

**CENTRE 7
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fondation suisse pour la culture

prohelvetia



**CATHY JOSEFOWITZ
*THE THINKING BODY***

exhibition from November 28, 2021 to January 30, 2022

PRESS PREVIEW

FRI 26.11.2021 10:00 - 13:00

OPENING

SAT 27.11.2021 17:00 - 21:00

Contact:

Centre culturel suisse. Paris
Léopoldine Turbat
lturbat@ccs-paris.com
T +33 (0) 1 88 21 04 21

curators: Claire Hoffmann & Elise Lammer

ccs-paris.com
prohelvetia.ch

Centre culturel suisse. Paris 32-38 rue des Francs-Bourgeois 75003 Paris T +33 (0) 1 42 71 95 70
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Cathy Josefowitz

The Thinking Body, the largest retrospective to date of the work of Cathy Josefowitz (1956–2014), showcases the entire range of her artistic output, in which paintings and drawings enter into a dialogue with choreography. Her whole life long, she never ceased to deconstruct the hierarchy between the dramatic and the visual arts and, thanks to works whose dimensions and expression reflect the range and the impact of her own body, her oeuvre personifies a reconciliation of two media often treated as disparate in art history. The body—in motion and in relation to other bodies—constitutes the core of her work.

Having departed this life in Geneva, in 2014, Cathy Josefowitz leaves a legacy comprising more than 3'000 works of art spanning a period of over forty years. While Josefowitz's work was rarely exhibited during her lifetime, the cosmopolitan Swiss artist's extensive oeuvre now can be rethought in the context of current discourses: it resonates strangely in light of the present resurgence in Europe and the rest of the western world of questions of identity pertaining to the body, its self-expression, and its representation by others, as well as to the rise of a new syntax of feminist militancy.

This retrospective highlights Cathy Josefowitz's contribution to art history and contemporary dance and is an opportunity to discover an artist whose work remains still largely unknown.

The exhibition at the Centre culturel suisse is conceived by the curators Claire Hoffmann and Elise Lammer, as part of a project initiated by Elise Lammer and jointly realized and shown by the Kunsthhaus Langenthal (cur. Raffael Dörig), the Centre culturel suisse and the MACRO Roma (cur. Luca Lo Pinto), between 2021 and 2022.

With the support of the association Les Amis de Cathy Josefowitz (Geneva), the Arsenic - Centre d'art scénique contemporain (Lausanne) and La Becque | Résidence d'artistes (La Tour-de-Peilz).

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A prolific artist from a very young age, Cathy Josefowitz gained renown for an art practice revolving around inquiry into the nature of self and of the other, pursued via painting, drawing, performance, and choreography. Born in 1956 in New York, this Swiss artist never ceased to explore incarnation, at times to the point of obsession, in relation to her own physicality as well as that of others; in part in semantic terms, in her representation of the ideal, dysfunctional, invalid, effervescent, ecstatic or, quite simply, inert body; and conceptually, too, through a number of projects that denounced the violence inflicted on the bodies of marginalized members of society, particularly the women among them, and on those of animals. Cathy Josefowitz studied set design at the Théâtre National de Strasbourg before moving to Paris at the tender age of seventeen, to take a degree in visual arts at the École Nationale des Beaux-Arts. In the late 1970s, in the United States, she discovered dance, then primal theater, and later, while studying in the UK at the Dartington College of Arts, the contact improvisation and anatomical release dance techniques pioneered by her avant-garde peers Steve Paxton and Mary Fulkerson, respectively. Her own research into the interrelation of the choreography of movement and the painterly gesture attained ultimate polish at the School for New Dance Development in Amsterdam, where she took a course in choreography from 1987 on.

The exhibition features Cathy Josefowitz' main groups of works, from all periods of her life: her very first drawings with surrealist undertones; sketches of stage design; a series of puppets; the key figurative paintings of the 1970s depicting marginalized bodies, hybrid beings, and scenes of friendship, love, and interspecies relations; a large series of pastels from her notebooks; and works created during her stay in Italy. A selection of videos of her choreographies create the link between her experimental dance practice and painting. The series of *Ciels* (Skies), and *Prières* (Prayers) from the 1990s and 2000s show the more abstract and colorist side of her work towards the end of her life.

The exhibition also occasions a new performative work by the Swiss-American artist Garrett Nelson (*1982). In their research into Josefowitz's work as a dancer and painter, Nelson explores the experimental dance context as well as a form of painting that "is embodied." Their performance, presented at the Kunsthhaus Langenthal, at the Centre culturel suisse. Paris and at the Arsenic – Centre d'art scénique contemporain, Lausanne, was produced in collaboration with La Becque | Artist Residency, La Tour-de-Peilz.

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Press release



Biography

Cathy Josefowitz was born in 1956 in New York. At the age of 16 she entered the Théâtre National de Strasbourg to study stage design. She settled there with Romain Denis, grandson of the painter Maurice Denis and an artist in his own right. She abandoned her studies before the end of the first year and moved to Paris, to attend the École Nationale des Beaux-Arts. She helped Romain Denis with the set design for Ariane Mnouchkine's *Molière*, but preferred to spend time alone and paint. Her first works were large expressionist and figurative paintings on kraft paper. In the United States she discovered dance and *Primal Theatre*, a technique focused on improvisation and the search for raw, primitive, and subconscious emotions.

In 1979, at the age of 23, she went to England to study dance at the Dartington College of Arts in Devon. There she met two great minds in experimental contemporary dance: Steve Paxton, who co-founded the Judson Dance Theater with Trisha Brown in New York in the 1960s and invented the dance practice of *Contact Improvisation*; and Mary Fulkerson, a founder of the *Anatomical Release Technique*. Both would greatly influence her work. Cathy Josefowitz graduated with a degree in performing arts in 1983, with the choreographic composition *Fiesta Graduata*, created in collaboration with another student, Mara de Wit. Highly acclaimed by the judges, the two of them went on to create, that same year, in Wales, the dance and theatre company *Research and Navigation*.

Closely involved in the feminist milieu and the gay and lesbian liberation movement, Cathy Josefowitz lived in a romantic relationship with a woman, Susan, from 1983 to 1987. She composed and sang militant songs with dancing friends under the group name *Lining Time*. Then in 1987, she went to study choreography in Amsterdam, at the School for New Dance Development (SNDD).

In 1988, she married the writer Beppe Sebaste and moved to Italy. Their son Pierre was born in July, 1991. In the early 1990s, she devoted herself to painting and worked on several series on the themes of animals, transportation, and dance. It was also during this period that she began her first monochromes inspired by the nature and landscapes of California, especially Ojai, where she had stayed in 1990.

In 1997, she met the painter Colin Paul Mey and began living with him in Paris. Ever more tied to the body and gestures, her painting practice developed towards very large formats on the ground. From 1998 to 2000, she made *Prayers*, a series of abstract and geometric works inspired by the colour and light of her travels in Egypt.

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In 2004, Cathy Josefowitz and her son moved to Geneva, where she continued to paint. She created black and white monochromes, smaller format works that mixed abstraction and the figurative, as well as collages of various subjects, in an artistic inquiry that revisited themes from her past paintings.

Over several months in 2008, she and Colin Paul Mey co-created a series of paintings using their four hands. This pictorial and amorous game fused their respective painting practices with scenography. Josefowitz then returned to large-format painting, firstly with a series based on the Kama Sutra. But figuration then gradually vanished from her work, as she shifted to almost monochromatic variations.

In 2011, Cathy Josefowitz and Mara de Wit relaunched *Research and Navigation*, the company they had founded in 1983. Exploring the relationship between dance and painting, their year of work together resulted in the video *Fiesta Graduata Revisited*.

Over a few months in late 2012 and 2013, Cathy Josefowitz painted many paintings on the theme of skies, in shades of grey and pink, whose scenographic composition (as paintings in movement) she worked on with Lorenzo Piqueras. Cathy Josefowitz died on June 28, 2014, in Geneva.

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Bibliography

Ludovic Delalande, Rebecca Lamarche-Vadel, Elise Lammer, *Cathy Josefowitz*, ed. Mousse, 2020

Rebecca Lamarche-Vadel, *Dance, Eat, Love*, ed. Dilecta, 2018

Steve Paxton, *Gravity*, ed. Contredanse, 2018

Mary Fulkerson, *Release* (self-published), 1978

Mary Fulkerson, *Language Axis*, ed. Department of Theatre, Dartington College of Arts, 1977

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LP edition

Artist: Lining Time collective

Title: *Strike*

Release Date: February, 25th, 2021 (reissue)

Formats: LP/Digital

Label: Shadow World

Catalogue Number: SW006 (digital) and SW006LP (LP)

Digital retail distribution: via Believe Music

Physical retail distribution: via Hot Salvation



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Garrett Nelson *Anacrónica III: The Mesmeric Sermons of the Nudists*

Saturday, November 27 - 18:00



Garrett Nelson, *Dick*, 2021, plywood, metal, driftwood, acrylic, stretch gaberdine
© Julien Gremaud / Arsenic – Centre d'art scénique contemporain

A cross-institutional collaboration, *Anacrónica III: The Mesmeric Sermons of the Nudists* is a project by the performer and researcher Garrett Nelson, inspired by the work and legacy of the late Swiss artist Cathy Josefowitz (1956–2014). Nelson was granted access to the archive of the entire oeuvre of Cathy Josefowitz, to create what can be understood as a cross-generational dialogue between two artists who work(ed) at the intersection of dance, performance, and *queer studies*.

Anacrónica III: The Mesmeric Sermons of the Nudists is the third and final piece in a trilogy of installation and performance, where Garrett Nelson shows new sculptures and paintings alongside the work of Cathy Josefowitz. Nelson's new performance, shown in the black box theater space of Centre culturel suisse, is set in a dreamlike space. It includes cave painting shadows, painted bodysuits, traditional Swiss artifacts, and two new paintings of darkroom sex scenes. It stars the Parisian dancers Marius Barthaux and Simon Peretti in a narrated choreography of lustful delusion and misplaced time, a poem about a tablecloth and a house made of mist, as well as a homage to the Italian poet Sandro Penna (1906, Perugia–1977, Rome). Largely unpublished, Penna's work comprises poetry and a few novels exploring homosexual love and sexuality. During his lifetime, his work was revealed and supported by Pier Paolo Pasolini and Umberto Saba.

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Nelson's performance concludes with *A Sailor Being Tired*, an Appalachian Ballad, which originates from near Indiana, US, where the artist was born and

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to where their ancestors immigrated. Derived from various European and African influences, including English ballads, Irish and Scottish traditional music, and African American blues, Appalachian music often evokes nostalgic memories of home and loved ones. The artist created the title of the work, *The Mesmeric Sermons of the Nudists* from a positivized inversion of a line from Albert Camus's unpretentious vignette of naked eaters in *Summer in Algiers* (1954): "...undressing every day at noon for a frugal lunch in the sun. Not that they have read the boring sermons of the nudists, those Protestants of the flesh (there is a theory of the body quite as tiresome as that of the mind)."

Garrett Nelson was invited to develop this project organized jointly by Arsenic—Contemporary performing arts center, Lausanne, Centre culturel suisse, Paris, La Becque|artist residency, La Tour-de-Peilz, and Kunsthau Langenthal, in collaboration with curator Elise Lammer and the estate of Cathy Josefowitz. The new performance and exhibition presented at Centre culturel suisse follow a one-month residency in summer 2021 at La Becque, during which Garrett Nelson had access to the Cathy Josefowitz archive in Geneva. Studio visits and exchanges with experts on Cathy Josefowitz's work and the curators additionally sustained this research. As a result, a new performance piece and sculptures by Garrett Nelson are being shown at Kunsthau Langenthal, Arsenic, and Centre culturel suisse, alongside the exhibition of Josefowitz's paintings.

Garrett Nelson makes artworks comprising performance, text, and image. Often directly related to the work of other artists, writers, architects, and activists, their practice creates dialogue, collaboration, and critical analysis, while reframing and accompanying history. They live in Argentina and Switzerland and are a PhD candidate at the Universidad Nacional Córdoba, working on the contemporary history of voice in performance art as a queer feminist strategy of taking space and creating visibility. Past exhibitions and performances of theirs have been shown at Museo de la Ciudad Mexico, Kunsthalle Zurich, Taylor Macklin, Zurich, Oslo10, Basel, Kunsthalle Basel, Centre PasquArt, Biel, SALT Galata Istanbul, Les Urbaines—Lausanne, Biennale Sinop in Istanbul, and Munar—Buenos Aires, among other venues.

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Images

Exhibition views available starting 03.12



Image 1 : Cathy Josefowitz, *La Tempête Acte I Scène I*, watercolor and gouache on paper, 73 x 102 cm, 1974. Courtesy of Les amis de Cathy Josefowitz.



Image 2 : Cathy Josefowitz, *Sans titre*, oil on cardboard, 97 x 68 cm, 1974. Courtesy of Les amis de Cathy Josefowitz.

Image 3 : Cathy Josefowitz, *Sans titre*, oil on canvas, 150 x 120 cm, 1979. Courtesy of Les amis de Cathy Josefowitz.

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Images



Image 4 : Cathy Josefowitz, *Sans titre*, oil on canvas, 120 x 150 cm, 1992. Courtesy of Les amis de Cathy Josefowitz.



Image 5 : Cathy Josefowitz, *Portrait de Romain*, charcoal, pastel and gouache on paper mounted on canvas, 158 x 98 cm, 1977. Courtesy of Les amis de Cathy Josefowitz.



Image 6 : Cathy Josefowitz, *Walking*, felt-tip pen on paper, 29 x 20 cm, 1989. Courtesy of Les amis de Cathy Josefowitz.

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Images



Image 7 : Cathy Josefowitz, *Marionnettes*, oil on cardboard, height 25 cm, ca. 1972. Courtesy of Les amis de Cathy Josefowitz.

Image 8 : Cathy Josefowitz, *Marionnettes*, oil on cardboard, height 25 cm, ca. 1975. Courtesy of Les amis de Cathy Josefowitz.

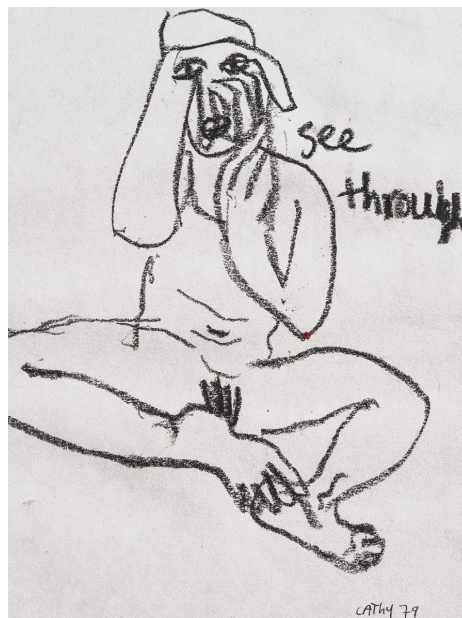


Image 9 : Cathy Josefowitz, *The Thinking Body*, oil, charcoal on paper mounted on canvas, 187 x 187 cm, 1997. Courtesy of Les amis de Cathy Josefowitz.

Image 10 : Cathy Josefowitz, *Cathy 79*, pastel on paper, 24 x 20 cm, 1979. Courtesy of Les amis de Cathy Josefowitz.

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Images



Image 11 : Cathy Josefowitz, *Par pluie ou par beau temps*, oil and paper on canvas, 189 x 191 cm, 2002. Courtesy of Les amis de Cathy Josefowitz.



Image 12 : Cathy Josefowitz, *Le poids du monde*, oil on canvas, 1999. Courtesy Les amis de Cathy Josefowitz.

Image 13 : Cathy Josefowitz, *Le Tire-bouchon*, oil on cardboard, 100 x 79 cm, 1975. Courtesy of Les amis de Cathy Josefowitz.

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Le Centre culturel suisse

The Centre culturel suisse (CCS) aims to promote contemporary Swiss artistic and cultural creation in France through its programming and to encourage exchange between the artistic scenes of the two countries. The Centre culturel suisse is part of the Swiss Arts Council Pro Helvetia.

Informations pratiques

Cathy Josefowitz, *The Thinking Body*

28.11.2021–30.01.2022

preview 26.11 10:00–13:00

opening 27.11 17:00–21:00

Performance

Garrett Nelson, *Anacrónica III: The Mesmeric Sermons of the Nudists*

Saturday, November 27 at 18:00

Art mediation

Curators tour by Claire Hoffmann and Elise Lammer, on Wednesday, January 12 at 19:00

Flash visit : a 20' tour by our art mediators Delphine Melliès, Yael Miller and Indra Berger every week-end at 4 pm

Group visit upon request to Anna Terp : accueil@ccsparis.com

Centre culturel suisse. Paris

38 rue des Francs-Bourgeois 75003 Paris

E ccs@ccsparis.com

T +33 (0)1 42 71 95 70

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Program : ccsparis.com

Contact:

Centre culturel suisse. Paris

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lturbat@ccsparis.com

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