

The Museum of Modern Art

MoMA ANNOUNCES *TAKING BACK OUR SPACE*, A MULTIPART EXPLORATION OF THE POLITICS OF SPACE AND GENDER DYNAMICS THROUGH THE PHOTOGRAPHIC LENS

The Exhibition Will Feature a Groundbreaking Feminist Work by Late German Artist Marianne Wex Alongside Works by Seven Contemporary Artists

New York, NY, September 4, 2025—The Museum of Modern Art announces ***Taking Back Our Space: Photographic Perspectives***, presenting eight artists who use the photographic medium to explore the relationship between bodies and space from intersectional feminist perspectives. On view from September 20, 2026, to Spring 2027, in the second-floor Paul J. Sachs Galleries, this exhibition brings Marianne Wex's 1977 feminist photographic project *Let's Take Back Our Space: 'Female' and 'Male' Body Language as a Result of Patriarchal Structures*, which MoMA acquired in its entirety in 2018, into dialogue with recent works by seven contemporary artists: Nona Faustine, Martine Gutierrez, K8 Hardy, Yuki Kihara, Joiri Minaya, Paulina Olowska, and Wendy Red Star. Each of these works is on view at MoMA for the first time. *Taking Back Our Space* is organized by Roxana Marcoci, Acting Chief Curator of Photography and the David Dechman Senior Curator, with Caitlin Ryan, Assistant Curator, Department of Photography.

Born in 1937 in Hamburg, Germany, Marianne Wex studied and taught at the Hamburg Hochschule für bildende Künste (College of Fine Arts), originally turning to photography as a way to document her painting practice. From 1972 to 1977, Wex photographed the bodily postures of women and men on the streets of Hamburg, paying close attention to the specific positions of their arms, legs, feet, hands, and heads. She rephotographed advertisements, fashion magazines, newspapers, studio portraits, pornography, film and television stills, and a world history catalogue of figurative sculpture. Influenced by the era's defining feminist activism and efforts toward collective consciousness-raising, Wex separated these images by gender and organized them into categories such as "Standing Arms," "Seated Legs," and "Possessive Holds," revealing how women and men had been socialized to inhabit space differently. To create *Let's Take Back Our Space: 'Female' and 'Male' Body Language as a Result of Patriarchal Structures*, Wex mounted thousands of gelatin silver prints and accompanying textual analysis onto nearly 250 boards, which she arranged into sequences that reflect the long impact of patriarchy on bodily expression in the West.

"Wex's pedagogical survey of gendered body language in everyday life is exceptional on several counts: it combines the history of social documentary, street photography, with the typologies of Conceptual art and the anti-relational potential of photomontage; it brings classical sculpture into dialogue with contemporary life to expose gender norms

perceptible in the everyday; and it is an epic visual archive, a feminist version of such art-historical touchstones of cataloging and typology as Aby Warburg's *Mnemosyne Atlas*. Its project of identifying and unlearning prejudicial forms is as relevant as ever in the 21st century" said Marcoci.

The gallery space will also contain works, all from MoMA's collection, by contemporary artists who consider the intersections of race and gender beyond the binary. Within this context, the artist's notion of "taking back space" engages crucial questions of sovereignty and decolonization, resonating both as a reclamation of physical territory and the ability to represent oneself.

In the self-portrait *They Tagged the Land with Trophies and Institutions from Their Rapes and Conquests, Tweed Courthouse, NYC* (2013), the artist Nona Faustine, nude except for a pair of white heels—a reference to the oppressive legacy of white authority and the history of racism—pushes against a marble column of the Tweed Courthouse in downtown Manhattan, a late-19th-century building just a few steps away from the African Burial Ground Monument, where a massive colonial-era gravesite was discovered in the 1990s.

Editor-in-chief, photographer, and model are just some of the roles Martine Gutierrez adopts across the publication *Indigenous Woman* (2018). As a creative director of this art book-turned-magazine, she crafted advertising campaigns, moving across photographic genres and expanding notions of gender and race across its pages. In addition to copies of the magazine, a print of Gutierrez's *Body en Thrall, p 120 from Indigenous Woman* will be on view for the first time.

K8 Hardy, one of the founders of the feminist, queer art collective and journal *LTTR*, will be represented by her *Position Series* (2007–12/2017), which features the artist in various states of self-transformation, creating an inventory of positions that restages gender identity as fundamentally fluid, plural, trans, and activist.

In her *Divergences* (2020–22), Joi Minaya digitally collages photographs of women removing bodysuits in stereotypical tropical prints, what the artist calls the "iconic patterns of a commodified aesthetic," against a patterned wallpaper backdrop. The models seem to resist and escape the way the suits encase the body, referencing histories of formerly enslaved people escaping to freedom in areas of dense nature.

Three works from Yuki Kihara's body of work *Paradise Camp* (2020) offer a visually striking reclamation of the Polynesian settings appropriated by 19th-century painter Paul Gauguin. The work, which features nonbinary models—Indigenous Samoan *fa'afafine*—exposes colonial histories and blurs Westernized conceptions of prescribed gender.

Collages from *Body Movement – Alphabet Studies* (2007), by Paulina Olowska, overlay found photographs of people with ink and paint washes to suggest the shape of letters, drawing a conceptual line between the performativity of the body and of language. Such interventions reinscribe neglected histories into the public landscape, reclaiming space beyond the simply physical.

Wendy Red Star's Accession series (2019) layers illustrations of Native objects commissioned for the collection of the Denver Art Museum in the 1930s and contemporary photographs that she took at the Crow Nation's annual Crow Fair, one of the largest events organized by and for Indigenous North Americans. Pairing institutionally made drawings with contemporary images of Native cultural expression, the collages reclaim the archive as a space where intergenerational forms of memory, knowledge, and ritual can be sustained.

Mutually inflecting one another, these works offer a new critical lens through which to reimagine Wex's watershed installation. The exhibition will be accompanied by an artist-centric, lushly illustrated volume edited by Marcoci and Ryan. Featuring a never-before-published interview with Wex, who passed away in 2020, by Roxana Marcoci and Madeline Weisburg, the publication also includes brand new conversations between each contemporary artist and a scholar or curator, including Kaitlin Booher, Sophie Cavoulacos, Stuart Comer, Nisa Mackie, Joseph Pierce, Caitlin Ryan, and Lanka Tattersall, whose interview with Faustine took place prior to the artist's premature passing in 2025.

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PRESS CONTACTS:

Jack Spielsinger, jack_spielsinger@moma.org

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