

2 SEP- CHANNELLING: BODY 20 DEC ← IMAGE → 2025 VIEWER



EDUCATION GUIDE





Ketty La Rocca, *le mie parole e tu?*, 1975

This guide serves as a supplement to the exhibition *Channeling: body ← Image → viewer* and includes information about the works on view, questions for looking and discussion, activities, and suggested readings. You may learn more about educational programs at MoCP [here](#). To schedule a tour of the exhibition or print viewing with your class, please visit our [website](#).

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INTRODUCTION

This exhibition features work by eleven artists who work in photography, video, performance, and installation. Each artist communicates through and with the body, using different modes of communication to “channel” life experience, while questioning how lived experience can be represented and understood through artworks. Through simple movements often performed for an audience or the camera—like crawling, lying, climbing, kneeling, pointing, running, walking backward—the artists explore experimental modes of communication and release. Their gestures also draw attention to our senses of touch, sight, and sound, to directly engage the viewer’s body in the exhibition experience.

ARTISTS FEATURED

LAURA AGUILAR

PIA ARKE

EJ HILL

SUSAN HILLER

KETTY LA ROCCA

SHARI ROTHFARB MEKONEN

GUSTAV METZGER

PAULO NAZARETH

ANNA OPPERMANN

GINA PANE

BRIDGET SMITH

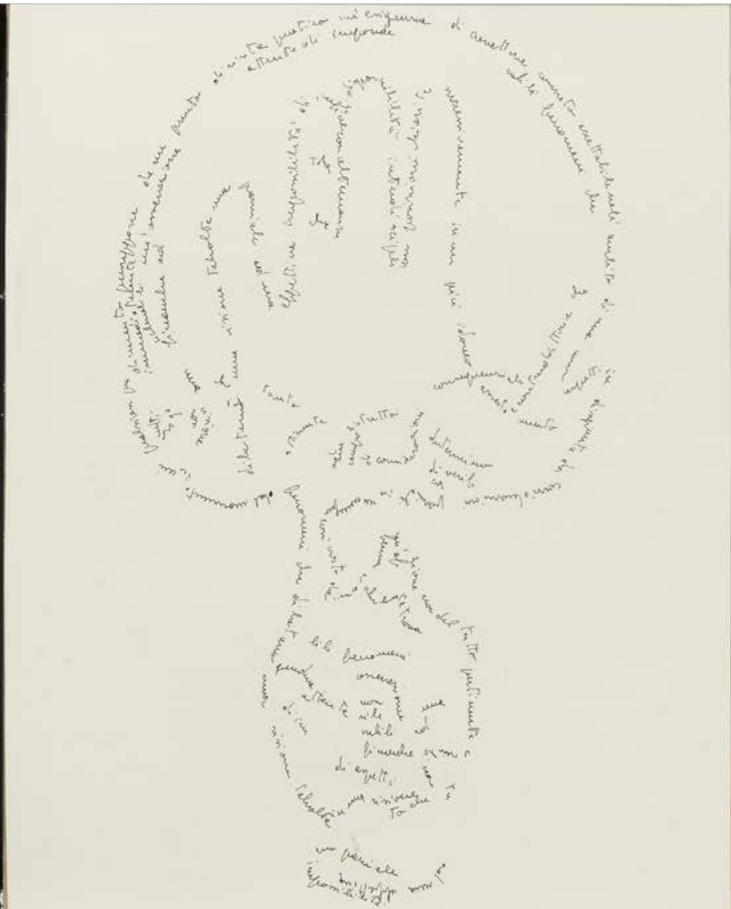


Shari Rothfarb Mekonen, *Ocean Avenue* (still), 1999, 16mm film

KEY THEME

Embodying and Releasing Trauma

Many artists in *Channeling: body* ← *Image* → *viewer* explore the body as both a site of lived experience and a vessel that carries the weight of trauma and oppression. Importantly, these artists also emphasize the body's capacity to transcend pain through gesture, movement, and expression.



EXHIBITION HIGHLIGHT

Ketty La Rocca

(Italian, 1938–1976)

Before becoming a visual artist, Ketty La Rocca was a poet, and themes of language remained central to her visual practice. In this work, she overlays an X-ray image of her skull with photographs of her hands, evoking the visual vocabulary of sign language. Through this gesture, La Rocca questions how spoken language can dominate and even obscure the expressive power of the body—and especially women’s bodies. The merging of her hands with the X-ray of her skull also alludes to her personal experience with illness and imagery from her cancer diagnosis.



Questions for Looking and Discussion:

- La Rocca used a wide range of materials in her work, including personal medical imagery like the X-rays seen here. What emotions or associations does this material evoke for you?
- Notice how the artist repeats the word “you” across the X-ray. Why do you think she chose this word, and what might the repetition suggest?
- Why do you think La Rocca chose to present this piece as a triptych, with each panel gradually revealing less visual information? What effect does this progression have?

Ketty La Rocca, *Craniologia*, 1974

EXHIBITION HIGHLIGHT

EJ Hill

(American, b. 1985)



This photograph (captured by Texas Isaiah) documents a performance by EJ Hill as he ran in circles around the Los Angeles–area schools he attended. As he ran laps around each school—one for every year enrolled—Hill is physically and symbolically sweating out the lessons he learned about his body in each site. The work addresses how educational institutions, and the US societies in which these are embedded, create systems to control Black, Brown, and Queer bodies.

EJ Hill and Texas Isaiah, Victory Laps (West High School), 2018

Questions for Looking and Discussion:

- Artists sometimes revisit personal experiences through performance. Have you ever re-enacted a moment from your life or shared a story from your past with an audience? How did it feel to have others witness that memory?
- Do you think a camera can effectively capture and translate time-based performances or site-specific installations? What can a two-dimensional recording offer that the original cannot—and what might it fail to convey?
- Like La Rocca, Hill worked with repetition by circling the school again and again. How might his repeated physical action contribute to the work's emotional or political impact?

KEY THEME

Performing Ritual

Many works in this exhibition explore the power of ritual as a form of embodied presence. Others consider how cultural ritualistic practices can shape the sense of self. For example, a film by Bridget Smith captures the rituals of a Galician village in Spain during the feast day of Saint Martha, a ritual believed by locals to cure the sick. The film follows relatives of those who have recovered from life-threatening illnesses lying in open coffins and carried through the village in a procession before emerging to picnic with their families, blending acts of symbolic death and rebirth.

She says of her practice: *“I use the rituals and narratives that the community practices to explore various themes: the awe of the supernatural, the rational, and the subjective, and the use of acting and performance to publicly explore private emotions.”*

Through ritual, the exhibition insists on slowness, presence, and embodiment, asking us to consider how the body holds memory and meaning.



Bridget Smith, *We Must Live!* (still), 2012

EXHIBITION HIGHLIGHT

Paulo Nazareth

(Brazilian, b. 1977)

In his video, *Tree of Forgetting* (2012–2013), Paulo Nazareth portrays himself walking backward, counter-clockwise, around a tree. The performance recalls a historical ritual believed to wipe memories of identity from newly enslaved peoples who would be forced to journey the Middle Passage, the route across the Atlantic from Africa to the Americas. *Tree of Forgetting* is one of four videos the artist refers to as *Notebooks from Africa* produced at a time when he was traveling there regularly. With the persistent, durational gesture of his 473 rotations around a tree in Benin, Nazareth's body imparts the sense of recalling and rewinding history.

Questions for Looking and Discussion:

- Nazareth's performance is a reference to a historical ritual. Are there any rituals (even including religious events or rites of passage rituals like weddings or births) that have been passed down to your family members and communities? What importance or weight do these rituals hold in your life? Do they make you feel connected to your ancestors?
- Compare this film of the artist making laps around a tree to the photographs of EJ Hill's performance making laps around a school. Which project is more engaging or interesting to you and why?

Paulo Nazareth, *Tree of Forgetting* (still), 2012–2013



IN-GALLERY ACTIVITY

Go on a Walking Meditation

The curators note in their exhibition essay that these artworks serve “as a counter to the disembodiment of remote screen culture [to] remind us that we humans are both in, and of, the body.” This activity invites you to experience moments of mindfulness in the exhibition through the slow movements of your body.

BEGIN WITH INTENTION

Start at the gallery entrance or anywhere within the space. Stand still for a moment. Feel your feet on the ground. Sense the weight of your body and your breath moving in and out.

BREATHE WITH AWARENESS

Take a deep breath in. Hold the breath for a count of five. Then slowly exhale to a count of five. Hold for a count of five before you inhale again. Repeat this “box breath” two more times. As you breathe, let tensions in your body soften. Let your attention settle inward.

WALK SLOWLY AND INTENTIONALLY

Begin to walk through the exhibition space at a slow, deliberate pace. With each step, notice how your body moves in relationship to the architecture, the artwork, and the presence of others.

CLOSELY OBSERVE WHAT IS MOST

DRAWING YOUR ATTENTION

Allow your gaze to settle on an artwork that catches your attention most. Walk toward it with quiet intention. Stand before it for 2–5 minutes. Absorb the details of the material, form, and composition.

WATCH YOUR THOUGHTS

As you stand with the artwork, allow a memory or thought to surface. It may be small, fleeting, vivid, or blurry. Write it down here or in a journal. Don’t edit or question it; just jot it down.

CONTINUE ON

Continue through the exhibition in this mindful state, closely observing works that attract your attention and writing thoughts and memories that arise as you look.

RETURN AND RESPOND

Return to the piece you first chose. Stand with it once more. Now add a response to your memory:

- Have any new thoughts or feelings emerged?
- Has your perspective shifted after walking through the rest of the exhibition?
- What, if anything, have you noticed about the artwork in this second encounter?
- Write this reflection beside your original memory.

EXHIBITION HIGHLIGHT

Anna Oppermann

(German, 1940–1993)



Anna Oppermann, *Being an Artist*, 1975–1976

Unlike Paulo Nazareth's rituals, which directly incorporate the artist's physical presence, Anna Oppermann enacted ritual through the creation of intricate installations that she called "ensembles." Presented here as photographic documentation, Oppermann's assemblages include layered photographs, drawings, handwritten notes, and found objects that she presents to show different facets of her lived experience. *Being an Artist*, 1975–1976, highlights Oppermann's repeated self-questioning of her profession through an expansive meditation on her inner and outer worlds. Oppermann added each photograph she took of

the ensemble back into the piece so it grew over time. After her death each time an ensemble is exhibited a photograph is taken of the installation and added back into the piece so it continues to grow.

Questions for Looking and Discussion:

- Consider the title of this piece: *Being an Artist*. After closely observing the arrangement and content of the materials Oppermann includes, what insights do you think she is offering about her experience or identity as an artist?
- What can you learn about the artist from viewing her belongings? Are there any objects that you see in this photograph that you feel drawn to or personally relate to?

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

Make and Photograph an Altar About Your Everyday Life

In the spirit of Anna Opperman, create a small, intentional arrangement of objects that reflect your daily life and rituals.

REFLECT

Look around your home or space and collect 5–10 items that represent the things that came to mind in the reflection. These could include:

- Photographs
- Book, notes, letters, or to-do lists
- Artifacts you collect from nature
- Significant pieces of jewelry or clothing
- Incense, herbs, or flowers
- Knickknacks, toys, or other small objects

CHOOSE A SPACE AND ARRANGE

Designate a flat surface to use as an altar space. Take your time arranging the objects. Consider grouping items by meaning, color, or shape. Consider elevating one or more pieces with a box or small platform. Think about the overall balance and composition. How does the altar change as you move objects around to find a balance that you feel happy with?

VISIT, REVISIT, AND PHOTOGRAPH YOUR ALTAR

Return, add, and adjust to your altar regularly, and take a photograph of it each time you make a change. Add your photographs of the altar back into the piece. Through the photographs, reflect on how the altar changes and grows over time, and what these changes say about your life.

For more on photographing arranged objects, please visit our curricular guide: [the Art of the Still Life](#).



Laura Letinsky, *Untitled #49*, 2002
MoCP collection (not in exhibition)

Prompts for Discussion:

- Looking at your altar, would you consider it to be a self-portrait of sorts? Why or why not?
- How did you feel creating the altar? Did you learn anything new about yourself?
- What do you wish was part of your ritual that isn't yet?

KEY THEME

Activating the Viewer's Embodied Experience with the Artwork



Susan Hiller, *Monument (Colonial Version)*, 1980–1981

This exhibition strives to reduce the distance between artist and viewer through interactive elements that invite active participation. In an installation by Susan Hiller (American and British, 1940–2019), for example, museum visitors are invited to sit on a park bench placed before her photographs of monuments. Yet the bench faces away from the images, encouraging visitors not to focus visually but instead to listen to a recorded voice of the artist reflecting on their presence in the “here and now” amid ongoing time and memory.

The curators state in their essay: *In several instances the artists attempt to “erase” the distance between you and I, or artist and viewer. The works challenge and subvert codes of communication and societal behavior to break through what [Gina] Pane described as the conditioning of an anaesthetized society.*

EXHIBITION HIGHLIGHT

Gustav Metzger

(stateless, born Germany 1926)

Questions for Reflection:

- How does your experience of viewing a photograph with ease in your everyday life—on your phone, in the news, or in a book—compare to the act of crawling on the floor, beneath a fabric cover, to encounter this image?
- What sensations or emotions arose from engaging your body in the act of viewing?
- Consider photographs that we see in the news or media, and what exhibiting artist Gina Pane describes as “an anesthetized society.” What does this phrase mean to you? How might the vulnerable, and potentially awkward or uncomfortable, act of crawling on the floor challenge this sense of societal numbness?

In Gustav Metzger’s *Historic Photographs: To Crawl Into—Anschluss, Vienna, March 1938* (1996–1998), you are invited to kneel and crawl beneath a large fabric sheet to engage with the artwork. The photograph, revealed only through this physical participation, depicts Jewish people in Austria forced to clean the streets—a record of one of the earliest atrocities of World War II. Metzger, himself a refugee who escaped Nazi Germany on the Kindertransport from Nuremberg to the United Kingdom in 1939, calls for direct bodily involvement to evoke an embodied remembrance of the “weight of history.”

Gustav Metzger, *Historic Photographs: To Crawl Into—Anschluss, Vienna, March 1938* (installation view), 1996–1998



EXTENDED RESOURCES

BOOKS AND MONOGRAPHS

Campt, Tina M. *Listening to Images*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2017.

Chavanne, Blandine. *Gina Pane: Situation idéale*. Dijon: Les Presses du Réel, 2011.

Marta, Karen, ed. *Gustav Metzger: Interviews with Hans Ulrich Obrist*. Zurich: Hauser & Wirth, 2024.

Maude-Roxby, Alice. *On Record: Advertising, Architecture, and the Actions of Gina Pane*. London: Artwords Press, 2004.

Smith, Bridget. *Society*. London: MACK, 2007.

Warr, Tracey. *The Artist's Body*. London: Thames & Hudson, 2012.

EXHIBITION CATALOGS

Carter, Ros, and Sofie Krogh Christensen, eds. *Pia Arke: Catalog*. Berlin: KW Institute for Contemporary Art; Southampton: John Hansard Gallery, 2024.

Chevlowe, Susan, ed. *Jewish Identity Project: New American Photography*. New York: The Jewish Museum, 2005.

Epstein, Rebecca, and Sybil Venegas, eds. *Laura Aguilar: Show and Tell*. Los Angeles: UCLA, 2017.

Gallagher, Ann, ed. *Susan Hiller*. London: Tate, 2011.

George, Adrian, ed. *Art, Lies and Videotape: Exposing Performance*. Liverpool: Tate Liverpool, 2004.

Heathfield, Adrian, and Amelia Jones, eds. *Perform, Repeat, Record: Live Art in History*. London: Live Art Development Agency, 2012.

Made in L.A. 2018: Hammer Museum Catalog. Los Angeles: Hammer Museum, 2018.

Maude-Roxby, Alice. *Live Art on Camera*. Southampton: John Hansard Gallery, 2007.

Melee: Paulo Nazareth. Munich: Hirmer Verlag, 2019.

Stepken, Angelika, ed. *Ketty La Rocca: You—Works and Writings, 1964–1976*. Frankfurt: Revolver, 2017.

Vorkoeper, Ute, ed. *Anna Oppermann: Ensembles, 1968–1992*. Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz, 2007.

ILLINOIS LEARNING STANDARDS ADDRESSED IN THIS GUIDE

VISUAL ARTS STANDARDS

VA:Re7.2 Perceive and analyze artistic work. Visual imagery influences understanding of, and responses to, the world.

VA:Re8 Construct meaningful interpretations of artistic work. People gain insights into meanings of artworks by engaging in the process of art criticism.

VA:Re9 Apply criteria to evaluate artistic work. People evaluate art based on various criteria.

VA:Cn11 Relate artistic ideas and works with social, cultural, and historical context to deepen understanding. People develop ideas and understandings of society, culture, and history through their interactions with and analysis of art.

MEDIA ARTS STANDARDS

MA:Re7.1 Anchor Standard 7: Perceive and analyze artistic work. Media artworks can be appreciated and interpreted through analyzing their components.

MA:Re8.1 Anchor Standard 8: Construct meaningful interpretations of artistic work. Interpretation and appreciation require engagement with the content, form, and context of media artworks.

MA:Re9.1 Anchor Standard 9: Apply criteria to evaluate artistic work. Skillful evaluation and critique are critical components of experiencing, appreciating, and producing media artworks.

SOCIAL SCIENCES STANDARDS

SS.H.8.9-12 Analyze key historical events and contributions of individuals through a variety of perspectives, including those of historically under-represented groups.

SS.9-12.IS.1 Create actionable, student-driven (or student-informed) questions that lead to deeper social studies investigations.

SS.9-12.IS.2 Develop culturally informed, student-driven supporting questions that contribute to inquiry and evaluate the purpose of supporting questions.

SS.9-12.IS.3 Develop new essential and supporting questions by primary/secondary investigation, collaboration, and use of diverse sources.

SS.9-12.IS.5 Gather and evaluate information from multiple primary and secondary sources that reflect the perspectives of multiple groups, including marginalized communities.

