

New York Exhibition

## Suzy Lake

PERFORMANCE OF PROTEST

Nov 19, 2019 – Jan 18, 2020

Opening:

Tuesday, Nov 19, 6 – 8 p.m.



Suzy Lake, *Imitations of the Self (Study #2)*, 1973-2012, Edition of 10 (2 PPs), Archival inkjet print, 16

Arsenal Contemporary Art is pleased to present Suzy Lake's first solo exhibition in New York. *Performance of Protest* follows Lake's five-decade spanning career, capturing her continued investigation of her own image as a means to probe and resist constructions of gender, identity and beauty. Beginning in the late 60s, Lake began documenting herself while dealing with the issues that were pressing at the time, such as the female body's relation to larger social forces, which she continues to tackle with wry scrutiny. The burden of performance, wavering from the idealized to the incapacitated body, has become her major concern, with various strategies insisting on its flexibility.

The exhibition focuses on the current of resistance that connects some of Lake's best known series. In many cases, this act of protest arrives by ways of the artist's deft understanding yet brilliant "misuse" of photography, other times resistance is suggested in the confrontation between the viewer and Lake's own body. In the 1976 series, *Choreographed Puppets*, for example, Lake is suspended, maneuvered by persons controlling chords tethered to her limbs. The counteractive force between the artist's body and those who manipulate her movements is mirrored by the inherent tension of the artist restricted by her own performative volition. Similarly, in *Imitations of a Self* (1973), Lake performs for her camera, applying a thick layer of makeup beginning with white face, a reference to the facial tabula-rasa of mimes. The title of the work and the act it represents beckons the question of which

version of the artist is being emulated and, as such, where to locate a genuine self within an image-rich world.

Forged in Detroit during the civil rights movement of the late 1960s and moving to Canada during the wave of anti-Vietnam draft dodging, Lake's career is steeped in the image production and politics of her North American context. Her real-world acts of protests, such as her engagement with the civil rights efforts, is picked up thematically in the evocation of power in her work. In *Pre-Resolution* (1984), the artist tackles the confinement of the photograph's arena, breaking through this figurative stage with a sledgehammer. This textural sensitivity to production (and destruction) speaks to the artist's dedication to research, tallying and measuring the world based on her physical engagement with it. Memory and tactility are forefront in the varied representations of the artist as a complex subject in these shifting contexts.

**Suzy Lake** is based in Toronto, Canada. Exhibitions of her work have included: *WACK! Art and Feminist Revolution 1965 – 1980*, LACMA, Los Angeles 2010-13; *Traffic: Conceptual Art in Canada 1965-1980*, the Art Gallery of Alberta, 2010-13; *The Pictures Generation*, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, and, *Wish You Were Here: The Buffalo Avantgarde in the 1970s*, Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, New York, 2012. In 2014, the Art Gallery of Ontario (AGO) presented *Introducing Suzy Lake*, a large-scale retrospective exhibition and major publication. Still touring, Lake is part of *The Feminist Avant-garde of the 1970s: Works from the SAMMLUNG VERBUND*, Vienna, curated by Gabriele Schor, which opened in 2010 at the Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Moderna, Rome, Italy. In 2016, Lake was awarded a Governor General's Award in Visual and Media Arts and was the winner of the Scotiabank Photography Award which included a solo exhibition at the Ryerson Imaging Centre and a publication by Steidl. Her work is represented in the collections of numerous institutions including The Metropolitan Museum of Art, USA; the Albright-Knox Art Gallery, USA; the National Gallery of Canada; the Art Gallery of Ontario; and, the Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal.

Information:

Loreta Lamargese

Curator

+1 212 658 0017

llamargese@arsenalcontemporary.com

www.arsenalcontemporary.com