

Simone Forti's Medium is Movement

Kingsley Manor resident's iconic performance art melds art and dance.

As an emerging painter in the 1950s, Simone Forti became interested in movement.

"I spent a lot of time at the zoo in those days," said the Kingsley Manor resident. "The natural movements I saw in animals was fascinating and I began sketching them. There's a lot of poetry in movement."



Simone soon began to explore human movement through dance and with the avant-garde art movement exploding in the 1960s, took the next logical step - her medium became movement.

For six decades, Simone has created iconic performance art, including a show at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles earlier this year. The show, simply titled "Simone Forti," showcases more than 80 works including her 1960-61 "Dance Constructions," in which dancers use knotted ropes to suspend themselves in space or, on a slant board, shifting their weight off the usual horizontal plane.

Now a renowned artist, that was not always Simone's life plan. Following her graduation from Fairfax High School in Los Angeles, she attended Reed College in Portland, Oregon to study biology. She continued to paint and soon came to a crossroads. She had to decide whether to continue "to play it safe" by studying biology or follow her passion and become a full-time artist. "I knew it would be difficult to make a living as an artist but it's something I never had second thoughts about."



After studying for four years with famed dancer and choreographer Anna Halprin, who Simone considers her mentor, she knew there were many opportunities in New York City for artists. She was correct. “Dance Constructions” was first performed at Reuben Gallery in 1960, a pioneering gallery of happenings, events and new media art. Further “Constructions” debuted at Yoko Ono’s loft, the following spring.

She and several other artists rented a loft in Manhattan, working together and encouraging each other. “It was an exciting time,” Simone said. “Being with other artists really inspired me.”

While she is widely celebrated as a choreographer and dancer, Simone views herself more broadly as an artist who works with movement, using her own body alongside other materials and media. She has expressed this philosophy through her experimental holograms, drawings and videos from her “Illuminations” and “News Animation” series and drawings and photographs from her lifelong exploration of animal movement and the natural world.



“My challenge has always been to make something out of nothing,” Simone said. “That may be the challenge of any artist.”

These days, Simone’s inspiration comes from her life at Kingsley Manor, located not far from the excitement of the city, which she loves. She has shifted her focus to writing, while enjoying the relaxed atmosphere among friends.

"I'm glad I can now be part of the Kingsley Manor community as an artist," Simone said.

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Simone Forti portrait, courtesy of Zuma News, LA, 2013.

"Dance Constructions" courtesy of the Museum of Contemporary Art (MOCA) Photos by Jeff McLane