

# "The Gesture"

MACEDONIAN MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART

"The Gesture: A Visual Library in Progress" is a Greek-Italian production whose ultimate aim is the establishment of a library to make video works accessible to a broader public. Organized by curators Marina Fokidis, Sergio Rinaldi, and Daphne Vitali, it traveled to the Quarter-Centro Produzione Arte, Florence (where Rinaldi is artistic director). The pivotal interest in this project lies in the gesture and the gesturing body as it has been explored in video and photography from the '60s to the present, with a focus on performance, action, and bodily experience that underline social, political, identity, and gender issues and activism. "The Gesture" is a work in progress, hence no claim to comprehensiveness can be assumed. Nonetheless, there were unexpected omissions at Thessaloniki, ranging from such pioneers as Nam June Paik and his Fluxus colleagues to Rebecca Horn.

Such reservations aside, this was a loose yet intelligible grouping of works by artists of different generations, displayed to bring out connections and differences across time. For instance, Ana Mendieta's *Body Tracks*, 1974, was loosely aligned with *Satisfaction*, 1994, by Elke Krystufek, followed by *Up to and including her limits*, 1976, by Carolee Schneemann, and then, further on, back in time to Valie Export's *Body Type*, 1970, showing changes in approach to the female body and gender issues. With Mendieta and Schneemann, it became clear how women artists challenged cultural conditioning and attempted to legitimize their bodies on their own terms; how issues of privacy and intimacy were trespassed as artists like Krystufek transformed the way female identity and sexuality are addressed; and then, as a reminder, how literal, basic, and almost primitive the gestures of certain artists were in the early days, as with Export.