

ON FUSES

By the early 60s, meat was everywhere. Whether limp or hard, fatty or lean, fresh or decayed, meat was becoming an increasingly visible substance that could be used to reflect and critique the hierarchies of postwar American culture. Yet whereas Pop Artists like Claes Oldenburg, Andy Warhol, and Roy Lichtenstein emphasized the iconography of meat as an exchange commodity, Carolee Schneemann utilized the meat of the body to enact alternative models of relationality that could not be conscripted within capitalism. Recognizing corporeality as the basis for a profound similitude among all beings, Schneemann used the meaty body in a variety of films and performances to represent profound relations of analogy between subjects, regardless of whether they were male or female, animal or human, or alive or dead. By foregrounding the links between differently enlashed subjects, Schneemann re-oriented the history of twentieth-century Western art towards a radical engagement with the flesh.

Moving through the two-dimensional surfaces of mid-century Abstract Expressionism as a young painter, Schneemann expanded the autobiographical mode of mark-making beyond the limits of the canvas to an engagement with the sexual politics of meat. Even before encountering poet Michael McClure's theory that all human beings were nothing more than "bags of meat,"¹ Schneemann had already begun to articulate a nascent ontology of the flesh. As the daughter of a country doctor, Schneemann witnessed the fleshy vicissitudes of living and dying bodies of an early age. She had not only grown accustomed to people coming into her house "with bloody limbs in their arms," but had been trained to wrap and tend to wounds as a child.² "There was always physically around us—leaking, spilling out of boundaries, wounded farmers with bleeding limbs, broken bones, hemorrhages, infections, bodies that were not intact. No fantasy of the sanitized body in this household..."³

1. Carolee Schneemann, in interview by Linda Mentono, "Interview with Linda Mentono," *Imaging her Erotics: Essays, Interviews, Projects*, (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2003), p. 131.

While Abstract Expressionism kept the body

proximate but safely out of reach, Schneemann foregrounded the actual meat of the body rather than just the marks that it left. As early as 1963's *Eye Body*,⁴ 36 *Transformative Actions*, Schneemann used her nude body as an extension of her painting-constructions, provocations that would continually earn her wrath, derision and degradation by the phallicentric art world.⁵ In a letter to Clayton Eshleman from 1975, Schneemann defended herself, for the umpteenth time, against implicit charges of narcissism and exhibitionism: "In your earlier letter you write about my using temporal experience 'must to a great extent hinge upon the necessity for you to show your naked body'... I do not 'show' my naked body! I AM BEING MY BODY!"⁶

Schneemann's crucial distinction between "having" vs. "being" a body grounded her use of the flesh as a vehicle for political resistance and social transformation. Though Schneemann has always identified as a painter, since the early sixties, her explorations of embodiment have frequently fused the corporeal idiom of dance with the "hand-touch sensibility"⁷ of painting in durational media like film and performance. This corporeal turn necessarily involved a shift away from the fixed, two-dimensional "frozen" image towards a sustained acknowledgment of "the thickness of vision"⁸ and the

2. Carolee Schneemann, interview by Carl Heyward, *Imaging her Erotics*, p. 202.

3. Carolee Schneemann, "Eye Body," 36 *Transformative Actions*, "Imaging her Erotics," p. 55.

4. Carolee Schneemann to Clayton Eshleman, 24 October 1975, *Correspondence Course: An Epistolary History of Carolee Schneemann and her Circle*, ed. Kristine Stiles (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), p. 261.

5. Carolee Schneemann, "Inferior Scroll," *Imaging her Erotics*, p. 159.

6. Jonathan Crary, *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1990), p. 150.

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"effervescence" of the mortal body. Art historian Amelia Jones has argued that the body art practices pioneered by Schneemann in the early sixties dramatize a "profound shift in the conception and experience of subjectivity," which posit the individual as fundamentally "intersubjective (contingent on the other) rather than complete within itself."⁸

Carolee Schneemann's work demonstrates the precarity of embodiment that links male and female, human and animal, and live and dead bodies in a thick-set consortium of the flesh. Yet while the "incomprehensible vulnerability" of flesh often functions as a radical equalizer in Schneemann's aesthetics, it does not erase differences of subjectivity. Schneemann used the meat of the body to oppose the very distinction between obscene and sacred upon which patriarchy depends.¹⁰ Schneemann perceived culture through a sensual economy of the flesh that was as attuned to the patriarchal territorialization of the body as it was to the body's ability to resist such systematic organization through erotic ritualized motion.

Through its exploration of the flesh as the "physiological source" of our "ontological kinship" with other, Schneemann's haptic, participatory aesthetics provide the basis for an ethic based upon profound empathy. As Kaja Silverman argues in *Flesh of My Flesh*, the notion that the flesh of one's own body corresponds not only to the flesh of other bodies, but to the flesh of the world from which we all emerge, has the potential to bind us together in terms of mutual identification.¹¹ "These correspondences," Silverman writes, "connect us to both ourselves and others,

promoting transformation rather than stasis, equality rather than hierarchy, and an "unfinished universality" rather than a closed order."¹² Though Schneemann's mixed-media practices strive to overcome social inequalities, they do not attempt to deny the differences that are constitutive of our individual identities. Simultaneously acknowledging the similarity and otherness of oneself and one's "others," Schneemann uses the erotic body as a vehicle to explore more expansive forms of relationality.

Schneemann's search for more intimate and egalitarian forms of relationality in art was partially inspired by the difficult experiences of collaboration she had with several male artists, including her lifelong friend, experimental filmmaker Stan Brakhage (1933–2003). Indeed, Schneemann's move towards cinema in the mid-sixties was inspired by Brakhage's own documentation of her own lovemaking with her then-partner James Tenney (1934–2006) in the late fifties. As Brakhage moved to incorporate Fuses in his own experimental domestic cinema, Schneemann and James Tenney played pivotal roles as both filmic doubles and provocative alternatives for Stan and his wife Jane. Allowing Brakhage to film them performing intimate, sexually explicit acts in *Loving* (1957) and *Cat's Cradle* (1959)—which, along with Brakhage's films *Daybreak* (1957) and *Whitey* (1957), were shot in Schneemann and Tenney's Vermont home—they explore sensual conduits through which Brakhage could explore the relationship between sex and cinema as two, intricately related forms of embodied experience.

Both *Cat's Cradle* and *Loving* fantasize a utopian sexual symbiosis of man and woman. As avant-garde film scholar P. Adams Sitney has claimed, Brakhage's fluid treatment of bodies suggests the interpenetration of male and female, creating an androgynous being out of discrete individuals.¹⁴ Nonetheless, this hermaphroditic merging was neither replicated offscreen in the film's mode of production nor in the couples' often tense interminglings. By diverting attention from intersubjective conflict towards the sumptuous rhythms of natural light, Brakhage evaded

the gendered issues that made the friendships between the couples so problematic. Though Schneemann had willingly participated in Brakhage's pursuit of his own "visualized sexual self-definition," she would come to disavow Brakhage's representation of her in both films. "Like *Cat's Cradle*," Schneemann wrote, "*Loving* was an extremely frustrating event, in which I felt repressed, witnessed, appreciated but constrained."¹⁵

Disatisfied with Brakhage's representation of her subjectivity, Carolee Schneemann set to work on *Fuses*, an erotic film essay of her and Tenney's lovemaking that she shot and edited between 1964 and 1967. Schneemann was explicit about her decision to make the film as a reaction against Brakhage's misrepresentation of her own sexuality, as well as his appropriation of the female experience of childbearing in his classic film *Window*. *Walter Baby Moving* (1959),¹⁶ "I wanted to see, 'the fuck,'" she writes, "lovemaking's erotic blinding core apart from maternity/paternity."¹⁷ In its explicit documentation of sexuality unbound by phallicentric conventions, *Fuses* explores the sensual pleasures of inter-subjective interpenetration that could be activated within an egalitarian, heterosexual relationship. In doing so, the film posits a utopian alternative to the types of frozen, idealized forms of gender and sexuality explored by Brakhage in his representations of hetero-relationality.

The first film Schneemann made after inheriting the seventeenth-century farmhouse in which she still lives and works, *Fuses* is evidence of the kind of expansiveness that a female artist can perhaps only articulate in a room of her own. Though Schneemann has referred to it as a "genital landscape film"¹⁸—presumably because the way in which it juxtaposes unabashed images of penises and vaginas against vistas of the body and natural environment—*Fuses* "exporates the perception of distance necessary for the

15. Carolee Schneemann to Robert Heiler, 23 October 1977, Correspondence Course, p. 287.

16. *Ibid.*

17. Schneemann, "It Is Raining" (2003), in Stan Brakhage: Filmmaker, ed. David E. James (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2005), p. 83.

18. Carolee Schneemann to Wolf Vostell, 22 January 1965, Correspondence Course, p. 95.

7. Sally Bones, *Greenwich Village 1963: Avant-Garde Performance and the Effervescent Body* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993), pp. 192, 194.

8. Amelia Jones, *Body Art/Performing the Subject* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), p. 10.

9. Carolee Schneemann to Naomi Levinson, 29 May 1959, Correspondence Course, p. 41.

10. Carolee Schneemann, in "Interview with Carl Heywood," *Imaging Her Erotics*, pp. 196–207. Originally published in *Art Papers* 17, no. 1 (January/February 1993), pp. 9–16.

11. Kaja Silverman, *Flesh of My Flesh* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), p. 34.

12. *Ibid.*, p. 26.

13. *Ibid.*, p. 2.

14. P. Adams Sitney, *Visionary Film: The American Avant-Garde, 1943–2000* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 143, 159.

RIGHT / COUNTER / *Fuses*, 1964–1967

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contemplation of landscape. An ever-shifting kaleidoscope of color, texture, light, and flesh, *Fuses* immerses the spectator within erotic ecstasy. Treating the camera as a mobile, tactile participant in the action, the profilers not just on image, but on experience of sensuous abandonment: The bodies of Schneemann and Tenney writhe and commingle amongst washes of hand-painted crimson and indigo while fireworks of scratches and dots explode upon the celluloid. Gliding over breast, abdomen, and thigh, the camera caresses the lovers' bodies, thrusting in and out of their fusion. Painted, collaged, scratched, dyed, baked, stomped, and dipped in acid, the skin of the celluloid bristles and bursts with the affective contagion of desire. Genitals burst in and out of focus so proximate to the camera that we can almost feel the pulsing contractions of labia and scrotum. Fingers disappear in orifices and eyes roll back in pleasure; bodies pound each other so vigorously that the frame is itself upended by their force.

Though we are submerged in the film's "skins" of color,¹⁹ *Fuses'* celebration of egalitarian, non-reproductive sexually liberates its performers from the carl's cradle of patriarchy and its domestic entrapment of women. Binary oppositions dissolve as warm and cool colors merge in the frame. As in Robert Raushenbergs sculptural "Combines" from the mid-fifties, fragments of the everyday world about in the film's dense collage, but their effect defies static construction. Seasons change as incandescent fields of autumn flowers give way to banks of snow; a body once scored by bikini tan lines is draped with Christmasinsel. Under the veil of Schneemann's brush, the meat of the flesh becomes lustrous and deliquescent. Stained with color, and sparkling with flickering light, bodies transcend their boundaries, disintegrate, fuse into each other. Hands briefly glimpsed on a steering wheel resume rhythmic stroke of the hips and fur of two "pusses"—human and feline. A tree inflamed at dusk bursts into an ironic image of Schneemann's "burning" bush. The film's parallel montage relishes such ylfictions, but it also reminds us of the continuum between body and world.

19. Annelia Jones, "Screen erotisms: exploring female desire in the work of Carolee Schneemann and Pipilotti Rist," *Screen/Space: The Projected Image in Contemporary Art*, ed. Tomara Todd (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011), p. 129.

Transixed by the film's exploration of the gestalt of sexuality, we are nonetheless blinded by its occluded visions. Images of bodies "writhing underneath" the "rippling contours" of the film's skin appear before being submerged again in dark waves of pigment.²⁰ If we can barely distinguish between male, female and feline flesh before the constantly ogitized frame metamorphoses again, it is because the film chooses sensual immersion over scopopic mastery. Too densely collaged to run through the laboratory's printer when first completed,²¹ *Fuses'* stunning palimpsest documents sex from the inside of pleasure.

Recurring images of light streaming through a window, changing foliage, and tangled sheets situate sexuality simultaneously in the realm of domesticity and the natural world. Yet rather than fetishizing domesticity, Schneemann incorporated typically "feminine" labors into her process, in such a way that evidences—more authentically than the visual tropes in *Carl's Cradle*—the way in which the formal strategies employed by female artists coincide with other forms of experimentation practiced in a home studio.

Formally astonishing as these aesthetic effects are, however, their power derives from the "pervasive intensity of the interchange" between Schneemann and Tenney;²² Working next to each other in adjoining studios—the practicing lives, Ruggles, Webers and Schoenberg on the piano while she was "shredding an image source to produce an incremental visual gestalt"²³—Schneemann and Tenney influenced each other to challenge the limits of the media in which they worked. As a painter, "working with space as if it is time," Schneemann found through her close collaboration with Tenney a way of musically rendering the space between bodies in the durational media of film. *Fuses* is a "painfully, tactile translation" of bodily sensation that is "edited as a music of frames."²³

20. *Ibid.*

21. Carolee Schneemann, in "Interview with Katie Haug," *Imaging her Erotics*, p. 43.

131 Carolee Schneemann, email message to the author, July 20, 2012.

22. *Ibid.*

23. Schneemann, in "Interview with Katie Haug," *Imaging her Erotics*, p. 43.

CHOCOLATE / *Fuses*, 1964–1967

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Schneemann employed equivalence as a guiding principle of her editing, which she used to constantly challenge viewer's "unconscious attitudes" about the ontological distinction between the sexes: "I edited sequences so that whenever you were looking at the male genital it would dissolve into the female and vice versa."²⁴ Gene Youngblood observes that this deliberate "fragmentation not only prevents narrative continuity," but "also closely approximates the actual experience of sex in which the body of one's partner becomes fragmented into tactile zones and exaggerated mental images."²⁵

Defying the taboo against full frontal male sexuality, Schneemann's camera lurches ample attention on her partner's genitals, which are studied in close-up, from multiple angles, and in various states of excitation. At times hard, slick, and red, at other times tentative, pink, and probing, the curved shaft of Tenney's penis in shifting states of tumescence serve as the film's punch line, even as these images are matched by Tenney's rapturous exploration of Schneemann's own body. Schneemann's unabashed fascination with her partner's shape-shifting genitals—which traditionally could be shown only if they were "placed within an idealized mythology"²⁶—shattered the taboo, even in avant-garde cinema, of showing explicit, upclose images of the aroused male genitals.

Yet images of the male genitals are hardly the only stand-out in Schneemann's palimpsest of bodies and sexual acts. One particularly striking image is a close-up of Schneemann's face as she performs oral sex on Tenney. Made in the same period as Andy Warhol's notoriously withheld such an explicit image in *Blow Job* (1964), this female-authored shot is historically unprecedented. Not only were blow jobs never represented in what porn scholar Linda Williams has described as "the belated coming of age" of American film (1896–1963), but before *Deep Throat* (1972) accorded "mainstream public recognition" to fellatio, it had often been regarded, along with other non-procreative sexual acts, as abnormal, perverse or even legally punishable sexual behavior.²⁷

24. *Ibid.*, p. 33.
 25. Gene Youngblood, *Expanded Cinema* (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co.), p. 119.
 26. Carolee Schneemann, "The Labanon Series," *Imaging her Erotics*, p. 193.

Debuting five years before *Deep Throat*, Schneemann's depiction of oral sex is all the more remarkable because unlike a pornographic blockbuster created by a male entrepreneur, *Fuses* is a feminist self-portrait. Although the feminist anti-porn movement did not coalesce until the 1970s, *Fuses* was completed just as feminist discontent with pornography was beginning to surface aboveground. Although it would be ten years before Robin Morgan coined the controversial motto,

"Pornography is the theory, rape is the practice,"²⁸ the protests against the 1968 Miss American Pageant, often regarded as inaugurating the feminist anti-porn crusade, were only a year away.²⁹ By the end of the sixties, certain radical feminists were already articulating their fear that the sexual desires and pleasures of straight women might be a form of false consciousness that emerged from the conditions of "compulsory heterosexuality"³⁰ within patriarchy. As these fears increased in response to the explosion of hard-core pornography in the early seventies, feminists often critiqued fellatio as an inherently submissive form of sexual behavior.

What did it mean in this context for Carolee Schneemann to offer a portrait of herself performing fellatio on her lover? Schneemann writes: "There were no aspects of lovemaking which I would avoid [...] As a partner I had never accepted the visual and tactile taboos concerning specific parts of the body."³¹ Unlike the well-choreographed, often grotesque facial acrobatics of *Deep Throat*, Schneemann's face suggests a euphoric, unself-conscious sense of erotic abandonment. As in the parallel shots of Tenney performing cunnilingus on Schneemann as her body

27. Linda Williams argues that although "fellatio was certainly not invented by the generation of the seventies," it was nonetheless not a sex act that had much public recognition before this decade. Linda Williams, *Screening Sex* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008), p. 137.
 28. Alice Echols, *Daring to Be Bad: Radical Feminism in America 1967–1975* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), pp. 92–101.
 29. Adrienne Rich, *Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence* (Amalepe, CA: Amalepe Publications, 1982).
 30. Carolee Schneemann, "Notes on Fuses," *Imaging her Erotics*, p. 45.

thrashes in pleasure, moments of awkward discomposure accentuate the image's authenticity. Unlike hard-core pornography, this encounter has not been choreographed for "maximum visibility."³² Beautiful as Schneemann is, she is not framed "to-be-looked-at."³³ On the contrary, her pleasure breaks the frame. One cannot speak of submission or objectification when lovers have so fully and generously dissolved the boundaries between themselves.

In spite of the film's egalitarian mode of production, historic screenings of *Fuses* often elicited hostile responses. Though Schneemann showed the film as work in progress as early as 1965 and 1966,³⁴ it was more regularly screened in its entirety in 1968, 1969 and the early seventies. When *Fuses* showed at the "Dialectics of Liberation" conference in London in 1968, Schneemann was yanked out of the projection booth and informed that she would not be defended in the (likely) case of immorally charges.³⁵ When the film showed at Cannes, "a great commotion erupted in front of the screen. French men were ripping up the seats with razor blades and screaming because it was not truly pornographic. It wasn't satisfying the predictable erotic, phallic sequences they wanted."³⁶

For in her move away from Backhous's insistence on procreation towards the representation of "fucking" as a sensual, but non-reproductive interpenetration of bodies, Schneemann queered heterosexual sex. For Schneemann, the fuck was not the wham and bam of hard-core porn, but a utopic commingling in which eros merged with ethos. Though Schneemann's emphasis on the word "fuck" 31. Williams, *Hard Core: Pleasure, Power, and the 'Frenzy of the Visible'* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), pp. 48–49.
 32. Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," *Screen* 16, no. 9 (Autumn 1975), 11.
 33. Schneemann, in "Interview with Kate Haug," *Imaging her Erotics*, p. 23.
 34. James M. Harding, *Cutting Performances: College Events, Feminist Artists, and the American Avant-Garde* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2010), p. 134.
 35. Carolee Schneemann, in interview by Aviva Rahmani, "On Carotship: Interview with Aviva Rahmani," *Imaging her Erotics*, p. 211, originally published in *M/E/A/N/I/N/G Journal* (1989), 3–7.

served as a way of "eroticizing" her "guilty culture,"³⁷ using the word was also, as poet Michael McClure writes, a method of opening up (the self, the body, the other, and the community) to acts. "The fuck," Schneemann writes, "was inseparable from an intimacy, an erotic generosity."³⁸ Fucking was a way of shattering the limitations of the corporeal and political body, in order to move beyond the psychological and spiritual paralysis of the subject within hegemonic culture.

Fuses' intensely tropic representation of sexually positions viewers to see and not see the sex act. Rather than looking down at the "doings of beasts," Schneemann joined them, presenting her vision of herself fucking through the imagined eyebody of her car Kitch, who "watches with complete unrestrained interest."³⁹ "We are perceived through the eyes of our car. By visualizing the car's point of view, I was able to present our coupled images in the context of the rectangles and the seasons surrounding us."⁴⁰ But if *Fuses* aspires to represent the car's corporeal apprehension of the sex act—through small touch, hearing, movement and imperfect sight—it also partially obscures the human's. Human vision is, after all, not equivalent with what is visible. Although *Fuses* relies on the visual realm to evidence the pleasures of lovemaking, it derives its intensity from the tactile. As Laura Marks has argued about haptic cinema, Schneemann's tactile camera yields to the body of the thing seen, dissolving the boundaries of the seer.⁴¹ Although certain hard-core images of the "fuck" remain recognizable, the closer the camera gets to the erotic encounter, the less visible the specific mechanisms of sex become. Filmed by lovers with no intervention by an outside cameraperson,⁴² the camera becomes a body whose "eye" goes in and out of focus.

36. Schneemann, in "Interview with Linda Montana," *Imaging her Erotics*, p. 133.
 37. Schneemann, in "Interview with Kate Haug," *Imaging her Erotics*, p. 26.
 38. Schneemann, "Notes on Fuses," *Imaging her Erotics*, p. 45.
 39. Laura U. Marks, *The Skin of the Film: Intercultural Cinema, Embodiment, and the Senses* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000), p. 132.
 40. Schneemann, in "Interview with Kate Haug," *Imaging her Erotics*, p. 42.

Alternately handheld or affixed to a swinging chandelier, the camera bears chaotic witness to the frenzied motion of the lovers' bodies.

Actively participating rather than passively observing the action, the camera frequently obfuscates the sight of the observer, whose own eye is never permitted to sight the body as its target. Just as Schneemann is not an artist who shows her body, Fuses is not a film that shows sex but rather a "lover's discourse," in which "description" has been "replaced by its simulation."⁴¹ Rather than visual surveillance of the sex act, Fuses mimics what Roland Barthes has described as the lover's experience of engulfment and succumbing in which the body's gesture is "caught in action and not contemplated in repose."⁴² Gene Youngblood was quick to recognize the "fluid oceanic quality" and sense of boundlessness created by Schneemann's corporeal expansion of cinema: "She's filming her consciousness, not her orifices. Fuses moves beyond the bed to embrace the universe in oceanic orgasm."⁴³

That succumbing to such ecstatic engulfment—as participant/spectator—should involve a degree of immersive blindness is consistent with Schneemann's desire to delve into "lovenmaking's erotic blinding core."⁴⁴ It is also consistent with philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty's notion of the "invisible" as a form of phenomenological apprehension that is situated inside the visible. In love's blinding core, which is always also an abyss, corporeal sensation overweighs the subject's ability to organize the sensory richness of being into recognizable chunks of information. Schneemann's blinding fuck refuses the artificial parceling of subjectivity into the binary opposition between body and mind. As McClure writes, "I would rather fuck with my meat body than have intercourse and watch it with my mind—or pretend that my mind-doll looks down on a divisible body. I will not amputate myself into pieces that store at one another and snicker."⁴⁵

41. Roland Barthes, *A Lover's Discourse*; Fogmets, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Hill & Wang, 1978), p. 3.
 42. *Ibid.*, pp. 10–12, 4.
 43. Youngblood, *Expanded Cinema*, p. 121.
 44. Schneemann, "It's Faining," p. 83, emphasis added.
 45. Michael McClure, "Phi Epsilon Kappa," *Meat Science Essays* (San Francisco: City Lights, 1963), p. 20.

If Fuses moves to satisfy the spectator/lover's "craving to be engulfed,"⁴⁶ then it does so at the deliberate expense of Western paradigms of vision and Cartesian accounts of subjectivity. Refusing the visual mastery implied by Renaissance perspective, as well as hard-core's fetishistic insistence on maximum visibility, Fuses approaches the optical blindness of sexuality as an exquisite "crisis of engulfment."⁴⁷

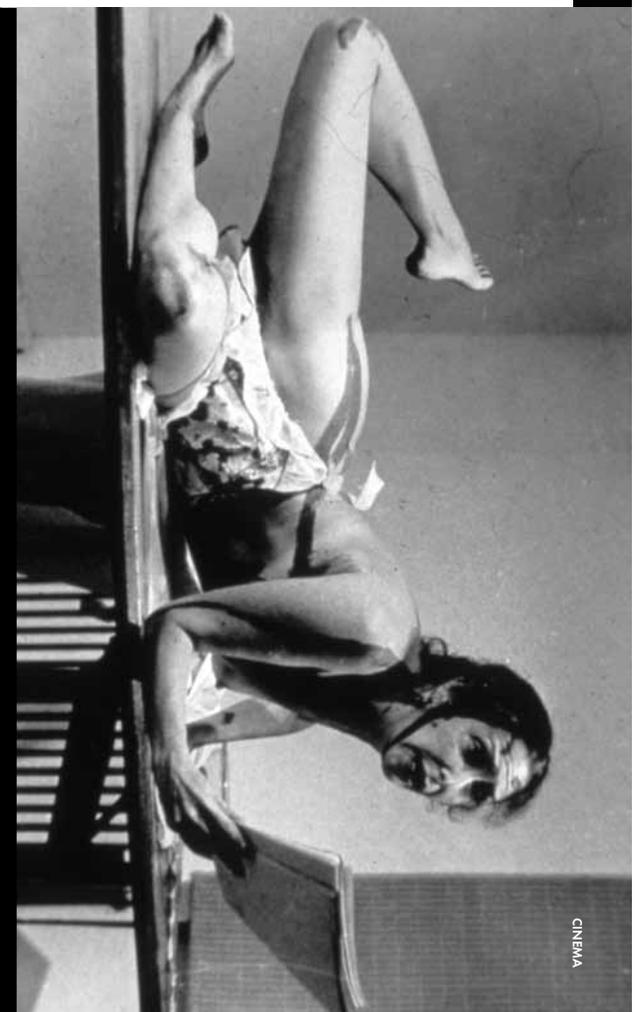
Yet homologous as it might be with other types of mammalian flesh, the meat of the human body could never be isolated from its role as a signifier of sex and gender within a patriarchal culture. Meat was hardly neutral. Contemporaneous with Schneemann and McClure's use of the word "meat," another, powerful connotation of the word insisted upon its genitality.

By the time Schneemann performed *Interior Scroll*—first in 1975 for a mostly female audience in the "Women Here and Now" festival in East Hampton, New York and then again in 1977 at the Telluride Film Festival in Colorado⁴⁸—the "meat shots" of stag films—close ups of nude genitals in the act of penetration—had been replaced by the "money shot" that began to dominate hard-core moving image pornography after the success of Gerard Dominiano's 1972 film *Deep Throat*.⁴⁹ These suddenly obligatory shots of male ejaculation "assumed the narrative function of signaling the climax of a genital event" by offering visual proof of male orgasm. Yet as Williams argues, "this new visibility" of "the hydraulics of male ejaculation," serves to disguise and distort knowledge of female pleasure, whose in-visible specificity elides hard-core's insistence on visual clarity.⁵⁰

46. Barthes, p. 10.
 47. *Ibid.*, p. 11.
 48. Schneemann, "Interior Scroll," *Imaging Her Erotics*, p. 155.
 49. In *Hard Core*, Williams argues that the fetishistic inclusion of shots of the ejaculating penis in hard-core pornography (known as "money shot") is a compensatory device for the stubborn "invisibility" of female sexual pleasure. In earlier forms of moving image pornography, like stag films, "meat shots" (shots of genital penetration) were considered adequate evidence of genital activity; Williams, *Hard Core*, pp. 58–92, 9–119.
 50. *Ibid.*, pp. 93–94.

Interior Scroll, 1975

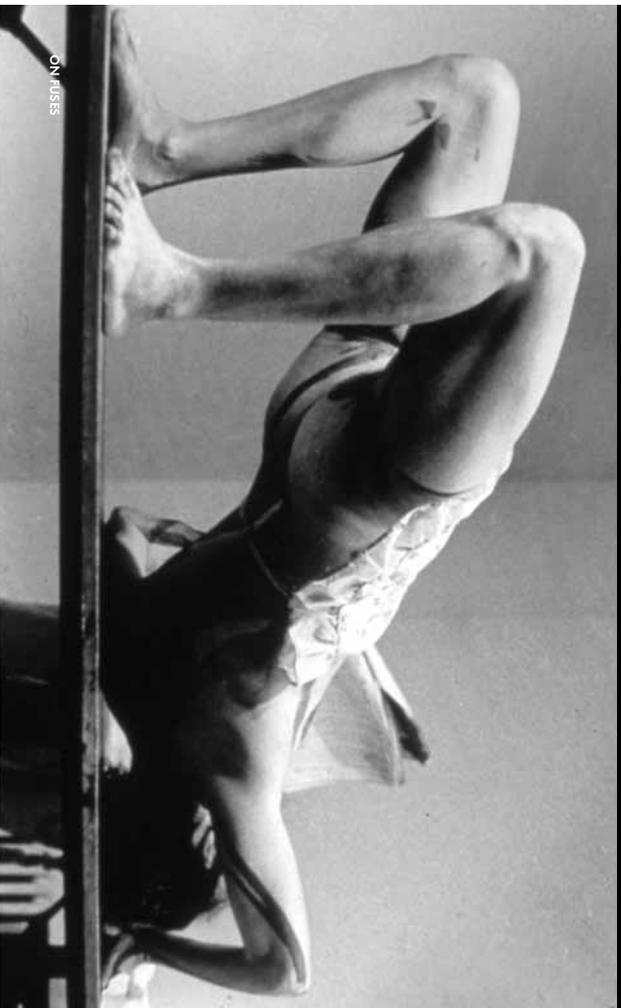
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Schneemann's orchestration of meat pushed against pornography's articulations of genital meaning. Deploying the word "meat" to designate the entire flesh of the body, instead of just the female genitals, Schneemann challenged the instrumentalization of the female body—as both meat and money—by patriarchy. In *Interior Scroll*, first performed three years after the legal debut of hardcore, feature-length American pornography and its concomitant replacement of "meat" with "money," Schneemann posed naked on a stage, with her body pointed in quick stripes, as she pulled a long thin coil of paper from her vagina and unrolled it to read a narrative to the audience.

Foretelling the critique of patriarchal film language in Laura Mulvey's influential essay "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema"—also from 1975—Schneemann changed her audience to "PAY ATTENTION TO CRITICAL AND PRACTICAL FILM LANGUAGE, IT EXISTS FOR AND IN ONLY/ ONE GENDER." Yet rather than dismantle the phallogocentric, fetishistic grammar of cinema through the patriarchal language of psychoanalysis, as Mulvey had done, Schneemann returned to the "meat systems" of the body. Recognizing how the transformation of food through the body's digestive system parallels the journey of each individual towards finitude, Schneemann's loquacious vulva proposed a cinema concerned instead with "DIET AND DIGESTION." There is "die in diei," she declared, reminding her audience that meaning lies within, rather than beyond, our mortality. Distinguishing her work from the metaphorical tendencies of other experimental filmmakers of the time, Schneemann asserts, "you are back to metaphors/ and meanings/ my work has no meaning beyond/ the logic of its systems."⁵¹

Assailing the Cartesian distinction between body and mind with its bold assertion of genital thought, *Interior Scroll* not only insists that there can be no mind without meat, but that meat is mind itself. Etching the vulva as a deep, invisible space, Schneemann transformed the "occluded interior of the female body"⁵² into a "translucent chamber"⁵³ capable of producing its own discourse. Daring to make the unseen meat of the genitals think and

speck, Schneemann rejected the dismissal of the female artist as "sculptress" or "film-makers" while nonetheless insisting on the specificity of female bodies. In this way, *Interior Scroll* "confronts" and "dismantles the convention of the genital being 'obscene'" by finding a mode of representation that makes the invisible legible. In doing so, it dramatizes "an ethic about knowledge itself—received from and in the body."⁵⁴

Carolee Schneemann's performances and films from the 1960s and 70s offer a magnificently generous fusion of self and other, spectator and performer, male and female, eye and body, and skin and film. Becoming "in"-visible in the meat joys of these works, we give ourselves over to the oceanic feeling of radical connectiveness that can challenge the Western fiction of an impenetrable, sovereign ego and the social divisions it supports. As we do, the boundaries between our bodies melt away, allowing us to transcend our own "brog of meat" and merge with the flesh of the world.

Excerpt from text originally published in *Ano Osterweil, Flesh Cinema: The corporeal turn in American avant-garde film* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2014). Republished by permission.

51. Schneemann, "Interior Scroll," *Imaging Her Erotics*, p. 159.
52. Jones, *Body Art*, p. 3.
53. Schneemann, "Interior Scroll," *Imaging Her Erotics*, p. 153.

54. *Ibid.*, p. 154.

Interior Scroll, 1975
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