

GETTY RESEARCH INSTITUTE ACQUIRES SIMONE FORTI ARCHIVE



Unbuttoned Sleeves, 2005, REDCAT, LA, Photographer: Carol Petersen

LOS ANGELES – The Getty Research Institute (GRI) has acquired the archive of artist, dancer, performer, and writer Simone Forti (Italian-American, b. 1935), who is one of the seminal figures in the history of Minimalism and experimental dance in the United States. The collection covers every major period of Forti's career, from the 1950s through today.

“Simone Forti is widely celebrated as a pioneering figure in the history of experimental dance and art, especially for her work in improvisation, minimalist forms, and engagement with current events,” said Mary Miller, director of the GRI. “Our archival holdings are rich in avant-garde dance, Minimalism, Fluxus, Conceptualism, and *arte povera*, providing the strongest possible context for this material. Her archive greatly enhances the research opportunities for anyone studying major art movements in the latter part of the 20th century.”

The archive covers every major period of Forti's career and life, beginning with family documents from the early 20th century and spanning her more-than-six-decade career. It includes an extensive set of diaries and notebooks containing a wealth of unpublished information. The archive also

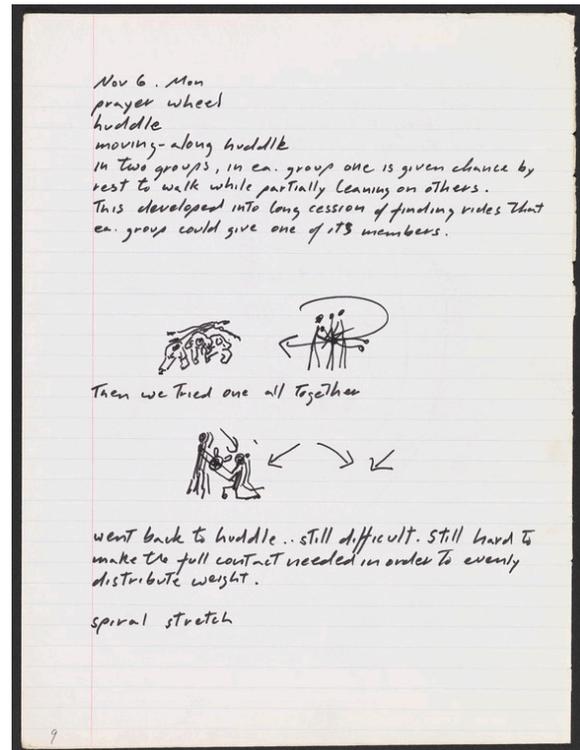
includes project files, correspondence, photographs and negatives, audiovisual materials, posters and ephemera, rare books, sketches, and works on paper.

At the heart of the archive are the 125 diaries, notebooks, and sketchbooks that form a chronicle of Forti's ideas since the 1960s. The often-illustrated diaries chronicle Forti's daily activities as an artist and teacher, as well as her often unsung practice as a writer. This trove of unpublished biographical information also includes accounts of the major artistic figures that have formed her circle of peers.

"The diaries offer great insights into Forti's life and her work as one of the most seminal dance and performance artists of her generation, and they help us understand how much of her work emerges from her profoundly-tuned skills of observation" said Glenn Phillips, head of modern and contemporary collections at the GRI. "Always poetic and often moving, Forti's writings range from accounts of everyday life to her deepest ideas about art and creativity. Although Forti has issued volumes of her writing over the years, her strength as a writer is certainly the least-recognized aspect of her creative output, in large part because she herself viewed the diaries as a mostly private activity until later in life."

Forti's project files cover every major project in her career, include notes on the development of the work, related correspondence, drafts of texts, programs, posters and ephemera, photos, and, in some cases audiovisual documentation of her performances.

Although Forti has primarily been known as a dance and performance artist, she has also throughout her career produced visual art, including paintings, drawing, Xerox art, sculptures, installations, and experimental holography. Artworks in the archive include one of her *Red Hat* watercolor sketches from 1966, a print from her 1972 series *Illuminations*, a full set of her *Anatomy Maps* Xerox collages from 1985 and two large drawings/scores from her 2009 work *Song of the Vowels*. Most notably, the archive also includes *Movements/Crawl Sit*, part of Forti's series of moving image holograph works from 1975-79, which are now seen as landmarks in the history of holography.



Notes on *Prayer Wheel* and *Huddle*, Simone Forti, ca. 1973. Getty Research Institute, [2019.M.23](#)

The archive also includes a selection of works on paper given to Forti by other artists. One of these is a unique hand-drawn accordion-fold score by Italian Fluxus artist Giuseppe Chiari from 1969 that stretches to nearly 17 feet when unfolded.

The Simone Forti archive will be made available to researchers after being cataloged and digitized by the GRI.



Red Hat in Yellow and Red Landscape, Simone Forti, 1966. Getty Research Institute, [2019.M.23](#)

About Simone Forti

Simone Forti was born in 1935 in Florence, Italy to a Jewish family who emigrated to Switzerland in 1939 to escape anti-Semitic persecution. The family eventually settled in Los Angeles, where Forti studied dance as a young child. She attended Reed College in Portland, Oregon from 1953-55. In 1955 Forti moved to San Francisco, where she married artist Robert Morris and performed and created artwork under the name Simone Morris. It was during this period that she studied with Anna Halprin and participated in Halprin's Dancers Workshop alongside AA Leath and John Graham. From 1959 to 1960 she taught at the Marin Dance Co-op before moving to New York City, where she participated in the experimental downtown art scene characterized by performance, minimalism, and process-based art. Alongside Trisha Brown, Steve Paxton, Yvonne Rainer, Lucinda Childs, Rudy Perez, and Elaine Summers, Forti was part of a core group of students interested in functional, disjunctive, and non-expressive dance, many of whom would go on to found the Judson Dance Theater in 1962. During this period Forti also performed and presented her own work alongside and often in

collaboration with peers who were producing “Happenings,” including Jim Dine, Claes Oldenburg, and Robert Whitman. She also produced the influential series of works *Dance Constructions* at this time.

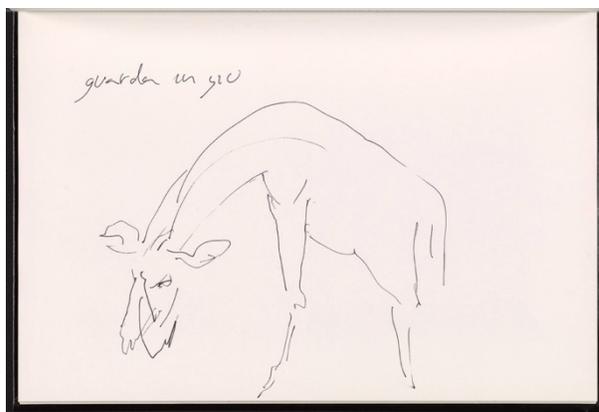
Forti married Whitman in 1961 and continued to collaborate with him through the mid-1960s. She completed her BFA at Hunter College in 1965. In the late 1960s, she returned to the country of her birth, Italy, to study and work. Upon her return to the US in late 1969, Forti lived on a commune in Woodstock, New York for a year before moving back to Los Angeles in summer 1970.

In Los Angeles, she lived with artists Nam June Paik, Alison Knowles, and Peter Van Riper. She taught and performed at California Institute of the Arts, initiating the improvisational music and dance workshops *Open Gardenia*. In 1970 Forti began a now 45-year long collaboration with musician Charlemagne Palestine, producing the first of a series of manifestations called *Illuminations*.

In the late 70s, Forti lived and worked in New York, collaborating with musician Peter Van Riper on *Big Room*, which was performed all over the US and Europe. The two were married from 1975-81 and shared a live-work studio loft in the city where Forti held rehearsals and workshops. In 1976, she began collaborating with Lloyd Cross, physicist, and inventor of Multiplex Holography, on holograms such as *Angel*, *Striding Crawling*, and *Dancer*.

From 1986-1991, Forti made work as Simone Forti and Troupe at the Yellow Springs Institute in Chester Springs, Pennsylvania. She spent a decade at Mad Brook Farm in Vermont from 1988-1998 before returning to Los Angeles, where she continues to live, work, and teach.

Throughout her rich and varied artistic career, Forti has been the subject of major exhibitions and museum shows throughout the US and Europe, most recently *Judson Dance Theater: The Work Is Never Done* at the Museum of Modern Art in New York. Her retrospective exhibition *Simone Forti: Thinking with the Body* was presented at the Museum der Moderne Salzburg in 2014. She has received numerous prestigious awards, including six National Endowment for the Arts fellowships, the New York Dance and Performance “Bessie” Award for Sustained Achievement, a John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation Fellowship. Her prolific writing includes regular contributions to *Movement Research Performance Journal* and *Contact Quarterly* and she has taught in the Department of World Arts and Cultures at the University of California, Los Angeles, since 1997.



Giraffe sketch, Devised Title, Simone Forti papers, ca 1968

MEDIA CONTACTS:

Amy Hood
ahood@getty.edu
310 440-6427
Getty Communications

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