

Northwestern

MARY AND LEIGH
BLOCK MUSEUM OF ART

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Ground-breaking Charlotte Moorman exhibit makes Euro debut

Block Museum's Lisa Corrin speaks at Museum der Moderne Salzburg opening

- Classically-trained cellist's works are now on view in Mozart's hometown
- Exhibition revived and expanded experimental artist's significance and legacy
- Project conceived around Moorman's archives at Northwestern University Libraries
- Reception held for Northwestern alumni living abroad

EVANSTON - The groundbreaking exhibition "Feast of Astonishments: Charlotte Moorman and the Avant Garde 1960s to 1980s" made its European debut on Friday (March 3) with an opening celebration at Salzburg's Museum of Modern Art.

The exhibition originated as a curatorial collaboration between the Mary and Leigh Block Museum of Art and Northwestern University's Charles Deering McCormick Library, which houses the Charlotte Moorman Archives. The exhibition also features a number of loans from international museums and private collections, including that of Yoko Ono.

The exhibition is made up of hundreds of objects, photographs, videos, audio recordings and written captions that reveal a complex and powerful portrait of the Little Rock, Arkansas-born girl, who trained in cello at Julliard and became a barrier-breaking figure in performance art and curator of the avant garde.

The "Feast of Astonishments" exhibition had its world premiere at the Block in January 2016, travelled to the Grey Art Gallery at New York University in September and arrived in Salzburg for the March 4 opening. The exhibition will be on view through June 18, 2017.

A New York Times review named the exhibition one of the Top 10 exhibitions of 2016, saying "once you plunge in, you're likely to stay, whether you're deepening an existing acquaintance with the artist or meeting [Moorman], as many people will be, for the first time. The days of forgetting and misperceiving are over, and a foundational 20th-century art figure is revealed."

Helming the collaboration was Lisa Corrin, the Block Museum's Ellen Philips Katz director, who was a guest of honor at the Salzburg opening.

"It was very important to us that Charlotte Moorman's contributions to art history be presented in a European museum. She had a very important career in Austria and Germany, in particular, where the art and intellectual communities were open minded and quick to grasp the significance of her performances. She had close relationships with many artists from this region and was a conduit between experimental artists working in the US and those working in Europe." -Lisa Corrin



[L to R: Corinne Granof, curator of academic programs, Block Museum of Art; Sabine Breitwieser, director, Museum der Moderne Salzburg; Lisa Corrin, director, Block Museum of Art; and Brigitta Pallauf, President of the Regional Parliament, Salzburg Landtag]

“ Charlotte Moorman was, of course, one of the great ambassadors for new music and she would have been so proud, I think, to know that she was being honored in the home of Mozart. He was a radical who pushed the boundaries of music in his time just as Moorman did in hers. She believed in the classical tradition as the foundation of all further experimentation. She also believed that to keep this hallowed art form alive and evolving, you had to learn all of its rules and then learn to break them. ” -Lisa Corrin

The Museum der Moderne Salzburg and Block Museum hosted a private tour and reception of the exhibition for Northwestern alumni in the area during the opening weekend.

The Topless Cellist

For three decades, beginning in 1960, Moorman’s dedication to a radically new way of looking at music and art took many forms, some extreme, from playing the cello while suspended by helium balloons over the Sydney Opera House to performing on an “ice cello” in the nude.

Charlotte Moorman was jailed and convicted for indecent exposure in 1964 for a performance of “Opera Sextronic,” earning her the nickname “the topless cellist.” Classically-trained at Julliard, the avant garde artist and festival curator was often pigeon-holed as a fringe novelty or accessory to video artist Nam June Paik.

Moorman achieved some level of public recognition having appeared on “The Tonight Show” with Johnny Carson and “The Mike Douglas Show,” but didn’t receive her full due until the publication of a 2014 biography by Joan Rothfuss and the 2016 world premiere of the Block Museum’s “Feast of Astonishments” exhibition.

“Feast of Astonishment” Curators and Sponsors

The transatlantic exhibition was made possible with support from the Terra Foundation in Chicago.

The exhibition has been curated by a collaborative team: Lisa G. Corrin, Director, Block Museum; Corinne Granof, Curator of Academic Programs, Block Museum; Scott Krafft, Curator of the Charles Deering McCormick Library of Special Collections, Northwestern University Libraries; Michelle Puetz, Pick-Laudati Curator of Media Arts, Block Museum; Joan Rothfuss, consulting curator and author of *Topless Cellist: The Improbable Life of Charlotte Moorman*; and Laura Wertheim Joseph, Consulting Curatorial Associate. Exhibition design by Dan Silverstein, Associate Director of Collections and Exhibitions Management. The Museum der Moderne Salzburg is directed by Sabine Breitwieser, and curatorial consultation was provided by Tina Teufel, Curator, Museum der Moderne Salzburg.

“A Feast of Astonishments” is organized by the Mary and Leigh Block Museum of Art at Northwestern University, in partnership with Northwestern University Libraries. The exhibition is supported by major grants from the Terra Foundation for American Art and the Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts. Additional generous support is provided by the Elizabeth F. Cheney Foundation; the Alumnae of Northwestern University; the Colonel Eugene E. Myers Foundations; the Illinois Arts Council Agency; Dean of Libraries Discretionary Fund; the Charles Deering McCormick Fund for Special Collections; and the Florence Walton Taylor Fund.