

MoMA EXHIBITS SELECTIONS FROM RECENTLY ACQUIRED SHUNK-KENDER PHOTOGRAPHY COLLECTION FEATURING AVANT-GARDE MOVEMENTS OF THE 1960s AND 1970s

Art on Camera: Photographs by Shunk-Kender, 1960–1971

May 17–October 4, 2015

The Robert and Joyce Menschel Photography Gallery, third floor

Press Preview: Thursday, May 14, 2015, 9:30–11:30 a.m.

NEW YORK, April 22, 2015—Following the recent acquisition of more than 600 works from the Shunk-Kender Photography Collection, The Museum of Modern Art presents ***Art on Camera: Photographs by Shunk-Kender, 1960–1971***, on view from May 17 through October 4, 2015. The photographers Harry Shunk (German, 1924–2006) and János Kender (Hungarian, 1937–2009) worked together under the name Shunk-Kender from the late 1950s to the early 1970s, based first in Paris and then in New York. Shunk-Kender photographed artworks, events, and landmark exhibitions of avant-garde movements of the era, from Nouveau Réalisme to Earth art. They also produced portraits of and collaborations with artists. *Art on Camera: Photographs by Shunk-Kender, 1960–1971* is organized by Lucy Gallun, Assistant Curator, Department of Photography.

The exhibition features approximately 25 works, comprising more than 200 individual photographs, selected from the Shunk-Kender Photography Collection, which recently entered MoMA's collection as part of a major donation from the Roy Lichtenstein Foundation to an international consortium of five institutions. *Art on Camera* begins in Paris in 1960, with Yves Klein's *Leap into the Void (Saut dans le vide)*, a work that is widely known through the photomontage created by Shunk-Kender. The exhibition then shifts focus to New York; it includes their documentation of Yayoi Kusama's astonishing Happenings of the late 1960s, and selections from *Pier 18*, a project for which Shunk-Kender photographed works by 27 artists. The resulting pictures capture the chaotic energy, playful wit, and systematic processes of the era's performance and Conceptual art in two-dimensional black and white. The roles played by the duo varied from one project to the next. In some cases, Shunk-Kender worked as documentarians, photographing Happenings and performances; in other instances they were collaborators, acting alongside other artists to realize works of art through photography.

Yves Klein

Yves Klein's landmark work *Leap into the Void* (1960) was published as a photomontage in his specially issued newspaper *Dimanche—Le Journal d'un seul jour* on November 27, 1960, and distributed throughout Paris. In the image, Klein daringly leaps from the roof of a building in

Fontenay-aux-Roses, a residential area south of Paris, with a single cyclist passing by on the street below him. In fact, to construct this image, Klein enlisted Shunk-Kender, who shot multiple photographs that day. They worked alongside a team of Klein's friends—fellow judo practitioners—and his wife, who together held taut a large tarp for him to fall onto. The photographers then created the montage *Leap into the Void* (*Saut dans le vide*), in which Klein's airborne body was laid atop an everyday street photo taken at the same site.

Yayoi Kusama

Yayoi Kusama staged numerous elaborate performances in New York in 1968, including ecstatic gatherings of costumed, painted, and nude bodies that were held within her mirrored chambers. In these images, Kusama can be seen in various fantastically patterned garments as she paints multicolored polka dots on the nude bodies of performers, including the legendary downtown artist Jack Smith, among others. Shunk-Kender's photographs range from straightforward documentation of the scene to more expressionistic images, in which bodies are captured mid-motion, the glow-in-the-dark dots on their skin radiant in the darkness.

Shunk-Kender also captured the proceedings of multiple iterations of *The Anatomic Explosion* (1968), during which Kusama organized a group of dancers to strip and pose in front of the New York Stock Exchange and other Wall Street locations in an unconventional artistic protest against the Vietnam War. In some photographs, Kusama and her collaborators can be seen burning documents or applying her signature polka dots to the bare skin of performers. The manifesto-like announcement that Kusama distributed at the events included the phrases "Obliterate Wall Street men with polka dots," and "Stock is for burning!" In other photographs, the dancers unfurled a large banner reading "Self-obliteration" in front of a statue of George Washington.

Pier 18

In February and March 1971, a series of artworks were executed at a derelict Hudson River pier in New York. Conceived and organized by independent curator and cofounder of *Avalanche* magazine Willoughby Sharp, the actions, instructions, and performances of *Pier 18* were enacted by 27 artists, including Vito Acconci, John Baldessari, Dan Graham, Robert Morris, and many others. No spectators were present, save the artists themselves, various collaborators, and Shunk-Kender. Sharp invited Shunk-Kender to collaborate with the artists to photograph their individual projects. From the start, it was understood that Shunk-Kender's photographs would be the physical manifestation of the work to be experienced by an audience. Realizing the work as multiple seven-by-ten-inch prints would allow for quick and straightforward dissemination. Although Sharp envisioned the project as a way to present and distribute the art without participating in the usual system of galleries and museums, an exhibition was planned for Pomona College Art Gallery in Claremont, California—though it did not take place as the photographs were not printed in time.

Later that year, MoMA curator Kynaston McShine saw the prints in Shunk-Kender's Westbeth studio, and they were presented that summer as MoMA's *Projects: Pier 18*—the second exhibition in the Museum's experimental Projects series.

This exhibition presents selections from *Pier 18*, including individual prints hung in rows (similar to how they were displayed at MoMA in 1971), along with smaller prints mounted by Shunk-Kender, enabling multiple photographs of one work to be brought together on a single 20x26" board.

SPONSORSHIP:

The exhibition is supported by the MoMA Annual Exhibition Fund.

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Press Contact: Sara Beth Walsh, (212) 708-9747 or sarabeth_walsh@moma.org

For downloadable high-resolution images, register at [MoMA.org/press](https://www.moma.org/press).

Public Information:

The Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53 Street, New York, NY 10019, (212) 708-9400, [MoMA.org](https://www.moma.org). Hours: Saturday through Thursday, 10:30 a.m.–5:30 p.m. Friday, 10:30 a.m.–8:00 p.m. Museum Admission: \$25 adults; \$18 seniors, 65 years and over with I.D.; \$14 full-time students with current I.D. Free, members and children 16 and under. (Includes admittance to Museum galleries and film programs). Free admission during Uniqlo Free Friday Nights: Fridays, 4:00 p.m.–8:00 p.m. [MoMA.org](https://www.moma.org): No service charge for tickets ordered on [MoMA.org](https://www.moma.org). Tickets purchased online may be printed out and presented at the Museum without waiting in line. (Includes admittance to Museum galleries and film programs). Film and After Hours Program Admission: \$12 adults; \$10 seniors, 65 years and over with I.D.; \$8 full-time students with current I.D. The price of an After Hours Program Admission ticket may be applied toward the price of a Museum admission ticket or MoMA Membership within 30 days.