



Eleanor Antin, *Love's Shadow from Loves of a Ballerina*, 1987, installation with video projection. Los Angeles County Museum of Art.

## Eleanor Antin

LOS ANGELES COUNTY MUSEUM  
OF ART

*Los Angeles*

This absorbing retrospective of Eleanor Antin's work, organized by curator Howard N. Fox, focused on the highlights of an original and idiosyncratic career. A pioneer in

performance, conceptual, video, installation, and feminist art, Antin has imaginatively explored her personal identity, both actual and imagined, over the past three decades.

Arranged chronologically, the show permitted the

viewer to map Antin's artistic evolution, from her crudely rendered pieces to her more polished, mature works. This development was best captured by the three personae Antin invented: the king, the nurse, and the ballerina. In performance, photos, and video, she acted out her fantasies as these alter egos, while asserting that women were free to be anything they chose. For the king, Antin donned beard and cape and went out about town having pictures of "himself" taken by passersby. For the nurse, she made feature-length videos, *The Adventures of a Nurse* (1976) and *The Nurse and the Hijackers* (1977), using paper-doll figures that she moved on camera.

Although they often feel like elaborate jokes, her later pieces project a more textured sensibility. As the black ballerina Eleanora Antinova, Antin produced a book of illustrated memoirs, *Recollections of My Life with Diaghilev* (1981), and an accompanying series of silent movies. *Loves of a Ballerina* (1986), the room-size installation at the end of the exhibition, included the corner of a dressing table surrounded by the gaudy effects of a life on the stage, with Antinova's tired face projected onto a mirror on the table. There's a pathos in this life that lingers longer than the smile that the earlier works playfully elicit.

—Scarlet Cheng