

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Barbara T. Smith

Old Shoes: Performance Relics 1968-1975

November 21, 2009-January 23, 2010

Opening Reception: November 21, 6-9pm

Dialog and Reception: January 16, 1-4pm

For this second exhibition of Barbara T. Smith's work at The Box we will present a vivid sense of her performances from 1968-1975. In addition to documentary photographs of these performances, the show will include relics and media that were used and saved by the artist from the original events. This show will include her better-known pieces along with several that have rarely been seen, all part of California's early performance art movement. The gallery and the artist believe that this exhibition will shed light on some of the early work done by women for those of a younger generation who may not be aware of it.

An example is a triptych of events done in 1969: *Fire Rings*, *Mass Meal*, and *Plots*. Since these events took place before there were alternative art spaces, they were performed on the beach, the artist's studio and empty lots of grass respectively. *Fire Rings* consisted of the spontaneous combustion of 12 fires in the barbecue pits at Newport Beach accompanied by intense wailing siren sound followed by a feast of fish cooked over the flames. *Mass Meal* was an environment of meat, paint, sounds and light which all collapsed into chaotic revelry in which the space was physically trashed leaving the artist feeling crucified. Two of the four large Day-Glo plastic panels used in this piece that held sizzling roasts of meat will hang in the gallery to induce the sensation of the original performance. In *Plots*, Smith ventured into different fields where she planted tiny succulents knowing they would be plowed away, thus completing a performance version of a classical triptych.

In Smith's 1974 piece, *Scan I*, forty-five people dressed entirely in white with white hoods sat on bleachers in front of a television set as a metaphor for television "snow." Like the cheering section at a football game, the performing audience responded to cues on the monitor that provoked various actions such as blowing bubble gum, cigarette smoking, sticking out their color painted tongues and blowing party blowers; creating a nonsensical "image." After several "scans," the art audience was invited to join the performers in the bleachers and try to decipher the cues imbedded in the television commercials whilst licking "all-day" suckers. This piece was a critique of television hypnosis. *Scan I* is an example one of her little known pieces that we will show complete with the hoods worn by performers and cue cards that the performing audience used. It is unique in that it presents another perspective of the artist's concern for the cultural values of American society.

The last exhibition of Smith's work at The Box in 2007 was a look into sculptural and physical objects that preceded these early performances. Smith who is primarily known for her performative works was born in 1931 in Pasadena, CA. She has lived and worked in the Los Angeles Area her whole life. After she received her BA from Pomona College in 1953, she married and had three children before returning to the University of California, Irvine for her MFA in 1971. Smith was included in the following international exhibitions: *Out of Action: Between the Performance and Object, 1949-1979, Los Angeles 1955-1985: The Birth of an Art Capitol, WACK!: Art and the Feminist Revolution*. The artwork shown in the first exhibition at The Box later traveled to Maccarone, NY and *Sex in Scandinavia*, OCA, Oslo. And she recently had a solo show of vintage documentation at Galerie Parisa Kind, Frankfurt. She is currently participating in *Installations Inside/Out: 20th Anniversary Exhibition* at The Armory Center for the Arts in Pasadena, CA. She will be included in one or more exhibitions for the *Pacific Standard Time* extravaganza for Southern California in 2011.

If you have any questions please contact Mara McCarthy, Director of The Box at mara@theboxla.com or 626 463 8144.