

Carolee Schneemann

SAMUEL DORSKY MUSEUM OF ART

State University of New York at New Paltz, 1 Hawk Drive,
February 26–July 25



Carolee Schneemann, *Up To and Including Her Limits*, 1973–76, crayon on paper, rope, harness, two-channel video transferred to digital video, Super 8 film and projector, dimensions variable. Installation view, Samuel Dorsky Museum of Art, 2010.

“Within and Beyond the Premises,” the current retrospective of New York artist Carolee Schneemann’s work, is a secret history of modern art. Schneemann worked in the city and upstate during the apex of Abstract Expressionism and early Conceptual, performance, and feminist art. Each is referenced here, but Schneemann’s singular, embodied consciousness is what shines through most of all in these intimate and idiosyncratic pictures and installations. Curator Brian Wallace has managed to condense a rich and varied career into four thematic categories—research, ecstasy, furies, and dwelling—that illuminate the inextricable relationships between an object and its process of creation, as well as the artist and her environment.

Although “Within and Beyond the Premises” emphasizes projects made during the 1960s and ’70s, more recent work such as 2001’s *Terminal Velocity* underscores Schneemann’s ability to subtly modulate scale and repetition in order to investigate human tragedy both global and pedestrian; at the other extreme, *Vesper’s Pool*, 2000, in chronicling the death of a cat and its aftermath, extends the intimacy and psychic intensity of Schneemann’s early portraits and box sculptures. The latter installation feels at once mythically transhistoric and obscenely private. Such is the character of much of the work in this fifty-year survey—always thoughtful but never afraid to explore domains beyond the merely rational. Little on display here yields to cursory viewing: At their best, the pieces reveal themselves through the careful, quiet consideration so suited to the exhibition’s New Paltz setting. As a result, “Within and Beyond the Premises” compels—and rewards—deep immersion.

— Ian Bourland