

>DEPART

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ULAY: THE ANIMIST

JANUARY 28–APRIL 1, 2017



PUBLIC OPENING

SATURDAY, JANUARY 28, 2016, 6-9PM

DEPART Foundation, 9105 West Sunset Boulevard, Los Angeles, CA 90069

curated by Maria Rus Bojan

Los Angeles, CA—DEPART Foundation announced today that it will present *Ulay: The Animist*, its first solo exhibition and the first West Coast presentation for German artist Frank Uwe Laysiepen, known by his pseudonym - Ulay (b.1943).

This landmark exhibition highlights key features of his oeuvre, unfolding the main trajectories that draw on his performances and photographic works. A pioneer of body art, performance art and Polaroid photography, Ulay is well known for *Relation Works* – his collaborative period with Marina Abramovi, between the years 1976 and 1988. Recently, Ulay's individual work achieved newfound attention, culminating with the 2016 retrospective exhibitions at Schirn Kunsthalle, Frankfurt, Nederlandse Fotomuseum, Rotterdam and GNYP Gallery Berlin.

The Animist unfolds Ulay's individual oeuvre by exploring the hidden connections between seemingly disparate aspects of his work and his passionate life. The exhibition traces the genealogy of Ulay's self-performative Polaroid photography from the early 1970s to the life size experiments he conducted with large format Polaroid technique in the 1990s. This presentation also includes photographic documentations of his travels throughout China and Australia, bringing together a body of works that truly reflects the artist's underlying preoccupation with the expression of reality in its most immediate and intense form.

The show takes its title *The Animist* from a 1995 performance of the same name, in which Ulay tests the boundaries of perception and public participation through a subversive combination of sounds and ritual gestures. Considering the metaphor of "the animist" as the most appropriate expression of the core of Ulay's work – a figure that joins together and reconfigures the relation between the spiritual and material world – the exhibition invites viewers to discover the artist's intense experiences and insights into what constitutes *Reality*.

Ulay's commitment to showing life in its most basic, raw, and truthful form poses an existential and ethical dimension, where the Polaroid is the preferred medium to embody his take on reality by capturing the image's process of becoming. At a retrospective glance, these images stand out through a personal aesthetic purged of emotion and stylistic artifices. They go beyond the crust of conventional thought in order to penetrate at the heart of what constitutes subjective reality, thus encouraging us to fundamentally reconsider our relationship with ourselves and with the world.

ULAY

Ulay is the pseudonym of Frank Uwe Laysiepen. He was born in 1943 in Solingen, Germany. Ulay was formally trained as a photographer, and between 1968 and 1971, he worked extensively as a consultant for Polaroid. In the early period of his artistic activity (1968–1976) he explored identity and the body through a series of Polaroid photographs, aphorisms, and intimate performances. At that time, Ulay's photographic approach was becoming increasingly performative and resulted in performative photography (*FOTOTOT*, 1976). From 1976 to 1988, he collaborated with Marina Abramovi on numerous performances; their work focused on questioning perceived masculine and feminine traits and pushing the physical limits of the body (*Relation Works*). After the break with Marina, Ulay focused on photography, addressing the position of the marginalized individual in contemporary society and re-examining the problem of nationalism and its symbols (*Berlin Afterimages*, 1994–1995). Nevertheless, although he was working primarily in photography, he remained connected to the question of the 'performative', which resulted in his constant 'provocation' of audiences through numerous performances, workshops and lecture-performances. In recent years, Ulay is mostly engaged in projects and artistic initiatives that raise awareness, enhance understanding and appreciation of, and respect for, water (*Earth Water Catalogue*, 2012). Ulay's work, as well as his collaborative work with Marina Abramovi, is featured in many collections of major art institutions around the world such as Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam; Centre Pompidou Paris; Museum of Modern Art New York.

MARIA RUS BOJAN

Maria Rus Bojan is an international curator based in Amsterdam. Rus Bojan works closely with the German performance artist Ulay, writing, curating, and producing materials for several international exhibitions such as Ulay's first major retrospective, *GEN.E.T.RATION ULTIMA RATIO*, (2005), at Centro Parraga, Murcia, Spain, *Ich bin Ich*, (2013), Salon Dahlmann, Berlin, and *Body of Pain, Body of Love, Body of Wisdom*, (2016) at GNYF Gallery Berlin, while contributing to his recent retrospectives at Nederlandse Fotomuseum, Rotterdam, and Schirn Kunsthalle Frankfurt, (2016). In 2014, she published Ulay's first monograph: *Whispers, Ulay on Ulay*, at Valiz Amsterdam, awarded the Special Prize for Publications of the Dutch Section at the International Association of Art Critics in 2015. She has been a curator of *Performing History*, the Romanian Pavilion for the 54th edition of the International Art Exhibition La Biennale di Venezia (2011). Rus Bojan publishes extensively on contemporary art and is a regular contributor to *Sinteza Magazine*.

DEPART Foundation

DEPART Foundation provides an alternative platform for creative experimentation and exploration, set within a global context, that thrives outside of conventional, cultural structures. The impact of its work can best be understood as the charting of new artistic destinations with every project and program it undertakes.

Since its founding in 2008, DEPART Foundation has served as a catalyst for the Italian art and cultural community, strengthening the dialogue between Italy and the international art world. Like multiple outposts in Europe and U.S., DEPART Foundation has actively encouraged artistic production through sponsorship of young and established artists and the provision of spaces and resources conducive to the research, production and exhibition of new work, and to the presentation of educational and public programs.

Some of the most interesting and dynamic artists of our time, from around the world, have been presented for the first time in Rome by DEPART Foundation. They include Cory Arcangel, Joe Bradley, Nate Lowman, Ryan McGinley, Tauba Auerbach, Darren Bader, Louis Eisner, Roe Ethridge, Sam Falls, Mark Flood, Elias Hansen, Brendan Lynch, Oscar Murillo, Sarah Braman, Seth Price, Jon Rafman, Stephen G. Rhodes, Amanda Ross-Ho, Sterling Ruby, Lucien Smith, Valerie Snobeck and Frances Stark.

Depart Foundation in Los Angeles has presented solo exhibitions of work by Gabriele de Santis, Kour Pour, Grear Patterson, Petra Cortright, Mark Horowitz, Giorgio Andreotta Calò, Cameron Platter and Edward S. Curtis.

Image credit: Ulay, *The Animist*, 1995, color print, documentation of the performance with the same title from Theater aan der Werf, Utrecht, photo: Peter Boersma, courtesy the artist, GNYP Gallery Berlin and MB Art Agency.

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