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BLOCK MUSEUM ANNOUNCES 2016 EXHIBITION ON THE ‘TOPLESS CELLIST’
First major exhibition on Charlotte Moorman, leading organizer of Avant Garde festivals

- Moorman was a passionate, fearless advocate of avant-garde art in the 1960s-1980
- Historically overlooked exhibition puts Moorman on the map in scholarship, art history
- Exhibit showcases vast collection of Northwestern Library’s Charlotte Moorman Archive
- Project supported by The Andy Warhol Foundation and Terra Foundation for American Art

EVANSTON, Ill. --- [Charlotte Moorman](#) was a bold, barrier-breaking performer and a tireless champion of the avant-garde. Her freewheeling [Avant Garde festivals](#) brought experimental art to the masses for nearly 20 years. Until now, her story has gone largely untold.

In January 2016, Northwestern University’s [Mary and Leigh Block Museum of Art](#) will present the first exhibition exploring the art and impact of Moorman -- a musician, performance artist and impresario. The exhibition will consider her life, her influence and the transatlantic network of artists across creative fields who were her collaborators in the 1960s through 1980.

The exhibition will travel in fall 2016 to New York University’s [Grey Art Gallery](#) in Manhattan, the site of Moorman’s most comprehensive activities. The exhibition is being supported through major grants from [The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts](#) and the [Terra Foundation for American Art](#).

To date, recognition of Moorman has been limited to her collaborations with other artists, including composer John Cage and Korean-American multimedia artist Nam June Paik, and to her 1967 performance of Paik’s [“Opera Sextronique,”](#) for which she became known as the “topless cellist” after being arrested on indecency charges.

The Block Museum’s upcoming exhibition goes deeper to examine Moorman as a leading international figure of a seminal period in the recent history of experimental art. Her Avant Garde festivals, which took place in such varied New York locations as Central Park, on the Staten Island Ferry and in Shea Stadium, also were the precursors of many of today’s citywide arts festivals with their focus on innovative use of public spaces to connect new art forms to a wider audience.

The Block Winter 2016 exhibition will feature original sculptures, photographs, video art works, recreated installations, newly discovered props and costumes for performance art works, annotated music scores, archival materials, film clips and audio recordings. Many of these objects will be drawn from a one-of-a-kind archival resource held at Northwestern University Library, the Charlotte Moorman Archive, acquired by the [Charles Deering McCormick Library of Special Collections](#) in 2001.

The exhibition is being organized by [Lisa Corrin](#), the Block Museum's Ellen Philips Katz Director and curator of modern and contemporary art; Corinne Granof, Block curator of academic programs and a specialist in artistic connections between postwar U.S. and Germany; and [Joan Rothfuss](#), consulting curator, premier Charlotte Moorman scholar and author of the first Moorman biography, "[Topless Cellist: The Improbable Life of Charlotte Moorman](#)," released by MIT Press in Fall 2014.

An exhibition catalogue published by [Northwestern University Press](#) will feature new scholarship from art historians, musicologists and experts on the 1960s and 1970s, including, [Hannah B. Higgins](#), professor in the School of Art and Art History at the University of Chicago; [Kristine Stiles](#), France Family Professor of Art, Art History and Visual Studies at Duke University; and [Kathy O'Dell](#), associate professor of art history and museum studies, University of Maryland, Baltimore County. It also will feature essays by emerging scholars in the field. The volume will extend and complement Rothfuss' biography and existing scholarship on the period by illuminating the artistic activities of Moorman and her circle within a broad social and aesthetic context.

For more information on this upcoming exhibition, contact: Joanna Gueller, communications manager, Block Museum of Art, at 847-467-4602 or joanna.gueller@northwestern.edu.

ABOUT THE MARY AND LEIGH BLOCK MUSEUM OF ART

The [Mary and Leigh Block Museum of Art](#) is the fine art museum of Northwestern University. It serves the academic and cultural needs of the University and Chicago-area community with thought-provoking exhibitions, a rich and diverse permanent collection, dynamic programs, and classic and contemporary film screenings at Block Cinema.

Celebrating its 35th anniversary in 2015, the Block is a dynamic, imaginative teaching and learning resource that aims to inspire a new generation of artists, scholars and arts professionals. Admission is free and open to all, and visitors are invited to participate in experiential learning opportunities that bridge the classroom and the world beyond the campus. Learn more at www.blockmuseum.northwestern.edu.

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