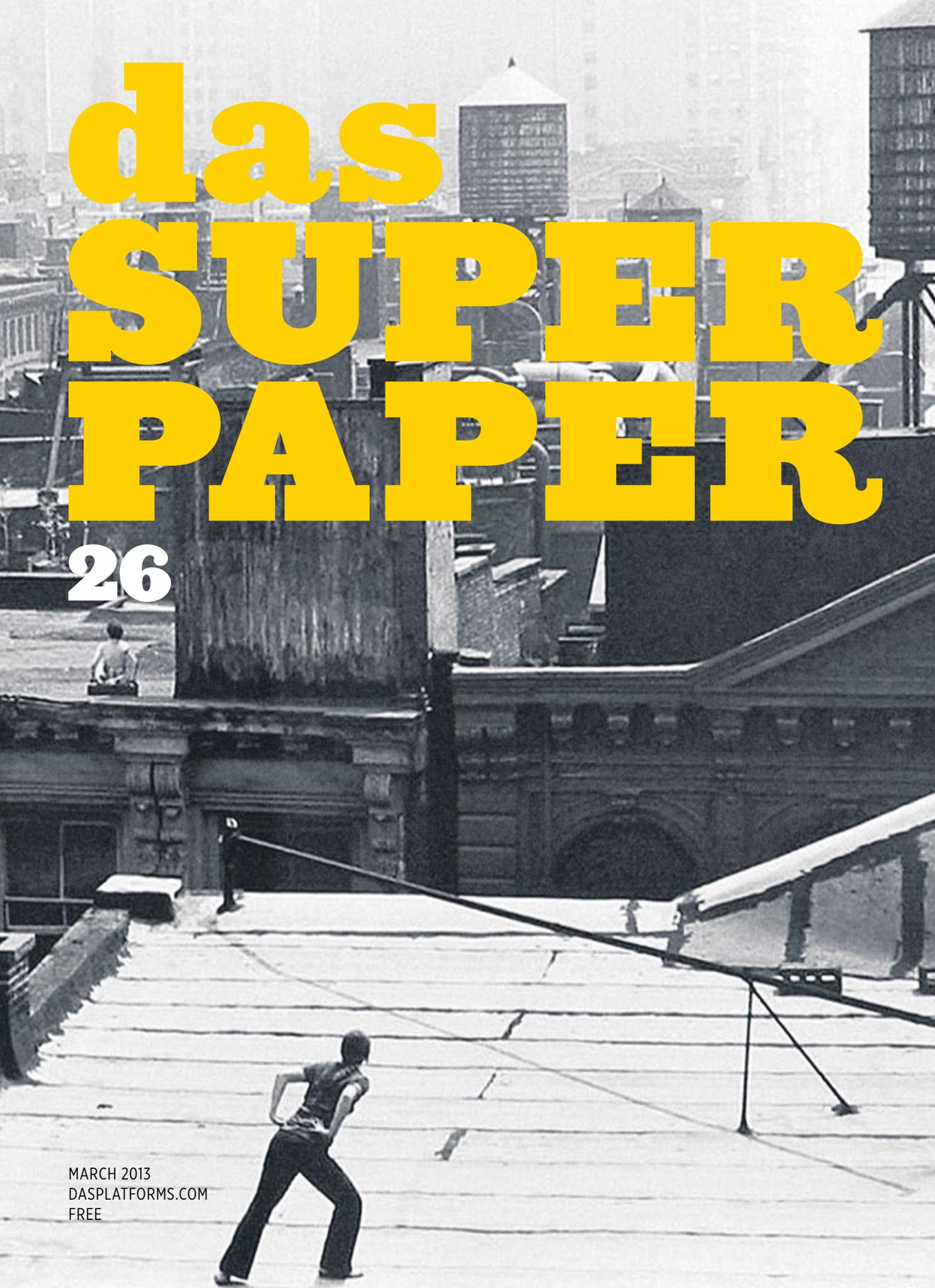


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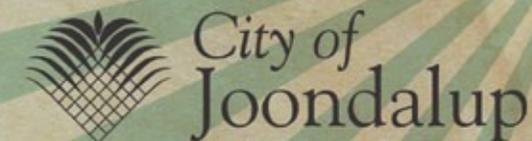


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ISSUE 25: ERRATUM & APOLOGY

In an interview in issue 25 of Das Superpaper, Pedro Reyes discussed his work Sanatorium created for Documenta. The interview makes an inaccurate reference to a work created by Stuart Ringholt (Laughter Workshop), and neglects to attribute the work to Stuart. A photograph of Laughter Workshop taken by Malte Roloff was reproduced without appropriate permissions being obtained and with an inaccurate image credit. The editors of Das Superpaper would like to join Pedro in offering our sincere apologies to Stuart and to Malte. An amended text with correct attributions is available on dasplatforms.com.

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SUPERKALEIDOSCOPE is a collective founded by Australian visual artists and curators Kim Fasher & Sarah Mosca. Collaborating since 2010 they have curated projects in Berlin, Sydney and Melbourne.

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RE: PERFORMANCE AND WHAT WE SPOKE ABOUT ON THE LAST DAY ON EARTH

Performance has a long and rich history within the visual arts, from early 20th century movements like Futurism, Dada, and Bauhaus, to the Happenings, 'actions' and Fluxus movement of the 1960s and 70s.

We are currently witnessing an extraordinary resurgence in the popularity of performance art. The medium has moved from the margins to the centre of contemporary visual art discourse. Recent years have seen performance art being embraced with unprecedented confidence and major institutions have reflected this by presenting shows of mass appeal such as Marina Abramović's *The Artist is Present* exhibited at MOMA, Tino Sehgal's *This Progress* at the Guggenheim Museum, the Tate Modern's new Tanks programming, and locally with the next installment of *13 Rooms* curated by Hans Ulrich Obrist and Klaus Biesenbach.

There is a largely undocumented history of Australian performance art, though in the last decades it has never been absent from our artist-run-spaces, theatres, carparks and galleries. Local organisations such as Performance Space and Artspace have been challenging conventional notions of performance making for the last thirty years.

The contributors to this issue of *Das Superpaper* met for a discussion about performance art at SuperKaleidoscope's studio on the 21st December 2012. We talked about the character and consequences of new performance formats used by artists, curators, and institutions. It became the blueprint for this issue.

Live gestures are one of the most direct expressions you can make in art. We view this in reference to time, history, fiction, participation and collaboration. We also reflect on the recent trend of re-performance and re-enactment that questions the nature of performance art, and how best to preserve it whilst maintaining the potency of the initial physical encounter.

Over the following pages we invite you to consider why performance art is being adopted with such frequency by new generations of artists, and why at this moment, audiences are demanding participation and such an undeviating engagement with their art?

"We must experiment with ways beyond objects."

HANS ULRICH OBRIST

"Performance art is a living form of art and should be re-performed"

MARINA ABRAMOVIĆ

SuperKaleidoscope
(Sarah Mosca and Kim Fasher)

THE ITERABLE GESTURE BY REBECCA ODWYER

"It is impossible to change the factual, thing-like side of the past, but the meaningful, expressive, speaking side can be changed, for it is unfinalised and does not coincide with itself (it is free). The role of memory in this eternal transformation of the past..."

MIKHAEL BAKHTIN,
Transformations in Irish Culture

It may be problematic, admittedly, to distinguish the 'thing-like' past from that of the expressive, or to explain why certain artworks avoid becoming thing-like long after their initial appearance. It is not simply a case of some works remaining more 'memorable', whether in a positive or traumatic sense. Neither do I believe it to be a case of the works in question requiring extension by re-enactment through time into the present, in a movement towards finalisation. The works in question do not require reiteration, but rather hold this trait as structural component. Reiteration is inbuilt, not only now, in the present, but at its initial manifestation.

Consider the gesture: something not enclosed in itself, but rather open-ended and infinitely repeatable. Though the gesture may differ on iteration, the meaning remains comprehensible. This recalls Erwin Panofsky's famous definition of iconographic analysis: a man walks down the street, puts his hand to his hat, takes it off and tips it to me. On a formal level, I observe the shifting contours of colour, shape and volume. However I do not interpret it only in this way, and immediately realise that he is greeting me (albeit in a rather old-fashioned way). This recognition, what Panofsky terms 'synthesis rather than analysis', stems from a three-part interpretation of the gesture, culminating in the understanding that he is greeting me. Thus the gesture – no matter the formal deviations – communicates itself. The meaning, or subject matter, supersedes the differentiation that occurs formally through subsequent reiteration. It is in this way that I view the prevalence of contemporary artistic restaging.

The gesture is designed, and indeed intended for, reiteration. In fact, its functionality cannot continue without reiteration. In that situation, the man greeting me with his hat above would be interpreted only on the basis of his formal

movements, and not on the culturally determined meaning of the particular act. This meaning can only be generated *over time*; I cannot simply decide to start using some new gesture in everyday life – I will be greeted with suspicion and most likely alienated. The same cannot be said of contemporary art. The formation of a new 'gesture' remains fully possible; certain artworks take as their subject matter the iterability of the work of art. In doing so they aim less for the eternal return of the same, and more for the sedimentary evolution of gesture, which punctuates not only contemporary cultural production, but also life itself.

ITERABILITY

Firstly I feel it necessary to explore the specific notion of iterability as developed by Jacques Derrida in the essay *Signature Event Context* (1972). That is, the "the capacity of the sign, or syntactically linked group of signs, to have a basic sense or intelligibility which can be recognised independently of any specific context of application." Although Derrida is referring to the practice of writing, the idea holds great resonance when applied to contemporary artistic production. Derrida diverges from the typical definition of communication as transmission of implicit meaning, moving to a definition allowing for "movement", "tremor" or a "displacement of force". Looking back to Panofsky's unpacking of art-historical analysis, the implications are many. Not only does the gesture fail to communicate by means of transmission, the force of its implicit meaning becomes unfixed, displaced. This, Derrida claims, is through the fundamental absence that lies at the heart of the practice of writing; indeed this absence necessitates the 'iterable' quality which gives structural form to the cultural object, in this case the text:

In order for my 'written communication' to retain its function as writing, i.e. its readability, it must remain readable despite the absolute disappearance of any receiver, determined in general. My communication must be repeatable – iterable – in the absolute absence of the receiver or of any empirically determinable collectivity of receivers. Such iterability... structures the mark of writing itself...a writing that is not structurally readable – iterable – beyond the death of the addressee would not be writing.

But can we apply this line of thought to works of art? I believe we can, and that a transcendental lacuna may be bridged by adoption of an iterable rather than inherent quality of the work of art. This approach may actually facilitate contemporary re-staging, not merely place it to one side by invoking the debased aura of the original work.

Of key importance here is the concept of absence, which Derrida claims to be central to the work's iterability. Firstly, a work of art always denotes absence. Much like writing, the work of art is generally addressed to someone (the viewer, the patron), and holds the marks of someone (the author) either temporarily absent, or dead.¹ As Derrida says, elsewhere:

The 'I died' is not a phenomenologico-grammatical monstrosity, a scandal of common sense or an impossible sentence with no meaning. It is the sense of tense, the grapho-logical time, the implicit tempo of all writing, all painting, of every trace, and even of the presumed present of every cogito ergo sum.

Thus absence, even death, pervades the work of art – indeed any form of representation. The circumstances surrounding the work of art's creation inevitably alter over time; neither party (nor context) can remain present indefinitely.

Therefore the work of art must function in the absence of both primary parties; it must learn to cope, as it were, solo. At the risk of anthropomorphising it, the work of art must hold the property of iterability if it is to remain present for the future. What I argue is that certain works or performative moments hold greater quantities of this trait of iterability. They thus remain active, gesturally, even when re-enacted (re-iterated) by artists such as Gerard Byrne, Marina Abramović or Andrea Fraser.

Derrida tries to imagine a form of communication between two parties which defies subsequent iteration: in short, a 'code' of such complexity that the work could not continue to function in its absence. This, I believe, is the culturally dominant ideal of the work of art – a highly coded, transcendental entity, defiant of future reiteration. However, Derrida shows this to be a fallacy – the structure of the work-as-code is the very trait that will ensure its deciphering and future (re) iteration:

The possibility of repeating, and thus of identifying the marks is implicit in every code, making it into a network...that is communicable, transmittable, decipherable, iterable for a third, and hence for every possible, user in general.

Therefore, through contemporary re-enactment, the founding work (or gesture) might be said to query the function of this 'machine', a system of iterations that remains open and productive through time, and might function definitively in its author's absence. One could argue that another artist could take control of the machine through the restaging of the original. To what extent anyone can control it, however, is uncertain.

Derrida goes on to discuss the spoken utterance, using as his point of departure John Langshaw Austin's seminal lecture series *How To Do Things With Words*, which was held at

Harvard in 1955. Austin defined many kinds of spoken utterance – illocutionary and locutionary, and most crucially the performative², that which "does not describe something that exists outside of language and prior to it. It produces or transforms a situation, it effects."

As with the written word, no sign is un-hackable – its code enables future iteration, or citation. Yet Austin does not allow for this within his interpretation of the performative. Both he and Derrida agree that the performative allows a certain divergence from the pursuit of semantic truth, though Derrida differs from Austin in believing that performativity should account for "the determined modification of a general citationality – or rather, a general iterability – without which there would not even be a 'successful' performative." It is, then, through a Derridian rather than an Austinian-definition of performativity that we can glean insight into the significance of contemporary forms of re-enactment. For, if cultural production can be 'reality-producing' through iteration, then the quest for semantic truth, or 'newness', becomes redundant.

Certain works, works that intimately involve themselves with the iterative capability of the work of art, can hold resonance over and beyond the allusions to appropriation. For though the appropriative work of art functions through citation of what it appropriates, it cannot function in the absence of (the author of) what it appropriates. A Sherrie Levine version of an Egon Schiele, or a re-photographing of works by Walker Evans, cannot function in the absence of the appropriated author. Without the knowledge that these works appropriate *something or someone*, they lose virtually all meaning.

Contemporary examples differentiate from this appropriate

necessity-of-the-author and exemplify a deliberate tactic of placing iterability at the heart of cultural production. For if the form of the gesture, which provides the possibility of contemporary re-enactment, is founded not on newness but citation or iteration, then Derrida is right that "the intention animating...(the gesture) will never be through and through present to itself and its content."

Not only is it not fully evident, or available, to the author, it might only become evident with the passing of time, alongside the residual accumulation of citation and subsequent iteration. It is at this strange place where successful works of contemporary re-enactment find themselves.

1. Through this negotiation of absence through representation Derrida makes the analogy to the act of mourning. For more on the work of art as mourning see his *By Force of Mourning* (1996) in which he says: "such would be the 'primitive' of representation as effect: to presentify, to make the absent present, as if that which returned were the same."

2. For more on the 'reality producing' aspect of performative practices, see Dorothea von Hantelmann's *How To Do Things With Art* (2010). Here Von Hantelmann argues there to be "no performative artwork, because there is no non-performative artwork."

MEMORY, RE-PERFORMANCE AND THE ITERABLE GESTURE PICTORIAL BY SUPERKALEIDESCOPE

Our relationship with the past is continuously being altered by actions taken in the present. There are always certain moments that resist finalisation. This pictorial looks at artists who employ re-performance and re-enactment as tactics in their practice. In doing so they explore the possibility of a history that remains in flux. Here we see artists actively re-engaging with the past. Their performances are grounded in something other than mere nostalgia or aesthetic appropriation. Through re-staging, the original act is modified and complicated by a process of sedimentation and accumulation, allowing us to read new meanings that apply to our present temporal and geographic context.

The process is reminiscent of the act of remembering – whereby every time we recall a memory we are seeing it through the lens of our amassed experience. By re-performing past events a new conception of the artwork is formed, not based on originality, but rather on its resonance or capacity to (re)iterate in any given context.

Anahita Razmi's 2011 work *Roof Piece Tehran*, is a re-performance of Trisha Brown's iconic architectural performance *Roof Piece*, originally staged in New York, 1971. Razmi's complex work looks at how rooftops in Iran became political spaces during the 2009 presidential elections. Her piece references the call and response anonymous shouting demonstrations that echoed out from the

rooftops, illegal satellite dishes transmitting unfiltered foreign media, and the fact that public performances and dance are severely restricted in Iran.

In the 1965 performance work by Joseph Beuys, *How to Explain Pictures to a Dead Hare*, the artist walked around a gallery whispering descriptions of the pictures on the walls to a dead hare held in his arms. This seminal work was re-created by Marina Abramović in 2005 at the Guggenheim in New York as part of her re-performance series *Seven Easy Pieces*. Abramović was not present at the original staging of the event so her re-performance was constructed from iconic photo-documentation and accounts, and performed for a duration of 7 hours.

Jeremy Deller's *The Battle of Orgreave* (2001) was a spectacular re-enactment of the historic National Union of Mineworkers strike (1984), where violent confrontations between police and rioters took place at a coking plant in South Yorkshire. More than 800 people participated in Deller's performance piece, including miners and policemen from the original strike and others drawn from battle re-enactment societies across England.

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Anahita Razmi
Roof Piece Tehran 2011
Video installation,
12 videoloops,
18 min 11 sec each
The Emdash Award
2011 Commissioned
and Produced by
Frieze Foundation
for Frieze Projects 2011,
in cooperation with
Hasti Goudarzi



•| Babette Mangolte:
Trisha Brown
Roof Piece 1973
53 Wooster Street
to 381 Lafayette Street,
New York City (1973)
Copyright by Babette
Mangolte (All Rights of
Reproduction Reserved)

•| Anahita Razmi
Roof Piece Tehran 2011
Video installation,
12 videoloops,
18 min 11 sec each
The Emdash Award
2011 Commissioned
and Produced by
Frieze Foundation
for Frieze Projects 2011,
in cooperation with
Hasti Goudarzi





•| Ute Klophaus,
Joseph Beuys
Joseph Beuys in the
Action 'Explaining
pictures to a dead hare'
1965 (printed later),
1997 (printed)
Gelatin silver
photograph,
30.7 x 20.5 cm
Art Gallery of New
South Wales
Mervyn Horton
Bequest Fund 1997
© Ute Klophaus

•| Marina Abramović
performing Joseph
Beuys, *How to Explain
Pictures to a Dead
Hare* 1965 November
13, 2005, Solomon R.
Guggenheim Museum,
New York. Photograph
by Kathryn Carr
© The Solomon R.
Guggenheim
Foundation, New York.



••
Image courtesy of
Press Association.
18 June 1984. Today's
scene of violence
outside the Orgreave
Coking Plant near
Rotherham, where
police, with mounted
police support, clashed
with miner's pickets



••
Jeremy Deller
*The Battle of
Orgreave 2001.*
An Artangel
commission.
Image by
Martin Jenkinson.



INDIFFERENCE AND REPETITION AN INTERVIEW WITH TEHCHING HSIEH BY AMELIA GROOM

On September 30, 1978, Tehching Hsieh vowed to seal himself off in a cage inside his downtown New York studio, for one year. “I shall NOT converse, read, write, listen to the radio or watch television,” he wrote, “until I unseal myself on September 29, 1979.” A friend came daily to deliver his food and remove his waste. This became the first in a series of simple but arduous year-long performance works carried out by the artist.

For *Time Clock Piece*, he punched a worker’s time clock in his studio, every hour on the hour, day and night, from April 11, 1980 to April 11, 1981. He photographed himself each time he ‘clocked in’, and the thousands of resulting images were made into a time-lapse film, condensing 365 days into six minutes. For *Outdoor Piece* (1981-82), he vowed “I shall stay OUTDOORS for one year, never go inside. I shall not go into a building, subway, train, car, airplane, ship, cave, tent.” *Rope Piece* had him tied to the performance artist Linda Montano by an eight-foot rope, from the 4th of July 1983 to the 4th of July 1984.

A few months after completing that work, Hsieh announced his *No Art* performance piece, for which he would not make any art or engage with anything related to art for one year. His sixth and final durational performance work was his ‘thirteen-year plan’ (1986-1999), during which time he declared he would make art without showing it to anyone. After that, he said he would “just go on in life.” I recently emailed him with some questions.

You started out as a painter. Why did you change to live art?

There was a gradual process from painting to performance. They are my cognition of art in different times.

For your first performance piece, you jumped out of a second storey window and broke both ankles. Are you some kind of masochist?

The work is destructive, it is a gesture of saying goodbye to painting, broken ankles were out of my prediction. I have no interest in masochism.

Was physical struggle part of what you were communicating through the long duration works, or just a side effect?

The struggle is there because of the situation in life and in art, but I don’t emphasise it, my work is not autobiographical.

After moving from Taiwan to New York as an illegal immigrant, your first one-year performance saw you in voluntary solitary confinement, alone in a cage without speaking, reading or writing for twelve months. Was it boring in the cage?

Staying in a cage for a few days can be boring. Staying for 365 days, it is not the same anymore and you are brought to another state of living. You need to do intense thinking to survive through the year, otherwise you could lose your mind.

Is there a particular sort of freedom to be found in self-imposed constraint?

I didn’t need to deal with trifles in daily life when staying in the cage, I had freethinking, I lived thoroughly in art time and just passed time. The freedom found in the confinement is what one could find in a difficult situation, it is a way to understand life.

Your second one-year performance *Time Clock Piece* is a work of monumental monotony. The thing unfolds as one big etcetera – a self-perpetuating reiteration of the same, with nothing new accomplished or accumulated. ‘Clocking in’ is the start of the worker’s day: by isolating the act and repeating it on loop, you suspended commencement and stretched it out over a whole year. Was this a conscious defiance of the notion of progress?

•/•

Tehching Hsieh
One Year Performance
1978-1979
Photography by:
Cheng Wei Kuong
© 1979 Tehching Hsieh
Courtesy the artist and
Sean Kelly Gallery,
New York

Punching the time clock is itself the work, I didn’t need to produce anything in the context of industrialisation. The 8760 times of punching in throughout the year is repetition, but in another way, each punch in is different from any other punch in, as time passes by.

The conditions of this work meant you couldn’t ever fall asleep or leave your studio for more than an hour at once, for a whole year. It’s as if you were making literal what the anarchist George Woodcock termed ‘the tyranny of the clock’ in 1944. Were you thinking at all about the mechanised regulation of time through the worker’s body that was brought about after industrialisation?

I thought of industrialisation but that is not what I wanted to say, I’m not a political artist. Although the time clock was invented to track an employee’s working time, I used it to record the whole passing of time, 24 hours a day for the duration of one year in life, like the nonstop beat of a heart. Life time and work time are included in this one year of art time.

Unable to legally work in the US, you dressed yourself in a worker’s uniform and enacted labour without production. Can we think of this as the *reductio ad absurdum* of industriousness – where deadpan diligence and punctuality in the extreme amount to an elaborate emblem of inefficacy?

To me this piece approaches time from a more philosophical perspective than that of industrialisation. Instead of the 9-5 working day, the time used in this piece is the time of life. The 24-hour punch in is necessary to record the continuity of time passing. I believe Sisyphus pushes the boulder 24 hours a day, not 9–5, and he does it forever.

You have often named Sisyphus as an early influence on your practice. How did the influence manifest?

I read Albert Camus’s *The Myth of Sisyphus* when I was 18, and I encountered its inspiration again and again in my early age. Rebellion, betrayal, crime, punishment, suffering and freedom form a cycle in my life experience, and are transformed in art.

The other influences you have named are Dostoevsky, Kafka and Nietzsche. These are all literary figures – why did your works take the form of performance? Did you need to be outside of language?

I’m not a person using words to create, I use art, but their thoughts inspire me, and I practice in life.

What is time?

Once a child asked me, “is future yesterday?” We all ask questions about time in different ways. Time is beyond my understanding, I only experience time by doing life.

Albert Einstein: “An hour sitting with a pretty girl on a park bench passes like a minute, but a minute sitting on a hot stove seems like an hour.” Was your own perception of time altered during the one-year performance works?

My works are like a mixture of sitting on a park bench with a girl and sitting on a hot stove. This was how I felt about the passing of time.

Laurie Anderson: “This is the time. And this is the record of the time.” What’s the difference?

For me the difference is between the experience of time and the documents of time. My performances happened in real time, documents are only the record.

Very few people saw your works as they were performed; most of us will only ever have the statements and the photographic/video evidence to go by. What is the relationship between lived time and remembered time in your work? Are the documents secondary traces of the works, or an extension of them, or something else entirely?

Documents are traces of the performances. Compared with the performances themselves, the documents are the tip of the iceberg. Audiences need to use their experience and imagination to explore

the iceberg under the water. There is invisibility in the work, even if you came to the live performances.

Marina Abramović has referred to you as “a master”. Her manifesto states “an artist should not make themselves into an idol.” Have you seen her in the Givenchy fashion campaign that just came out?

I don’t really pay attention to fashion and am not sure if that means she is an idol. As a powerful artist and a beautiful person, Marina is favoured by the times. Her ambition in art is much bigger than being an idol.

Having gained a level of notoriety in the New York art world at the time, your fifth and final one-year performance piece was a staged negation: you stated that starting 1 July, 1985 you would “not do ART, not talk ART, not see ART, not read ART, not go to an ART gallery and ART museum for one year.” Instead you would “just do life.” What is the difference between art and life?

All my works are about doing life and passing time. Doing nothing, just passing time and thinking were my mentality and I turned it into the practice of my art and life.

After this abstention from anything art-related (paradoxically carried out as art), you announced a thirteen-year plan, to commence on your 36th birthday in 1986 and continue until your 49th birthday. Your statement read “I will make ART during this time. I will not show it PUBLICALLY.” Why this resistance to being public?

After the *No Art* piece, it seemed contradictory to go back to doing art publicly. I had to do art underground for a longer period of time, which was the last thirteen years of the millennium.

Is art without a public still art?

Art cannot exist without public, but the public could be in the future – I published the work after thirteen years.

You made such radical work, but operated so quietly. Until very recently, you were excluded from all the standard surveys of performance and body art – and then in 2009 MoMA and the Guggenheim Museum in New York both showed your work, and Adrian Heathfield’s huge monograph *Out of Now* was published, and there was a sudden resurgence of interest. Why did it take so long for people to look at what you had done in the 70s and 80s?

There are reasons not in my control. My work is done in my studio or in the streets, outside the system of the art world. Most of my work was done when I was an illegal immigrant with less publicity, and the work itself is not easy to categorise. Also it is to do with my personality, but I feel comfortable with this slow and durational recognition.

You have stated that you stopped making art because you ran out of ideas. Did you say everything you wanted to say with the six completed works?

My art is not finished, I just don’t do art anymore.

Now you are “just doing life.” Will you ever make art again?

Not doing art anymore is an exit for me. Art or life, to me the quality is not much different, without the form of art, still, life is life sentence, life is passing time, life is freethinking.



|•/•
Tina Havelock Stevens
is White Drummer
HD Video Still
from *Submerge* 2013
MONA FOMA 2013
© the artist

MOFO & CROSS-DISCIPLINARITY BY CARRIE MILLER

While cross-disciplinarity is nothing new in the broad sweep of art history, there has been a recent preoccupation with cross-disciplinary, interdisciplinary, or, to put it yet another way, *anti-disciplinary* practices. It's more than mere chance that the ascendancy of these practices has coincided with the erosion of disciplinary boundaries in the academy. The desire to deconstruct the traditional categorical distinctions in art history and theory is not only influenced by the dominance of postmodernism, it's also part of the rise of a visual culture which is antagonistic to the notion of discrete disciplinary models of analysis. This has led to a number of artists taking as the starting point of their practice, say, identity politics, and privileging theories around that conceptual trope over the way they choose to materialise it in an object or action.

There has been an almost unquestioning celebration of this breaching of conventional disciplinary fields and categories which has attracted substantial institutional support. Many universities now offer postgraduate qualifications in cross-disciplinary practice, the Australia Council established the Inter-Arts Office specifically to support interdisciplinary art practices, and a number of traditional visual arts institutions have chosen to exhibit art that occupies an expanded creative context.

An often unacknowledged problem with interdisciplinarity, however, is that of discipline itself. Much of this art suffers from a lack of rigour which, on the face of it, appears to come from a failure to master a single area of expertise and therefore a general lack of proficiency by artists who range across a number of fields. But an alternative explanation for the mediocrity that characterises a lot of cross-disciplinary practice is that it is too concerned with resolution of ideas that are then given material form rather than understanding the material context of the work as providing its own unique conceptual terrain.

MONA FOMA is a festival in Hobart that celebrates an 'anything goes' approach to art-making. And this year there were a series of works that show anti-disciplinary practices don't have to be mediocre. Tina Havelock Stevens' knockout performance on opening night demonstrated her core interest in the body as a site of immanent meaning. The visual elements of the performance – her witchy sea creature costume, her drum kit affixed to a cage, the crane that hoisted her into Salamanca Bay, but particularly the specificity of the artist's body – all combined in a moment of pure presence with her subaquatic endurance drumming performance, proving that a feminist punk ethic can produce an inspired and enduring aesthetic. It was the Dionysian union of Havelock Stevens' high-octane underwater drumming and a crowd that was ready for anything which ultimately constituted the work *White Drummer* as it was taking place.

And connections were everywhere in the collaborative work of interdisciplinary artists Vicky Browne and Darren Seltmann. The implication in *Synchronic Lines* is of a

collective mind, and the work's seamless, hand-made elegance a sign that it was made by one. There were connections in the careful glue joints between all the pieces of cardboard which made up the audio pods, and connections to the Mylar tent upstairs where the noise made by the pods was transmitted. The audience was left to interact with the work by manipulating the knobs inside the pods to create noise, and to experience that noise upstairs in the magical space of the Mylar tent. In other words, to complete its meaning or function in their own way.

There is a fierce intelligence behind the work of these artists. And both Havelock Stevens and Seltmann have been successful in other creative industries; even Browne, while a visual artist, has a unique flair for sound. Yet they don't rely on fixed conceptual meaning or their superior technical facility to determine the experience of their art. Instead, there are a million ideas sparking off these works which are all part of a series of ongoing conversations which fuel the artists' practices. Which is why they are cross-disciplinary artists in the best sense: comfortable to let the material speak for itself and for the audience to speak back.





A PLACE OF ACTION PERFORMA FOUNDING DIRECTOR & CURATOR ROSELEE GOLDBERG INTERVIEWED BY BREE RICHARDS

RoseLee Goldberg is an art historian, critic and curator who has dedicated her career to exploring the critical role of live performance in art history, and establishing new models for its interpretation and presentation. She is the author of the seminal survey 'Performance Art: From Futurism to the Present', which remains an influential text on the history of performance art and in 2012 was released in its third edition. In 2004 Goldberg founded PERFORMA, a multi-disciplinary arts organisation devoted to the research, development and presentation of performance across disciplines. Centred on a performance biennial in New York City, Performa seeks to engage artists and audiences, generating new directions for performance in the 21st century. Performa will present its fifth biennial, in November this year.

In February I emailed RoseLee Goldberg with questions about her perspective on performance. These are her responses.

Bree Richards: Performance has undergone a real resurgence in recent years, transitioning from the margins to the centre of contemporary art discourse. Alongside a marked increase in the number of works and venues, the medium has been embraced by new audiences around the world. What are the driving factors behind this embrace?

RoseLee Goldberg: Many factors come into play – perhaps the main one being the excitement of a greatly expanded art audience to engage directly with artists. Another is the fact that the museum of the 21st century is entirely different from the art museum of just a decade or two ago. Then, they were quiet places of contemplation, of study; we spoke in whispers and tiptoed through the haloed halls of legitimised art history. The museum today is a cultural pleasure palace where large audiences can gather, and where they are as likely to experience a slide down a two-storey shoot that also doubles as a sculpture, to eat a meal in a specially constructed artist's kitchen, or

to lie on pillows listening to avant-garde music scores. A third factor is an art historical one; the 1970s, which was in many ways a 'golden age' of performance and conceptual art is now history. The story of this work must now be told in every contemporary art museum.

You've described how for the Futurists in 1909 the train, car, plane and machine were the basis for an evolving aesthetic. Is there an equivalent for performance artists in 2013, or is the field just too broad?

The Futurists responded to the thrill of speed represented by the train, the car, the plane. These high-powered machines distributed people and information around the globe at speeds unimaginable in the 19th century. The equivalent for us today is the computer, the Internet, and the ever more advanced technologies that are spinning us faster and faster into the future. This is the powerful aesthetic of our times. It is very similar to the massive shift that occurred at the beginning of the last century

Why do you think performance has often been the medium of choice for artists seeking to articulate 'difference', and for entering into wider conversations about global culture?

Because performance is without rules, without an academy, without gatekeepers. In the 1970s it was a platform for feminist politics, in the 80s, for multiculturalism, gender identity and AIDS activism, and in the 90s it provided a vehicle for a new generation of artists from China, South Africa, Cuba, to become known globally in the international art world. Performance engages people – even if paradoxically it might initially seem incomprehensible – because it is a direct experience. People can 'read' other people, and they feel free to respond and to make their opinions known. It provokes conversation and a community of viewers. This is much more difficult if you're standing in front of an abstract painting.

What role have the abundance of new technologies had on the reception of performance, given it is now easier than ever before to access at a remove? And what flow-on effect has this had for artists attempting to negotiate the tension between the original live performance and its representation in film, photography, video, or in other media?

Indeed, an enormous effect, mostly because this work can be seen around the world. The internet, YouTube, Vimeo have been critical in informing people about the extensive history of performance, so at last there is knowledge being built around a broad range of material which leads to comparisons and criticism and a sense of excitement that comes with that knowledge. As with any art, each 'representation' of the form flows through many different media; the Mona Lisa is known through images, post-cards, publications, films, Instagram. Many people probably know the work through other means than the numbers who actually see the real thing. It is interesting to note that Performa had more than 4,000,000 hits on our website during three weeks of Performa 11. Performance is all about media, so it is the perfect form and content for 21st century technologies

In recent years a number of major museums have established performance

art departments, appointed specialist curators, built dedicated spaces and turned their attention to questions about how performance might be collected and preserved. Why do you think it has taken so long for this to happen?

Yes, it has taken a very long time because art historians and critics rarely understood the critical role of live performance by visual artists in shaping the history of art. Throughout the entire 20th century artists have worked across media, in film, sound, language, dance, music and architecture, influencing each other and pushing and pulling ideas in all kinds of exciting directions. I will acknowledge that it is a lot of work to stay current with so many distinct disciplines and their histories and to understand where the connections and the deep influences occur. Back to your first question about why the increasing interest in performance now: the nature of the contemporary museum as a place of action, the 70s now being history and so on. It's why I started Performa, because I felt it was taking too long to get this message across, and I was determined to show the importance of performance as central to the history of art, not a side-show, in the most public way and to insist that it was time that museums did just that – start their own performance art departments to catch up with a medium that will be used more and more by up and coming generations of artists.

Given that museums are now responding to the history of performance art, do you think re-staging early seminal performances is problematic? Or can it help to open up a dialogue about curating, conserving and presenting performance history?

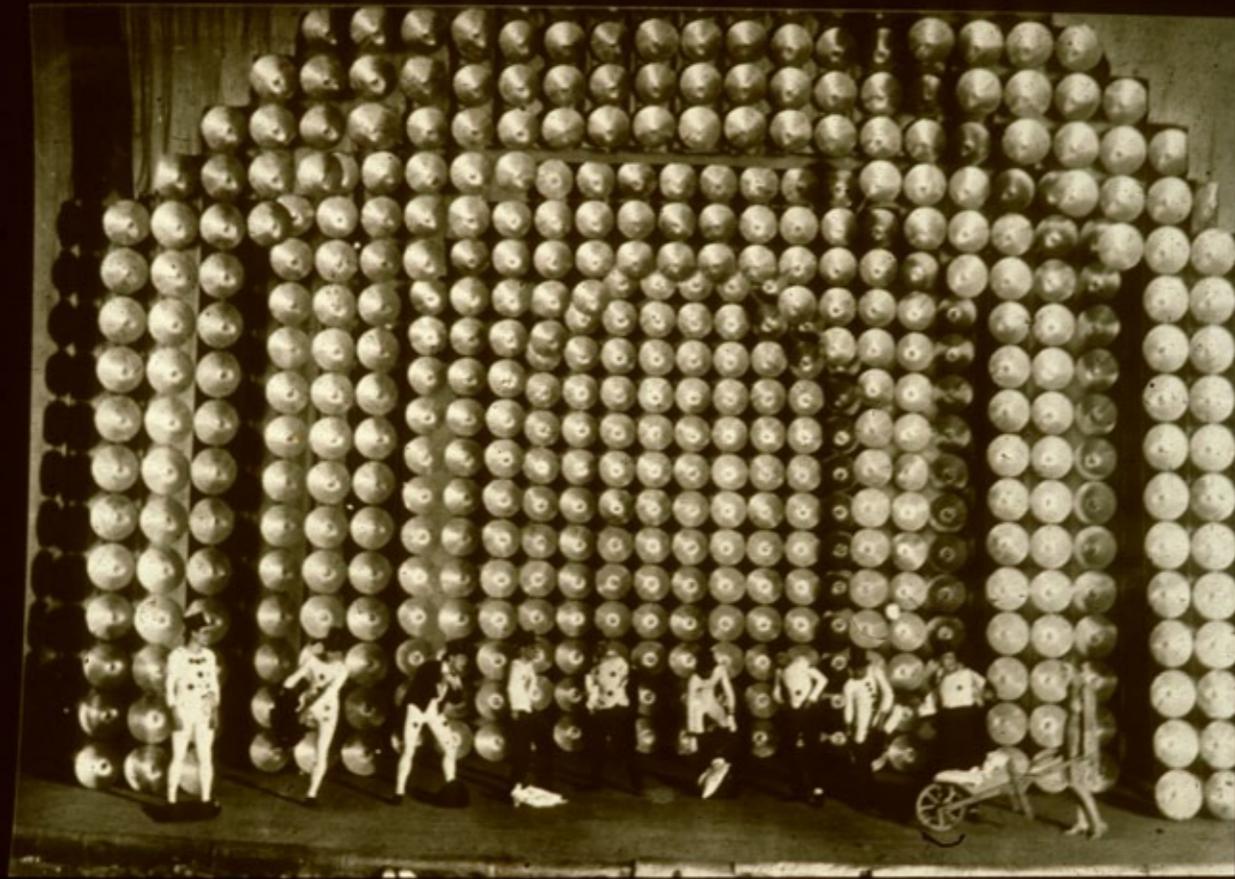
As any educator knows, 'acting out' is a terrific way to bring a concept to life. Re-staging seminal performances opens up fascinating discussions about the nature of performance, its ephemerality, how artists use it to express particular concepts. It provides an opportunity to revisit the times when the piece was originally made. Curating, whether of performance, painting, or sculpture, demands extensive knowledge on the part of the curator, and real talent and sensitivity as well, to make sense of the past and to present work to the public in a way that is gripping and illuminating.

And finally, what is it about performance that continues to excite you?

It incorporates all disciplines; it reflects contemporary politics, economics, global developments. It is always in progress, shifting and changing. It is many-layered, involving ideas as much as the physical body, space and place as much as context and aesthetics.

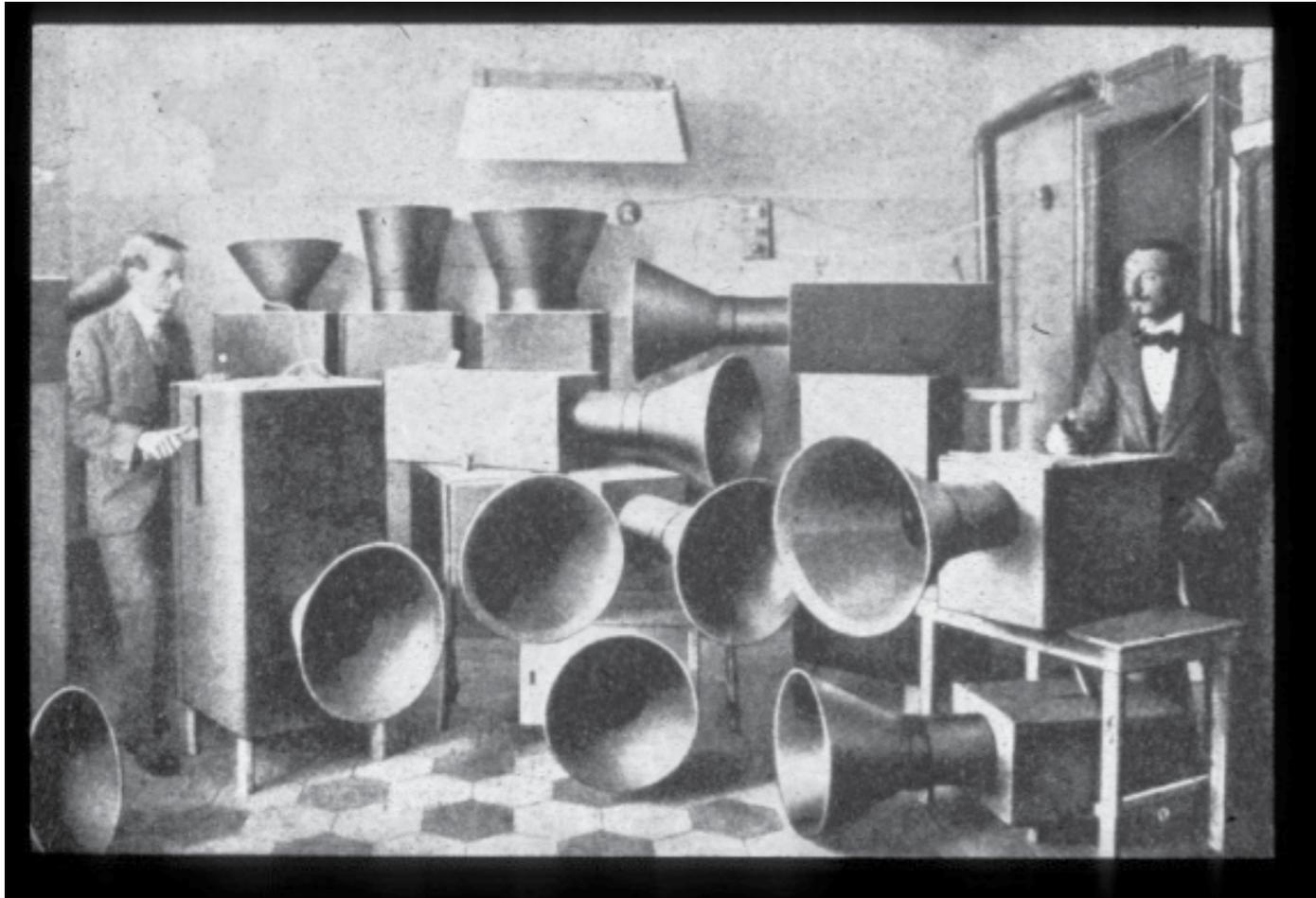
•| Francis Picabia and Erik Satie, *Relâche*, 1924.

|• Ryan McNamara, *Re: Re: Re: Relache Tribute to Francis Picabia & Erik Satie Relâche*, 2012. Performance View. Photo by Patrick McMullan. Courtesy Performa.



•| Russolo and his Assistant Piatti with *Intonarumori*, or noise instruments, 1913

•| Luciano Chessa, *Music for 16 Futurist Noise Intoners*, 2009. PERFORMA 09. Performance View. Photo by Paula Court. Courtesy Performa.



FICTION: PERFORMING IDENTITY BY ROBYN STUART & NICK GARNER

For six weeks in 2006, the home of German-born, Canada-based sculptor Joseph Wagenbach (b. 1929) was open to visitors for the first time. During this period, more than a thousand visitors were able to experience Wagenbach's incredible legacy first-hand in the physically immersive environment of his home. The Municipal Archives moved in to sort through the home, and Senior Archivist Iris Häussler conducted tours through rooms filled with hundreds of sculptures. As one visitor wrote "the small rooms were packed with a veritable pandemonium of amorphous, organic forms... They rested on shelves, huddled in corners as if murmuring to each other, dusted with cement. Who lived here? What caused him to transform his space in this consuming manner?"

The answer: no one. There was no Joseph Wagenbach. The house, the artist's biography, the sculptures, the on-site archival office, and the accompanying website were all the creation of Häussler herself. Häussler is adamant that her aim was not to deceive her audience; as part of their experience of the work, audiences were supposed to come to the realisation that Wagenbach was a fictional protagonist. Häussler compares herself to a writer:

My work revolves around fictitious narratives. I draft figures like a writer does, inventing their biographies, setting their lives into an urban, inconspicuous environment, equipping them with visually productive life-habits that lead into intensely sculptured interiors.

The Legacy of Joseph Wagenbach is based on the understanding that the biography of the artist is fundamental to the way that art is read. The biographical obsession goes back to 1550, when Giorgio Vasari published his monumental *Lives of the Most Excellent Painters, Sculptors and Architects*, and set the ideological foundation for art-historical writing. The artist's biography provides a narrative framework propped up by signifiers (*Canada-based, immigrant, born 1929, outsider artist, etc.*). Printed neatly on white cards stuck on museum walls, a biography is the cryptographic key by which audiences read the works. But of course, a biography is just words, and as long as there have been words people have been using them to construct fictions.

Perhaps it's telling that 460 years after Vasari's tome, Koen Brams published the equally lengthy *Encyclopaedia of Fictional Artists 1605–2010*. If Foucault imagined a world where all artistic production continued for one year but the identities of the artists were removed, Brams' encyclopaedia imagines the opposite: no art, no artists, just pure, unencumbered biographical data.

Q: Which of these biographies describes a real artist?

1. Charles Rosenthal was born in 1898 to a Ukrainian Jewish family. He studied at an art school in Vitebsk; founded by Mark Chagall before

moving to Paris in 1922. When he was killed in an automobile accident in 1933, 30 paintings and 40 drawings were recovered from his studio in Montmartre.

2. Ilya Kabokov was born in 1933 to a Ukrainian Jewish family. He studied at an art school in Moscow and became a member of the Union of Soviet Artists, which enabled him to work as a children's book illustrator. Despite the Soviet ban on 'unofficial' art production, Kabokov began making work separately to this official employment. He emigrated to Berlin and then New York in the 1990s.

In writing about fictitious artists, there's a sense that perhaps we shouldn't give the game away. Perhaps rather than the smug reveal – *the answer is B, Ilya Kabokov!* – we should prop up the performance by playing along. There's also a paranoia that perhaps we ourselves are still being played: perhaps we haven't quite peeled away all the layers. What if the real punchline is not that Ilya Kabokov created Charles Rosenthal, but the other way around? Perhaps we've been outwitted by a cunning artist, who's tricked us into thinking that we're experiencing fiction when in fact it's all fact.

It doesn't help that all our research has been done through that notorious liar, the internet. Fictitious artists predate the internet by aeons (particularly if you give any credibility to the theory that Shakespeare was one), but there's no doubt that the internet considerably sped things up. Nowadays, in less than ten minutes you could create your very own fictional artist, along with a fictional gallery to represent them, write-ups on half a dozen fictional blogs and a fake Wikipedia entry. It's so easy, too easy, and because it's predicated on deception, the fictitious artist can quickly become elitist, the very embodiment of the art world's navel-gazing self-obsession. If it's to avoid these claims, the fictitious artist has to go beyond the *Ha! Tricked you* moment.

After the Moment of Reveal, what's left? The intention of fictitious artists ranges from institutional critique, questioning notions of

authorship and value, subverting preconceived paradigms... in short, it's a roll call of what you could cynically think of as the usual suspects of contemporary art production. But so much of the beauty of fictitious artists lies in their simulation of a reality which is *just plausible enough*. It's not necessarily meant to deceive, but to offer up an alternative, to foster a speculative state of mind.

Mark Manders, an artist who has spent 15 years designing buildings for a fictional persona, puts it this way: **My work is an ode to the fictional, 'as if' way of thinking. I believe it's important that people deal with fiction as if it were reality, while understanding that it's fiction.**

What Manders is describing formed the plot of the 1945 play *An Inspector Calls*, in which a family is visited one evening by an inspector investigating the suicide of a young woman. Under interrogation, the family are revealed to have effected the woman's exploitation and utter social ruin – and even the phone call that reveals that the inspector was a fake and that no suicide was reported cannot absolve the family from the crime.

In other words, there doesn't have to be a real Joseph Wagenbach, a real Shakespeare, a real Charles Rosenthal or a real suicide. Rather, the point is to inaugurate a performance of an alternative reality in which the audience is willingly complicit. Going beyond the idea that what is considered reality is taken from a set of relative fictions that we as a society find generally agreeable, the simple act of querying the relationship between author, text and audience not only validates a range of perspectives not afforded by the 'accepted narrative' but also generates a whole set of new ones.



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Courtesy of the
Joseph Wagenbach Foundation
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© IRIS HÄUSSLER



•/•
Clark Beaumont
Co-existing, 2013
13 Rooms,
Kaldor Public
Art Projects,
Sydney 2013
Image courtesy
of the artist

MEET CLARK BEAUMONT BY NINA STROMQVIST & DANIELLE ROBSON

When it was announced that Clark Beaumont were chosen as the Australian contingent for Kaldor Public Art Project's much anticipated performance art extravaganza *13 Rooms*, the general flavour of media coverage was of the 'plucked from obscurity' variety. An easy assumption to make. The Brisbane-based duo's new performance piece, *Coexisting*, will feature alongside works by some of the world's greatest living artists, including 'grandmother of performance art' Marina Abramović, Damien Hirst and John Baldessari.

Despite an artistic practice that spans little more than four years, Clark Beaumont (consisting of Sarah Clark and Nicole Beaumont) have maintained an impressive and active career. They have been included in multiple group exhibitions, held two solo shows and presented a number of live performances. They were also one of sixteen artists from across Australia selected for *SafARI 2012*, the unofficial fringe event to the Biennale of Sydney.

As a result, there is a grassroots art world well aware of these early-career artists and the immediacy and honesty contained in their practice. At once arresting and intimate, Clark Beaumont's raw energy is carefully woven into abstract narratives and poignant performances as they wrestle with notions of identity, female subjectivity, intimacy and interpersonal relationships. Although the media may like to claim the duo are unknowns, for two women acutely aware of their place in the world as recent arts graduates, collaborators, friends and confidants, their perceived lack of star status is of little concern. All that matters to them is that they stay true to what makes Clark Beaumont, Clark Beaumont.

What follows is a transcript of a conversation between Sarah and Nicole and the *SafARI 2012* curators Danielle Robson and Nina Stromqvist, where they discuss their work for *13 Rooms*, and what it means to be two people and one artist.

NINA: So, firstly congratulations! We were so excited to hear you were selected. Have you had much contact with the curators Hans Ulrich Obrist and Klaus Biesenbach? Do you know what inspired them to select you?

NICOLE: Thanks Nina! Yes, we have been in contact with the curators in relation to our work for *13 Rooms*, but they've been quite tight-lipped on just why they selected us to begin with. All we know is that Simon Castets [New York-based independent curator] found us on YouTube and recommended us to Hans Ulrich. We are curious, but it's probably best that we don't know too much, otherwise we

may be influenced by what they like. Instead, we can focus on staying true to us!

NINA: There has been a huge shift in the way performance art is being dealt with in the art world recently. *13 Rooms* refers to the project as 'living sculpture', very much dependant on an unmediated engagement with the audience. Not knowing what you're doing specifically for the exhibition, I imagine this is quite different from how you have worked recently, and in fact, goes right back to where you began with one of your first performances, *Undress* (2010).

SARAH: We haven't done live performance in a

while and in coming up with our *13 Rooms* work, it was interesting to see how the medium of live performance informed our concept development.

DANIELLE: What are you able to tell us – are you in costume? Are you present in the performance? Because so far, the Rooms project has involved the artists as directors, instructing interpreters to perform their ideas.

NICOLE: Well, we decided almost immediately that it was essential for us to be in the artwork. Throughout our practice, whether making live or mediated performances, we always use ourselves as both a medium and subject, so it

would have been bizarre for us to use other performers. Unless of course we had them embody us! We just didn't decide to go down that track this time.

SARAH: When thinking about concepts for the work, Nicole and I were focused on creating an artwork that would harness the directness of *13 Rooms*. We wanted to explore our relationship and interact with one another honestly, so we set up parameters that would allow us to do so. For the exhibition, we will be present as ourselves and consequently, we will wear our own clothes.

NINA: Can you tell us more details about the piece?

NICOLE: The work is called *Coexisting*. Sarah and I will be occupying a plinth with a surface area slightly too small for two people to comfortably occupy. As two people, but one artist, Sarah and I must continually navigate the complex terrains of negotiation and compromise in collaborative practice. *Coexisting* will become a physical manifestation of this sharing relationship, as well as a test: over eight hours a day, for eleven days, we will have to physically negotiate our limited space on the plinth together.

SARAH: The work also extends from a historical trajectory of conceptual art concerning the dematerialisation of the art object by explicitly positioning the artist as artwork.

DANIELLE: I love it. You're dependent on each other to stay on the plinth, but also competing against each other for space and comfort. That's a very poignant dynamic that occurs in relationships.

NICOLE: Sarah is afraid of heights.

SARAH: It's not even that high! I just don't like it. And I don't like standing up on it either.

DANIELLE: How did Hans Ulrich Obrist and Klaus Biesenbach respond to your proposal for this work?

SARAH: We received an email from Klaus that simply said 'It's really wonderful!' So that was good, ha! Hans Ulrich was also very positive, but Klaus's one line email really amused us.

NINA: From what I know of the previous iterations of *13 Rooms*, this will work well with its overall minimalist aesthetic.

DANIELLE: It's quite a different approach to the very ambitious work you presented for *SafARI 2012*, *So Where The Boody Hell Are You?* In that work, you pushed yourselves technically to produce a very layered and highly edited video work. Here, it seems like you've reacted against that approach. This work is very powerful, but paired back and ostensibly quite simple to produce.

NICOLE: They are quite different. As a video work, we had months to create the work for *SafARI*, but for *13 Rooms*, the work is in fact made during the exhibition, from the first day to the last. So I think it probably will end up as full on and multi-layered as *So Where the Bloody Hell Are You?* It will just be drawn out over eleven days with different viewers witnessing different aspects of the performance.

NINA: From what I understand, the other performers in *13 Rooms* will be getting breaks. Will you get to rest every two hours?

SARAH: We're talking to the Programs Manager about this actually. We're trying to keep breaks as minimal as possible, so we're always in the room. No one can actually fill in for us, and it's eight or nine hours a day!

DANIELLE: What kind of training are you doing? It's a marathon!

SARAH: I'm trying to run a lot! What we really need is Pilates.

NINA: It's all about the core strength.

NICOLE: We both have bad posture. It's all going to be on display! At the same time though, we don't want to prepare too much. We want our performance to remain as authentic as possible. It will just be what it is. Nothing can prepare us for this kind of endurance work anyway.

DANIELLE: Have you set yourselves a series of parameters or conditions for the performance?

NICOLE: We've decided to be quite loose with rules; although we won't really be interacting with the audience. If something is funny, then we'll let ourselves laugh. We're just going to be ourselves.



CATCHING UP ON OUR OWN HISTORY: PERFORMANCE ART & CULTURAL AMNESIA BY DIANA SMITH

It has been 20 years since Anne Marsh's historical survey of performance art, *Body and Self: Performance Art in Australia 1969-92* was published. In her introduction, Marsh described her goal as addressing a "gap in Australian art history" and noted a certain "cultural amnesia" which had enshrouded certain types of art practice that extended beyond the boundaries of the art museum during the late 1960s and 1970s.¹ The year after Marsh's book was published, artist and academic Sarah Miller built on this point, noting the cultural amnesia evident in the "absence of any but the most fleeting (and typically dismissive) mention of performance art in art critical discourses over the past ten years (as any survey of art journals in this country clearly indicates)." This, Miller suggested, was "particularly fascinating given the plethora of performance art/performance activity taking place in Australia not only throughout the eighties but the nineties, particularly in Sydney."² Two decades on, nothing much has changed. *Body and Self* is still the only publication dedicated to performance art in Australia, and it is out of print. I found my copy many years ago at a second-hand bookstore. It was checked out of Marrickville Council Library in 2004, and today copies are so rare they're almost collector's items, costing around \$400 through online booksellers.³

This cultural amnesia is particularly odd given the explosion in performance art internationally in the last decade. Last year, Amelia Jones observed the "wholesale resurgence" in live art practices, which "has verged on art world obsession."⁴ In Australia there have been new levels of visibility for performance art in major institutions across the country and with it, as curator Reuben Keehan remarks, "a greater purchase among a younger generation of practitioners."⁵ And yet Marsh's text still remains the only comprehensive study on performance art in Australia.

Marsh herself is perplexed that her work has produced so few descendants. In a recent email to me she noted, "it's astounding to me that *Body and Self* is still current in the field (published in 1993!) Why didn't someone else follow up?" As a performance artist interested in the history and lineage of the medium I practice, I find myself pondering this question quite regularly. Why, given the rich and vibrant legacy of performance art in Australia, is the history confined to one book, a collection of magazine articles, catalogue essays, artist monographs and the occasional mention of performance in books on Australian art, few of which reach enough depth to assist in connecting the past with the diverse and expanding array of contemporary practices? As Marsh commented in her email, it's "amazing that we need to keep catching up on our own history." After talking to Marsh, I began searching for the causes of this cultural amnesia in Australia.

The first potential cause relates to the ephemeral nature of the medium itself. Performance art, like many other conceptual practices of the 1960s and 1970s, developed within a particular socio-historic context that stressed, among other things, the 'dematerialisation' of the art object. The focus was on the 'live' moment and the unmediated relationship between performer and spectator. According to performance theorist Peggy Phelan:

Performance's only life is in the present. Performance cannot be saved, recorded, documented, or otherwise participate in the circulation of representations of representations: once it does so it becomes something other than performance.⁶

Perhaps this is why performance art has not been well documented and why, as curator Sue Cramer noted, it is "often hidden from view and not adequately represented in public collections."⁷ Miller took

this one step further, suggesting there are certain hierarchies in the art world that "continue to revolve around the primacy of objects."⁸ Perhaps the lack of history was a byproduct of artists who saw the medium as inherently and exclusively lodged in the present, combined with an institutional structure that favoured collectable objects. Certainly these two factors would, in combination, explain the absence of documentation.

If this is the case, it is unusually specific to Australia. It certainly wasn't such a problem for historians in other parts of the world, where narratives of the medium have been developing since the 1970s. In America Lucy R. Lippard's *Six Years: the Dematerialization of the Art Object* came out in 1973, documenting the work of artists from America, Europe, Asia and even including brief entries on Australian artists Mike Parr, Peter Kennedy and Tim Johnson. In 1974, Lea Vergine's *The Body as Language* was first published in Italy and documented the work of 60 performance artists from America and Europe, although no Australian artists were featured. In 1979, the first edition of RoseLee Goldberg's classic text *Performance Art: From Futurism to the Present* came out in the US and featured American, British and European artists but, again, no Australians. A revised edition released in 2001 acknowledged the existence of "Australian artist Stelarc", but only provided a single sentence of coverage.

In her email to me, Marsh theorised that this dearth of serious critical interest in Australian performance is "primarily because generations of art historians have not chosen Australian art as an option." This is not surprising, given measurements of academic excellence (such as those outlined by the Howard government's Research Quality Framework and Excellence in Research Australia) tend to privilege English and American journals over Australian ones, thereby making it a disincentive to write about something as niche as Australian performance art history.

Accordingly, I began wondering if this lack of interest in our own histories might have something to do with an Australian provincialism, in which we still see ourselves as "a nation in which most activities are derivative and most new ideas are taken from abroad," a point Donald Horne articulated in *The Lucky Country* back in 1964.⁹ Mark Davis

repeated this point in 1997, arguing that "even now, cultural contact with places other than Europe or the USA carries little weight among the cultural establishment."¹⁰ Coverage of cultural activity produced within Australia is still seen as secondary to that produced, and imported, from overseas.

This perhaps helps to explain why Australian artists have been left out of the picture and why our histories are not being written. The relatively undocumented history of video art (the medium that often captures performance art) in Australia also supports this perspective. In 1986 curator Bernice Murphy pointed to the "repeated gaps in transmission" in the history of Australian video art.¹¹ In 2004 writer and curator Daniel Palmer summarised the same topic by remarking, that Australia's "history of video art remains to be written" as it has been "relatively poorly documented and subsequently little known."

Palmer used the same terminology as Marsh, finding that, with the exception of sporadic local histories buried in a few magazine articles and catalogues, video and performance art had been the subject of "cultural amnesia".¹² This helps to explain why most of my artistic references from the canon of performance art are imported from elsewhere, from Yoko Ono's *Cut Piece* (1965) to Carolee Schneeman's *Interior Scroll* (1975) and Marina Abramović's *Rhythm 0* (1974). Whilst these works took place in a markedly different context, it is relatively easy to encounter them (most are visible online), and read their history and critical discussion of their context and impact. By contrast, it is extremely difficult to find comparable discussion regarding artists who directly influenced the development of performance art in Australia, for example Bonita Ely, Joan Grounds or Lyndal Jones. Ely was one of my lecturers at COFA in the early 2000s. I didn't encounter her influential performances *Dogwoman Communicates with the Younger Generation* (1982) and *Dogwoman Makes History* (1985) until after I'd graduated, when I saw her do an artist talk in Korea.

Notably, Bonita Ely, Joan Grounds and Lyndal Jones share another feature in common to many performance artists beyond the relative obscurity of their work. Anne Marsh notes that performance art was an attractive medium for female artists because "it was not entrenched within the art world hierarchy and as a new medium could be used by women to analyse their position in society."¹³ Charles Green, also writing from an Australian perspective, found that women were "dominant in this arena" which did not bring with it the "patriarchal history of sculpture or other more traditional art forms."¹⁴ Another Australian, Nick Waterlow, furthers the suggestion that performance art was a form in which women were particularly prevalent, arguing, "although male artists such as Stelarc, Parr, Danko and Kennedy are central to the narrative of performance, so are equally complex artists such as Bonita Ely, Joan Grounds, Lyndal Jones and Jude Walton."¹⁵

In the USA, Moira Roth notes that performance and the women's movement went hand in hand:

By 1970 women artists had discovered that performance art – a hybrid form which combined visual arts, theater, dance, music, poetry and ritual – could be a particularly suitable form in which to explore their reassessments of themselves and other women. Thus, increasingly over the decade more and more women artists channeled their creative energies into this new medium and in the process transformed its content and form.¹⁶

The high presence of female artists practicing performance art during the 1970s and 1980s may, in itself, suggest another driving force behind the cultural amnesia. The absence of women in art history has been a key subject since the rise of the modern women's movement in the late 1960s. In 1971, Linda Nochlin posed the question, in her landmark essay of the same name, "Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?" She investigated the social and economic factors that had prevented women from achieving the same status as their male counterparts. Nochlin advocated the need for a "feminist critique of the discipline of art history" and the entire education system. Her critique drew attention to the alarming degree to which women's artistic output failed to enter the canon and major institutions.¹⁷

Certainly, there were early suggestions that this absence had the

potential to impact on performance art in Australia. In a 1984 collection of essays, compiled and independently published by Anne Marsh and Jane Kent, Kent observed that "performance art has been consistently left out of art history, which has concentrated on the art objects of the major art movements." She continued that, "as performance art has been concealed or omitted from history, women's contribution to performance has been hidden more so."¹⁸ Whatever the rationale, the marked absence of critical attention around women's art can easily be argued to have impacted upon the wider histories of mediums in which they were perceived to be 'dominant in the arena.'

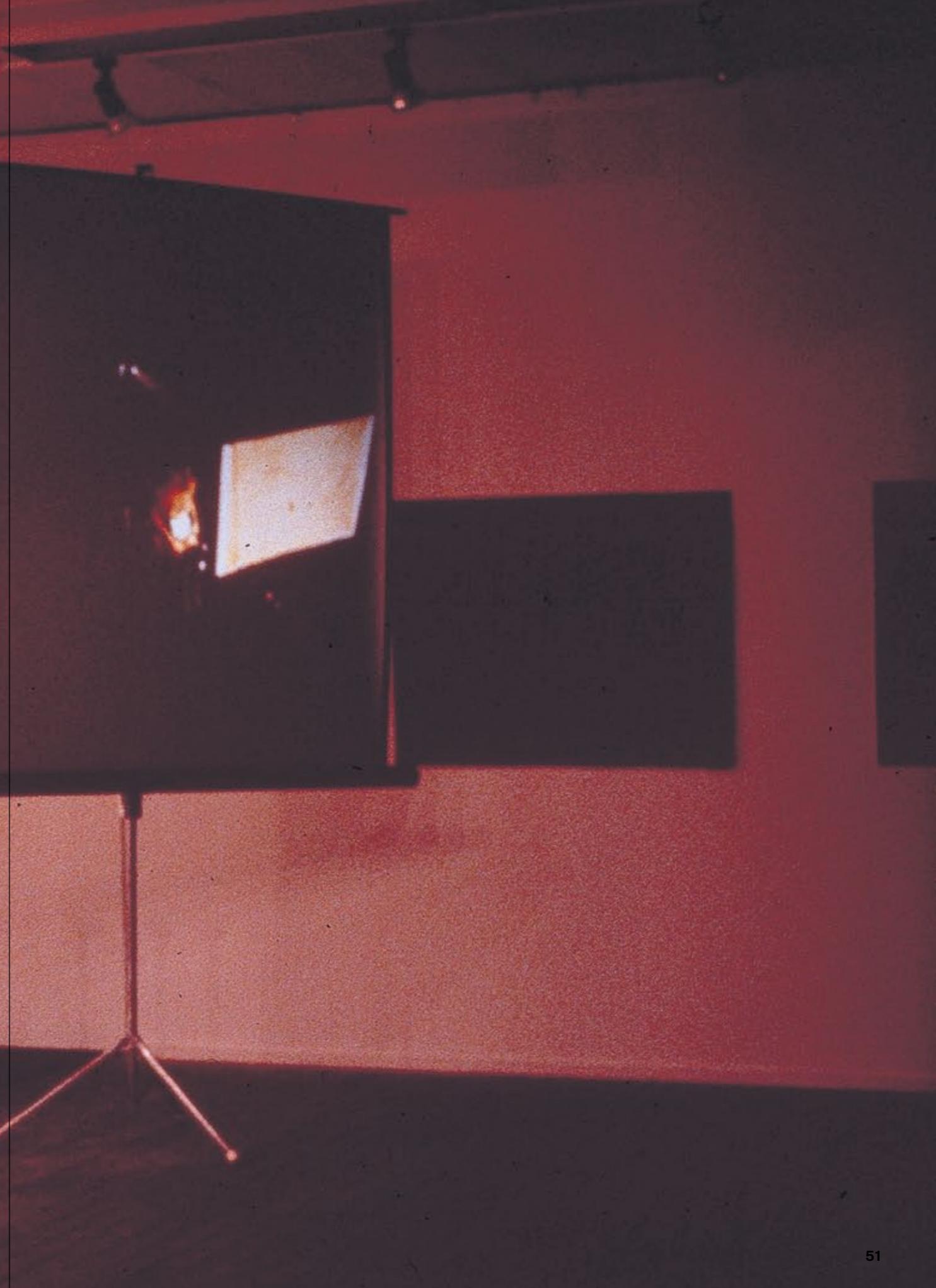
In exploring Marsh's question as to why her work had provoked so few descendants, it seems to me that Australian performance art has been lost somewhere between the ephemeral nature of the medium, a provincial reluctance to value our culture and the seeming invisibility of women's creative output. But equally I ponder why the medium, and women's participation in it, seemed to be undergoing a revival. As Bree Richards, curator at the Gallery of Modern Art in Brisbane, commented in 2012, "live and performative artforms are enjoying a resurgence internationally and, in an Australian context, particularly amongst early career and experimental women practitioners."¹⁹ As I personally take part in this resurgence, as a researcher, writer and artist, I ponder most of all what the critical fortunes of my peers will be and whether we, like Bonita Ely, Joan Grounds and Lyndal Jones will find our history consigned to sporadic catalogue essays and magazine articles. The concern isn't just how the cultural amnesia has obscured our history, but how it obscures our present and future work. We need to not only catch up on our history but to develop a narrative that connects the present with our past.

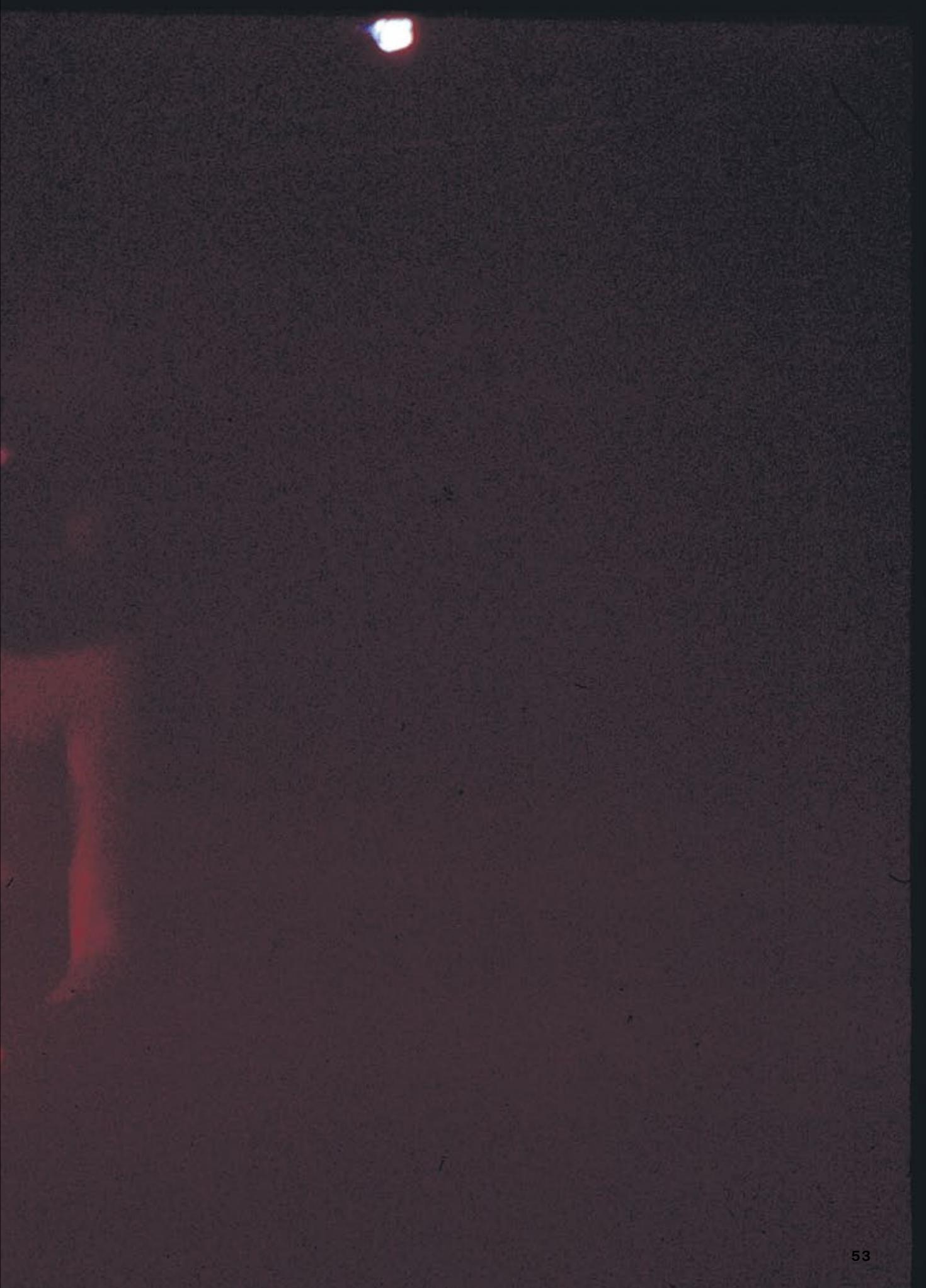
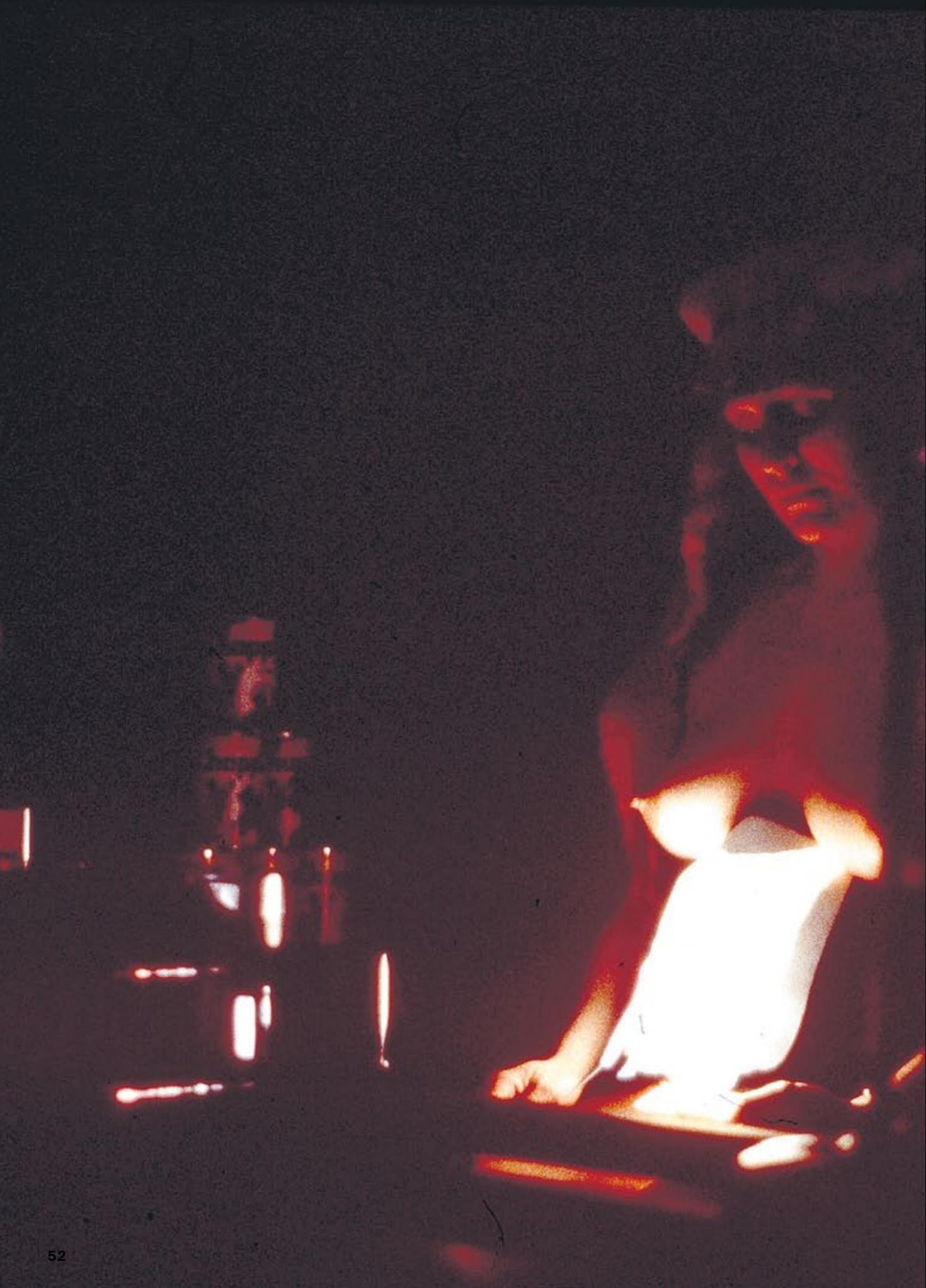
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2. Sarah Miller, 'A Question of Silence – Approaching the Condition of Performance' in *25 Years of Performance Art in Australia*, Marrickville: Ivan Dougherty Gallery, 1994 (Catalogue), p. 7.
3. Anne Marsh has recently released a digital version of *Body and Self*, which can be accessed on The Australian Video Art Archive website: www.videoartchive.org.au/B&S/Body_Self_cover.html
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11. Bernice Murphy, 'Towards a History of Australian Video', *The Australian Video Art Festival 1986*, Sydney: Australian Video Festival, 1986 (catalogue), p.19.
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18. Jane Kent, 'Performance Art and W.A.M: A Report', *Live Art: Australia and America*, ed. by Jane Kent and Anne Marsh, Adelaide, Anne Marsh and Jane Kent, 1984, p.8,19 Bree Richards, *Contemporary Australia Women*, Brisbane, Queensland Art Gallery, Gallery of Modern Art, 2012 (catalogue), p.173.
19. Bree Richards, *Contemporary Australia Women*, Brisbane, Queensland Art Gallery, Gallery of Modern Art, 2012 (catalogue), p.173.



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Bonita Ely
*Dogwoman Makes
History*
Firstdraft Gallery
Sydney, 1986
Photograph from the
artist's collection

•/•
Bonita Ely
*Dogwoman
Communicates
with the Younger
Generation*
Künstlerhaus
Bethanien, Berlin,
1982. Photograph
from the artist's
collection





SILENT ENCOUNTERS BY KATE BRITTON

On first sight they looked like visitors, gallery goers like myself. I watched them, wondering where they were going: slow, purposeful, respectful – the way you might approach an open casket. I moved towards them, walking up the ramp of the Tate Modern's Turbine Hall towards the glass exit. It was the pace of the walkers that first piqued my attention – their complex yet ordered distribution, their measured steps. Once in their midst I was vaguely unsettled and fell into step, modulating my movements so as not to disturb the unspoken rhythm of the group, wondering if they even constituted a group, or if it was just chance that they walked with this nebulous intent. As we reached the peak of the hall, the walkers (and now also myself, unwittingly implicated) slowly turned, proceeding back the way we had come in the same measured gait. Towards the plateau of the hall a young woman turned to me with fierce attention. "Do you know that Nietzsche died of a broken heart?" she demanded.

The work, Tino Seghal's *These Associations*, was staged as part of the Unilever Series at the Tate Modern from July to August 2012, and involved the Turbine Hall being "inhabited by an assembly of participants whose choreographed actions use movement, sound, and conversation" in the curator's words. Like much of Seghal's work, *These Associations* went undocumented, leaving no trace beyond the memory of the encounter. As participatory and performance-based work continues to ride a wave of renewed interest, questions about its aesthetic qualities (and quality) become more pressing, particularly as many artists producing these ephemeral pieces ascribe them to a disavowal or negation of a formal aesthetic. How are we to judge work that takes encounter, relation or experience as its medium? Should it be judged aesthetically at all, given the frequent reliance on an untrained and in some cases unaware public to constitute the work?

To enter the museum space, Judith Butler has argued, is to engage with this uncertainty, to open yourself to the surprising and the uninvited. "When we enter the museum," she says, "we consent to that very lack of consent, we submit ourselves to a zone of unwillful proximity with others. We will see what we did not expect to see, we will hear what we did not expect to hear and we live through the unexpected gamut of pleasure and pain in response." In entering the museum then, "we consent to losing consent in relation to what the senses sense." This sensory uncertainty is two-sided; its resolution lies with neither the artist nor the participant but somewhere between them, in the encounter, in the collision of the artist's blueprint and the participant's reality. In this sense, participatory and performative art relies perhaps more than any other medium on an economy of affects, an inter-subjective flow of what art historian Claire Bishop calls "dynamic, kinetic qualities of feeling" and "non-conscious affective resonance".

The *more-than* of participatory work, its supra-individual dynamism, is perhaps the mark of its aesthetic success or failure – an aesthetic of perception rather than products or objects. Jacques Rancière proposed a reworking of the term aesthetic, one that concerns aisthesis, "a mode of sensible perception proper to artistic production." The work of art thus

becomes the event of perception, inseparable from the flow of effects it conceives or induces, the movement of forces between bodies, human or otherwise. Like Seghal's *These Associations*, Roman Ondak's 2007 work *Queue* relied on the complicity of its participants, gambling on the deeply human tendency to modulate behaviour according to environment. Staged at the Tate in 2007 [and at the Kölnischer Kunstverein in 2003], *Queue* comprised a group of performers queuing at random points throughout the gallery, prompting some visitors to join them. If asked what they were waiting for, the response was always the same: "we're just queuing." Later that afternoon, all Tate visitors were invited to clap as part of Nina Jan Beier & Marie Jan Lund's *All the People at Tate Modern (Clap in time)*, and a seemingly impromptu spate of applause spread through the gallery like wildfire, another example of contagious behaviour.

Deeply entwined with these works is the question of participation itself. What is it that possesses someone to walk or queue or clap without knowing why? Would we do it outside the gallery? How much of what we do is attuned to those around us, wittingly or not? Or, put another way, does creating the conditions for such encounters and exchanges create new forms of attunement? Describing Rancière's aisthesis, Claire Bishop says that "the undecidability of aesthetic experience implies a questioning of how the world is organised, and therefore the possibility of changing or redistributing that same world." Anything can happen in the perceptual fold. Artist Dora García, whose work *The Crowd* saw her plant a 'fake' and misleading tour group in the Tate Modern, acknowledges the open-ended nature of such performance works. "Actually I have no idea how the work is going to develop, so I am there as [a member of the] public, watching my own work," says García. "Sometimes it is more interesting than others, but really I think this is some kind of negotiation with reality, how it's going to turn out." So if perception is 'negotiation with reality', and experience a mediation between the potential and the real, what is it about performance-based or participatory art that casts these encounters in such stark relief?

Reflecting on *These Associations*, the experience for me was about the unspoken immersion in the group that occurred before having consciously identified them as a group at all. It was the moments leading up to the realisation that I had stumbled into the midst of a performance that made the piece successful, those moments of uncertainty or undecidability in which the body, seeming to know more than the mind, falls unconsciously into step. We sense that we are a part of something before we know what, and we become aware of the infinitesimal alterations we undergo as a result of our environment. I was once told that there is no more sexually-charged environment than a silent yoga retreat, doubtless for this very reason – silent bodies in proximity, pre-verbal and collective affect circulating via a circuitry of the gaze. Indeed, what is desire if not affect, the flow of forces between bodies? Inevitably, in the gallery space, "in as much as we are looking at art, we are invariably looking at others looking at art, or being watched as we look," Butler says. In the case of performance in visual art, this circuitry is extant. The so-called quality of a work then, must surely be linked to the intensity of the experience it provokes, its capacity to create a rupture in the fabric of our daily lives, to suspend us between the real and the performed, the sublime and the quotidian, the aesthetic and the embodied.

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Dora García in collaboration
with David Hernandez
The Crowd 2001
Marres, Maastricht, NL.



•/•
Roman Ondak
Good Feelings
in Good Times
2003/2004
Performance
Image courtesy of:
Galerie Martin
Janda, Vienna;
Johnen Galerie, Berlin;
GB agency, Paris;
Kurimanzutto,
Mexico City.



DIE BRÜCKE



•/•
Santiago Sierra
*Veteran of the wars
of Northern Ireland,
Afghanistan and Iraq
facing the corner* 2011
11 Rooms, Manchester
International Festival.
Photo: Manchester
City Galleries

FACE-TIME: INTIMACY & DISCOMFORT BY AMY SPIERS

In Melbourne, experimental performance art practices are experiencing a heyday, with the term “live art” increasingly appearing on festival programs across the city. Given the rising popularity of this hybrid art form, it is interesting to note that Melbourne-based live artists share many concerns, including a focus on audience participation, forging new connections and bringing people together. It is now common for the Melbourne art-goers to find themselves having face-to-face encounters with people they do not know in intimate, constructed situations.

In recent years I have conversed with artists via mysterious rendezvous, such as in Jason Maling’s *The Vorticist* (2007–10). I have selected conversation topics from a menu while chatting with an unknown masked participant in Triage Live Art Collective’s *Strange Passions* (2011). I have been clasped to the bosom of a stranger while slow dancing no less than twice, at *No Show’s Shotgun Wedding* (2012) and Aphids’ *Thrashing Without Looking* (2010–2012). I have even slept next to the artist Charlie Sofo as part of his *B.E.D.* project (2010–11). Close encounters have also been instigated in my own art practice as participants had their picture taken with a stranger in a makeshift photo booth in *The Photobooth Project* (2006–2008).

The popularity of unusual live encounters extends beyond Melbourne. Exhibitions like *13 Rooms*, to be held by Kaldor Public Art Projects in Sydney this year, or Battersea Arts Centre’s *One-on-One* festival in the UK, are a testament to a worldwide interest in live performance and intimate one-on-one art experiences.

So why are artists and audiences interested in live, inter-subjective encounters at this particular moment in time? Perhaps the increased incidence of intimate works suggests we have an anxiety about losing our ability to connect with others.

Artists often explain their motivations by voicing fears that our market-driven, consumerist society has forced people to become too self-interested, alienated and atomised. We are spending less time interacting with diverse people face-to-face and increasingly chat with like-minded “friends” online, leading prominent sociologists, like Richard Sennett, to claim that our ability to co-operate with people different from us in real life is being eroded.¹

While these fears may be valid, it is interesting to examine how live artists are choosing to reconnect us. In Melbourne, I am struck by the regularity with which I have been asked to convivially converse, dance and eat with strangers in an artwork. These artistic encounters were initially liberating and refreshing, but repeated participation in enforced intimacies leads me to demand a more penetrating analysis of what such encounters actually do.

The interactions in live art encounters are usually amiable. Once the initial awkwardness was overcome, talking with a masked stranger or lying next to a strange artist became enjoyable and genial. At times the small talk felt forced and too polite, but many of the Melbourne works I have experienced had a distinctly friendly air.

The people I have met through these projects have largely been like-minded art-goers, none of whom would seem out of place in my usual social circles. Furthermore, the participants were not selected in a way that called to mind their cultural, social or political specificity. Instead, the participant was almost always addressed as an undetermined, universal “anyone”.

Do cosy encounters in live art provide a short-lived but transformative insight into the potential of human intimacy, compelling us to forge more meaningful relationships in our real lives? Or do they rather leave the participants feeling comfortable and reassured about their position in the world?

It is my feeling that politely and pleasantly chatting to strangers who are not radically unlike ourselves does not do much to confront us with the more complex structural divisions in our society. Instead, it smoothes over these divisions by making people believe that co-operation and togetherness can be achieved easily. These works do not lead to politics, but rather leave us at the level of the decontextualised, individual encounter.

While it is certainly admirable to want to bring people together in positive ways, perhaps live artists could begin to experiment with

confronting the deeper inequalities and challenges faced in Australian society. When we consider that Indigenous life expectancy still remains far below that of other Australians, or that asylum seekers who come to Australia by boat face an indefinite detention in inhumane conditions, I wonder if Australians really should be made to feel at ease about our relationship to others at this particular historical moment.

The work of Spanish artist Santiago Sierra presents an alternative to all this feel-good intimacy. An iteration of his piece *Veteran of the Wars of Northern Ireland, Afghanistan and Iraq facing the corner* (2011) will be presented at *13 Rooms* in Sydney this year. Sierra has made a career out of producing troubling encounters with pointedly selected participants. In *Veteran of the Wars*, war veterans are paid a sum of money to stand silently facing the corner of an empty room. Viewers enter and are confronted by the silent figure, the experience of which has been described as both powerful and ambiguous.² It is deliberately unclear if this work’s point is “to shame or honour”³. Sierra raises conflicting and contradictory responses because our relationships with the people around us are conflicting and contradictory. Works like Sierra’s, in art historian Claire Bishop’s words,

show that “inter-subjective relations are not an end in themselves, but serve to explore and disentangle a more complex knot of social concerns about political engagement, affect, inequality, narcissism, class, and behavioural protocols.”⁴

I wonder what an encounter that forces us to confront more complex knots of social concerns would look like if made by an Australian artist. As enjoyable as it is to meet strangers in a pleasant atmosphere, perhaps it is time for Australian artists to experiment with more politically challenging encounters.

1. Richard Sennett, *Together: The Rituals, Pleasures and Politics of Co-operation* (New Haven, CT and London, UK: Yale University Press, 2012). Sennett’s work is discussed by Nathan Heller in the article “The Disconnect”, *The New Yorker Magazine*, April 16, 2012.

2. Richard Dorment, “11 Rooms, Manchester International Festival, review”, *The Telegraph*, 12 July 2011.

3. Adrian Searle, “Manchester international festival: Room with no view”, *The Guardian*, 11 July 2011.

4. Claire Bishop, *Artificial Hells* (London, UK and New York, NY: Verso, 2012), p.39.



PERFORMING LIFE: INDIGENOUS AUSTRALIAN PERFORMANCE MARY ROSE CASEY INTERVIEWED BY SUPERKALEIDOSCOPE

Can you outline the different types of historical or traditional Aboriginal performance?

Performance in all its forms – choreographed, scripted, improvised, sung, danced and spoken – have played a central place in all aspects of Aboriginal cultures pre-European settlement. Battles, judicial procedures, marriage arrangements, education and spiritual practices all utilised performance. The categories of performance include those for ceremony, many of which are secret and sacred, and a plethora of types of public performance ranging from those designed to teach important stories to those that dramatised topical themes. The focus in my research is on the topical performances not those created for ceremony. These performances range from improvised songs and comedies for a moment's entertainment to complex choreographed and scripted performances that remained in the repertoire for decades. All the elements that are identified with European theatre were also within the traditions of Aboriginal performance including dialogue, mime, song, dance, costume, properties, lighting effects, creators, directors, performers and managers.

What is the relationship between oral history and entertainment in traditional Aboriginal performance?

The topical performances have often been categorised as 'oral history'. This label though initially intended to give a deeper understanding of the depth and accuracy of representation that is a feature of Aboriginal performance does not accurately present the practices or performances. The use of 'oral history' as the category for every performance that focuses on topical themes creates a slippage between a tradition of stories passed down and aesthetic performances for entertainment created around topical events. The former are usually told as stories marked by reference points for authority, such as my Uncle x who was there. These markers act as witnesses to authenticity or reliability of the story. They are tales about events that happened and fit within what is usually meant by terms such as oral history. Topical performances are imaginative and aesthetic response to life.

In 2011, John Bradley and I discussed the problems that arose because a white film maker assumed that an aeroplane dance *Ka-Wayawayama* created by a Yanyuwa man, Frank Karrijiji, in the 1940s was an oral history of an event that preceded the composition of the work. That event was the crash of a US plane and the loss of most of the crew in 1942. There are Yanyuwa oral histories about that event that are told by people who were there or people who had the story from people who were there. However, the series of dances, songs and mime sequences with detailed props, puppets and costumes were Karrijiji's aesthetic interpretation of the impact of the Second World War in general on his people. The performance is focussed on planes and aerial and ground searches by Yanyuwa people. Because the outside film maker assumed the performance was an oral history of the event there was very little room in the film for the actual performance since it did not fit.

Two examples from the early twentieth century illustrate the point. A group of white Buffalo hunters in Northern Australia wanted a local Aboriginal group to perform a corroboree for them towards the end of their hunting expedition in the area. The Aboriginal people created a performance that satirised the mighty hunters and included incidents such as when a buffalo charged and the hunters frantically ran to and climbed the nearest trees. Another performance again from the early twentieth century was created at a cattle station satirising a touring party that was driving up the west coast of Australia. The costumes included heavy padding to reproduce the well-developed bellies of the men in the car and the full outfit of the driving coats and goggles. In performance every characteristic of the men's walks and behaviour was reproduced for fun. These performances in a sense are part of a very rich oral tradition but I would argue they are not oral history in a formal sense any more than contemporary films are oral history, even though in a sense they can be understood that way. In Aboriginal cultures everything is part of a continuum. Performances intended for entertainment that include precise representation, to the point where they can be described as a form of mimicry, are part of the continuum of performances that act as oral history. Having said this there is the fact that performances for entertainment are only performed as long as there is demand for the pieces and the creators or original performers live.

How have Aboriginal initiated performances been an important part of cross-cultural communication in Australia?

It is this question that I am trying to find an answer to with my current research. From first settlement the focus on performance within Aboriginal cultures necessarily made it a feature of any contact and exchange. From the Aboriginal perspective there are many examples of importance to them of performances they presented as part of cross-cultural communication. Performance was used for diplomatic purposes, to communicate Aboriginal knowledge and ownership and as a way to engage with the settler economy as Aboriginal people were denied access to traditional lands and food sources. There are examples of communities inviting all the local settlers to performance events for political and diplomatic negotiations. In the nineteenth century these range from performances of country and culture such as was presented to the people of Perth, to a performance in Queensland where the leading settlers were invited to watch a three-act performance that represented the war that would follow if they did not leave.

Once European settlement was well established, Aboriginal initiated performances were a major form of entertainment for settlers up until the mid-twentieth century. What I am seeking to discover is the impact of these performances on the settler populations. Corroboree performances were a regular feature of life. The Aboriginal people advertised them in

towns by sending words to newspapers, by painting themselves up for performance and parading through towns letting people know when the shows would be open to the public and the price. Newspapers and diaries across the long nineteenth century are full of references to corroborees. What is harder to gauge is the impact. These performances were by the early nineteenth century the main point of contact between many settlers and Aboriginal people. Corroboree as a word was practically synonymous with Aboriginal. The ways in which these performances were received close to justify Aboriginal dispossession. I would argue that despite these responses the performances actively confronted neat stories that foretold the dying out of Aboriginal people. Further, that these performances with their wit and satire contested many derogatory racialised narratives.

How were performances traditionally toured and traded between communities?

Traditionally performances for entertainment were traded at large regional gatherings. In areas where there was large amounts of food available at intervals biennially or biannually, such as Bunya nuts or Bogon moths, groupings would gather from across large regions, such as southern Queensland or northern Victoria and southern New South Wales. At these gatherings there would be judicial business, marriages arranged and bartering of goods between groupings. The goods that were bartered included performances. Once an arrangement was made to sell a performance, those being taught the new work would gather round and watch and be taught the show. Shows were also given to others for free if that was the inclination of the creator. The shows would be learnt as envisaged by the person who created it and learnt in his language. Subsequent performances and trades would be presented as learned in the original language. A show could travel across the country through different gatherings and end up being performed before an audience and by performers who did not speak the language that was used. They would understand what it meant but not necessarily the words. A performance stayed true to the original conception and grouping. These practices continued well into the twentieth century.

In current contemporary art discourse there has been a lot of debate in regards to the re-enactment of performance works. In traditional Aboriginal performance, were there singular or collective authors and what role did re-performance play?

The people who created the performance, song, dance, mime, scenario, costumes and so on owned their work. If it was created by one person then it was sole ownership (as with Karrijiji's). If a number of people created the work then there was collective ownership. Performances for entertainment could only be performed with the permission of the creator. Unlike sacred dreaming stories and related performances, shows for entertainment were not passed down. When the creator and original performers died their work was not performed again. In the case of Dreaming stories there are lines of inheritance and ownership and responsibility for the stories and their care and performance so they continue over time.

The British artist Jeremy Deller recently re-created the Battle of Orgreave, a violent miners' strike in South Yorkshire, 1984. Similarly Tiwi Islanders have re-performed the Bombing of Darwin (1942). How often does remembering and re-performing traumatic cultural events figure into the narratives of traditional Indigenous performance and what is the significance of the act?

The focus of my research is on performances created for entertainment. In those, traumatic events are consistently treated in a satirical manner, finding the humour within traumatic events. There are many instances of comedies satirising colonial violence. I would argue that this approach was part of maintaining individual and community dignity and strength in the face of overwhelming trauma.

Gail Mabo recently re-read Paul Keating's Redfern speech at Damien Minton Gallery. Although not specifically a performance piece, how does Mabo's gesture relate to traditional performance/re-performance practices within indigenous culture?

Gail Mabo's performance is closer to important ceremony than to the type of work I am focussed on. Secret and sacred ceremonies are focussed on remembering and re-performing stories of creation of the land and its people. Mabo's act I believe is in the same spirit of affirming connection to land and recognition of its people.

TOP:
Aboriginal Corroboree at Adelaide
Print published in the Australasian Sketcher, 29 June 1885.

BOTTOM:
Aeroplane dance photo, first night 1991.
Left Dwayne Charlie
Right Lanceton Norman
permission agreed li-Yanyuwa li-Wirdiwalangu (Yanyuwa elders group)



SONGS YOU COULD ENTER BY CRAIG SCHUFMAN

Late last year, Beck released an album of songs you had to learn to play if you wanted to hear them. Song Reader was not so much something new in rock and roll, as something very old, which seemed new, because rock's auteur theory - the idea that artists ought to be a creative one-stop-shop, writing, arranging and performing their own music - has long since done away with the idea of music-making as a communal activity. But Beck has been toying with the idea of a do-it-yourself songbook since the mid-nineties, when the stultifying demands of a then-booming music industry lead him to seek out more open-ended, participatory forms of music making. So, while his contemporaries were busy perfecting the new stadium rock, Beck drew inspiration from Folk traditions and Fluxus performance art of the 60s. You'll be surprised at which of these he learned about from his Grandad.

In November 1996, Beck performed a new single, 'Devil's Haircut' on The Tonight Show with Jay Leno. In the interview that followed, Leno mentioned the fact that Beck was carrying on a family tradition, since the singer's grandfather, Al Hansen, had been a guest in 1965, when Johnny Carson was the host. "But he got kicked off the show didn't he?" asked Leno. "Yeah, that's right" said Beck. Hansen's crime had been to pull out a pair of dressmaker's scissors and cut off Carson's tie just below the knot, thus completing a performance of Nam Jun Paik's 'Sonata for John Cage'. That Carson should mistake this musical number for an attack on his person was, in a sense, fair enough. Hansen was a Fluxus artist performing a piece by a Fluxus composer, and the whole point of Fluxus was to make art less like art and more like everyday life. The movement looked forward to a day when art as we now know it would be replaced by a 'non-art reality', in which anything from the cutting of a necktie to the peeling of a potato could be considered a creative act, and art could be made out of anything, by anyone, at any time.

In his own work, Hansen took what he later described as "objectionable, shitty, funky material" - Hershey bar wrappers, cigarette butts and bodybuilder magazines - and transformed them into beautiful objects: fertility goddesses, contemplative mandalas

and love poems. He introduced his grandson to the family business at quite an early age. "He'd ask if he could have one of my toys", Beck recalled in 1996, "and then he would dismantle it and set it on fire and cover it with cigarette butts and spray paint it silver. Just taking these mundane things and turning them into some other monstrosity." That Beck's words could just as easily have described his own music as Al's art gave an indication of just how closely he'd come to identify with his older relative since his death in 1995, and just how much he'd learned on all those Grandfather-and-son day trips to the dump.

"I wanted to create songs somebody could enter", said Beck, "a scenario exists and you kind of go in and create your own story within it". The singer was talking about his 1996 album 'Odelay', an album of urban blues ballads and end-of-the-world party tunes, not so much produced as pulled apart and put back together again by production duo The Dust Brothers. Beck sang and rapped over dusty loops from half-forgotten hits of the 60s and 70s, and frequently interrupted his own flow with samples from fake children's records, blasts of feedback, cheap synths, and other funky material. This method of 'pure deconstruction', as Beck called it, was partly inspired by hip hop, his first musical love. But the conceptual thinking behind it owed more to Fluxus.

The problem for Beck was essentially the same one faced by Hansen, Cage and Paik back in the 60s, the alienation and boredom engendered by an over-ritualised art form. He'd recently learned that being a hero of the Alternative nation, and a poster boy for the Slacker ideal meant, in a day to day sense, a life of dull interviews and endless gigs playing his one hit over and over again in front of thousands of bored-looking moshers. Determined to bridge the gap, Beck saw that he would have to use noise, nonsense, post-consumer trash and violations of expectation to cut his work back to a human scale, and then invite his audience in to hang out. After he'd pulled it off with 'Odelay', Hansen Jr was careful to repay the debt he owed to his avant-garde forebears. Having finished his first musical number on The Tonight Show, he manfully submitted to a second, as Jay Leno made for his fetching peach-coloured tie with a large pair of scissors.

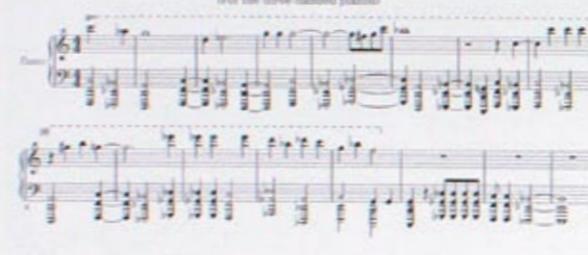
Because the soundtrack to our lives cannot fall silent, there must be...

INSTRUMENTALS FOR THE END OF THE WORLD

COMPOSED AND PUBLISHED BY NOSTRADAMUS JONES, COLUMBIA, MO

Apolkalypse

(for the three-handed pianist)

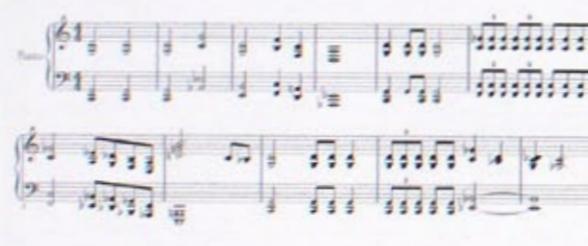


It's the End of the World

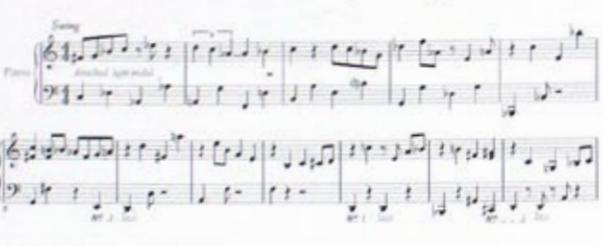
(and I Feel Like Dropping the Postcard)



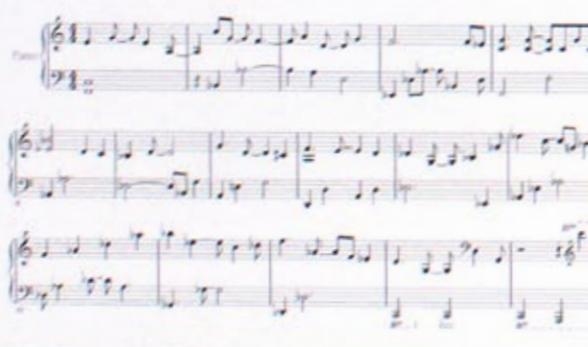
The Final Countdown



Doomsday Rag



Is There Room for One More in the Fallout Shelter?



Judgment Day (Don't Judge Me)



NOTHING RUNS BETTER ON MTV THAN A PROTEST AGAINST MTV BY GEORGIE MEAGHER

Historically, performance art was an activity that largely eschewed the mechanisms of the art market and throughout its development – especially during the 1960s and 70s – was driven by radical political protest. Anti-government and anti-capitalist, many artists personified the popular phrase of the time, ‘the personal is political’. The slippery nature of the medium has meant a great deal of significant early performance art works transpired outside institutional contexts – in studios, public spaces, commercial and artist-led spaces. Ephemera, personal accounts, video and photographic documentation have since been utilised to write performance into mainstream art history (and therefore into the collections of large institutions) but until recently the live encounter has been absent.

Performance art has become increasingly visible internationally. Contemporary art galleries such as Tate Modern in London and New York’s Museum of Modern Art have been instituting Performance Art departments, hosting symposia and acquiring performance works for their collections since the late 1990s. A number of Australian institutions, whilst not having dedicated collecting policies for performance, have also increasingly engaged performance artists in their programs. Klaus Biesenbach, co-curator of 13 Rooms and director of MoMA PS1, cites the responsibility of museums to conserve and historicise as a reason for initiating these departments at museums. Glenn D. Lowry, MoMA’s director, proudly described purchasing Tino Sehgal’s *This Kiss* as “one of the most elaborate and difficult acquisitions we’ve ever made.” Formerly a peripheral activity in the object-centred world of contemporary art, artists and institutions are now wrestling with the complexities of buying, selling and exhibiting performance, exploring how the transaction of an embodied, time-based form can be negotiated. Since artists have been experimenting with performance for over forty years, why the sudden interest? Twenty years ago it would be impossible for most museums to fathom collecting performance at all.

1. JUST LIKE THOSE CHE GUEVARA T-SHIRTS

Art historian RoseLee Goldberg identifies a number of early examples of artists utilising the frame of the market in their work – ‘selling performance’ – long before Sehgal’s lawyers got involved. Yves Klein’s *Zone de Sensibilité Picturale Immatérielle* [Zones of Immaterial Pictorial Sensibility] (1959–62), offered the experience of an empty space in exchange for gold, and Piero Manzoni’s *Artist’s Breath* (1960) and *Artist’s Shit* (1961) both marketed the corporeal output of the artist as a commodity – either exhalation into a balloon or excrement into a can. These works each stretched and subverted the boundaries of artist-market relations in a context where the future of rampant capitalisation wasn’t certain. Needless to say, times have changed, and economic contexts of artistic and political gestures have markedly different implications. Now, free-market capitalism has erupted, labour is increasingly flexible and precarious ideas are key objects of economic exchange. Where previously political subversion critiqued its own very participation in the market, we now operate in a subsumptive capitalism, where “nothing runs better on MTV than a protest against MTV” (Mark Fisher, *Capitalist Realism: Is There No Alternative?*)

2. FLEXIBILITY REIGNS

Museums are increasingly finding new ways of integrating performance, along with discursive projects and publications, into their core activities. Curator Alex Farquharson calls this phenomenon ‘New Institutionalism’, where “exhibitions no longer preside over other types of activity ... The ‘new institution’ instead places equal emphasis on a range of other functions ... This results in a redistribution of its resources, expressed both

spatially and temporally in terms of how institutions’ hardware (their buildings) and software (their schedules) are apportioned.” It was sparked by a disparate cohort of independent curators, who, having previously produced various exhibitions and biennales independently, put down roots as directors of a number of key European institutions in the early 2000s.² This new approach decentralises the hierarchies of object over idea and presentation over production, setting in motion the construction of a new conceptual space for performance to exist within the museum context.

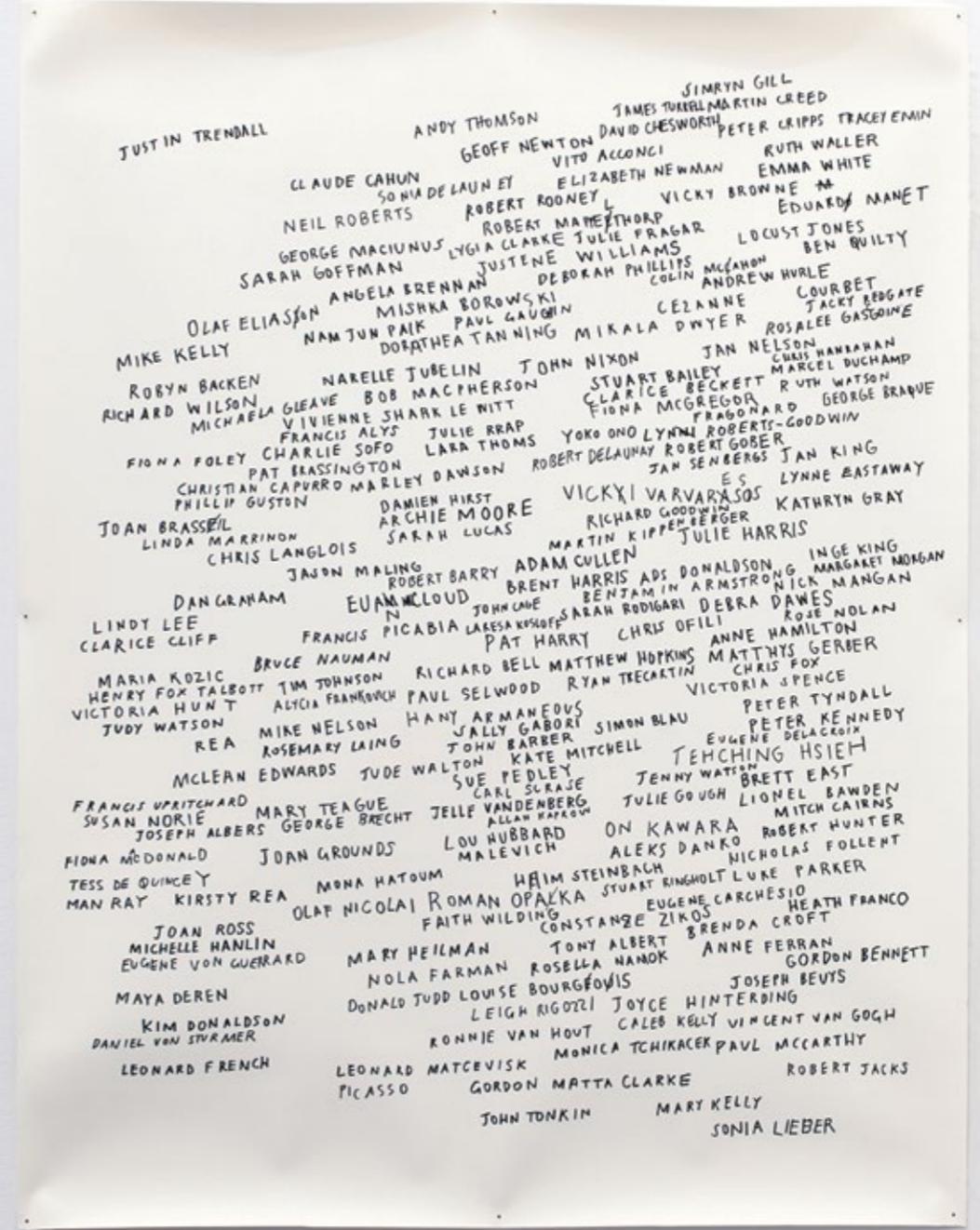
3. WE HEART OUTSOURCING

In the 1990s, a new genre of performance art emerged – what art historian Claire Bishop describes as “‘delegated performance’: the act of hiring non-professionals or specialists in other fields to undertake the job of being present and performing at a particular time and a particular place on behalf of the artist, and following his/her instructions.” Often relying on ethnic, social, physical or cultural specificities in performers, these works rely on a contract or artist’s instructions, and the availability of suitable participants. Like re-enactment, which is similarly being explored by artists and curators attempting to grapple with this ephemeral form, Bishop argues that these forms have accelerated the institutionalisation of performance art, and facilitated its collectability.

In an economy of ideas, where physical objects are secondary to experiential, transformative and knowledge-based offerings, selling performance is anything but counterintuitive. It becomes a somewhat irrelevant chicken-or-the-egg question then, to consider whether the changing nature of art affects the market or vice versa. Australia is blessed and cursed by an invisible hand at play – the state and federal government funding bodies that keep the arts afloat. And we’ve been selling performance to them, in a way, for years. Perhaps the question is not why or how to sell performance, but who are we selling it to? It is the responsibility of artists to decide if their work should or should not be for sale, and making an income from art is just as important for performance artists as painters. But a painting doesn’t change colour once you decide to sell it. The immediacy and subversive potential of early performance art revelled in issues that are now being side-stepped, both by artists and collectors, in pursuit of a performance art that is less provisional than enduring. But to galvanise the marketplace into gambling on the value of a social exchange as if it might be a Pollock painting? Seems almost as crazy as buying a can of Manzoni’s shit.

1. Local Positioning Systems, curated by Performance Space at the Museum of Contemporary Art in 2012, was a program of seven live art and performance projects and Power to the People curated by Hannah Mathews at the Australian Centre for Contemporary Art Melbourne in 2011 included performance works as a key, ongoing element of the exhibition.
2. Nicolas Bourriaud and Jerome Sans at Palais de Tokyo, Paris and Charles Esche and Maria Lind at the Witte de With, Rotterdam are key examples.

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Agatha Gothe-Snape
Every Artist Remembered
with Barbara Campbell 2011
Posca pen on arches paper,
180 x 140 cm
Image courtesy the artist and
The Commercial Gallery, Sydney



SNAKES ON THE ISLAND BY BRONWYN BAILEY-CHARTERIS

Cyprus is a nation politically and socially split between the north and the south. In Northern Cyprus, Turkish Cypriots attempt to remain independent of the majority-Greek Republic of Cyprus in the south. Fifty years ago, Cyprus was made independent from British rule. Since then the political and ethnic divisions have increased, and at times led to warfare. From this strained political and social context emerges artist Socratis Socratous and curator Sophie Duplaix. I'm looking specifically at their performative exhibition *Rumours*, from the 16th Venice Biennale.

Rumours is an example of a theatrical exhibition, which uses the devices of theatre and spectacle to make the audience a complicit performer within the work. The work is made up of three main elements: documentation of correspondence between the artist and the Venetian government, video footage of a barge bringing a palm tree into Venice and finally a full scale bedroom for a snake charmer. These elements come together to discuss ideas of political unrest, communication and metaphor.

I'll set the scene for you. As you walk into the space you are greeted with cheap blonde wood covering all the surface areas of the space. The feeling is creepy, a semi-claustrophobic maze. On the walls are an extensive collection of the official letters between the artist and various authorities. The artist is asking permission for snakes to be brought into Venice and kept at the exhibition space for the six months of the Biennale. He's also asking that he be allowed to plant a palm tree in front of the Greek Pavilion in the Giardini area of Venice. The inevitable rejection letters and other correspondence from the authorities are posted too. Through a window in the chipboard we can see a bedroom. It's a real bedroom, as best as we can tell. It's a basic set-up with a mattress, sink, chair, etc. At present it's empty, but it looks freshly departed. In the corner there is a large glass box, a terrarium, for snakes. This is of course the snake charmer's bedroom. On another wall is the video footage of the rejected palm tree floating around Venice on a barge. The tree looks for a place to be planted, but to no avail.

As you further investigate the exhibition you discover the palm tree may have had poisonous cobras and their eggs hidden in the roots. Hence the snake charmer's bedroom: for when the snakes arrive in Venice. In the catalogue we see Cypriot tabloids translated into English. The headlines read 'Panic in the Occupied Areas' and 'The Palm Tree Headache: after the cobras now they're talking about dangerous insects'. Supposedly there are documented cases of these palm trees (and the snake eggs) entering Cyprus as a form of terrorist action. This idea of snakes being brought into Venice, by the artist, adds to the mythology of the world that Socratous creates for the viewer.

On one level this exhibition merely plays with theatricality, using it as a device to discuss the political and social complexities of Cyprus. On another level it actually makes the audience complicit in a staging of a performance. The audience becomes the performer as they move between the closed-in walls. Everything in the exhibition seems to reflect back on the performer (the audience) to make decisions and perform those decisions. The room feels like a stage – and it is a stage, with props and all. I find I am the performer in this work. It's my bedroom and I'm begging the authorities to listen. I'm to piece together the collage, to walk through the rooms, and when I leave I'm to continue the rumour of snakes on the island.

In the catalogue essay, critic Cassar writes that within this exhibition "we (the spectator) are permitted to become participating artists or curators ourselves...[revealing] the exhibition as a space of converging roles." He's right to an extent. However I believe it's actually that next step: it's not the audience as artist, it's the audience as performer that allows us to make sense of this piece, and makes this exhibition complex and impactful.

Socratous is an interesting artist. His treatment of the site of Venice for the Cyprus Pavilion cleverly utilises narrative and performance. The work he presented in the Adelaide Festival in 2012 was particularly punchy. I am not suggesting that he is the only artist creating this phenomenon. Other local and international artists are also creating complicit performers out of their audience members. I'm looking at Elmgreen & Dragset, Bababa International and Tom Nicholson, to name a few. In this dawning age of re-performance, I believe understanding the performance of the audience and the provocations they receive will also lead to a new way of seeing performance and its many manifestations.

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Naja Haje
Cobras 2008
video still



I'M SUPER OKAY WITH THAT. NO, NO THAT'S FINE BY TIM SPENCER

Simon Fujiwara is a contemporary artist working mainly from the United Kingdom and Mexico. There is a photo of him in a studio with a sombrero on the Internet. He is about thirty-one. His work is a pastiche of performance and architecture and he feels slightly fraudulent at both. Tim Spencer is a writer and performer who asked the question, 'Who is SF?'

SF has a thing for anecdotes. Some time in the past his mum had a thing about her age and he went somewhere and told a homeless person how old she was, and this guy (the homeless guy) turned up on their doorstep with a bunch of flowers and SF got in so much trouble and wasn't allowed to go to the tip with his father on the weekends to look for old door handles because his dad was an architect. TS asks the big questions.

SF is sitting in a bath. So I'm told. I wasn't there. I heard the noises of a bath and had no reason to doubt them. "I really like taking a bath when I talk to journalists" he tells me. "I'm not a journalist," I assure him. "Then what are you?" "I don't know. I like writing. I like performing. I don't know, I can do lots of things." "Yeah," the laconic British voice assures me, "try going to art school and saying that." "So are you like, naked?" "Yeah". TS reports.

SF SF SF is gay and he is an artist. He makes things. He draws things. He says things aloud. In his palatial mansion in Mexico, somewhere, he leads a team of underlings in a relentless search for the ultimate form. "Maybe one day I'll find it," he says, stroking the head of an underling. "Maybe not". TS is totally interested and writing down what he says, as he says it.

SF, like what is a childhood, really? It's just a serious series of events that you only remember imperfectly, so what's the big deal? You get back on the horse and you ride and ride into the sunset, because if you don't you won't ride ever again. TS looks over his shoulder and keeps walking back to the homestead.

SF puts things in museums, like, he builds stuff and he performs in them.

SF was definitely born and definitely is called SF by most people. Not all people, there are some nicknames spattered here and there, some current, some extant, but by and large, (and by 'large' I mean 99.98% of the earth's population) people call this modern day artist SF. TS is one of those people. This is what they talked about.

SF wrote a script about his family in a weird sex romp in a hotel during Franco's Spain because there were no gay novellas from that period and his mum may or may not be Spanish. Or they lived in Spain for a time. TS really goes the distance and gets the quotes that he needs and actually has too many quotes and feels compelled to write addenda that he puts on his personal blog.

SF is an international sensation. Did you know he's like, impressively young. He's way younger than you. He's older than TS though. By about two years.

Now you have recreated and elaborated on SF's installance Hotel Memblas, you may be experiencing identity shock. No, you are not the English/Japanese artist Simon Fujiwara. No, you have never been interviewed by TS. No, you did not have phone sex in the bath of a luxurious hotel with either of them. Yes, they exist as people, but in an entirely abstract way. A way such that even if you meet either of them, you will not be privy to their innermost selves, or even be able to penetrate the thick miasma of personality contradictions that, contradictorily, add up to a genuine personality. Yes, you could study these phenomena at any one of the fine acting institutions in the country, perhaps even a fine arts academy where you form a prog-rock/glam revival band with two people who finally understand you after 16 torturous years in the education system, galvanising a first-hand experience of audience interaction and communication, which, you begin to tell your family, friends and fine arts tutors, is all that really matters.

Yes, you could launch a blog that slowly but surely establishes its voice as a preeminent authority on contemporary arts and performance, maneuvering your way past the publicity team that manages SF to complete your own interview of this titan of performative energy, who may or may not be in the bath at the time of the interview, and may or may not instigate phone sex, and who may or may not use this said phone sex in a performance surrounded by the constructed environment of a luxury hotel in Dubai. The same publicity team, by the way, that so deftly swatted away my journalistic advances with the very same cool professional assurance of a pretty girl at a co-ed school, gallivanting on a train station post-3:15 pm, blithely aware of the attention such gallivanting and such cool professionalism generates. But like I said, I'm super okay with that. No, no that's fine. SF is a brilliant and clever artist TS has never spoken to.

Some architectural suggestions
for your S.F.
installation / performance
(hereafter 'Instalmance' or even
'perforation')



or even



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e following
ript, in an
svertly performative,
ordering on academic
style: "The young
male artist reclined
in the hotel bath,
the half empty bath
sells a gift from a
wayward aunt. This is
Franco's spirit, and revolution
was no longer in the air
but inside peoples pants
and through their hair, like
the smoke of an effusive BBA!
Get ready to change position.

Preferably in a place of your own
architectural design and construction,
preferably in a museum of modern
art, or at very least, somewhere
with good lighting and the potential
for an ambulatory and respectful
audience. Allude to a
phallus. It does not have to
be your own. You can be a
woman and be SF too. As
you stand on the indicated
marks on the magazine
you may have to squat
in order to keep reading
the text, reminiscent of
the 'sitting lotus', a
first grade yogic position
known for the hamstring/
elbow sensation. This
is normal. This is
all part of the
SF experience.

stand

Make sufficient
mental/performance
connections
between
your body
and
performance
and the
architectural
structure surrounding

Before reading the next script, you may
consider looking up and making eye
contact with your audience.
Performance is all about the
audience. You might be a body
in an impeccable space but
WHAT A BODY. Am I right??"

Once a connection has been
established, resume reading the
script. Feel free to alter your
vocal patterns/pitch to
indicate a second character/
punching function: "The
interviewer on the other
end of the phone, far from
the bathroom, far from the
country clears his throat
and asks a question none to
do with himself than any
performance the artist has
ever conceived of. His
voice sounds weak, like
a crack in the vocal
box, fractured by
menager hood and
never healed by
heterosexuality.

Are you
uncomfortable with
the term artist
yet?" The
distended boy
interviewer asks.
Re. artist tires.

He is
languid
and
su.

pine

This
might
not be
a complete
waste of
time. "What

here

are you
wearing?"
'Excuse me?'
'Tell me.' "Uh,
jocks and a
t-shirt actually.'
like to interview
in my underwear."
"Touch yourself"
"I'm not sure that's
appropriate." "Do it.
Tell me about it. Are
you hard?" "Yes. God
yes." "Tell me what you
want to do to me." "I don't
want to interview you. I want
to interview your body."
"Do it Do it in no interview. Mo

• II •
Photo by
Samuel Hodge,
2013



(UN) BECOMINGS



BY
SEBASTIAN
GOLDS PINK

INT.
POTTS POINT APARTMENT.
EVENING

BRIAN FUATA, A HANDSOME POLYNESIAN MAN, SLUMPS INTO A GREEN EASY CHAIR IN A TASTEFULLY DECORATED ART DECO APARTMENT IN THE 'PARIS END' OF POTTS POINT. OPPOSITE BRIAN, ON A COUCH, **SARAH RODIGARI** AND **JESSICA OLIVIERI** SIP ON GLASSES OF WINE AND EAT SEA SALT FLAVOURED CHIPS. THE STYLE OF THE APARTMENT COULD BEST BE DESCRIBED AS FOLKSY CHIC. THE ATMOSPHERE IS LIGHT AND CONVIVIAL.

ARTWORKS BY MITCH CAIRNS, AGATHA GOTHE-SNAPE AND MARY MACDOUGALL ADORN THE WALLS. ON THE EDGE OF THE LIVING ROOM STANDS AN IMPOSING BOOKCASE FILLED WITH ART BOOKS AND A SMALL BUT DIVERSE SELECTION OF FICTION. **SEBASTIAN GOLDSPIK**, AN INTERVIEWER WITH BROODING GOOD LOOKS, POINTS BETWEEN SARAH AND BRIAN.

SEBASTIAN GOLDSPIK: I wanted to start off by talking to Brian and Sarah about the first time I saw you guys perform which was back in the day with *UnBecomings*.

SARAH RODIGARI: It was a three-night season of queer performance during Mardi Gras at Performance Space. By five or six young artists...

BRIAN FUATA: ...Who were paired up with a mentor.

SARAH: What was the year?

BRIAN: 2001.

SARAH: And also in 2000 or maybe 1999.

BRIAN: And most of the artists came from PACT, actually all the artists came from PACT.

SEB: So the Kingpins...

SARAH: ...Were in the first one. Garth Bolwell who got married and moved to the suburbs.

BRIAN: Carl Velasco and myself, Rosie Dennis and Sarah [Rodigari].

JESSICA OLIVIERI: Who curated it?

BRIAN: Fiona Winning did.

JESS: Ah...

BRIAN: Already there was this platform for intergenerational interaction so these emerging artists were paired with a mentor.

SARAH: Who was your mentor?

BRIAN: Chris Ryan. Yeah, and it was really exciting.

SEB: And when you were at PACT and I can ask this of both of you – was your intention to be actors or performance artists?

BRIAN: So I stumbled onto PACT accidentally. I moved down to Sydney from Brisbane. I was introduced to performance making. The idea of co-devising...

SARAH: ...Improvisation.

BRIAN: Improvisation. Butoh bodywork and also the idea of interdisciplinary collaboration.

SARAH: You were going to be an actor?

BRIAN: Yeah acting was my thing. I always liked theatre of some sort.

SEB: And what about you, Sarah?

SARAH: I think I really liked theatre but in year 12 I did Drama for my HSC and I really liked the devised piece as opposed to the scripted piece. My old drama teacher used to be the director of PACT and she had said I should go there but I never did. It wasn't until I was at uni doing theatre studies that I joined PACT with Chris Ryan.

BRIAN: I had this idea of theatre and did drama studies at high school and we did this one semester of Brecht, I was like, "I love this idea of fucking shit up." Alienating the audience or objectifying the audience and from there I was like, "this is my thing."

SARAH: I studied Brecht at uni but dropped out of theatre and studied Sociology and went to PACT on the side. It was an alternative to theatre. It was theatre but not theatre. I guess it was performance art without saying it was performance art 'cause you didn't want to say it.

BRIAN: I don't know how it was for you but performance meant for me something that was anti-authoritarian, anti-traditional, anti-linear narratives and wasn't exclusively black box based.

A KNOCK AT THE DOOR. BRIAN GETS UP TO ANSWER IT.

SEB: Jess, I first became aware of your practise through an institutional context through the *Changing of the Guard* project at MCA. What was your pathway?

JESS: Well I went to art school and so my understanding of performance came from the visual arts. At art school I didn't make performance, mostly sculptures and installation. I got this grant to go overseas and before I went I made this work that was kind of a throw away idea of having people perform in this installation. And when I went away I found it really hard to get materials. So I started making videos with this girl who was also on the residency. When I got back from that I pretty much started making performances exclusively.

A DOOR OPENS. **SAMUEL HODGE**, A PHOTOGRAPHER, ENTERS WITH BRIAN.

JESS: Hi Sam.

SARAH: Hello Samuel.

JESS: Would you like a glass of wine? Brian will get you one.

LAUGHTER

BRIAN: We are being interviewed Sam.

SAMUEL HODGE: Great – do you have a charger?

JESS: [gesturing with an open hand] Over there.

BRIAN HANDS SAMUEL A GLASS OF RED WINE. SPONTANEOUS SINGING UB40'S CLASSIC SONG RED RED WINE ENSUES.

INT.
POTTS POINT APARTMENT.
TEN MINUTES LATER

SAM: So what's the deal? Do I just take some snaps?

SEB: You just take some of these guys then later we might do some staged ones. There's a shower scene.

LAUGHTER

SAM: What is this wine?

BRIAN: Tempranillo

SAM: It tastes so...it tastes of something?

BRIAN: Wood?

SAM: Wood!

SARAH: Tobacco.

THE INTERVIEWER PAUSES WHILST THE GROUP FOCUSES HE THEN CUTS THROUGH THE FORCED SILENCE WITH HIS NEXT QUESTION.

SEB: One thing that is very important to each of your practices is the mutual friendship between the three of you, but also the collaborations that you work in and have worked in, in the past. So Sarah, I'll start with PANTHER and your collaboration with Madeleine Hodge.

SARAH: So Maddy and I met in Melbourne and we wanted to make performance works that focused on its relationship to its audience. Maddy and I actually met at PACT. We met at a workshop with Richard Murphet from VCA.

SAMUEL, THE AFFABLE PHOTOGRAPHER, STARTS TAKING PHOTOS.

SARAH: We really liked working together. We had high expectations. We just kept pushing each other. A year later we met in Melbourne. We needed a community like Performance Space or PACT in Melbourne and there wasn't one. So we decided that we would start making work and invite people from overseas to come and work with us. We started to look to Sydney and internationally to make work. We collaborated with a large group of people from Glasgow called READER. We wanted to make performance that wasn't theatre that was abstract. Did not take the linear structure of beginning middle and end.

DISCUSSION ENSUES ABOUT PANTHER'S PERFORMANCE HISTORY.

SEB: So Jess, a key aspect of your performance practice has been your work with PARACHUTES FOR LADIES. Can you talk about the genesis of Parachutes?

JESS: So Parachutes started as a way of acknowledging all the people who helped me make the work. I thought it was important to do that basically, this idea of authorship was quite important to me and that I wasn't the sole author. How do you credit all these people that have influenced and collaborated on the work? It also began as a collaboration with Hayley Forward who's a sound engineer and we would collaborate on making the work. We came up with a framework and we would invite people into the framework and they were the Parachutes For Ladies. So we were the Ladies.

SARAH: That they were parachuting for?

JESS: No they were parachutes for us. They were saving us.

SARAH: Ah.

SEB: And Brian, similarly to Sarah and Jess you've been involved in numerous collaborations and projects but I guess one kind of defining collaboration of your practice has been WRONG SOLO, your collaboration with Agatha Gothe-Snape.

BRIAN: Hmm. In terms of this idea of collaboration and friendships, my solo practice has always operated parallel to a really strong and vibrant social scene or friendship group.

SARAH: Which is what I was saying about why Maddy and I looked so hard to find this community to make work with.

BRIAN: The first major collaboration was with Hannah Furmage and from then on it was just friends hanging out getting drunk quite often and saying we should just do a show. Wrong Solo slips into that same pattern. Aggy [Gothe-Snape] and I were initially attracted to each other from this real improvised, site-responsive, context-responsive or emotional-responsive space of just being artists just working shit out. And that kinda becomes a conscious performance as well as a subconscious performance. But how we met was once again through connections at PACT.

SEB: So you're all friends with each other. But I wonder how much in your social life you talk about performance? I mean, I know you are all very supportive of each other, you attend each other's performances and I'm assuming you discuss and critique and break down each other's performance? How much of the time in your friendship is taken up with talking about this common thing that you do?

JESS: I say 50.

BRIAN: Yeah.

JESS: 50 per cent art, 20 per cent gossip and 30 per cent love.

BRIAN: But I think that it's...

SARAH: ...It's all part of it.

BRIAN: Yeah, this idea that everything is a performance and performance not in an art sense but in a sociological sense as well. Even if it is gossip, it's about performativity and public personas as opposed to how we imagine their private persona to be and the clashes of that. I think that's important in our definition of performance. We see it as a social object.

IN 2013, BRIAN FUATA, JESS OLIVIERI AND SARAH RODIGARI ARE COLLABORATING TO CURATE A PERFORMANCE PROGRAM, *RESTAGING RESTAGING HISTORIES* AT ALASKA PROJECTS.

CALLY SPOONER

CALLY SPOONER (BORN 1983) IS AN ARTIST BASED IN LONDON. USING THEORY AND PHILOSOPHERS AS ALIBIS TO HELP HER WRITE, AND CASTS OF ARGUING CHARACTERS TO HELP HER PERFORM, SHE PRODUCES PLOTLESS NOVELLAS, DISJUNCTIVE THEATRE PLAYS, LOOPING MONOLOGUES AND MUSICAL ARRANGEMENTS TO STAGE THE MOVEMENT AND BEHAVIOR OF SPEECH, WITHIN HIGH PERFORMANCE ECONOMIES.

SPOONER'S RECENT PROJECT, "COLLAPSING IN PARTS" INVOLVED PRODUCING A NOVELLA OVER A PERIOD OF EIGHT MONTHS AT INTERNATIONAL PROJECT SPACE, BIRMINGHAM. PLAYING WITH THE FORM, SITE AND ANXIETY OF PERFORMANCE, THE PIECE INCLUDED A SERIES OF EVENTS, AS FOOTNOTES TO THE EVOLVING TEXT. THE TEXT WAS PUBLISHED ONLINE AS IT WAS WRITTEN, ENACTING THE PROCESS OF 'THINKING OUT LOUD' INTEGRAL TO ALL OF SPOONER'S WORK. THE PROJECT CULMINATED IN A FILMED PERFORMANCE OF THE NOVELLA AND AN EXHIBITION AT IPS IN 2012.

INCLUDED IS AN EXCERPT FROM COLLAPSING IN PARTS, LABOR (PART II).

FOR FULL TEXT PLEASE VISIT
INTERNATIONALPROJECTSPACE.ORG/CALLYSPOONER

CALLY SPOONER IS REPRESENTED BY MOTINTERNATIONAL, LONDON AND BRUSSELS.

III. LABOR (PART II)

It was December 2008, and the press-conference was a disaster. Programmed at the beginning of the month to coincide with the Golfer's brand new home-based driving range, Burson, Murphy and Green, now fully engaged as the Golfer's primary confidants, ensured that everyone who was anyone was informed or assembled.

The gist was simple: show the world the Golfer's perseverance, even in times of hardship and injury, with a blinding come-back swing after five months of non-public injury time. The project would set a precedent for every working man and woman in these times of economic injury, encouraging them to take their labour home, recover from stumbles out-loud, never fear their audience, and hit their balls further than any competitor could ever imagine possible.

"Sure, he's been injured," pitched Murphy to a reporter, "but performance isn't just about the tournaments, it's about the relentless backstage work. The rehearsal, the training, day in day out, non-stop. Eli is a high performer, not only because he wins, but because even in times of trouble and strife, he continues, relentlessly, because he knows that when you're not practicing, someone, somewhere is practicing. And then, when the time comes to meet him - he will win." "And what are your thoughts on having him as your public face? Are you happy with the collaboration?" asked the journalist. "Very happy," offered Green. "He's a role model for hard workers and high performers in boardrooms and offices everywhere. We're all thrilled to be working together in these tricky economic times. And, despite the current adversity, in 2009 we can expect great things from the company, just as we will see great, great things from him."

The live event was flawless. The Golfer made everyone very happy with an extremely big swing, and the team awaited the next day's press with confidence. Unfortunately, instead of the hoped for 300-yard triumph, the coverage ended moments before the ball landed, with an image of the Golfer looking very preoccupied by a front row spectator: an unidentified blonde in a baseball cap.

If truth be told, the incident was a genuinely unfortunate shot of the Golfer's gaze of intense focus colliding with her equally focused gaze on the Golfer. And whilst he wasn't especially looking at her, not exactly, the documentation was touching. Gossip spread far too fast, fuelling a fairly ill-informed accusation that he was officially in love, and not with his wife. Burson, Green and Murphy's response was prompt.

"Why the hell did you look at her, Eli?" yelled Murphy. "I didn't!" insisted the Golfer. "I was just... squinting." "It's fucked," shouted Murphy. "Ruined. Your entire public recovery is screwed. We bring you out here, invest all this energy into showing the world you're a fighter, that you're back for the fight, and you blow it all on a blonde in a baseball cap!" "I was NOT looking!" "It's irrelevant." Green waved his newspaper. "The facts are present. And they're certainly not facts about your fighting come-back." "Not even a word on the injury," muttered Burson. "Quite incredible." He folded up his paper. "We'll have to do another event," said Green. "It needs to happen. Should it be another stint on the range?" "Absolutely not," Burson intervened. "It'll look desperate and obvious, and we don't want to project any more of that."

The Golfer looked hurt. "But I gave a pretty good swing." He stared at the men. "Right?" "You know that's not the point." Murphy paced the room, sweating now. "Look where your looking has got us. I mean for God's sake Eli, just keep your focus. That's all you had to do. KEEP YOUR FOCUS. Without your focus we're NOTHING."

The whole saga was upsetting for the Golfer. He had been looking forward to reactivating his vitality after being injured and miserable for so long, and this sideline disaster seemed unfair. Furthermore, as a first public recovery swing, post injury, 290 yards wasn't bad. "A nice normal drive," he'd said. Then they all cheered, and that felt good. Equally upsetting was his wife's behaviour, which seemed confused and totally unexpected, because no, he had not been looking at the blonde. Raising the issue awkwardly, in a manner they mostly kept off limits, he grew indignant and red-faced, which made him seem especially guilty, but, true or untrue, the blonde on the range turned out to be the tip of something much more historical.

In a flurry of tears and sporting an unattractively runny nose, the wife reeled off her marital traumas chronologically. Beginning with the daily 4.30am alarm clock, the 5am workouts, the stony silences during intense training, his impenetrable routine (which wife and children were never drafted into), followed by the injury, and the ensuing sluggish depression which left a layer of misery on every woman, child and object in his vicinity. This was aggravated by his disengagement with his children, his refusal to visit her parents, his disinterest in his brother's new baby, his constant strategising over what to eat and how to train, too many visits from 'those three men' and finally, the complete overhaul of her garden into his driving range. Soon it was clear that what he'd taken as five years of uniquely tacit understanding was actually a silent, cancerous hatred for his egocentricity, and the blonde in the baseball cap was truly the last straw.

Finally, on December 12th she packed up her bags and the children, took the nanny, and left him to the solitude he'd quite obviously been craving for years. Somewhat disturbed that his usually unobtrusive wife could be so relentlessly noisy for so many weeks, he welcomed her exit, secure in the knowledge that she'd gone to her sister's and would return on the 29th. This was ideal: the perfect opportunity to get back to his routine, and he drafted a strategy on iCal. 5am - two hours of range work. Followed by on-course swing work, followed by two hours of putting practice. Play nine holes. Three or four hours of on-course work, followed by a workout, nine further holes and a protein-rich supper, as part of his performance improving diet.

There.

He was satisfied with the strategy.

The possibility of his pending routine was exhilarating, but the competitive spirit to action his agenda just wouldn't arrive. The will to win was nowhere.

For the remainder of advent, he'd set his alarm for 4.30am each night, and each morning, at 4.30am, he'd set it to snooze, eventually waking up somewhere nearer to 10. The power of the night's brutally unremitting anxiety, potentially a useful fuel, evaporated into a nothingness by morning, and even coffee couldn't revive it. He decided he must be sick. He was sure he was sick. Maybe he needed a tournament, another public event, to get him moving. Out on the driving range, for the press conference, he'd been fine, he'd risen to the challenge, but without any tournaments till March, he panicked that the effect of no training would raise its ugly head in the spring, possibly before an audience of thousands, and nothing could sooth the fear.

• II •
Cally Spooner
Collapsing In Parts 2012
HD Video
1 hour and 22 minutes



