool, 1989): 32
The central part of Export and Rosenbach's concept around these transformed Madonnas is the theory that the representation of women has the ability to fluctuate between the dual status of both object and subject. The unknown women in Export's *Silent Language* absorbs the identity of the Madonna and Rosenbach in *Don't Believe I'm an Amazon* mutates into a powerful image of Madonna/Amazon. They are both are emblems of female supremacy and protection. These performances become ritualised symbolic actions; simultaneously real and unreal in order to push the boundaries of well-defined and self-contained Western classifications of women. The result is a kind of interweaving of art historical information and emotional feminist issues. Therefore, throughout *Invisible Adversary* Export always leads Anna back to the question that "to be a woman entails cognisance of role-victimisation, defiance through self-expression, and ultimate self-determination through action."230 This is an open-ended question that never seems to get resolved.

229 O'Dell, 97
230 Eifler, 250
Conclusion
Conclusion:

Presently, there is renewed interest by academics in female performance artists, and attention is returning to the feminist movement of the 1970s. More specifically, a reconsideration of performance art is taking place, along with a re-examination of the range of feminist self-expression and self-determination. Export's actions have been about the relationships between Austrian politics and culture and about the transition of women from objectivity to subjectivity. Export's early association with Peter Weibel, Viennese Actionism, and her post-war background allowed for several Austrian voices to be articulated through her. Beyond this, Export's work has also been about the crisis of identity, which Austrian women faced with the after effects of Nazism and with the conservative nature of post-war Austria. Export has traced the power of female representation, and has used this power to impose social perceptions, identification and behaviour. The springboard for Export's Feminist Actionism was her body, which she used to represent the subconscious and overt struggles of Austrian women. As a result, in the 1960s and 1970s Export's artwork dealt with extravagant displays of physical endurance meant to act as an allegory for the purging of contemporary Austrian society. In contrast to that of her male colleagues, Export's work has constantly held a feminist edge, and has insisted on a separation between private and public spaces, while remaining simultaneously aggressive and aesthetically refined. To suggest the repetitious exploitation of women and to expand upon her feminist and psychological theories, Export used video, photography and documentary film in *Invisible Adversary* and the bipolarity of Anna. That is why Export, in making Feminist Actionism truly her own, was able to develop a series
of artistic stages, which involved actions without the screen, actions on the screen, and actions in front of the screen. Valie Export has emerged as one of Austria's leading filmmakers and multimedia artists since the 1960s. Furthermore, and I think most significantly, to date Export is still considered a radical female artist and prominent representative of Austria's feminist avant-garde movement. In 1995 the EA-Generali Foundation in Vienna acquired Export's entire cinematographic work. She was the first female artist to be awarded the EA-Generali Foundation Sculpture Prize in 1995. The EA-Generali Foundation also obtained two of the boxes or Mini-Movie Theatres used by Export in *Touch Cinema* (1968). They were on display during a retrospective of her work held at the Goldie Paley Gallery at the Moore College of Art and Design in Philadelphia entitled *Ob/De+Con(STRUCTION)* in 2000. Export has held visiting professorships from 1983 until 1992 at the Academy of Visual Arts in Munich, at the San Francisco Art Institute and Institute of Media Arts at San Francisco State University, the International Summer Academy in Salzburg, and the Academy of Applied Arts in Vienna. From 1989 until 1992 she had a full Professorship at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, School of Fine Arts, and from 1991 to 1995 she held the post of Professor of Visual Communication. In the winter semesters of 1994, and 1995 she was vice-chancellor of the Academy of Arts in Berlin. Since 1995 Valie Export has been a professor of multimedia and performance art at the Academy of Media Arts in Cologne.

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231 Karner, 21
232 The exhibition *Ob/De+Con(STRUCTION)* was organised by Elsa Longhauser, Director of the Galleries at Moore. The show ran from January 18 to February 27, 2000, in Philadelphia. It will be moving to the Santa Monica Museum of Art to run from 9 March - 28 April 2001.
Doris Rothauer, head of the Künstlerhaus in Vienna and a leading Austrian art critic, has accused Export of creating artworks containing "no therapeutic elements; there's no sought-after eye contact, and no self-revelation to the recipients." On the contrary, I argue that Export's actions were intended to reveal that at the core of her performances the end result was a form of artistic cathartic release as demanded by Hermann Nitsch's abreaction theory. Through Export's feminist artistic endeavours she was able to establish and secure the means of purification, thus liberating the mind through the eruption of the body at a visceral and psychological level. Art historians like Kristine Stiles, Chrissie Iles, and Roswitha Mueller who have written extensively on Export's performances have explored the many ways in which she attempted to reclaim her body. In the wake of the New Women's movement in Germany they argued that because Export is a female artist she had to use her body aggressively to free women from pre-established socialisation and cultural misconceptions. However, the rhetoric of these scholars, who trace Export's own brand of Feminist Actionism to the avant-garde performances of the Viennese Actionists, neglected to go back in time and re-examine the importance of post-war Austrian cultural influences on the artist. I perceive Export's work to be much more than a purely female artistic contribution to be aimed directly at dominant cultural social and political mores. Export's extensive search for her own distinct feminist voice meant to articulate the realities of a generation of Austrian women, a generation of women who indisputably have suffered under the narrow subservient roles espoused by Nazi doctrine, has been undeviating. The fruits of this search were a body of work containing

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provocative political statements of rebellion, which were meant to jolt the phallocultural order of things within a male-dominated Austrian art institution.

Finally, the frictions established by Export's aggressive rhetoric and her perseverance as an active feminist artist in Austria, were unquestionable part of her struggle to modernise the art community of a conservative society. Export's intensely emotional and provocative actions performed during her early artistic development have not only challenged male dominated institutions, but they have succeeded in dislodging pre-established coded images and visual texts, which, in my opinion, have historically restricted the creativity and fluidity of countless Austrian women.
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Figure 1. Valie Export, *Tapp und Tast Kino, (Tap and Touch Cinema)* (1968)  
Expanded Cinema
Figure 2. Valie Export, *Aktionshose: Genitalpanik (Actionpants: Genitalpanic)* (1969)
Photograph by Peter Hassmann
Figure 3. Valie Export, *Aktionshose: Genitalpanik (Actionpants: Genitalpanic)* Poster (1969), Photograph by Valie Export
Figure 4. Valie Export, *Eros/ion* (1970)
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Figure 6. Friederike Pezold, *The Personified Sign-Language of a Sex after the Laws of Anatomy, Geometry and Kinetics* (1973)
Figure 7. Ulricke Rosenbach, *Tanz für eine Frau, (Dance for a Woman)* (1975)
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Figure 10. Hermann Nitsch, *Asolo Raum* (1970)
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Figure 16. Valie Export, *Remote . . Remote . .* (1973), 16 mm. Film (112 min.)
Figure 17. Valie Export, *Remote . . . Remote . . .* (1973), 16 mm. Film (112 min.) Close-up of Export cutting her cuticles with an exacto blade.
Figure 18. Valie Export, *Unsichtbare Gegner (Invisible Adversaries)* (1976). The breakdown scene where Anna (played by Susanne Widl) finds a baby in the refrigerator.
Figure 19. Gustave Klimt, *Judith I* (1901)
Figure 20. Egon Schiele, *Seated Girl* (1911)
Figure 21. Oskar Kokoschka, *Die Windsbraut (Bride of the Wind)* (1914)
Figure 22. Günter Brus, *Art and Revolutions* Presented by SÖS, The University of Vienna (June 7, 1968)
Hintergründe von Erwin Alges Rücktritt (3.19)

Anklage gegen die Uni-Ferkel wurde sehr rasch erhoben

Beispielloser Skandal vor 500 Personen Freitag abend an Wiener Uni

"Wir zeigten direkte Kunst"

Exzesse in der Universität:
"Wir zeigten direkte Kunst"

Anklaage gegen die Uni-Ferkel wurde sehr rasch erhoben

Figure 23. Various Newspaper clippings about the Viennese Actionists (1968)
Figure 24. Valie Export and Peter Weibel, *Aus der Mappe der Hundigkeit (From the File of Doggishness)* (1969)
Figure 25. Yves Klein, *Performance of Anthropometries of the Blue Period*, Paris (March 9, 1960)
Figure 26. Gina Pane, *Autoportrait(s), Transfert* (1973) Stadler Gallery, Paris January 1973)
Figure 27. Gina Pane, *Autoportrait(s), Le Corps* (1973) Stadler Gallery, Paris (January 1973)
Figure 28. Gina Pane, *Autoportrait(s), Rejection* (1973) Stadler Gallery, Paris (January 1973)
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Various Scenes.
Figure 38. Valie Export, Stille Sprache (Silent Language) from Unsichtbare Gegner (Invisible Adversaries) (1976)

Figure 39. Valie Export, Geburtsmadonna (Birth Madonna) (1976)
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Figure 40 Valie Export, Stricken Der Madonna (Knitting Madonna) (1976)
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