

Simone Forti

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This high-intensity presentation of Simone Forti's multifaceted work established a dialogue between different creative moments and expressive typologies in the oeuvre of this extraordinary Italian-American artist, choreographer, dancer, and writer. Beginning in the 1960s under the inspiration of her then mentor, Anna Halprin, Forti was among the pioneers of artistic investigations based on an awareness of the body as a medium for movement, an identification with elementary phenomena of sound and rhythm, and the potential for expressive freedom offered by unconventional actions. The broader context for Forti's work is currently on view at the Museum of Modern Art in New York in the exhibition "Judson Dance Theater: The Work Is Never Done," but Italy, too, provided a stage for Forti's early efforts. In 1968, she spent more than a year in Italy and presented her "Dance Constructions," 1960–61, at Fabio Sargentini's Galleria L'Attico in Rome. She also frequently visited the city's zoo, seeking to re-create with her own body the movements and behaviors of certain animals.

Simone Forti, *Flag in the water*, 2014, digital video, color, sound, 19 minutes 46 seconds.



This exhibition in Milan—a version of one previously held at The Box in Los Angeles—was built around three recent video works that show Forti relating directly to various natural and cultural phenomena. In *Zuma News*, 2014, she works her way slowly along a sunny beach near the water's edge, moving through the seaweed and the surf with a stack of newspapers; we sense a merging of the rhythms of her body, the ocean, and even that of the decomposition of the newsprint as it becomes wet and washes up on the shore. In *Flag in the water*, 2014, Forti gradually immerses two flags (one with stars, the other with stripes) in a fast-flowing river. The flags were displayed in the show as autonomous works, titled *Flag (Stars)* and *Flag (Stripes)*, dates unknown, as if in an attempt to deconstruct and demythologize one of the key symbols of American identity. In *A Free Consultation*, 2016, meanwhile, Forti's movements take place on the snowy bank of a lake as she almost affectionately holds an old portable radio to her ear.

These works have surprising emotional density, thanks to the way visual, acoustic, and narrative components merge in the artist's search for correspondences between body, world, and action. In the press release, Forti says: "There is no intended message, but rather an invitation to let your body have its own ideas and thoughts." The show presents a vision of human existence continually suspended in a precarious balance, a dialectic between nature and culture, instinct and conventions, freedom and system. Other significant works in the exhibition, such as *Fly*, 1969; *News Animation: Mad Brook Farm*, 1986; *Past/Future*, 2012; and drawings from the series "Rubbings," 2015, suggested that this unstable equilibrium has always been the substance of Forti's art.

—Francesca Pola

Translated from Italian by Marguerite Shore.