

Liliane Lijn. Arise Alive

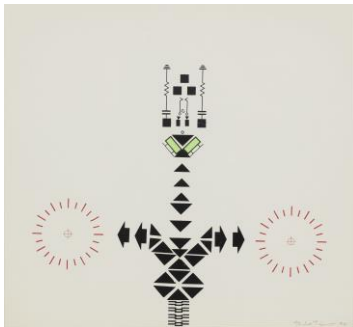
November 15, 2024 through May 4 2025

Press conference
Thursday, November 14, 2024, 10 a.m.

Opening
Thursday, November 14, 2024, 7 p.m.

The artist, at all times an outsider, is as a woman an outsider even among artists. She follows the path of her senses with little or no acceptance of predetermined moulds. Being herself means entering into the skin of everything else, not limiting or closing herself off to what she thinks she is. Subject to cyclical change, she becomes her own subject. She is a filter, a mirror, a prism, an energy coil. She is subject and object, active and passive. She finds herself the meeting point of opposites.

Liliane Lijn, London, 1982



Liliane Lijn
Electronic Goddess, 1971
Electronic Letrafilm and Letraset symbols
on paper, mounted on cardboard
Courtesy Liliane Lijn and Sylvia Kouvali,
London / Piraeus
Photo: Lewis Ronald
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Liliane Lijn. Arise Alive is the most comprehensive institutional solo presentation of the artist to date. Born in New York in 1939 and based in London since 1966, Lijn has been working at the interface of visual art, poetry, and science for more than six decades. She has created a multifaceted oeuvre that includes sculptures, installations, collages, paintings, videos, and performances. The exhibition showcases the most important stages in Lijn's category-defying work from the late 1950s until today.

Serving as a starting point for Lijn's multimedia practice are the kinetic art of the late 1950s as well as her exploration of Surrealist ideas, ancient mythology, and eastern philosophy. Her early works already manifest her interest in unconventional artistic materials—an interest that has thrived to this day. 1961 marked the first time Lijn used Perspex in her works, in which she experimented with reflections, movement, and light. "Electric lights flash on and off plexiglass constructions, creating a tangle of transparent shadows called *Echo Lights* by the artist," writes the American poet John Ashbery in 1963 about her exhibition at the Galerie de la Librairie Anglaise in Paris.

Ashbery was equally impressed by the motorized language-based works. "Her *Vibrographs* are wheels revolving too fast for you to read the words printed on them, but perhaps they affect you unconsciously like subliminal advertising." Akin to the linguistic experiments of the Beat poets, Lijn's so-called *Poem Machines* strive to set words mechanically in motion to liberate them from their fixed meanings. The works mark the beginning of her exploration of language, which has continued to this day, with the idea of the spoken word as vibration and thus energy. "The main concern of my work has been and is 'energy transfer.'"

Lijn's works are often based on everyday observations—the behavior of waterdrops on a glass pane or the awareness that letters are made up of lines. Her works can be

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understood as experimental arrangements to get to the bottom of the principles of our cosmos. As the titles of her works demonstrate—*Cosmic Flares I* (1966), *Act As Atom* (1967-68), *E=mc³* (1968)—Lijn has regarded technology and science as allies from the beginning to penetrate the regions that lie beyond visibility. She also understands this as a feminist project. For the artist, the dematerialization of language and body, their translation into vibration, light, and sound, mean an attack on patriarchal structures and the reduction of women to their bodies. “I was interested in dematerialization—the idea of losing the body. And that was related in a way to being a woman.”

One may also place Lijn’s book *Crossing Map*, published in 1983, in this context. More than fifteen years in the making, it paved the way for the multimedia sculptures of the 1980s. On a quest for new formats and forms of expression, Lijn started working on a prose text in the second half of the 1960s whose final version can be described as a hybrid between science-fiction, autobiography, and ecofeminist manifesto. This work of linguistic art, which she has also performed publicly, tells the story of the spiritual journey of an artist overcoming her material body.

At the same time, Lijn also focused her attention on the human figure in visual art to reflect on the effects of various technological advancements on the body. Using feather dusters, synthetic fibers, optical prisms, and lasers, she created futuristic female “deities” that seem to be part human, part animal, part plant. One of the highlights and the proverbial epicenter of the exhibition at mumok is the confrontation of *Lady of the Wild Things* (1983) and *Woman of War* (1986), which Lijn premiered at the Venice Biennale. At the time, they were aptly described as “goddesses of the Space Age.” Unfolding between the two outsized computer-controlled figures is a six-minute dialog that incorporates singing, 250 LEDs, laser, and artificial smoke. Lijn’s interactive sculptures, subsumed under the term “cosmic dramas,” were inspired in part by modern-day power generating plants. In them, she relates the cosmic to the personal, mythology to high-tech, giving female archetypes a contemporary form.

Liliane Lijn was born in New York in 1939 and has been working internationally since the 1960s. Her works are included in collections like the Tate Modern, the British Museum, and the Victoria and Albert Museum in London as well as the Musée de la Ville de Paris and Kunstmuseum Bern.

Selected solo and group exhibitions:

Electric Dreams: Art and Technology Before the Internet, Tate Modern (2024), *Radical Software: Women, Art and Computing 1960–1991*, Mudam Luxembourg (2024), *Americans in Paris: Artists Working in Postwar France, 1946–1962*, Grey Art Museum / New York University (2024), *Siren, (some poetics)*, Amant Foundation, New York

(2023); *Concrete Experience*, Badischer Kunstverein, Karlsruhe (2023); *The Milk of Dreams*, 59th International Art Exhibition of the Biennale di Venezia (2022); *I AM SHE*, Ordet, Milan (2020); *Action <-> Reaction: 100 Years of Kinetic Art*, Kunsthall Rotterdam (2018–2019); *Spotlight: Liliane Lijn*, Tate Britain (2017–2018); *Cosmic Dramas*, Middlesbrough Institute of Modern Art, Middlesbrough (2012–2013); *Liliane Lijn: Works 1959–80*, Mead Gallery, Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry (2005); *Beyond Light: Liliane Lijn and Bill Culbert*, Serpentine Gallery, London (1976–1977); *Liliane Lijn: Echolights and Vibrographs*, Galerie de la Librairie Anglaise, Paris (1963)

Curated by Manuela Ammer

A comprehensive monograph about Lijn's work will be published in conjunction with the exhibition:

Liliane Lijn. Arise Alive

Edited by Manuela Ammer, Emma Enderby

Foreword by Andrea Lissoni, Karola Kraus, Anne Barlow

Essays by Manuela Ammer, Emma Enderby, Sabeth Buchmann and Ilse Lafer, Jennifer Higgin

Conversations with Liliane Lijn by Anne Barlow and Michelle Kuo

Introductory texts by Teresa Retzer

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Liliane Lijn. Arise Alive is jointly organized with Haus der Kunst München, in collaboration with Tate St Ives.

Her Mother's Voice.

Eine Art Selbstbetrachtung

Liliane Lijn / Gaby Hartel

Wednesday, November 13, 6.30 p.m., ifk– Internationales Forschungszentrum
Kulturwissenschaften

Born in New York in 1939 as the daughter of Jewish refugees, Liliane Lijn has been a protagonist in contemporary art since the 1960s. Having grown up in a vibrant environment surrounded by six spoken languages, Lijn has also been involved in Spoken Word Literature for fifty years, with a particular interest in the magic of language, the sound of words and the physicality of the voice. One of her linguistic artworks, *Her Mother's Voice*, is based on interviews she conducted with her mother, seeking to trace not only her own past, but also the nature of her mother as a migrant existence. The strong accent of the mother's voice tells as much about the flight across Europe as it does about the events experienced along the way—or their expressive omission.

Gaby Hartel translated this work polymedially during her time as ifk Translator in Residence in 2019/20: from English into German, from the book page into acoustic art. The Hörspiel subsequently produced together with the artist (by Deutschlandfunk in 2022) will be presented at ifk where a temporary listening station will be launched.

Pompeii Commitment. Archeological Matters – Digital Fellowship

Release: Thursday, November 14, pompeiicommittment.org

mumok is pleased to announce that, coinciding with the opening of *Liliane Lijn. Arise Alive*, the artist's contribution to *Pompeii Commitment. Archeological Matters – Digital Fellowship* will be launched on pompeiicommittment.org. The project is part of the first long-term, contemporary art programme established by the Archaeological Park of Pompeii

Drawing inspiration from Pompeii's relationship with its natural surroundings, Liliane Lijn's Digital Fellowship reveals the behind-the-scenes development of the site-specific environmental installation *Sunstar* as the artist proposes to the Archaeological Park of Pompeii a new iteration of the project, hypothetically reconfigured on Mount Vesuvius. For the very first time, Lijn shares her private archive and a detailed account of the history of the solar installation and its scientific development since the early 2000s—thanks to the close collaboration with astrophysicist John Vallergera. The archive material is accompanied by a new essay expressly written by the artist, revealing the layers of co-creation, speculative thinking and experimental innovation that underpin her solar installation. *Sunstar on Mount*

Vesuvius would generate a small, intense point of light, a starlight perched on the summit of the volcano, making it possible to look directly at sunlight, something that is usually only possible during solar eclipses. Lijn invites the audience to consider not only the beauty of the project but also its conceptual depth, unfolding the complex relationship between sun, earth, and humanity, as well as the entanglement between all forms and expressions of life. *Sunstar on Mount Vesuvius* aims to generate a renewed perception and understanding of natural light and of its generative and transformative energy. It is a reflection on how we notice or neglect our surroundings, urging to show awareness of and take responsibility for the planet we inhabit.

Since 2022, the *Digital Fellowship programme of Pompeii Commitment. Archeological Matters* enables international participants to carry out an expanded research – both remote and in situ – over a period of several months, focusing on the site, both cultural and natural, of Pompeii or aspects related to its symbolism and significance in general. The Digital Fellowships facilitate in this way artistic and curatorial research within Pompeii's uniquely trans-temporal, multi-species, and deeply entangled context. At the end of their research period, each participant share an outcome on the digital portal pompeiicommitment.org.