

Stephanie Hopf

## **THE PERFORMED SELF**

### **Gender in Performance Art with special focus on**

### **VALIE EXPORT**

The focus of my presentation is on gender in performance art and how gender stereotypes are challenged and deconstructed in the works of the Austrian artist VALIE EXPORT. The artist works with feminism and the concept of gender politics to challenge gender stereotypes and to refer to the question of how a woman's role in society was/is determined. She does this by using her own body as a communicative tool and perceiving it as occupying an intermediate position between self-realization and external determination by society. Furthermore, the artist engages in 'American' discourse on specific issues and appropriates those for the Austrian context. Similar to U.S. performance artists, such as Yoko Ono, Martha Rosler, Barbara Kruger and Cindy Sherman, the body is always at the center of debates within EXPORT'S works – the body of how it is mediated, conceived, sensed and torn apart. The body as an object in a phallogocentric society where women only exist as constructs of the male gaze. A society that is, with all its norms and regulations, created and collected by a male predominance. VALIE EXPORT uses specific strategies, such as metaphor, citation and mimesis as well as parody, to deconstruct gender norms inherent in our society. Hereby, two phenomena are considered most important: human fragmentation and the body as material and canvas, in other words, as communicative tool.

First, the paper discusses performance art in general, the important difference between performance and performativity and also tries to give a short overview of the development of performance art from Black Mountain College, Happening and Fluxus to Body Art and Feminist Actionism. The second part of the thesis discusses selected works by VALIE EXPORT, and connects and embeds the artist in an 'American' context.

**Stephanie Hopf:** Since 2005, I am a student of English and Media Studies at the University of Vienna. After having spent a semester in Copenhagen, Denmark, via the ERASMUS program, I took part in an excursion to the United States in collaboration with Bradley University, Peoria last summer. I graduated in Media Studies in May 2011 and I am currently working on my diploma thesis in English Studies.