

visual arts preview

When art has no limits

CAROLEE SCHNEEMANN

by Elizabeth Licata

When—as we hope they do—the Albright-Knox is able to boost their funds to purchase contemporary art, some work by this renowned artist would be a good choice. Carolee Schneemann stands as a powerful, visceral presence at the juncture of media and performance art, and as a seminal figure in art that addresses sexuality, gender, and global politics.

With *Remains to Be Seen*, CEPA Gallery presents twenty years of Schneemann's work, including films, photographs, sculpture, video, mixed media, and documentation of such legendary performances as *Up To and Including Her Limits*.

Significantly, *Remains to Be Seen*, which opens March 31, remains on view at CEPA through May 26. That gives us plenty of time to see this once-in-a-lifetime exhibition and we should take advantage of it.

I've seen a sampling of Schneemann's most famous works, including *Fuses*, *Meat Joy*, *Vulva Morphia* and *Up To and*

Including Her Limits. They are unforgettable for several reasons. The first thing you will notice in any Schneemann work is the artist herself, often naked, obscured by abraded filmstock in *Fuses*, ritualistically performing amidst raw animal entrails in *Meat Joy*, and using her body to create her own version of the action painting in *Up To and Including Her Limits*. Beautiful, mesmerizing, and fiercely intense, Schneemann has been called a contemporary high priestess who rejoices in her sexuality and the power of the erotic, but also mourns the death of love as represented by war and man's meaningless brutality. Art-

ists numbered among Schneemann's like-minded contemporaries include Alan Kaprow, Stan Brakhage, Claes Oldenburg, Charlotte Moorman, and Michael McClure.

Unlike the work of other artists she has undoubtedly influenced—Karen Finley, the Guerilla Girls, and Valie Export, among others—one rarely notices distance, irony, or much humor in Schneemann's art; her work may be audacious, even shocking to some, but it is always an instinctive extension of her own persona, one that does—often—test all her limits, physical and psychological.

Infinity Kisses
(2004).



INFECTED DISTRICT

IN SPITE OF DECADES OF TALK, THE PLANS FOR REVITALIZING BUFFALO'S WATERFRONT ARE STILL MOSTLY ON THE DRAWING TABLE, but one area where the intrepid can see progress is in the Inner Harbor area, where the Erie Canal Commercial Slip is slowly being uncovered. You can see the original canal, long hidden, if you peer through the chain link fencing that surrounds this historic site.

The (literally) buried and

otherwise obscured history of Buffalo's waterfront is one focus of an unusual collaboration between Hallwalls artist-in-residence Mark Street and two local collectives.



Street is a Brooklyn-based filmmaker who has been researching the Inner Harbor and Cobblestone district for some time, including its unsavory and ill-documented reputation as a

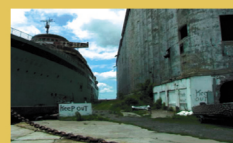
place of illicit activities, when it was called the Infected District (think *Gangs of New York* lite). He's also interested in more recent history and in what current Buffalo residents think about it now.

The Real Dream Cabaret steps into this as part of the cast and crew who will help Street realize his multimedia project, along with musical improvisers Open Music Ensemble.

See the results of this intriguing residency project for yourself at Hallwalls on

April 13, 8 p.m. Visit www.hallwalls.org for details.

—Elizabeth Licata





This is what contemporary art is about: testing our own limits, challenging our own perceptions, stepping outside of the comfortable and the expected. I can think of no artist who better personifies and promotes those essential purposes of art than Carolee Schneemann.

Remains To Be Seen is divided into three sections—War, Erotics, and Felines—and features Schneemann's most well known works, including *Interior Scroll*, *Vulva's Morphia*, *Fuses*, and *Meat Joy*. The section on cats will include large-format photographs and the recently completed film *Infinity Kisses*. The war pieces will include video and photo grids spanning 1964-2006 that directly address Vietnam, Kosovo, Lebanon, and the events of 9/11.

Additionally, CEPA's Public Art Window on Main Street will present *Vesper's Pool*,

Oil Paths
(1990).



Meat Joy
(1964).



a display of mystical objects that center on the death of Schneemann's cat, Vesper.

Ices Trip Train
(1972).

A companion exhibition titled *Broken Borders* is on view at the Museum of Contemporary Canadian Art in Toronto through April 30. It includes three recent large-scale, multi-channel video installations.

A catalog, *Split Decision*, produced in partnership with the Museum of Contemporary Canadian Art, encompassing the two exhibits, will also be available. The publication includes essays by art critic Thomas McEvilley, Canadian art writer Jim Drobnick, and Buffalo-based media artist Caroline Koebel.

Après

Elizabeth Licata
is editor of *Buffalo Spree*.

Viet Flakes
(1965).

