

## Terry Fox. Elemental Gestures

March 10 – June 5, 2017

**What is the common denominator between such different elements as the purring of cats, fishes, cigarette smoke, flour, water, yeast, and an artist's own body? The answer is that they are all on Terry Fox's "list of art ingredients" for his work. The exhibition *Terry Fox. Elemental Gestures* presents a comprehensive overview of this artist's oeuvre and is now showing at the Kunstmuseum Bern. It offers fascinating and compelling insights into the multi-faceted work of this very special US artist – with various connections to Bern.**

Terry Fox was born in Seattle (USA) in 1943 and became a visionary of contemporary art in the 1960s and 70s. He was highly valued among his contemporaries, including such artists as Joseph Beuys, Vito Acconci, Dennis Oppenheim, or Bill Viola. However, only since very recently has he started attracting the attention of the general public too. His earliest performative works were performances and events that thematically addressed everyday phenomena and life in public spaces. Frequently his artistic activities comprised simple, elementary gestures. Fox also called them situations.

Terry Fox worked with a great diversity of materials. Among them his own body played a leading role, but dead fish were likewise on the list. With materials such as these he plumbed the mental and physical bounds. His other materials too were alive in their own way: like when he fermented flour, water, and yeast to make dough or triggered physical transformation processes using fire. He employed the smoke of cigarettes for ritual-like acts. All these materials and actions were beyond the control of the artist, and at the same time only short-lived. The transitory nature of time was always a key element of his work. This was especially true for his sound art and sound installations. For these pieces Fox selected unorthodox instruments to produce sounds: the purring of cats, piano strings that spanned whole spaces, or water dripping from a melting glacier.

From the 1970s on, the US-born artist Terry Fox spent periods in Europe more and more often. He lived in Belgium and for many years in Cologne. He also had links to Bern through his art. For example, in 1990 as part of a performance at Furka Pass, he surrendered a dead sea bass to the ice of the glacier. The artist was moved profoundly by the acoustic experience of a melting glacier. Ten years earlier he had dedicated the performance *A Candle for A.W.* to the Swiss artist Adolf Wölfli at the Kunstmuseum Bern. And in 1988 Fox participated in the exhibition *Die Gleichzeitigkeit des Anderen* (The synchronicity of the Other) with the performance *The Eye Is not the Only Glass that Burns the Mind*. In the 1990s the Kunstmuseum Bern accrued major artworks by the artist. He had already early in Bern attracted attention as a pioneer of performance and conceptual art. With *Terry Fox. Elemental Gestures*, his oeuvre is returning to Bern in a comprehensive exhibition of his art.

The exhibition is a joint project of the Kunstmuseum Bern; the Akademie der Künste, Berlin; the BAM –Musée des Beaux-Arts, Mons; and the Von der Heydt- Museum, Wuppertal.

### Curators:

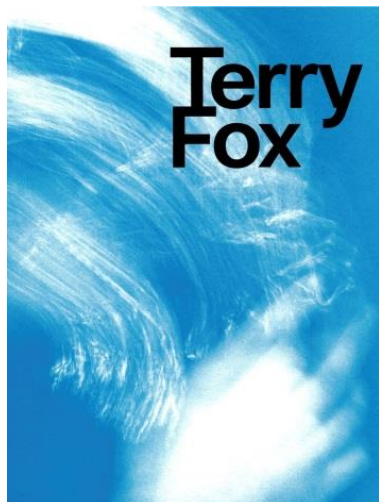
Seraina Renz, in collaboration with Valerian Maly

Exhibition concept by Daniel Spanke  
Arnold Dreyblatt, and Angela Lammert, Akademie der Künste Berlin

**Contact person:** Maria-Teresa Cano, Head of Communication and Public Relations Kunstmuseum Bern – Zentrum Paul Klee, [press@kunstmuseumbern.ch](mailto:press@kunstmuseumbern.ch), Tel.: +41 31 359 01 89

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## Catalogue

### **Terry Fox. Elemental Gestures**

ed. by Arnold Dreyblatt and Angela Lammert.  
Texts by René Block, Kathleen Bühler, Nikola Doll,  
Arnold Dreyblatt, Beate Eickhoff, Terry Fox,  
Constance Lewallen, Angela Lammert, David A.  
Ross, Bern Schulz, Lisa Steib. Verlag Kettler,  
Dortmund, 2015, 978-3-86206-524-0

## Supporting program of the exhibition

### **Terry Fox Symposium "The Eye is Not The Only Glass That Burns The Mind"**

**Friday, May 5, beginning at 6:00 p.m.**

**Saturday, May 6, 10:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.**

Organized by the Kunstmuseum Bern, Institut für Kunstgeschichte at the Universität Bern, Hochschule der Künste Bern, Robert Walser Zentrum Bern, and the Terry Fox Association e.V. Cologne

The symposium examines the ideas and the impact of Terry Fox's art as well as the scholarly debate about his expanded notion of what a work of art is. Because Fox's oeuvre is located on the periphery of a "void", in his works notions of performance, artwork, sound, text-image, or video art are reconceived anew.

### **The symposium has been kindly sponsored by:**

Fondation Johanna Dürmüll-Bol  
SWISSLOS Kultur Kanton Bern  
**"Art and Religion in Dialogue" Series**

**Sunday, March 19, 3:00 p.m.**

Valerian Maly (guest curator, Kunstmuseum Bern) speaks with André Flury (Bern region Catholic Church)

**Public guided tours**

**Sunday, 11:00 a.m.:** March 12, April 9\*, May 14\*\*, May 28

with the curator Seraina Renz

\*\* with the curator Valerian Maly

**Tuesday, 7:00 p.m.:** March 28, April 25

**Introduction for teachers and educators**

**Tuesday, March 14, 6:00 p.m.**

Bookings required: Tel.: 031 328 09 11 or [vermittlung@kunstmuseumbern.ch](mailto:vermittlung@kunstmuseumbern.ch) Art education for families

**"ARTUR" Children-Art-Tour**

**Saturday, March 25, 10:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.:**

**"Paths through Space"** Workshop for children from 6 – 12 years, fees: CHF 10.00 per person

**Fäger Holiday Course "Growing Art"**

**April 19 / 20 / 21, 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.**

Space – Sound – Perception – Action – Labyrinth – Sculpture: soft-footedly we will explore spaces, draw paths leading through them, make things happen, and experiment with materials and sounds.

**Fees:** CHF 60.00 (for three mornings)

**Bookings required:** Tel.: 031 328 09 11 or [vermittlung@kunstmuseumbern.ch](mailto:vermittlung@kunstmuseumbern.ch)