

Eleanor Antin: Time's Arrow

Eleanor Antin (b.1935) is one of the most important artists of her generation and a pioneer of performance and conceptual art in Southern California. In 1972, she challenged definitions of sculpture, self-portraiture, photographic documentation, and performance with *CARVING: A Traditional Sculpture*. Presented as a grid of 148 photographs, the work shows the transformation of Antin's body as she lost ten pounds over thirty-seven days by following a strict diet regimen; each vertical column of four photographs represents a day of her performance. In 2017, Antin restaged her landmark piece, creating the monumental sculpture *CARVING: 45 Years Later*. She again documented her weight loss, producing five hundred photographs over the course of one hundred days, with a fifth row added to the sequence.

For Antin, this practice is akin to that of a classical sculptor who removes one layer after another, but she manipulates her own body, rather than stone, as material. Antin was originally inspired to "carve" her body after receiving an invitation from the Whitney Museum of American Art to contribute work to its 1973 biennial survey of painting and sculpture. Antin submitted *CARVING: A Traditional Sculpture*, but the Whitney curators did not accept the work, suggesting that, to them, it was not sculpture but conceptual art. Since then, the work has been acquired by the Art Institute of Chicago, internationally exhibited, and widely recognized as a masterpiece.

CARVING: 45 Years Later is shown publicly here for the first time, alongside a 2017 self-portrait and a serial work from 1972. The new *CARVING* draws attention not only to the artist's physical manipulation of her body, but also to her transformation over a lifetime. Antin considers the piece to be "even more political than the earlier one.... *CARVING: 45 Years Later* depicts my belief that the older body is to be respected and admired. After all, it made it!"