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**ART**  
**Re.act.feminism**  
**@ Akademie der Künste, Berlin**

by KITO NEDO. 2008

Review of feminist art show with 25 artists in exhibition, plus 80 in video archive, makes special mention of O'Grady and three other artists, including Valie Export, Yoko Ono, and Gabrielle Stötzer.

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Photo: Kate Gilmore, "Star Bright, Star Might", 2007, video still of face in box (Courtesy Smith-Stewart Gallery)

**A BOX FOR BREASTS AND PROTEST**

Does the Berlin show "Re.act.feminism" at the Academy of Arts succeed as a witty refutation of the male-dominated art establishment? Kito Nedo reports on a survey of female performance art and promising new discoveries.

"Art has no sex..." wrote the American art critic Lucy Lippard in the mid-1970s and, sure enough, she did not forget to add: "That's all very well, but artists do." Lippard's text, which criticized the male-dominated art establishment, was published on the occasion of an exhibition of the Austrian Valie Export, whose work inspired an entire generation of young female artists to create feminist art, above all performances—an achievement comparable perhaps only with the work of Yoko Ono. For example, with Export's "Tap and Touch Cinema" (1968), a

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\* Posted online at: <http://www.art-magazin.de>, 12/12/2008. Also, expanded version published in Berlin bi-weekly *Zitty*, no. 25, 4-17 December, 2008, pp 100-101, with special box on O'Grady: "Double Emancipation: Lorraine O'Grady Grabs the Whip."

strapped-on box within which passers-by could touch the breasts of its wearer, the artist put her body in the service of art in accordance with the radical spirit of the time.

When the Berlin Academy of Arts presents a focused examination of feminist performance art from the sixties and seventies then Valie Export is certainly included. Beyond the presentation of already well-known artists, however, curators Bettina Knaup and Beatrice E. Stammer hope to broaden the perspective and to document the manifold approaches taken by extremely diverse activists in the USA and Eastern and Western Europe. Therefore, amongst the documentation and works of circa 25 artists, one also finds lesser-known names such as that of Lorraine O'Grady, who protested as "Mlle Bourgeoise Noire" in the New York of the 1980s against the under-representation and self-denial of African-American artists, while at the same time reinforcing the view that art could change the world.

Even the Berlin wall could not stop the offshoots of the feminist avant-garde. Deep in the province of the German Democratic Republic, under the suspicious eye of the Stasi (East German Secret Police), artist Gabriele Stötzer and others founded "Exterra XX," the first and only independent collective of female artists that showed film and photography in addition to performances.

Translated from German by Lynette Roth

"re.act.feminism": through February 8, 2009. Hanseatenweg 10, Berlin-Tiergarten. Catalogue: forthcoming.