

The Routledge Companion to Performance Art



Edited by
Lucian O'Connor, Graciela Ovejero Postigo,
Natalie Loveless, and Jennie Klein

THE ROUTLEDGE COMPANION TO PERFORMANCE ART

This global anthology offers a constellation of practices, genealogies, contexts, movements, events, artists, theories, and debates around performance art and its meaning, current and future research, and emerging critical discourse.

At the core of this collection is the understanding that performance art and its organizations emerged globally, without a single point of origin. Each chapter engages artists and practices from different moments and regions, foregrounding how cultural and social conditions shape distinct motivations, methods, relations, and interpretive frameworks. The first section of the book is devoted to multiple genealogies, rather than one central history, of performance art's formations throughout every inhabited continent on earth. The second section explores performance art as a situated practice of ethical engagement, political critique, and worldbuilding across diverse contexts. Chapters in the third section trace performance art's afterlives in dynamic interfaces that reshape histories, challenge dominant narratives, and persistently reconfigure relationships among bodies, actions, and institutions. The final section of the book offers a constellation of performance art documents and microhistories from global contexts. Considerable space in this book is devoted to the institutional infrastructure for performance art, including organizations, spaces, publications, and festivals.

The book is of interest to scholars working in contemporary art, performance art, conceptual art, art history, performance studies, anthropology, curatorial studies, theatre, dance, music, critical theory, and photography.

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Graciela Ovejero Postigo, Natalie Loveless,
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Katie Brewer Ball is an associate professor of performance studies at Wesleyan University. A writer living on Nonotuck land in Western Massachusetts, they are the author of *The Only Way Out: The Racial & Sexual Performance of Escape* (2024). Their writing has been published in *The Mass Review*, *Room Magazine*, *ASAP/Journal*, *Women & Performance: A Journal of Feminist Theory*, *WSQ: Women's Studies Quarterly*, *TDR: The Drama Review*, *Artforum*, *Bomb Magazine*, and more.

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Emily Johnson (Yup'ik) is a choreographer, writer, and performance artist who investigates place, community, and kinship. She is artistic director of the performance company *Catalyst*. Since 1998 she has developed works that engage land, water, and social justice. A recipient of the Bessie Award, Guggenheim Fellowship, and Doris Duke Artist Award, Johnson sculpts gatherings that function as portals and processions of care, inviting audiences to inhabit space, time, and environment together.

Amelia Jones produces a range of texts and exhibitions that address power and difference in art and performance. Exhibitions include survey shows of the work of Ron Athey (*Queer Communion: Ron Athey*, 2021) and Ken Gonzales-Day (2025ff). Her most recent book is *In Between Subjects: A Critical Genealogy of Queer Performance* (2021), and she is writing a book, *Lifework (Against Cultural Capitalism)*, which addresses ways of living creatively against the grain of neoliberal and fascist institutions.

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Tavia Nyong'o is the William Lampson Professor of Theater and Performance Studies, American Studies, and African American Studies at Yale University. He is the author of *The Amalgamation Waltz: Race, Performance, and the Ruses of Memory* (2009), *Afro-Fabulations: The Queer Drama of Black Life* (2018), and *Black Apocalypse: Afrofuturism at the End of the World* (2025) and co-editor of José Esteban Muñoz's *The Sense of Brown* (2020).

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Her research focuses on modern and contemporary Latin American art, dance, and performance art. Author of *Art and Politics: Mujeres artistas y artes de acción en los sesenta y setenta* (2019), edited by Yauguru, Buchelli curated *Transformadoras: Mujeres artistas en la colección del Museo Blanes* (2021) and co-curated *Teresa Vila: Arte y tiempo and Intersticios*. She works as a researcher at the Juan Manuel Blanes museum in Montevideo.

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Christopher M. Reeves, University of Illinois at Chicago, is a creative researcher and artist. His interests include art and technology, internet art, artists' books, Fluxus, performance art, punk and DIY, networks of friendship in art, and localized collaboration. In 2018 he co-founded and currently runs (with Curtis Miller) Flatland, an artists' event space in McKinley Park. In 2020 he edited, with Aaron Walker, *The World's Worst: A Guide to the Portsmouth Sinfonia*.

Aidana María Rico Chávez, b. Caracas, Venezuela, 1976, is an artist, migrant, and cultural agent located in Buenos Aires. Beginning her performance work through poetry in 2002, she examines power relations through motherhood, gender, and migration. She has shown her work across the Americas, Europe, and Asia, and was a professor at UNEARTE

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Albeley Rodríguez Bencomo is a Venezuelan professor, curator, and researcher with a PhD in Latin American cultural studies (UASB) and master's degrees in cultural studies and museology. She has taught at UDLA, UASB, and the Pontificia Universidad Católica del Ecuador and worked as a curator-researcher at numerous museums. Author of *Cuerpos irreales + arte insumiso* en la obra de Argelia Bravo (2014), she has taught and published widely across Latin America and Europe, specializing in feminist, decolonial, and performance art discourses.

Wagner Rossi Campos, b. Belo Horizonte, Brazil, 1966, is a multidisciplinary artist and founder-director of PERPENDICULAR. Holding a master's of arts from UFMG-EBA, he explores the body through urban interventions, performance, and activation processes. His practice spans identities – artist, curator, healer – reflecting on presence in contemporary society. He has organized and participated in major events throughout Brazil and internationally, including in Argentina, Colombia, Chile, Ecuador, Spain, Germany, and Portugal, expanding dialogs between body, ritual, and the social environment.

Soledad Sánchez Goldar, b. Capital Federal, 1977, lives and works between Córdoba and Salta. She holds a degree in theatre and is completing a doctorate in arts, both from National University of Córdoba (UNC). Artist, teacher, and organizer, she co-founded *La nariz en la taza* and co-organized the Argentine chapter of CONTINUO LATIDOAMERICANO de Performance. Goldar collaborates with CePIA's project *Escrituras Performáticas* and contributes to the archive of oral memory on performance in Argentina Performance Art. She has curated numerous festivals and received first prizes in the 95 Salón de Mayo del Museo Rosa Galisteo (2017) and in the 35 Premio y Salón de Arte Córdoba (2015).

Dimple B Shah is a Bangalore-based multidisciplinary artist whose practice spans performance, installation, printmaking, and video. Her work explores ritual, healing, ecology, and spirituality, integrating traditional practices with contemporary art to evoke transformation and embodied awareness. She has performed with *outofsite_chi* since 2020, facilitating Artist Focus conversations, serving on juries and providing lectures on performance art in Bangalore.

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Contributors

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Beth Stephens and Annie Sprinkle have been creating multi-media art projects about love, sex, queerness, and the sensuality of nature together for 24 years. Annie was a sex worker from 1973 to 1995, then morphed into a feminist performance artist and sex educator. Beth was a sculptor and installation artist and became a university art professor. She's taught at University of California Santa Cruz for over 30 years. These days the duo make feature films about environmental issues through an ecosexual gaze, make visual art, produce symposiums, create archives, and do performance activism. Their *Ecosex Manifesto* (2011) launched the Ecosex Movement. Their latest feature film, *Playing with Fire – An Ecosexual Emergency* (2025) was partially funded with a Guggenheim Fellowship awarded in 2021. Their book, *Assuming the Ecosexual Position – the Earth as Lover* (2021) chronicles their epic love story and art/life adventures.

Claire Tancons is a curator, writer, and researcher born in Guadalupe and currently based in Paris. She is a member of Independent Curators International (ICI) and practices curating as an expanded creative field, experimenting with the political aesthetics of walking, marching, second lining, masquerading, and parading in participatory processional performances. She has widely published on contemporary art and participatory, decolonial, and collective forms of exhibition-making.

Reiko Tomii is an independent art historian and curator who investigates post-1945 Japanese art. She contributed to *Global Conceptualism* (Queens Museum, 1999), *Century City* (Tate Modern, 2001), and *Art, Anti-Art, Non-Art* (Getty Research Institute, 2007). Co-director of *PoNJA-GenKon* (est. 2003), Tomii has organized symposia and panels with Yale University, the Getty Research Institute, and the University of Chicago. Her book *Radicalism in the Wilderness* (2016) won the 2017 Robert Motherwell Book Award and inspired her 2019 exhibition at Japan Society Gallery, *Radicalism in the Wilderness: Japanese Artists in the Global 1960s*.

ieke Trinks is a Dutch performance artist, curator, and educator based in Rotterdam. Her practice explores ephemerality, audience participation, and the boundaries of liveness within contemporary performance, public space, and experimental curatorial contexts. She has organized Artist Focus conversations with outofsite_chi, co-curated *Intercity* (2023), and curated *Flow* (2021). Trink began performing with outofsite_chi in 2013, when she was selected by the OoS jury as the 2013 International Artist.

Contributors

Layne Waerea (Ngāti Wāhiao, Ngāti Kahungunu) is an artist and researcher at AUT University, Tāmaki Makaurau/Auckland. Layne’s performance work to video was included in the *Busan Biennial: Seeing in the Dark* with co-directors Vera Mey and Philippe Pirotte (2024). Layne is a co-editor of *Resetting the Coordinates* (2024), the first anthology of performance art in Aotearoa. Layne’s practice explores performance, intervention, te Tiriti o Waitangi (1840), humor, and participation.

Victoria Wynne-Jones currently lectures in the areas of art history, fine arts, and dance studies and collaborates with artists on written commissions and exhibition-making. Her research focuses on the intersections between dance studies and performance art as well as curatorial practice, feminisms, contemporary art theory, and philosophy. Her 2021 monograph *Choreographing Intersubjectivity in Contemporary Art* was as part of a series entitled “New World Choreographies.”

Dr. Elif Su Yilmaz completed her PhD in the history of art, visual culture, and design (Department of Art & Design) at the University of Alberta under the supervision of Dr. Natalie Loveless. She specialized in contemporary performance art histories and theories and had both a scholarly as well as practical interest in activist art. She died suddenly during the completion of this volume and is missed dearly.

Keren Zaiontz is an associate professor at the University of British Columbia. She is the author of *Theatre & Festivals* and co-editor of *Sustainable Tools for Precarious Times: Performance Actions in the Americas*, winner of the ATHE Award for Excellence in Editing. Her current book project is a cultural examination of global north authoritarian power from the perspective of dissident artists who risk everything and model perseverance in the face of repressive rule.

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Jennie Klein

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Lucian O'Connor

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Graciela Ovejero Postigo

No happy deed takes place without a mesh of co-incidences, a mesh of cultural and personal undercurrents and emergences that link people and circumstances in the move towards the shared experience of knowledge expansion. In the new paradigm, intelligence is emotional and vibrational. The practice of art has proven it with historical evidence. This time I get to publish a few words of great gratitude: my artist parents, teachers of many, every artist, poet, and craft person I ever met, and closer to my participation in this book project, the pleasant coincidence of reconnecting with Jennie Klein on the shared interest for performance art which unfolded conversations that led into my editorial work for this book. It is an honor to have had this opportunity to present the reflexive voices of 14 South American authors from our strong and resilient community of transnational performance artists and researchers.

Natalie Loveless

Thanks first and foremost to the artists, scholars, scholar-artists, and artist-scholars who contributed to Section II of *The Routledge Companion to Performance Art*. Their care, commitment, and patience have meant the world to me as, together, we have navigated shifting political and personal landscapes, locally and globally. Stephanie Loveless, Freya Zinovieff, and Sha LaBare, thank you for your endless support. Graciela: thank you for the important histories that you continue to advocate for. Jennie: thank you for your long-time friendship and collaboration. Lucian: my debt of gratitude to you is beyond what these scant words can express. Your dedication, brilliance, insight, and wisdom have touched me since we first bonded over performance art while both graduate students at UCSC. This volume would not have seen the light of day without you. Last but not least: I need to acknowledge the students – in my classrooms and in our CoLAB space – who remind me daily that all is not lost.

The editors would like to dedicate *The Routledge Companion to Performance Art* to Natalie's former student, Dr. Elif Su Yilmaz, who passed away suddenly during the finalization of this volume. Her passion for performance art, commitment to social justice, and fierce curiosity about the world will never be forgotten.

Thank you, Elif Su, for having touched our lives so deeply.





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PERFORMANCE ART IN CONTEXT, PERFORMANCE ART IN MOTION

Lucian O'Connor

Leaning and sitting against the white walls of a large room, an audience chatters until we hear David Boykin's improvising saxophone begin to play. A video projection appears on one wall, synchronizing closeup hand gestures with Boykin's zigzagging melodies. The camera crops and anonymizes each figure. Across differences, across repetitions, the hand movements intermix and accumulate into a gestural dance choreographed by Ahalya Satkunarathnam. These mediated forms continue to intermingle as performance artist karen g. williams enters the center of the room, wearing a jumpsuit, orienting her own gaze toward the projection of hands in motion. Audience members alternate our attention between the saxophone, the video, and the woman now running in place on an open hardwood floor. She runs while embedded in a transmedia art installation – continuing to run for a long period, translating experiences of people living in prison to a contemporary art audience in New York City.

williams first created and directed *a blueprint of the bluegoose* (2003–2004) with assistance from Craig Harshaw for the Insight Arts *Creative Movements* festival in Chicago (2003), presenting her collaborative research on mass incarceration via performance art.¹ She explained in an interview that running in place was a method for marking time, referencing the routines of inmates who try to remain physically active while constricted to very small quarters.² The durational juxtaposition between sustained exercising and nervous hand gesturing is structured by extensive repetition, laced with anxiety induced by that repetition and the context of prison. Boykin's interpretive saxophone further aestheticizes the work's anxious affect. The first iteration of the performance marked time even more directly, when williams with co-performers Nicole Garneau and Aislinn Pulley started by dancing with outstretched arms, moving in clock patterns before they separated into three white rooms and ran in place (Figure 0.1).

I was present for the second iteration in New York, where williams performed alone, enacting a contrapanoptic gaze that strained to focus on disjointed, affectively intense video documentation and sounds while running toward nowhere but exhaustion. A sense of overwhelm mounted as transmedia fragments proliferated, culminating in a slideshow of photos featuring a man eating his last meal before facing capital punishment. How does one begin to understand the psychological impacts of the prison industrial complex? Is it possible to



Figure 0.1 karen g. williams, *a blueprint of the bluegoose* (2003). Performance installation with Nicole Garneau and Aislinn Pulley at the Insight Arts *Creative Movements* festival in Chicago.

Performance documentation courtesy of the artist. Used with permission.

achieve a state of health or wellbeing in such a context that systematically devalues people inside?

To approach these questions and more, williams amalgamated her fine arts training with ethnographic methods derived from anthropology: interviews that engage inmates, documentation of bodily movements, documents of abuse and torture in prisons, belongings of incarcerated people – all are interwoven into the content and form of her performance art.³ williams also approached the walls themselves as sculptural elements, transforming the art space into a prison setting. Significantly influenced by Paolo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1968) and Elaine Scarry's *The Body in Pain* (1985), williams poses serious questions in her art about power, domination, pain, and liberation.⁴ The performance in Chicago also included a waterboarding reenactment that emphasized the distress and disorientation of torture paired with interrogation.

williams taught me that performance art can be representational. *a blueprint of the bluegoose* prepared me to better understand numerous issues I had not previously considered related to race, policing, incarceration, performance, and semiotics. Endurance (running) can represent actions that are exterior to the frame of an event (here, condensing the routines of many incarcerated people into a prolonged contemporary art action). williams developed *a blueprint of the bluegoose* to better understand what people experience in prison and to bring attention to how the consequences of racial profiling and imprisonment can restructure peoples' lives. Angela Davis has shown that the prison was historically re-shaped to absorb the economic and cultural shock of abolishing chattel slavery in the United States starting in 1865. When I was Davis' student, she taught me that the structures of incarceration today are the direct descendants of the structures of slavery from previous eras. Among the many compelling examples she cites in *Are Prisons Obsolete?* (2003), Davis reminds us that 99% of Alabama's prisoners were white until the Emancipation Proclamation, after which prison populations became overwhelmingly Black.⁵ Davis writes that, "many people in Black, Latino, and Native American communities now have a far greater chance of going to prison than of getting a decent education," which indicates a structural problem.⁶ *a blueprint of the bluegoose's* exploration of what it is like to live in prison – including for people who have been incarcerated as the result of racial profiling or other systemic injustices described by Davis – employed various elements in a work of live art, including: endurance, representation, figuration, documentation, repetition, dance, music, video, interviews, an arts space, and more.

Kobena Mercer's "Black Art and the Burden of Representation" probes another kind of representation, for which Black artists are pressured by institutions and audiences to stand in for an entire group of people.⁷ williams addressed related burdens both in art and imprisonment, as she ran under the representational weight of racialized overincarceration. Her endurance action dramatized how representational pressures impact live presence, which she formally resisted with documentation, fragmentation, and co-performance. Tavia Nyong'o has written about these concepts at length, and further contributes to the discourse with José Muñoz and Fred Moten in mind in the chapter, "On Liveness, Blackness, Documentation, and Becoming" in Section III of this volume.⁸ I have internalized lessons taught to me by williams, Nyong'o, Davis, and Mercer, as I question any claims that "pure" performance art cannot be representational.

Coco Fusco addressed related dynamics of racial and colonial representation in her classic essay, "The Other History of Intercultural Performance."⁹ She insists that we expand our genealogies of performance art to include people who were put on view in medical

displays, anthropology exhibitions, and World's Fairs. Fusco's essay analyzes her experiences with Guillermo Gómez-Peña as they performed inside a golden cage – another kind of prison – at art and science museums around the world, in *Two Undiscovered Amerindians Visit ____* (1992–1993). The artists were regularly denied creative capacity by critics, even when they ironically performed racial and ethnic stereotypes deeply informed by the colonial histories they were criticizing. Elif Su Yılmaz, in her Section II chapter, “Transgression and Stereotype in Contemporary Performance Art,” revisits Fusco and Gómez-Peña's collaborations, showing how their methods interrogate boundaries. Yılmaz also analyzes works by James Luna (Luiseño) and the ethno-cyborg performance collective La Pocha Nostra in her notable chapter on transgression and stereotypes in performance art. I remain attentive to Fusco's concept of *self-conscious irony*, or the ability of artists to be creative in their self-presentations, and how it can be put into conversation with Mercer and Nyong'o's theories of representation.¹⁰

Building on his extensive intellectual and pedagogical engagement with performance, Joshua Chambers-Letson further problematizes how scholarly fields historicize the genre in his Section III chapter, “The Other History of Performance Art's History.” His meta-analysis of narratives and formal legacies questions origin stories and canons, pointing to key alternative inheritances for performance art that exceed what he identifies as the primary narrative, exemplified by Roselee Goldberg's *Performance: Live Art 1909 to the Present* (1979).¹¹ Chambers-Letson reminds us that appropriation, mimicry, and primitivism are part of the *racial unconscious* of performance art. His pivotal chapter amplifies the critical spirit of *The Routledge Companion to Performance Art* by encouraging “new and heretical narratives” that exceed and reshape those currently in place and taught in classrooms around the world.

Contexts

I first encountered performance art in the year 2000, in a poetry class taught by Yopie Prins at the University of Michigan. She presented to us Teresa Hak Kyung Cha's *Dictee* (1982) as an example of performative poetry authored by a visual artist from California's San Francisco Bay area. Learning about Cha's art in that context, and later in critical literature that foregrounds its relational elements, transformed my thinking.¹² In 2003 in New York, I activated *Dictee* in a group performance at the Hemispheric Institute's *Encuentro* (performance festival and academic conference), directed by my former mentor Diana Taylor, as I outwardly opened the pages from the *Erato/Love Poetry* section and read some of the contents. This was an attempt to perform how Cha implicates readers in the violence of rhetoric, a dynamic she also explores in the contents of her book.¹³ For nearly all of the *Erato/Love Poetry* section, each page includes large blank spaces positioned directly opposite to blocks of words that are the same size on the other page. When the book is closed, the gaps combine with their corresponding sets of text, coming together to form complete pages. When a reader opens any part of that section, their conventional action breaks it apart, creating multiple gaps and fragments.

Cha's text pressed upon dynamics that unsettled people who insisted that pure performance may be corrupt if too directly engaged with writing or documentation – even as *Dictee* is critical of how writing can impact the body. *Dictee*, which performatively poetizes the failures of attempting to speak in multiple languages, which associates writing with the needle pricks of acupuncture as well as with physical violence, and which takes

seriously the performances of reading and writing, is a carefully constructed interface that Cha fashioned while she was producing performance art. Today, the text is a milestone in a genealogy of approaches that explore how performance engages other media, which many of the chapters throughout this volume do in differential contexts.

The second performance artist I encountered, also in 2000, was Adrian Piper. At the time, I was studying autobiography, medicine, and anthropology under the mentorship of Ruth Behar and Sidonie Smith at Michigan.¹⁴ This research inspired additional interests in transdisciplinary theories of the body, phenomenology, and ontology. I met with Jacqueline Francis, who introduced me to Piper's *Out of Order, Out of Sight* (1996) volumes as entryways for learning about how artists engage philosophy and autobiography. Piper's performance art incorporates striking conceptual themes and methods via metaphorizations of pressures to conform to white culture in her *Catalysis* series (1970–73), transgender performances that challenge race and gender stereotypes in *The Mythic Being* (1973–75), dance, stereotyping, and intercultural relationality in *Funk Lessons* (1982–84), and much more. Ciclón Olivares writes about *The Mythic Being* and *Catalysis* in their contribution to Section I of this volume, "Chilean Conceptualism and Performance Art under Dictatorship." According to Olivares, Piper contributed to transnational efforts by artists of color to create transmedia performance that expanded the formal and geographic contours of visual art in the 1970s and 1980s. In Chile, performance became a critical tool to survive an oppressive authoritarian government, which I have researched and published about collaboratively with Olivares since 2006. Piper's work taught me that art can perform as ethical provocation and epistemological experiment, that it can confront racism, gender normativity, and subject formation with formal precision and intellectual depth.¹⁵

Later in my career, I learned art-historical methods for analyzing performance art from Catherine M. Soussloff, as well as museum and semiotic approaches from Jennifer A. González, preparing me to teach and publish about the genre. Amelia Jones, a contributor to Section II, has developed widely cited critical theories that expand art-historical traditions, also deeply informing my pedagogy and writing.¹⁶ She notably addresses how documents exhibit traces of performance art that connect ephemeral modes to other media in history. In 2006, I began taking photographs of performances at the request of friends who are live artists, including David Khang, Nao Bustamante, and Coco Rico, which has shaped my relationship to discourse about documentation and reproduction. Several contributors to this volume engage related topics; for example, Yelena Gluzman asks "What is a Performance Document a Document *For*?" in her Section III chapter, offering new theories of the document rooted in understanding its purpose, informed by her accountable collaborations throughout the performance art sector. Interestingly, in our times of cryptocurrency and digitization, Ali Na and Keren Zaiontz argue in their Section II chapter that NFTs are taking on characteristics of performance art, rendering them autonomous and distinct from their reproductions. My role as lead editor for *The Routledge Companion to Performance Art* has taught me that numerous scholars, curators, and artists continue to seek innovative methods for understanding performance art – with a notable turn toward archival questions and approaches that document and analyze artist networks, venues, and social structures.

Scholarly discourses that offer methods for working with documentation grow increasingly relevant. Anthropology has provided some critical tools for addressing documentary genres, intercultural dynamics, race relations, cultural connections to place, and other themes that are pertinent to performance art.¹⁷ Readers will notice throughout this

volume a timely interest in, and proliferation of, writings about performance art's institutions, social hierarchies, funding mechanisms, collective organizing, global networks, and more.¹⁸ Deirdre Heddon and Jennie Klein's co-edited anthology *Histories and Practices of Live Art* (2012) offers some ways to think about networks and venues that support the production of performance art.¹⁹ Klein is a co-editor of *The Routledge Companion to Performance Art*, and a catalyst for developing critical sociological accounts and micro-histories of live art, in conversation with Dominic Johnson. In her introduction to Section I, she prepares us to engage with the numerous voices in this book that address artist support networks around the world. Indeed, most of the contributions that focus on social structures and dynamics in performance art networks can be found in the sections that Klein edited.

My own initial engagements with live art/body art/performance art point to some still relatively untapped frameworks that can contribute to our understandings of what artists are doing and why. For example, autobiography can serve as a literary mode that foregrounds an artist's own thoughts, processes, intentions, life circumstances, institutional embeddedness, community accountabilities, and other elements sometimes overlooked.²⁰ Engaging artist autobiographies in conversation with scholarly approaches to the genre has deepened my own relationships to visual and performance art in general. As an undergraduate, I wrote about Faith Ringgold's autobiography *We Flew Under the Bridge* (1995), and why it mattered that the artist narrated her life as devoted to critical humility, with an emphasis on giving back to family and community.²¹ Learning about the artist's paintings, story quilts, and performance art through her autobiographical expressions was valuable and qualitatively different from reviews written by journalists, or peer-reviewed research published by art history professors. The approaches do not need to compete; different discursive modes can complement, inform, and transform one another in generative ways, particularly in classroom discussions that consider artists from social groups traditionally omitted from art history's canons. Adrian Piper's *Out of Order, Out of Sight* volumes do this work in dazzling ways.²²

Numerous contributors to *The Routledge Companion to Performance Art* mobilize autobiographical modes that critically clarify, theorize, and contextualize their work in relation to their lives. For example, in Section II, Indigenous artists Peter Morin and Cheryl L'Hirondelle connect their performance practices with their experiences of racialization and colonization. L'Hirondelle understands the use of repeated materials in performance to be the formation of a syntax, always informed by her relations to English, French, and Nēhiyawēwin (Cree language) – the latter of which she and her family were discouraged from speaking in public. Her chapter clarifies why much of her live art is about the impacts of colonialism on Indigenous bodies and languages, and how language for her is always interconnected with corporeality and performance. Morin clarifies how racialized relationships in his family, including how he grew up designated as a “half-breed,” continue to teach him new lessons and motivate him to question the tools he uses in performance. He details numerous personal life experiences that shape how he conceptualizes his body as an *impact zone*, particularly in relation to the Canadian Indian Residential School System. Indeed, embedding one's art in a discussion of a life or primary experience can explicate some conceptual dimensions of a work or practice, as it can also be a useful strategy for Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) to counter longstanding systemic exclusions from official archives and narratives of art.

Movements

From a Western-centric lens, performance art was born in the 1960s and 1970s, during a moment Lucy Lippard dubbed the “dematerialization of the art object.”²³ Lippard linked the genre to conceptual art as well as closely related variations such as op art, kinetic art, and installation art. Such approaches emphasize ideas and processes over ontic material forms. Visual artists in the West who contributed to these movements in the 1960s–1970s understood themselves to be abandoning the formalism that constituted progress in predominant histories of the *avant-garde*. For famed art critic Clement Greenberg (1948), *avant-garde* progression is defined by the reduction and refinement of an art genre to its irreducible qualities, such as purging illusionism from painting to emphasize two-dimensionality, the canvas, the materiality of the paint itself, and the pigments – all without the uniformity of decoration.²⁴ Greenberg asserted that emphasizing each medium’s unique qualities is a logical evolutionary outcome, and that painters would become more honest if they cease trying to trick viewers into confusing a two-dimensional canvas for a three-dimensional scene. Arguing that painters since Manet have increasingly moved toward abstraction, he postulated Modern Art as a Kantian process of constitutive self-critique.²⁵

Greenberg’s formalist histories of Modern Art glorified US Abstract Expressionism, positioning New York City as a global center for visual art in the mid-twentieth century.²⁶ The self-critical progression of Modernism reached a point of logical exhaustion by the rupturing, theatrical arrival of Minimalism in the late 1950s, which focused on the materials, approached art objects as autonomous presences resistant to external meaning, and disavowed the previous generation’s “cult of the artist.”²⁷ Thus, when Western visual art arrived at conceptual art and performance art, the stability of Modernist forms and genres began to break apart. Many performance artists of the previous century expanded visual art practices while simultaneously rejecting visual art conventions. In Allan Kaprow’s 1960s writings about happenings, he recognized the traditions of Western art insofar as they enabled a formulation of new ideas and methods – but he did not wish to conform to their boundaries or rules. Happenings are often identified as some of the first examples of performance art in the West. They emphasize connections between art and the environment, have no singular narrative or philosophy, and facilitate improvisation and unexpected occurrences. Kaprow’s goal was an expansion of his praxis to such a degree that he did not care if it were called “art,” “sport,” “game,” or “life.”²⁸

Presenting ephemeral works has also been critical to Fluxus artists, several who, like Dick Higgins, attended with Kaprow an experimental composition course directed by John Cage at the New School for Social Research in 1958–59.²⁹ A distinguishing element of Fluxus performances is the activation of a score, a form of notation developed in conversation with performing arts traditions like dance and theatre. Simon Anderson explains that the score in Fluxus helped to give the events structure that, “based on the characteristic of being repeatable, yet unique, each time they are performed, also distinguishes them from other live actions.”³⁰ Art historian Christopher M. Reeves considers these dynamics and more in his chapter, “Benjamin Patterson Inside and Outside of Fluxus,” in Section I of this volume. He shows how Patterson was drawn to the movement’s experimental and open-ended dynamics as he also pushed the limits of Fluxus scores and other forms in relation to race and politics in the 1960s, shedding new light on the movement’s social dynamics (see Figure 3.2). Moreover, the score continues to be important to live art – for the continued



Figure 0.2 Norval Morrisseau, “Garden Party” (1978). The Ojibwe artist asked his guests, “Well, if the Queen can hold garden parties, why can’t I?”

Photo by John Mahler for the *Toronto Star*, via Getty Images. Used with permission.

development of Fluxus events, as well as for the reperformance of past actions in new conditions.

Happenings, Fluxus, and other performance art variants of the 1960s–1970s were unconventional and critical of the art market. Throughout the 1970s, Lippard believed the “dematerialization” that motivated much US conceptual and performance art would greatly transform the art world as a market critique. However, she has since characterized her claim as overstated.³¹ Peggy Phelan later described anti-market-driven performance art as generating something of value that did not have an object.³² Her argument developed in 1993 (and widely cited thereafter) was that idea- and process-based artworks cannot be collected or commoditized by art’s dominant institutions. Phelan discouraged the documentation of performance in her book *Unmarked*, at times calling it a betrayal of performance’s ontology. She later clarified in an interview that

I was trying to point out what distinguishes performance, ontologically, from the photographic and recording arts. Performance’s ephemeral nature, I was arguing, is absolutely powerful and can serve as a rejoinder to the “preserve everything,” “purchase everything” mentality so central to the art world and to late capitalism more broadly.³³

Nevertheless, while it is possible, documents do not inevitably succumb to, or reinforce, systems of commodification. Phelan’s attention to how performance is distinct and can resist reproductive economies remains critically relevant in the 2020s, as others who connect performance with video, photography, and writing also show that documentation does not have to work in opposition to performance.³⁴

Significantly furthering the discourse, Jacqueline Francis and Camara Dia Holloway argue that documentary-style images themselves are not unalloyed reproductions of the real. From a critical race art history lens, they confront how photography has historically carried an aura of authenticity and unmediated objectivity, which can conceal an operator’s power and an image’s ideology. They acknowledge how Cindy Sherman unraveled the conventions of objective documentation by exposing the constructedness of photography, particularly in her celebrated *Untitled Film Stills* (1977–1980) – as Sherman’s lesser known *Bus Riders* series (1976) continues to raise urgent questions about how race is performed, coded, and consumed through representational norms.³⁵ Francis and Holloway clarify that “In 2016, Sherman said she had not been cognizant of the history of racist performances by minstrels in the Americas, Asia, and Europe.”³⁶ Yet in her 1976 series, the artist relied on gestural exaggerations and props to embody archetypes, leading Francis and Holloway to conclude that “both projects warrant examination of the intersections of race, class, gender, and sexuality that Sherman composes and constructs with her body of white racial identities.” Their analysis clarifies that an overdetermined expectation for photographs to function only as reproductive documents can also obscure how they are constructed, including how they are structured by racial narrative conventions that audiences are conditioned to accept as truth. Francis and Holloway’s astute contributions remain relevant to critics, historians, and practitioners of performance art who strive to engage critically with documentation.

Performance art has always involved the knotting-together of various practices, forms, and genealogies. It has never shrunk to purist binaries or essentialist demands. Reiko Tomii shows in her Section I chapter, “The ‘Lives’ of Performance Art in 1960s Japan: *Kōi* (Acts)

and Information Operations,” how the artist collective GUN critically broadened Abstract Expressionism’s core practice – action painting – into environmental performance art (see Figure 2.1). She also reveals how the collective Zero Jigen (Zero Dimension) and other artists in Japan used documentation as a tool for the publicity and amplification of their collaborations. In Yugoslavia, people working in self-managed art institutions under socialist state policies blurred lines between visual art and curatorial practices in the 1960s. In a context without capitalism, performance art was not centrally about resisting commodification (although criticizing it in the West was sometimes a part of it). Rather, artists, critics, and curators innovated with dematerialization in ways that resemble widely referenced curatorial experiments of the 1990s in the West – as Ivana Bago shows in her Section III chapter, “Dematerialization and Politicization of the Exhibition in Yugoslavia.” Amy Bryzgel’s Section I chapter, “Performance Art in East-Central Europe,” critiques the notion that performance art in formerly communist countries were all expressions of political resistance to state oppression, as Goldberg once claimed. Bryzgel reinforces the point that live artists in these contexts were not centrally protesting commodification or a market, and that they regularly created performance art for documentation that could travel internationally across borders when the artists themselves were restricted from doing so.

In Canada, Norval Morrisseau (Anishinaabe) was a prominent Indigenous artist from the Bingwi Neyaashi Anishinaabek First Nation, who trained to be a traditional shaman and healer during his youth following Midewiwin protocols. Later in life, he developed an iconic visual language that activated Indigenous symbols and concepts via acrylic on canvas.³⁷ Not unlike the artists from Japan and Eastern European countries noted in the previous paragraph, photographs and media helped Morrisseau’s art to reach more people than it may otherwise have. An important study by Carmen Robertson (Lakota), *Mythologizing Norval Morrisseau* (2016), analyzes how media presentations distorted his persona, however, subjecting him to primitivist stereotypes and expectations to perform his Indigeneity since the early 1960s. Robertson critiques Jack Pollock, Morrisseau’s gallery representative, for drawing “on stereotypical tropes present in popular culture and the press to make . . . claims of discovery. To convey the artist’s childlike innocence.”³⁸ She reveals that Morrisseau actually pursued Pollock, but the narrative of a white curator discovering an Indigenous artist was more seductive and profitable in the Canadian media.

Morrisseau is globally recognized for his achievements in painting and was also known for being a strong personality in the art world, becoming a media sensation immediately after his first solo exhibition in 1962. The enduring pressures he faced to perform his Indigeneity compelled him to expand his practice into performance. In 1978, he hosted “Garden Party,” a happening in Beardmore, Ontario, while at the height of his fame (see Figure 0.2). Morrisseau bused twenty-one guests from the high-art world in Toronto to his rural residence, welcoming them into an immersive, interactive event with the structures of a royal tea party and Morrisseau performing as a shaman – transferring his knowledge of how sweetgrass, tobacco, cedar, and sage are traditional medicines for Anishinaabe people – undermining stereotypes and expectations with ancestral knowledge.

Morrisseau approached ceremonial and intercultural dynamics as relational forms to sculpt, weaving together Ojibwe and Western traditions in the overall happening. Armand Garnet Ruffo writes that

As soon as the songs come to an end, Morrisseau jumps up reinvigorated and rushes around getting everyone up and dancing in a huge circle around the drum. He calls

this an “intertribal” and all the guests, especially Pollock, seem to be having the time of their lives.³⁹

Morrisseau concluded the event by presenting his guests with various offerings, including personalized sketches that he produced live, explaining their tailored meanings – as Ruffo relays, “‘For you, power and potency,’ he says dramatically, tearing the sheet away from the pad.”⁴⁰ In performance, Morrisseau refused to be isolated as “primitive,” or interpolated as beneath anyone, as he played with expectations and astonished viewers with his cultural knowledge and artistic abilities. He approached racial and colonial relations as part of his medium, invoking Indigenous Ojibwe traditions as vital, dynamic, living parts of contemporary art in Canada. The 2006 retrospective *Norval Morrisseau: Shaman Artist* would be the first exhibition dedicated to a First Nations artist at the National Gallery of Canada.

A decolonization of historical narratives about live art calls for an acknowledgment of how artists working in other genres like Morrisseau (painting) and Piper (conceptualism) have turned to performance to address their experiences with racism and stereotyping. It acknowledges how origin stories that privilege or center European influences are expressions of colonial dominance. The 1960s–1970s were indeed a period of intensity for dematerialized genres, and we might see them as a moment of strategically undoing disciplinarity rather than a paternal origin point. Catherine M. Soussloff and Mark Franko argue that conventional academic divisions between visual art, dance, theater, literature, and cultural performance artificially limit our understanding of creative practice. Because performance art historically emerged at the intersection of these fields, multiple discourses and traditions have a stake in what it is, what it means, and why.⁴¹ Visual artists who opened their work to emphasize ephemerality, processes, and the body newly entangled their practices with formal elements already important to other disciplines, cultures, and genealogies.

Across art festivals, biennials, galleries, and museums, Indigenous art continues to demonstrate extraordinary aesthetic force and critical intervention. Jeffrey Gibson (Choctaw and Cherokee), who represented the United States at the Venice Biennale, invited Oklahoma Fancy Dancers and Colorado Inter-Tribal Dancers to perform traditional Jingle Dress dances in front of the US Pavilion for *the space in which to place me* (2024) (see Figure 0.3). Jingle Dress dances enact Indigenous resiliencies against illness and death, usually in large group processions at powwows or other cultural events. At the 2025 Gaa-Miskwaabikaang Red Cliff Anishinaabe powwow, for example, emcee Migizi Sullivan emphasized that the dresses worn for the dances are medicinal, as he introduced a Jingle Dress special event for acknowledging Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women (MMIW). In Italy, Gibson and his team recontextualized Jingle Dress dancers with a fine art framing, as they performed around large red sculptures in front of the Pavilion for a global contemporary art audience.

Where might we draw the line between performance art and cultural performance in this case? What would be at stake in categorizing the actions as one or the other? What does *the space in which to place me* reveal about the interconnections between cultural performance, dance, design, and live art? Artists, curators, and theorists will continue to reshape and negotiate the boundaries between performance art and other genres. In many cases, the context itself can confer upon actions the status of art, observable as an institutional effect. The cover image for this volume, which features the opening “Acti.VĀ.tion” of the retrospective exhibition, *Pacific Sisters: Fashion Activists/He Toa Tāera* (2018) at the Te Papa Tongarewa museum in New Zealand, similarly illustrates a blurring of non-Western



Figure 0.3 Jingle Dancer performance, *the space in which to place me* (2024), US Pavilion 60th Venice Biennale.

Image courtesy of the Portland Art Museum, Portland, Oregon. © Jeffrey Gibson Studio. Used with permission.

cultural performance with performance art. Christopher Braddock, Ioana Gordon-Smith, Layne Waerea, and Victoria Wynne-Jones analyze the Pacific Sisters' groundbreaking actions in their Section I chapter, "Aotearoa New Zealand Performance Art." Their chapter is an extraordinary survey of live art produced in Aotearoa New Zealand, in which they explain how *vā* is an Indigenous Pacific concept that points to a relational space with ongoing connections between ancestors and their descendants.⁴²

The capitalization of the concept in the title "Acti.VĀ.tion" declares that the Pacific Sisters' contemporary art remains connected to ancestral practices. As Braddock, Gordon-Smith, Waerea, and Jones write, the Sisters' costumes were

made from both recognizably cultural materials – such as a found *tapa* (bark cloth) and shell – as well as overtly urban materials, including video tape or raffia. These costumes were activated in performances that doubled as fashion shows and storytelling through dance but took on the descriptor *performance art* as the Pacific Sisters interacted more with gallery and museum spaces.

As several examples I have explored in this introduction chapter show, the context of an exhibition can involve new frames and social dynamics that produce cultural performances, or aspects of them, as performance art.⁴³ At their retrospective, the Pacific Sisters exhibited their Indigenous and transcultural fashion works in performance to the visitors waiting to

engage them in the background of the photo, an audience that included the Prime Minister of New Zealand, Jacinda Ardern (see Figure 1.1). As the Pacific Sisters, Morrisseau, and numerous other artists have shown, the relationship to a particular audience in performance matters, and colonial dynamics can themselves be approached as forms to sculpt, as mediums to transform.

Critical Concepts and an Introduction to the Sections

A number of critical concepts invoke specific meanings that have been developed over decades in the scholarly literature about performance art. Examples include *presence*, *reperformance*, *act*, *temporality*, *endurance*, *dematerialization*, *activism*, *embodiment*, *happening*, and many more that other publications clarify – some providing annotated indexes for the purpose of building a common, evolving language.⁴⁴ Significant contributions include Jennifer Doyle’s attention to emotion and politics in performance art, and Natalie Loveless’ theories of attunement in relations of perception and response.⁴⁵ The online project *In Terms of Performance*, edited by Shannon Jackson and Paula Marincola, is a resource that will help readers of all competencies to engage with the genre in nuanced and thoughtful ways.⁴⁶ Megan Hoetger, in her Section III chapter, “Active Archives: On Performance Curatorial Research and Historiographic Method,” cites Julia Bryan-Wilson and Andrea Fraser’s contributions to Jackson and Marincola’s project, adding to their definitions and entangling them into her own curatorial and theoretical contributions. Across these contributions, in combination with the index to this anthology, along with indexes and glossaries for related projects, our readers can access numerous tools and terms for understanding and engaging with performance art around the world.⁴⁷

Performativity is one concept that has been extensively developed and reworked in scholarship about performance – and also merits a dedicated discussion here. The term was coined by linguist J. L. Austin in *How to Do Things with Words* (1955), where he defined a “performative utterance” as something spoken that creates some sort of change.⁴⁸ The example most commonly invoked to illustrate Austin’s speech act theory is the phrase “I now pronounce you man and wife,” which under the appropriate circumstances would prompt a series of familiar social transformations.⁴⁹ Judith Butler is well-known for renewing Austin’s theories in relation to gender in the 1990s, arguing that much performativity is achieved through repetition and normalization, not isolated utterances alone.⁵⁰ Along with additional critical theories – including Michel Foucault’s conceptualizations of social discipline and cultural norms – performativity was fundamental to Butler’s deconstructions of the gender binary over thirty years ago, deconstructions that simultaneously haunt and inspire gender politics in the 2020s. Observing how the pronouncement of a baby to be a boy or a girl (“It’s a girl!”) provokes a series of performative, disciplined cultural rituals, such as color-coding their clothing, has helped numerous thinkers to understand gender as a cultural expression that can be an interpretation of, and part of a continuum with, biology – but is not *determined* by biology. Sean Metzger and Roberta Mock further write,

one might take the example of an intersex child . . . who undergoes “corrective” surgery. In this example, the discourse has produced only two options for the infant’s body, which must be surgically altered to fit the morphological norms of either male or female.⁵¹

Examples of medically disciplining human bodies to conform to the myth of a sex/gender binary, for Metzger and Mock, reveal how discourse and conceptualizations of gender precede the body in Butler's theories.

For scholars who have undergone advanced training to understand the nuances and complexities of discourse on performativity, it can be perplexing to encounter the new meanings of it emerging. Increasingly common connotations suggest that "performative" is a version of dishonesty or flashiness, or is an empty gesture – communicating that someone is just doing something for show, that someone is doing something without any substance – that it isn't *real*. Such meanings might promise to describe live art that is just being staged to be circulated as images or videos on social media. And yet, invoking the term "performative" to describe any live art would also suggest that it is making a change in the world. The meanings are frustratingly conflicted, and we might wonder why new uses of "performative" have become so contrary to the word's decades-long academic etymology.

Whether and how emergent meanings might be formally incorporated into dictionary entries for "performative" remains to be seen. But the term increasingly becoming a signifier for inauthenticity rhymes with how gender essentialists have historically associated transgender expression with dishonesty. As Jack Halberstam writes, the achievement of "realness" in a performance "is not exactly performance, not exactly an imitation; it is the way that people, minorities, excluded from the domain of the real, appropriate the real and its effects."⁵² Framing an act or image as "merely" performative casts it as a failure of authenticity and impact, while suggesting others might succeed – a pattern that resembles how drag performers and trans people are criticized when they fail to "pass." Today, dismissing an action for being performative appears to enact a pop-culture appropriation and repurposing of clocking that is also directed at the term "performative" itself.

While the concept of gender as a cultural performance gains global acceptance, so too do gender essentialists become more vocal about who is and isn't being honest, who is and isn't *real*. Regardless of whether those who are redefining the word "performative" are overtly aware, the term is historically fundamental to deconstructions of gender taking place around the world. Can we characterize the collective tendency to inject associations of dishonesty and impotence into the etymology of "performative" as pointing to an unconscious impulse toward trans delegitimization that operates through a credibility economy steeped in ontology politics?⁵³ Will a critical term that exposed the sex–gender binary as constructed – a term that has long named the constitutive work of *doing* – succumb to pressures that invert its meaning and recast it as inadequacy or lack, as if realness were not itself an effect of normative alignment?

Many of the contributors throughout this volume invoke the term "performative" in a formal sense, and none are invested in presenting something without substance. On the contrary, this anthology is the manifestation of years of effort by over seventy thinkers and practitioners who offer valuable insights and expertise on performance art. My co-editors and I collaboratively decided to structure the volume according to four sections organized around themes. Each editor agreed to develop their section conceptually, maintaining contact with their authors and working with them closely to develop and edit their chapters for publication. As lead editor, I gave conceptual feedback to my co-editors and closely read and co-edited all the chapters in the book. The collection of short documents that comprise Section IV was primarily edited and translated (from Spanish or French,

where applicable) by Graciela Ovejero Postigo and Jennie Klein, who developed their ideas for the short form contributions in the field.

The volume's first section, *Global Emergences*, was edited by Jennie Klein, who strived to include as many microhistory accounts of live art and its social networks as possible. Her goal was not to provide an exhaustive, encyclopedic collection of chapters from every place on earth; instead, Klein's expansive approach overwhelms any Eurocentric narrative of performance art's origins or centrality. She enacts a critical humility in her introduction, acknowledging that her training did not yet expose her to a world of performance art outside of North America and Europe. She proceeded to cultivate and nurture – for decades – relationships with key figures in global performance art, bringing a number of their important voices into Section I. The result is a collection of chapters with a breathtaking diversity of perspectives, from every inhabited continent, revealing the genre's adaptability and entanglements with numerous formal, cultural, and political lineages.

The second section of this anthology, edited by Natalie Loveless, is entitled *Unsettled Performance*. It is further divided into three parts – Embodiment, Resistance, and Collectivity – which cluster the chapters into critical thematic dialogues. Loveless explains that the essays in Section II ground performance in “a practice of ethical embodiment” that is always tied to specific temporal and spatial contexts. She reminds us to be inspired by people who remain committed to caring and thinking about performance art in relation to pressing social issues. The unflinching chapters in this section theorize performance art as capable of bringing people together to create alternative social realities and resist dominant narratives. Contributors highlight the body as a site of knowledge and political engagement, especially in relation to land, identity, and colonial histories. Indeed, Section II approaches performance art as a powerful tool for critical inquiry, healing, decolonization, and social-ecological justice.

Section III of this volume, *Curation, Documentation, and the Archives*, was conceptualized and edited by me. I attempted to bring together critical voices attuned to the ways in which performance art is framed, mediated, institutionally embedded, and put into strategic relationships with other kinds of media. Some of these perspectives have been marginalized within the broader discourse because they do not discipline performance as separable from, or oppositional to, writing, photographs, videos, or archival materials. The chapters offer important expertise from academicians, curators, and artists on timely themes such as questioning canonization, reconsidering the value of the document, and reimagining the archives as sites of intervention for BIPOC artists – reminding us to not get stuck in boxes, as we are always *becoming* through performance.

The section with the most contributors is also the final section of *The Routledge Companion to Performance Art*. Section IV, *Performance Documents from the Field*, was edited by Graciela Ovejero Postigo and Jennie Klein as an eclectic and far-reaching collection of short essays predominantly written by artists, curators, and other practitioners. The section is divided into two constellations: “Special Collection from South America” and “Transnational Proliferations.” Constellation 1 is a curation of short essays from all countries in South America, many of which were translated from Spanish by Ovejero Postigo to be included in this volume, and thus they are featured in their own dedicated part of Section IV.⁵⁴ Constellation 2 is an additional collection of short documents by notable artists and curators, including microhistories of organizations, venues, and exhibitions of performance art. Rather than taking a completionist approach, “Transnational Proliferations” concludes

the anthology as an open-ended invitation for more writing about, and documentation of, performance art in global contexts.

All four sections of the volume include *curated conversation* chapters, which are specially formatted, formalized, and edited dialogs around key contemporary topics.⁵⁵ These conversations with prominent figures in the performance art world use accessible language that might be attractive entryways into the discourse for readers who are new to performance art or are exploring new topics about it. For readers who are seasoned scholars, artists, or other leaders in the field, the curated conversations will include fresh ideas and concise opinions about cutting-edge issues from respected voices. It has been our goal throughout the development of this anthology to map out a sequence of chapters that is stimulating, variable, and impure in ways that resemble the dynamic constitution of performance art itself.

As a co-edited anthology, *The Routledge Companion to Performance Art* seeks not to be an authoritative treatise on the genre. The editors do not believe that we have managed to include every voice, method, or concept that is important. Each of us extends our apologies to those who are not included in these pages but are nevertheless valuable to performance art. The notably high number of contributors to this anthology, from around the world, points to a great diversity of people who are invested in the genre – people from different disciplines, locations, social groups, and other contexts. Engaging with so many important perspectives while editing this volume has been humbling and inspiring, as we are reinvigorated from knowing that there is so much still to learn about performance art that is fresh, edifying, and exciting.

Notes

- 1 williams proceeded to study reentry programs and additional topics related to racial profiling and incarceration in her anthropology research as doctoral student, and later as a faculty member at the City University of New York (CUNY).
- 2 From an interview with karen g. williams conducted by Lucian O'Connor on November 27, 2024.
- 3 williams earned her BFA at Chicago's Institute for Fine Art.
- 4 Paolo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, New York: Herder and Herder (1970). First published in Portuguese in Brazil in 1968. See also Elaine Scarry, *The Body in Pain*, Oxford: Oxford University Press (1985).
- 5 Angela Davis, *Are Prisons Obsolete?* New York: Seven Stories Press (2003), 11.
- 6 Davis (2003), 10. williams and Davis furthered discourse about race, policing, and incarceration at a moment when the general public largely took the prison for granted as a staple of democracy.
- 7 Kobena Mercer, "Black Art and the Burden of Representation," in *Third Text: Third World Perspectives on Contemporary Art & Culture*, Vol 4, No 10 (Spring 1990).
- 8 Crystal Davis also notes in her book *Dance and Belonging* that institutional pressures can enable negative outcomes caused by well-meaning white progressive colleagues, who might recruit BIPOC for roles they are not prepared to fulfill, rendering them chronically in need of being "saved" by the person who has chosen to fill seats rather than focus on eliminating barriers for BIPOC. See also Nyong'o, "Unburdening Representation," in *The Black Scholar*, Vol 44, No 2 (2014).
- 9 Coco Fusco, "The Other History of Intercultural Performance," in *TDR*, Vol 38, No 1 (1994).
- 10 Fusco (1994), 154. See also Nyong'o (2014).
- 11 Roselee Goldberg, *Performance: Live Art, 1909 to the Present*, New York: Harry N. Abrams (1979).
- 12 For writings about Cha and *Dictee*, see Judith Barry, "Women, Representation, and Performance Art: Northern California," in *Performance Anthology: Source Book of California Performance Art*, edited by Carl Loeffler and Darlene Tong, San Francisco, CA: Last Gasp Press (1989). See also

Constance Lewallen and Lawrence Rinder, *The Dream of the Audience: Theresa Hak Kyung Cha (1951–1982)*, Los Angeles and Berkeley: University of California Press (2001).

- 13 I later researched the violence of rhetoric in *Dictee* with Neferti Tadiar as her student in 2005.
- 14 At the time, Smith was co-editing with Julia Watson the volume *Interfaces: Women, Autobiography, Image, Performance*, which would eventually be published in 2002.
- 15 Nizan Shaked shows that Adrian Piper's engagement with the body was not an incidental expressive turn, but a deliberate extension of conceptual art's core methods, deployed to interrogate subjectivity and social norms. See Nizan Shaked, *The Synthetic Proposition: Conceptualism and the Political Referent in Contemporary Art*, Manchester: Manchester University Press (2017).
- 16 See Jones "'Presence' in Absentia: Experiencing Performance as Documentation," *Art Journal*, Vol 56, No 4 (1997) and *Body Art/Performing the Subject*, Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press (1998).
- 17 Art historians with expertise linked to Africa, the Caribbean, the Pacific, and the Americas have for many decades combined anthropological and art-historical methods in their research – including regular trips to their regions of expertise, participant-observation, interviews with cultural figures, and more. The fields of performance studies, visual studies, and visual culture also adapt methods derived from anthropology and integrate them with formal analysis and institutional critique. Richard Schechner and Victor Turner's book *Between Theater and Anthropology* (1985) shows how interdisciplinary collaborations were critical to the emergence of performance studies as a field.
- 18 Some scholars, such as Britta Wheeler, were using sociological methods decades ago to explain how institutions dis/engage with live art; more recently, there has been a wider interest in the social structures that are connected to the genre. See Wheeler, "The Institutionalization of an American Avant-garde: Performance Art as Democratic Culture, 1970–2000," *Sociological Perspectives*, Vol 46, No 4 (2003).
- 19 See Jennie Klein and Deirdre Heddon, *Histories and Practices of Live Art*, Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan (2012).
- 20 For more, see Smith and Watson (2002).
- 21 I later met with Ringgold at her solo exhibition in New York City in 2014, which I attended with J. Kehaulani Kauanui and Dean Spade, and was privileged to spend several hours in conversation with the artist about her work, including posters she made for the campaign to free Angela Davis in the early 1970s.
- 22 See Piper's essay, "In Support of Meta-Art," *Artforum*, Vol 12, No 2 (1973).
- 23 Lucy R. Lippard, *Six Years: The Dematerialization of the Art Object from 1966 to 1972*, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press (1997).
- 24 For Greenberg's take on decorative arts and craft, see "The Crisis of the Easel Picture" (1948), republished in his book *Art and Culture: Critical Essays*, Boston, MA: Beacon Press (1965). For an in-depth contemporary analysis of Greenberg on decorative arts and craft, see Elissa Auther's "The Decorative, Abstraction, and the Hierarchy of Art and Craft in the Art Criticism of Clement Greenberg" (2004). Auther aptly argues that Greenberg presented categorical distinctions between media in art as anterior to value in art on page 342.
- 25 Clement Greenberg, "Modernist Painting," *Art and Literature*, Vol 4, No 2 (1965), 193–201.
- 26 This also contributed to the masculinist heroism of the movement's protagonists like Jackson Pollock and Mark Rothko, noted by Jones (1998).
- 27 For example, Ad Reinhardt's oft-cited notion of "art as art" is rooted in his belief that art is completely and essentially separate from life. See "Art as Art," in *Art International*, No 10 (December 1962). Rosalind Krauss argues that refabrications of minimalist works during the 1980s undermined and contradicted statements by artists unconcerned with issues of authorship or originality. See Krauss (1990) "The Cultural Logic of the Late Capitalist Museum," *October*, Vol 54 (1990).
- 28 Allan Kaprow, *Assemblages, Environments, and Happenings*, New York: Abrams (1966).
- 29 Artists involved in Fluxus and Happenings were not working separately; in addition to many of their mutual participations in the Cage seminars, figures such as Al Hansen contributed to both movements (although he was more known for his participation in Fluxus, including a Fluxus funeral he planned for his own death in 1995).

- 30 Simon Anderson, "Fluxus, Fluxion, Flushoe: The 1970s," in *The Fluxus Reader*, edited by Ken Friedman, Hoboken, NJ: Wiley (1998), 25.
- 31 Lippard, postface to *Six Years* (1997).
- 32 Peggy Phelan, *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance*, New York and London: Routledge (1993).
- 33 Peggy Phelan and Marquard Smith, "Performance, Live Culture, and Things of the Heart," *Journal of Visual Culture*, Vol 2, No 3 (2003), 295.
- 34 Examples are numerous, and several are explored in Amelia Jones and Adrian Heathfield, *Perform, Repeat, Record: Live Art in History*, Bristol: Intellect Ltd (2012). In his courses at UC San Diego, Ricardo Dominguez emphasizes documentation as integral to performance as an "active frame/framing of reflection." See, <https://www.thing.net/~rdom/ucsd/performance10.pdf>, last accessed December 2025.
- 35 Jacqueline Francis and Camara Dia Holloway, "Working Towards a Critical Race Art History," *kritische berichte*, Vol 53, No 4 (2025), 14.
- 36 Francis and Holloway, 15.
- 37 His rich compositions of animals, deities, cultural stories, and relations between figures are globally celebrated and were the focus of his solo exhibition at the National Gallery of Canada in 2006 – the first for an Indigenous artist.
- 38 Carmen Robertson, *Mythologizing Norval Morrisseau: Art and the Colonial Narrative in the Canadian Media*, Winnipeg, MB: University of Manitoba Press (2016), 44.
- 39 Armand Garnet Ruffo, *Norval Morrisseau: Man Changing into Thunderbird*, Madeira Park, BC: Douglas & McIntyre (2014), 214.
- 40 Ruffo (2014), 214–217.
- 41 Catherine M. Soussloff and Mark Franko, "Visual and Performance Studies: A New History of Interdisciplinarity," *Social Text*, Vol 20, No 4 (2002).
- 42 For more on the Pacific Sisters member Rosanna Raymond's particular engagements with this concept, see: Stacy Kamehiro and James Clifford, "From the Edge through the Vā: Introduction to 'Pacific Island Worlds: Oceanic Dis/Positions,'" as well as Stacy Kamehiro, Katharine Losi Atafu Mayo, Giles Peterson, and Maggie Wander, "SALTWATER/Interconnectivity," *Pacific Arts*, Vol 22, No 1 (2022), 135.
- 43 At the Gaa-Miskwaabikaang Red Cliff powwow in July 2025, as dancers gathered to be evaluated by judges, emcee Migizi Sullivan referred to the lineup as "the exhibition," provoking laughter in the crowd. This remark indicated an awareness of the differences and overlaps between powwow processions and museum displays. Here, the end of the procession and the lining up of Indigenous performers to be looked at and judged while standing in place humorously pointed to the history of anthropology displays of Native Americans, showing how ordinary Anishinaabe people have a critical awareness of this genealogy that is part of the history of performance art.
- 44 See Eylül Fidan Akinci's "Annotated Bibliography" and the rest of PART IV in *The Methuen Drama Companion to Performance Art*, edited by Bertie Ferdman and Jovana Stoic, London: Methuen Drama (2020). See also Diana Taylor's book *Performance*, which includes illustrations alongside writing about performance in art as well as other frameworks; Durham, NC: Duke University Press (2016).
- 45 See Jennifer Doyle, *Hold it Against Me: Difficulty and Emotion in Contemporary Art*, Durham, NC: Duke University Press (2013); see also Natalie Loveless, *How to Make Art at the End of the World*, Durham, NC: Duke University Press (2019).
- 46 See <http://intermsofperformance.site/keywords>, last accessed May 2025.
- 47 An incomplete list of additional resources includes: The Irish Museum of Modern Art's *What Is ___?* program, accessible at <https://imma.ie/what-is-art/series-1-1970-now/performance-art/>, last accessed June 2025. For a helpful glossary of general terms related to visual art, including performance art, see the Tate Modern's online resource *Art Terms* at <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/art-terms>, last accessed June 2025. Carla Neuss' chapter in *The Methuen Drama Handbook of Gender and Theatre*, entitled "Keywords: Gender, Trans, and Intersectionality" also offers helpful definitions for terms pertaining to gender and performance.
- 48 Austin contrasts the performative utterance with the constative utterance that describes something and can be judged as true or false. See Lecture 1 in *How to Do Things with Words* (1975), 1–11.
- 49 Austin's conception of the performative often relates to social contracts and requires appropriate circumstances to function successfully. For example, a priest or state official must utter the words

- “I pronounce you man and wife” for a marriage to be recognized; otherwise the utterance is not performative but instead “unfortunate” or “parodic.”
- 50 See Butler’s *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (1990) and *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex* (1993), both published by Routledge.
- 51 Sean Metzger and Roberta Mock, *The Methuen Drama Handbook of Gender and Theatre*, New York and London: Bloomsbury Academic (2024), 9.
- 52 See Jack Halberstam, *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives*, New York: New York University Press (2005), 51.
- 53 For more on the performative as a “queer effect,” see Amelia Jones’ Section II essay “In Between Queer and Performance” in this volume, particularly page 283. See also Cheryl L’Hirondelle’s chapter, “Toward an Acknowledgement of Embodied Lexicons of Performativity” in Section II, which reclaims performativity as “alive and teeming with intent” for Indigenous voices and ancestral continuity.
- 54 Ovejero Postigo traces the etymology of the term *constellation* to Mari Carmen Ramírez and Héctor Olea, naming the emergence of diverse artistic productions and “the spiritual-conceptual interconnectedness of this field.” See Gabriela A. Pinero, “Restructuring Latin American Art: the Constellation Model,” *Intervención*, Vol 4, No 7 (2013), 11–20. I draw inspiration from my friend and colleague Marcela Fuentes’ important book, *Performance Constellations: Networks of Protest and Activism in Latin America* (2019). The term is activated by major organizations for Klein, who acknowledges Performance Studies International (PSi) and Peras de Olmo as visionaries in organizing and conceptualizing relational performance art constellations.
- 55 The term “curated conversation” is inspired by Mary Nooter (Polly) Roberts’ use of the term at UCLA, for live dialogues she and her colleagues organized at the Fowler Museum. I adapted the concept to programming at the University of California, Santa Cruz, as director of Museum and Curatorial Studies from 2008 to 2013. My work as director included hosting events that featured Fred Wilson, Griselda Pollock, Amy Lonetree, Jennifer González, James Clifford, Sandy Stone, Paul Chaat Smith, Sylvester Ogbechie, Nizan Shaked, Amelia Jones, Nadja Durbach, Catherine M. Soussloff, Shannon Jackson, Lulu Mesa, Anthony Shelton, Shelley Butler, Clare Caroline, Roya Rastegar, Meredith Goldsmith, Cindy Bello, and Claire Tancons. I am grateful for the opportunity to learn from, and get to know, each of these individuals. The approach for written conversations throughout *The Routledge Companion to Performance Art* also takes inspiration from J. Kehaulani Kauanui’s edited volume, *Speaking of Indigenous Politics*, Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press (2018). I am indebted to Kauanui for her mentorship while I taught at Wesleyan University and beyond.

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SECTION I

Global Emergences



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Introduction to Section One



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1

SITUATING LIVE ART GLOBALLY

Jennie Klein

There currently exists a vast, internationally connected and globally situated live art (or performance art) sector in which many artists participate. As Dominic Johnson noted, “a network of venues, development agencies, festivals, and related programming circuits sustains the sector, bolstered by national arts funding programmes and imperatives in academic research and teaching.”¹ When I first began researching performance art, writing about feminist artists working in Southern California during the 1970s, I knew little about the history of performance art outside of the United States. In the process of writing a history (or herstory) of seventies feminist performance (the topic of my dissertation) I remained ignorant of work that was being done outside of the United States, Mexico, Canada, and Europe – until Linda Montano asked me to help edit her book *Letters from Linda M. Montano*, published by Routledge in 2005. Linda and I were invited to launch the book at the National Review of Live Art in Glasgow, curated by Nikki Milican. It was my first time attending a live art festival that included artists from all over the world. I was overwhelmed but also intrigued. I had thought that I knew a lot about performance art and theory but quickly realized that there was an entire sector out there of which I had been unaware.

In the twenty years that have passed since that time, I have become much more familiar with the live art sector, particularly with the festivals, meetings, collaborations, and publications that have made it possible for artists to make work that is “a levelling ground, in which audiences are provided a charged space in which to experience varied, contradictory and challenging performances.”² My goal as the editor for Section I of this volume, *Global Emergences*, was to solicit as many microhistories of performance/live art and the live art sector as possible, with the goal of demonstrating that live art was connected globally as early as 1966, when Gustav Metzger organized the month-long action art event *Destruction in Art* (DIAS) symposium that took place in London. What follows is a collection of chapters detailing eclectic histories that address geographical locations, performance genres, political art, and even the importance of tattoos. This collection demonstrates the breadth and depth of performance art around the world.

Global Emergences begins with Reiko Tomii’s discussion of Japanese performance art in her essay “The ‘Lives’ of Performance Art in 1960s Japan: *Kōi* (Acts) and Information Operations.” Tomii argues that to fully understand performance art in 1960s Japan, one

must examine the distinction between expression and operation, the term *kōi* (act), and the “first and second lives” of a work, particularly its documentation and dissemination. This essay examines performance art from the late 1950s through the early 1970s in Japan, covering groups like Gutai, Anti-Art, Hi Red Center, and Zero Jigen, as well as individual artists like Shinohara Ushio.³ Tomii analyzes how these artists navigated the limited art infrastructure and took ownership of documenting and disseminating their ephemeral acts. The essay details how artists moved from relying on photojournalists to actively controlling the “second life” of their works, which often involved shaping how it was presented and perceived. Tomii’s chapter underscores the importance of analyzing both the artistic act and the operational strategies employed by Japanese performance artists in the 1960s.

In his important revisionist essay about the Fluxus movement, “Benjamin Patterson Inside and Outside of Fluxus,” Christopher M. Reeves argues that Patterson’s contributions to the Fluxus art movement were uniquely defined by his attempts to address political issues, specifically those concerning race, which were often at odds with the movement’s typical forms and concerns. Patterson, as the only African-American member of Fluxus, used his work, such as *Variations for Double Bass* (1961–62), *Lick Piece* (1962), and *First Symphony* (1964), to explore and challenge the boundaries of art, social interactions, and racial biases. His later projects, like *American Studies Seminar II* (1965), further demonstrate his desire to study and alter societal behaviors, particularly within the American context. Despite his efforts, Patterson often felt that Fluxus lacked the capacity to deliver a sophisticated political message, leading him to engage more directly with community involvement and Black organizations later in his career. Patterson’s work reveals a tension between the ideals of Fluxus and the realities of his own experiences with racial alienation, highlighting the limitations of inclusivity in the art movement.

In “Chilean Conceptualism and Performance Art under Dictatorship,” Ciclón Olivares argues that conceptualism in Latin America, particularly Chile, was deeply intertwined with political resistance against authoritarianism – rather than just being a formal or aesthetic movement, as it was often viewed as in the United States and Europe. Olivares discusses Luis Camnitzer’s interpretation of Latin American conceptualism and contrasts it with North American approaches, while also bringing in Adrian Piper’s conceptualist performance art as a point of comparison. The essay highlights the work of the Chilean artist group *Colectivo Acciones de Arte* (CADA) and their use of “transmedia performance” to challenge the Pinochet dictatorship, focusing on actions involving milk and public intervention. The author also references artists and thinkers like Diamela Eltit, Raúl Zurita, Juan Downey, Cecilia Vicuña, and Nelly Richard in the context of their work and influence on Chilean art during this period. Olivares emphasizes how the unique historical circumstances in Chile influenced the coevolution of conceptual and performance art, turning them into potent tools for social and political change. Olivares’ essay serves as a complement to Graciela Ovejero Postigo’s essay “RENAMING UTOPIA. Peras de Olmo – ARS CONTINUA” and Soledad Sanchez’s essay “Performance Art in Cordoba, Argentina,” part of the *Special Collection from South America* in Section IV of this volume, both of which build on the history of Southern Cone performance as outlined by Ciclón Olivares.

“A Short Genealogy of Performance Art in Australia,” by Anne Marsh argues that Australian performance art – emerging in the 1970s and shaped by figures like Mike Parr and Jill Orr at spaces such as Inhibidress and the Mildura Sculpture Triennials – has been a diverse and politically engaged practice centered on the body, land, technology, and social issues. Early performance art in this context was influenced by “dematerialized art” concepts

and international figures such as Joseph Beuys, while later developments saw engagement with postmodernism, feminism, AIDS-era concerns, and relational aesthetics, as discussed by theorists like Nicolas Bourriaud.⁴ Artists including Stelarc explored technology and the body, while others like Lyndal Jones incorporated video and projections to deconstruct gender roles. Contemporary Australian performance art, as exemplified by David Rosetzky and Alicia Frankovich, continues to address critical issues like climate change and community through participatory and delegated practices, emphasizing connection and care. The evolution of documentation and the debate around “liveness” have further defined performance art in Australia, as seen in the works of artists like Eugenia Raskopoulos and Nasim Nasr.

In the chapter “Aotearoa New Zealand Performance Art” Christopher Braddock, Ioana Gordon-Smith, Layne Waerea, and Victoria Wynne-Jones argue that Aotearoa New Zealand’s performance art is uniquely defined by its complex fusion of Māori, Pacific, and Pākehā influences, especially the rise of Māori and Pacific performance art since the 1990s. The chapter discusses artists like Lonnie Hutchinson, Michel Tuffery’s *Pisupo Lua Afe* at Wellington’s Civic Square, and the collective Pacific Sisters’ performance *Ina and Tuna* at the Auckland City Art Gallery’s “Bottled Ocean” exhibition. The Pacific Sisters, who appear on the cover of *The Routledge Companion to Performance Art*, were notably joined and supported by Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern at their watershed retrospective exhibition, *Pacific Sisters: Fashion Activists/He Toa Tāera* (2018) at Te Papa Tongarewa, the nation’s innovative bicultural museum (see Figure 1.1). The chapter also covers Rachael



Figure 1.1 Pacific Sisters, opening Acti.VÅ.tion of their retrospective exhibition, *Pacific Sisters: Fashion Activists/He Toa Tāera* (2018). Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa. From left: Ema Lyon, Ani O’Neill, and Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern.

Photo by Kerry Brown, used with permission.

Rakena's video works inspired by Māori traditions and tikanga, Jeremy Leatinu'u's *Queen Victoria* performances in various cities (see Figure 6.1), and Kalisolaite 'Uhila's endurance performance "Mo'ui Tukuhausia" at Te Tuhi art gallery and Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tamaki. Lastly, the chapter analyzes early performance art influenced by Jim Allen at Elam School of Fine Arts and discusses performances such as *Contact (Parangole Capes)*, restaged at the *Groundswell: Avant-Garde Auckland 1971–1979* exhibition at Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tamaki, and the activities of the ANZART festival in 1985.

In "Africa on the Move," Serge Olivier Fokoua describes a new aesthetic centered on the ordinary and everyday life, often incorporating "trash" that has emerged in African art, breaking from traditional norms, as seen in works featured at the RAVY festival in Cameroon, which Fokoua curates. Fokoua notes that Congolese artist Eddy Ekete has observed that "African artists find inspiration through trash," challenging the notion that art must be "beautiful, neat, and shiny." Artists like Pascale Marthine Tayou, Joseph Sumegne, Dominique Zinkpè, and many others in cities like Yaoundé, Douala, and Lagos began to redefine art, leading to conceptual and experimental forms that include everyday objects and actions. In the early second millennium, Christian Etongo tackled the notion of body art in his woman-earth performance, breaking the aesthetic canons of body art by covering a woman's body with mud. At this moment, the artist's approach was no longer part of the utilitarian or the beautiful – she no longer uses the materials of painting or sculpture, but enters fully into performance. Self-taught, Etongo is among the Cameroonian performance artists who can be described as a performer through and through. The RAVY festival has become a platform for these artists, who often use what Fokoua describes as "singular attitudes, confusing postures, and astonishing approaches" that challenge traditional aesthetic conventions and question the role of the artist. This shift has led to a broader definition of what constitutes art, emphasizing social commentary and individual expression over traditional beauty standards.

Amy Bryzgel's "Performance Art in East-Central Europe," contends that performance art in this region developed concurrently with the West but with distinct characteristics and has been unjustly excluded from the dominant art history narratives. Too often, artists from this region are understood by Western authors as simply making political work, with the nuances of that work overlooked. Bryzgel highlights that artists like Natalia LL and Milan Knížák, despite interacting with Western movements like Fluxus, created works that engage and reflect their specific socio-political contexts. The chapter also examines various happenings, body art performances such as Raša Todosijević's *Drinking Water – Inversions, Imitations, and Contrasts* (1974), and gender-focused works like Orsolya Drozdik's *Nude/Model* (1977). Furthermore, the author discusses how political and institutional limitations influenced the creation and documentation of performance art, with artists using documentation as a form of witnessing and future outreach. Finally, Bryzgel advocates for a more inclusive, atemporal approach to art history, recognizing the significance of the "periphery" and challenging the dominance of the Western canon.

Jess Xiao Long argues in "Tattoos, Performance Art, and Protest" that tattoos are inherently performative, acting as both personal expressions of identity and catalysts for social action. Her essay traces a genealogy of tattoos from nineteenth-century sideshow "tattooed ladies" to their role in twentieth-century feminist and Civil Rights movements, noting their evolving significance. Long highlights how tattoos have been used to challenge societal norms and assert bodily autonomy, particularly for marginalized groups. Her chapter explores work by various contemporary artists, including Naufus Ramírez-Figueroa,

Castellano, MC Coble, Lama Tashi Norbu, Sally Rose, Illma Gore, Ron Athey, and Doreen Garner, who utilize tattoos in their performance art to explore themes of memory, trauma, control, and cultural identity. Ultimately, Long concludes that tattoos continue to be a complex medium, reflecting histories of oppression, resistance, and evolving expressions of self in contemporary society.

Chumpon Apisuk agreed to be interviewed by Nivedita Chawda and me about his life, art, and activism for our curated conversation titled “Performance, Politics, and Humanitarian Actions.” Apisuk, a Thai artist, studied in Boston due to political instability in Thailand and to join his brother who lived in the United States. He became involved with EMPOWER, working on the *Pat Pong* newspaper and using artwork such as the AIDS Quilt to raise HIV/AIDS awareness. His “ALIVE” projects aimed to destigmatize HIV/AIDS. Apisuk established several art spaces like Concrete House due to a lack of public venues in Thailand, fostering community engagement. He views all performance art as political, creating works like *Standing in Public* (2000–present) to address the need for art spaces. He founded the long-running performance art festival Asiatopia to support and network Asian performance artists. In our conversation, Apisuk discusses key performances such as *White performance*, *Hearts*, and *Silent Salt*, exploring themes like violence, human limits, and personal history. He observed that performance art in Asia is evolving, with more young artists and technological integration. Apisuk believes an international art scene is crucial for Thailand to recognize art’s importance in society.

In “Toward a New History of Post-Soviet Russian Performance Art: Liudmila Gorlova and the Aesthetics of Care,” Joanna Matuszak calls for a reevaluation of post-Soviet Russian performance art history, which has been dominated by Moscow Actionism. She highlights the overlooked work of Liudmila Gorlova and her 1994 performance, *Happy Childhood*. Matuszak explains that artists known for their aggressive public actions have been prioritized in conventional narratives, while Gorlova’s work, which focused on care ethics and social relations in a maternity ward, has been excluded. The essay discusses the historical context of the 1990s Moscow art scene and contrasts the “radical” actions of male artists with Gorlova’s more nuanced and intimate approach. Matuszak also compares Gorlova’s work with later artists like Katrin Nenasheva, who similarly engage in the aesthetics of care. Her chapter calls for a more inclusive history of Russian performance art that acknowledges a wider range of artistic practices beyond the established “grand narrative.”

In her essay, “Bodies-in-Extension in the Nordic Countries: Toward an Affective Understanding of Relation in Contemporary Performance Art,” Tina Mariane Krogh Madsen argues for an expanded understanding of body art beyond the human form, embracing relationality and diverse agencies in contemporary Nordic performance. The essay cites examples such as Kirsten Justesen’s feminist body practices in the 1970s, a live art festival in Copenhagen in 2001 featuring Kira O’Reilly and Ron Athey, and Teo Ala-Ruona’s performance *Lacuna* at the Drifts Festival in Helsinki in 2022. Jessie Kleemann’s *Arkhticós Doloros* at the Sermeq Kujalleq Glacier and Rita Marhaug’s *Norwegian Liquid* series are also discussed in the context of decolonial and environmental bodies. MC Coble’s *Note to Self* (2005) and *Things Change Anyway* (2023) are presented as examples of transgressive autofiction and bodily transformation. Madsen also includes her own performance practice, *Body Interfaces* (2014 to present), emphasizing the connection between human and geological agencies.



Figure 1.2 Open Session at Evaporate International Performance Art Festival: ephemeral art from Bergen, Norway and Boston, USA, at Boston's Metropolitan Waterworks Museum November 4, 2023.

Photo by Lani Asunción. Used with permission.

“The Body Politic: Performance Art as Resistance and Transformation in Ireland,” by EL Putnam, makes the case that performance art in Ireland serves as a vital tool for resisting and transforming social norms, particularly concerning reproductive rights and gender expression, against a backdrop of historical oppression rooted in Catholic morality. The essay details the Artists’ Campaign to Repeal the Eighth Amendment (ACREA) and their *Repeal! Procession* (2018), including Alice Maher and Áine Phillips’ involvement, as a pivotal moment in advocating for abortion rights. Putnam also discusses Eleanor Lawler’s work, which explores the aging maternal body and touch through an “aesthetics of hospitality.” Finally, the chapter highlights Day Magee’s exploration of grief and non-binary identity through performance, and Léann Herlihy’s work that challenges gender binaries using text and embodied experience. These artists and events exemplify the transformative power of performance art in reshaping Ireland’s “body politic.”

Global Emergences displays the expansive and interconnected nature of live art around the world, demonstrating how its practices are deeply rooted in local contexts, histories, and sociopolitical issues. The diverse microhistories presented in the following chapters reveal that performance has been a globally connected practice since at least the 1960s, reflecting a multitude of artistic, cultural, and political expressions. This collection aims to broaden the traditional narrative of performance art, acknowledging significant contributions of artists from various regions often marginalized in Western-centric art history. It underscores the vital role of live art as a powerful tool for social commentary, resistance, and transformation.

Notes

- 1 Dominic Johnson, “Introduction: The What, When, and Where of Live Art?” *Contemporary Theatre Review*, Vol 22, No 1 (2012), 7.
- 2 Johnson (2012), 8.
- 3 Notably, Joshua Chambers-Letson continues with a related critical discussion of Gutai and performance art in his essay in Section III of this volume, “The Other History of Performance Art’s History.”
- 4 Nicolas Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics*, translated by Simon Pleasance and Fronza Woods, Dijon: Les Presses du réel (2002).

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2

THE “LIVES” OF PERFORMANCE ART IN 1960S JAPAN

Kōi (Acts) and Information Operations

Reiko Tomii

Nineteen-sixties Japan is a paradigmatic site for the study of multiple modernisms in global art history. In the growing state of international contemporaneity (*kokusaiteki dōjisei*), vanguard artists in this country that had long been relegated to the margins began to assert their distinct characters in a range of dematerialized practices.¹ Among them is performance art: Japanese artists undertook early experiments and innovations in body-based and time-based practices, from the late 1950s through the early 1970s.² A constant presence in 1960s Japan, from Gutai to Anti-Art (*Han-geijutsu*) to Non-Art (*Hi-geijutsu*), performance art is a rich, diverse, and evolving topic to study. Memorable works abound. To just name a few, they range from Gutai's performance-paintings to the undocumented act of Kazekura Shō falling down from a piano stool on which he was seated in the late 1950s, from Hi Red Center's so-called *Cleaning Event* in 1964 to The Play's *Voyage: Happening in an Egg* of 1968, from GUN's *Event to Change the Image of Snow* to Hikosaka Naoyoshi's *Floor Event*, both in 1970.³

A number of studies have been devoted to this topic, examining tens of artists and collectives engaged in performative works.⁴ To complement these primarily micro studies, we need to make macro studies by investigating larger structural concerns. Two such macro issues are shared by various locales. One is the support system – or, more often than not, the lack thereof – in the formative years of performance art. The other is the very ephemerality of the practice that challenges conventional art-historical, object-based methodologies. In the latter, photography has routinely stood in to afford an elusive objecthood and visibility to ephemeral works, though not without theoretical complications.

Solutions to these concerns have varied from locale to locale as practitioners explored the potentials of performative practices, often contending with the state of local circumstances and infrastructures. In order to examine the macro framework of performance art, it is necessary to first understand what can be termed “local-macro” factors by examining the structural frameworks governing a given context in particular. It should also be noted that the discourse on and history of performance art has thus far been largely formulated in Euro-America. A non-Western locale with early contributions to performance art, Japan serves as a useful alternative or counter site to examine local-macro elements that structure the works.



Figure 2.1 GUN, Event to Change the Image of Snow (1970).

Photo © Hanaga Mitsutoshi. Courtesy of the artist. Used with permission.

With this goal in mind, this chapter is organized in two parts. It begins with a methodological consideration to put forth a set of analytical concepts extracted from the local logics and circumstances of 1960s Japan. Starting from the work of practitioners, this analytics strives to learn from the development of their theories and practices which they devised when there was no textbook, let alone a history book, of performance art. They worked under their local circumstances, sometimes aided by interpoetic inspirations from, and dialogues with, outside sources.⁵ Thus, focusing on the local agencies does not necessarily mean that a resulting narrative is merely local but also contains the foundation to further study global connections and resonances. The second part consists of a series of key episodes that inform the first part and illuminate the local-macro framework in 1960s Japan.

Analytical Tools for a Bottom-Up Study

Terminology: *Kōi* (Act)

The term “performance art” did not enter Japanese art discourse until the early 1980s, even though the word *pafōmansu* (パフォーマンス, “performance”) first appeared in the context of art in 1969.⁶ From 1954 to 1974 (the expanded sixties), the term of choice was *kōi* (行為, “act” or “action”), with an early usage made by Gutai’s Shiraga Kazuo in 1955.⁷ Other terms were employed by specific practitioners. *Akushon* (action) was linked to “action painting,” as exemplified by Shinohara Ushio’s bravado Action Art.⁸ *Ivento* (イベント, “event”) had dual roots in Fluxus and the experimental music of Group Ongaku. The Japanese term *gishiki* (ritual) derived from the esotericism of the Marquis de Sade, which entered Japan via the writer Shibuzawa Tatsuhiko on the one hand and the premodern body espoused by Zero Jigen (Zero Dimension). *Hapuningū* (ハプニング, “Happening”) was first used by the composer Ichiyana Toshi in 1961, two years after Allan Kaprow’s initial use of it in art, and reintroduced upon the publication of Kaprow’s 1966 book, *Assemblage, Environments & Happenings*. Concurrently, The Play – an Osaka-based artist collective – theorized on Happenings dissociated from Kaprow’s conceptualization.⁹

The word *kōi* (act) is more versatile than the later term *pafōmansu* (performance), encompassing both corporeal and cerebral works. For example, in 1970, *kōi* was used by the Psychophysiology Research Institute (Seishin Seirigaku Kenkyūjo), a short-lived mail-art collective that systematically collated the “records of *kōi* (act) or *mu-kōi* (non-act).”¹⁰ The participants’ interpretations of *kōi* ranged widely from taking metrological data to mailing such unconventional objects as stones and logs, and from streaking on the ground of *Expo ’70* to traveling abroad. And in 1971–72, when the publisher Kōdansha issued a thirteen-volume series on international contemporary art, volume 11 was bilingually titled *Kōi ni kakeru* (Staking on action)/*Art of Action and Concept*, featuring both performance and land art.¹¹ The volume’s contents are far broader than *bodī āto* (body art), the term the critic Tōno Yoshiaki used in 1965 to designate two outdoor performative works, *Hole* by Group “I” and *Homo Sapiens* by Ikemizu Keiichi, at *Independent Art Festival* in Gifu in central Japan (1965).¹²

In this chapter, my investigation follows the thread of *kōi* rather than the more body-focused *performance*, in acknowledgment of the language’s critical role in shaping local logics. This focus allows us to examine the artist’s agency (judgments and decisions) where the act is not differentiated into such clear-cut categories as land art and performance art – and to study a wide range of operational aspects in the local-macro issues that require attention directed as much to the intrinsic aspect (expression) as to the extrinsic aspect (operation).

Expression and Operation

I initially introduced a pair of concepts, “expression” and “operation,” to consider collectivism in prewar Japan, where the underdeveloped state of modern art systems prompted dissenters from the government salon to forge their own exhibition platforms by forming art organizations (*bijutsu dantai*).¹³ In this development, their do-it-yourself (DIY) efforts to seek alternative platforms for their expression constituted their operation.

In the most conventional sense, between these two kinds of the artist’s labor, *expression* typically takes place inside the studio, whereas *operation* represents the artist’s effort

outside the studio to make his or her work public (usually through exhibition) and otherwise engage and interface with society outside the studio with it. The more developed the support system of art is in a given locale (in the forms of museums, galleries, and art journalism), the less need the artist has to assume the operation. Conversely, if the local art system is less developed, as in prewar Japan, the artist might have been compelled to function themselves as the agents of operation to fill the gap. It should be noted that the state of international contemporaneity became evident in the postwar decades, but the contemporaneity therein observed primarily pertains to expression, not necessarily to operation. In fact, when comparing similar works from different locales, it is not enough to identify dissimilarities in expression alone; it is also imperative to uncover those in operation (which is inevitably socially and institutionally informed).

In studying performance art, in which the operational DIY spirit is also pronounced, the distinction between expression and operation has an additional benefit, partly because performative works often involve social dimensions, as exemplified by Hi Red Center’s “direct action” (*chokusetsu kōdō*) on the streets. Specifically, by breaching the boundary between art and life, the group typically merged expression and operation, as will be explained, shifting the mode of performativity from those analogous to stage-based dramatic theaters (the latter was consciously attempted by Kazekura in the late 1950s, while Gutai used the exhibition space as their stage, and vice versa). The operational study will highlight how practitioners in 1960s Japan sought alternative platforms, including the media sphere, for their performative works. Early on, photography factored in the division of labor between the artist and the photographer, where the photojournalists further facilitated and undertook the operation of social exposure. A further refinement of the distinction between expression and operation is required to address this conundrum by thinking of the “lives” of an act-based work.

The First and Second Lives of a Work of Art (Sakubin)

The notions of “first life” and “second life” pertain inherently to the ephemerality of performance art. Simply put, after the artist undertakes an act, which leaves little physical trace, one or more photographs often stand in as its record, thereby serving as its second life to complement its fleeting first life. Another possible word is “afterlife.”¹⁴ Between the two, I have opted for “second life,” because the work living outside or beyond its intended purpose or existence is not limited to performance art. Over times, for example, many altarpieces were removed from their habitats (cathedrals) and even broken into panels, which are now preserved in the museums, with their initial intended purposes effectively lost. The modern institution of the museum, together with the commercial marketplace, has facilitated the accumulation of objects for preservation and education, thus frequently depriving them of their first lives yet according them the status of autonomy.

This terminological set at once exposes the accepted convention in art history as the study of the objecthood of a work of art and enables us to consider an ephemeral work of art in a more integral manner. In the early days of performance art in Japan, the performative agency to create the first life and the documentary agency to create the second life were not always the same. Generally speaking, an artist gave a performance and a photographer photographed it. The act (the first life) was considered the artist’s *sakubin* (literally “item made” and meaning “work of art”), which contrasts with *shiryō* (meaning “recorded or documentary material”), offered by the photographer. *Sakubin* carries the ring of authenticity, while *shiryō* is tinged with the stigma of being secondary and derivative.

Who controls the second life (resulting photographs), however, becomes a crucial factor in the local development of performance art. In fact, as will be seen, the photographer's role was initially not only documentary but also collaborative and symbiotic. However, the artist eventually learned to control the second life as much as the first life, and devised ways to present the latter as *sakuhin*.

Information vs. Photography

In considering the second life of performance art, we customarily think of photographs, or other visual documentations such as video and film footage. It should be noted that photography (and film/video) is a relatively new technology dating back to the mid-19th century. Before photography, history (which is a compilation of performative acts, as it were) was not recorded by visual documentation but narrated based on participant accounts, eyewitness testimonies, and even hearsays, with some visual renderings either made on site or more often than not from memories. Even where we have photography and video, captured stills or footage are not enough or even accurate without corroborating discursive accounts.

Written documentation is no less important in considering the second life of performance art, as demonstrated by the participants of Psychophysiology Research Institute, with some of them heavily or solely relying on language. Oral information also helps us keep earlier undocumented or unphotographed acts in our discussion. For example, the two most prominent instances from 1960s Japan are Kazekura's falling down from a piano stool onstage in the late 1950s and the Kyūshū-ha member Miyazaki Junnosuke's daring all-night hole digging on the beach of Hakata in 1962. These two works, reconstructed from first-person and witness accounts, occupy important places in the annals of performance art in Japan.¹⁵ While Kazekura's onstage act indicates theater as an interdisciplinary source for performance art, Miyazaki's futile act pioneered the postwar litany of hole-digging as art.¹⁶

If the second life of an act consisted not just of photography but of information, textual or otherwise, what was truly at stake in 1960s Japan was how the artist learned to take the ownership of the entirety of information *and* organize it as *sakuhin*.

A Brief Operational Survey

The history of performance art in 1960s Japan began in an unexpected space: the rapidly expanding mass media. Two pathbreakers were Yoshihara Jirō, the Gutai leader in Osaka, and Shinohara Ushio, a notorious practitioner of Anti-Art in Tokyo. The two inventively exploited print journalism and moving-imagery outlets (newsreels and television programs). In Anti-Art, such photojournalists as Hirata Minoru and Hanaga Mitsutoshi played an indispensable role as "conspirators" by mediating the spheres of art and media. As Anti-Art practitioners – most memorably Hi Red Center – moved onto the urban streets, thus into the public sphere, the merging of expression and operation took place, while some collectives, like Zero Jigen, began to maintain control of photography and information so that they themselves organized the second life of their acts. This shift of the ownership became the hallmark of Non-Art, with artists and collectives beginning to organize the second life of their acts as "work" (*sakuhin*). This development was part of the rise of *gendai bijutsu* (literally contemporary art), a new sphere of practice codified toward 1970 within the art establishment as the extension and expansion of the avant-garde (*zen'ei*).¹⁷ Contemporary art had two primary habitats: the mainstream and the wilderness. It should be noted that

in the East Asian, especially Japanese, tradition, the wilderness is not always antagonistic to, if highly critical of, the mainstream, serving as a reservoir of talents and resources for the mainstream to tap in times of consequences. In this respect, the emblematic event in which the mainstream and the wilderness productively mingled was *Tokyo Biennale 1970: Between Man and Matter*, which included, among others, both the more information-conscious wilderness practitioners and the more photography-conscious artists, revealing their respective operational concerns.

Gutai’s “Performance Paintings”: Expression and Operation

Gutai’s radical actions – or “performance paintings” as characterized in recent Gutai scholarship – were at once expressions and operations.¹⁸ They were expressions made by the members who responded to the leader Yoshihara Jirō’s aspiration to create a new painting culture in interpoetic dialogue with the drip painting of Jackson Pollock, which he had seen in 1951 in Osaka. To encourage them to experiment with new picture-making strategies, he commanded them to “Do something that was never done before” and provided novel exhibition opportunities that included outdoors, onstage, and in front of the media.¹⁹ A resulting trope of “performance paintings” could be either two-dimensional, three-dimensional (e.g., Murakami Saburō’s torn-paper screens known as *Passage* of 1956), or even four-dimensional (e.g., Tanaka Atsuko’s changing color abstractions in *Stage Dress* of 1957).

They were also part of the operation conceived by the leader who routinely showcased these innovative and experimental acts with media exposure in mind. His strategy can be gleaned from the *1st Gutai Art Exhibition* in October 1955.²⁰ Both the indoor and outdoor spaces of the Ohara Kaikan hall in Tokyo served as sites for the Osaka-based artists’ acts that were offered to invited reporters and camera crews on the opening day. Most notably, Shiraga Kazuo performed his legendary *Challenging Mud* three times for the press in the hall’s front yard. One of these was documented by Mainichi Film Company for a newsreel, and his mud picture was kept on site throughout the exhibition, as documented in a post-card documenting this “work in the exhibition.”²¹

There were two publicity precedents of which Yoshihara was aware. One involved publicity stunts staged in the immediate postwar years by the salon-based exhibition society Nika (Second Section), of which Yoshihara was a senior member.²² The other was the famous *Life* article of 1949, which Yoshihara realized had instantly made Pollock known internationally.

As part of his media strategy, Yoshihara encouraged the members to self-document their works and activities. The group maintained ownership of these photographs as press images, used for their own publications (e.g., *Gutai* journal) and those by others. These publications were vital in cementing the brand of Gutai, as exemplified by the cover of the Italian art magazine *Notizie*, featuring Murakami’s *Passage* in the April 1959 issue, while furthering Gutai’s international networking – another ambition that Yoshihara harbored and realized.

Anti-Art (1): Publicity as Reward

In Tokyo, Shinohara Ushio, a gregarious and kinetic Anti-Art practitioner, forged the theory and practice of publicity for the sake of publicity.²³ His interest in publicity was inspired by Georges Mathieu, Pollock’s European counterpart, who gave public demonstrations of

action painting in Tokyo in September 1957, which fueled the notorious Informel Whirlwind, the Japanese rubric for gestural abstraction.

Shinohara observed two things in Mathieu's spectacle, on which he formulated his own principles. In terms of expression, Mathieu was limited by his deliberate composition and movement, so Shinohara must be "speedy, beautiful, and rhythmical."²⁴ In terms of operation, the Frenchman's showmanship generated phenomenal publicity in the mass media – then the Japanese artist, too, must exploit the mass media for publicity. His signature *Boxing Painting* (1959–61) was thus born, and his bravado actions duly received the media's attention. What he found in publicity was "reward" in an otherwise reward-less avant-garde life. He wrote,

The spiritual freedom that arises from the reward-less act [*mushō no kōi*] of *geijutsu* [Art with a capital A] is nothing but a thing of the past. . . . In front of an interviewer's microphone, . . . [h]e who loudly says something shocking wins. In front of a camera, he must not hesitate but start dancing naked.²⁵

In his critique of the modern ideal of art for art's sake, he embraced publicity as the sole reward for his art, the principle that was closely tied to the local situation, wherein practically no commercial market then existed for vanguard art. Indeed, unlike some of Gutai painters, such as Shiraga, Tanaka, and Motonaga, who achieved commercial successes partly thanks to Yoshihara's shrewd stewardship, Shinohara was *the* epitome of a starving artist. Even when he scored a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity of being photographed by the American William Klein, he did not have money to buy canvas, an expensive art material. To stage his *Boxing Painting*, he pasted inexpensive Kraft paper directly onto a concrete fence. Instead of using expensive boxing gloves, he wrapped his fists with pieces of rag and boxed with cheap bottled sumi ink. Literally intended only for a show, the resulting masterpiece was left to the elements – but the suite of photographs was destined for history.

Anti-Art (2): Photojournalists as Conspirators

Shinohara's publicity seeking was aided by sympathetic photojournalists, especially Hirata Minoru and Hanaga Mitsutoshi, who served as liaisons to the mass media (Figure 2.2). But Shinohara was not alone. Hirata and Hanaga followed action-oriented practitioners – Hi Red Center, Ono Yoko, and Zero Jigen (Zero Dimension), among others – who became their early subjects. Between the two, Hirata focused what he would later call "art in action" of 1960s Japan.²⁶

For Hirata, generating publicity meant a form of support. A good example is Ono Yoko, who gave a few private performances for his camera in the summer of 1964 before her return to New York. In one session at her apartment, he shot her performance *Bag Piece* with her then-husband Anthony Cox on the rooftop and their family portrait with their daughter, Kyoko. After he photographed her second performance of *Cut Piece* in her farewell concert at Sōgetsu Kaikan (the first having been presented in Kyoto earlier), he successfully pitched an article idea to the populist magazine *Shūkan taishū* (Weekly masses) and got her a three-page opening feature with these three photographs.²⁷

In the early phase of Anti-Art, artists were more concerned with performing their acts than documenting them, and thus generally happy that photographers filled the need. Yet they were dismayed by the lack of image ownership on their part. Even though a



Figure 2.2 Hi Red Center, *Cleaning Event* (officially known as *Be Clean! and Campaign to Promote Cleanliness and Order in the Metropolitan Area*) (October 16, 1964).

Photo by Hirata Minoru © HM Archive/Courtesy of Taka Ishii Gallery Photography/Film. Used with permission.

performative work may seem lost in history without a photographer’s involvement, a photographer cannot shoot without an artist’s act. In a symbiotic view, through the act of documentation, the photographer affords the second life of the artist’s ephemeral act (first life) and the possibility of an enduring place in history.

Above all, Hirata exercised a superb camera eye not just to record but to memorialize “art in action” through such iconic images as Hi Red Center’s *Cleaning Event* of 1964. Furthermore, by promoting “art in action” in the mass print media, he acted as a valuable intermediary between artists and society, enabling a larger exposure of their acts as social events. Hirata himself later characterized his role as a “conspirator.” As such, he was a proactive, often collaborative, and ultimately symbiotic agent of history.

Anti-Art (3): Merging of Expression and Operation

In 1963–64, some Anti-Art practitioners hit the streets to stage their radical acts, stirred by the political activism that had shaken the whole nation in 1960 in opposition to the decennial renewal of the U.S.–Japan Security Treaty (*Anpo*), which was initially signed in 1951. The treaty allowed the US troops to station in Japan, thus turning the archipelago nation into a de facto front base for the American Cold War operations in Asia. In 1963, Zero Jigen began its street acts by their *Crawling Ritual* in Nagoya, while in 1964, Hi Red Center

undertook their legendary *Cleaning Event* in Tokyo.²⁸ In these works, there was no separation between “expression” and “operation.” In essence, their expressions required them to go out and undertake operations beyond conventional exhibition sites, bringing their works directly to the public. Their operations *were* their expressions, and vice versa. By merging expression and operation, they fundamentally departed from the theater/exhibition model of performance art.

Beyond this shared trait, the two collectives markedly differed in their approaches. Both subversive in intent, the cerebral Hi Red Center was clandestine in spirit, seeking “nameless-ness” (*mumei-sei*) or anonymity in the crowded shopping districts, whereas the visceral Zero Jigen was scandalous by nature, aggressively pursuing publicity – frequently through public nudity.²⁹ The photographer Hirata was a close collaborator of Zero Jigen, instrumental for orchestrating a series of illustrated articles in mass-oriented outlets, such as *Suiri sutōrīzu* (Detective stories) in March 1965 and *Nyūsu tokuhō* (News special bulletin) in December 1966.³⁰

Zero Jigen’s media orientation was informed by the leader Katō Yoshihiro’s political stance. His radicalism and populism were rooted in 1950s leftist politics, inflected with an iconoclastic spirit against *geijutsu* (Art) in the 1960s and intensified by his reading of Marshall McLuhan’s information theory.³¹ Katō concluded that the replication of documentary images through the mass media would amplify their shocking force, even if the original acts were ephemeral and invisible to society. His conception of the group’s activities as media operation incorporated any and all pieces of information generated by them into their *sakubin*. Indeed, Kato would clip the magazine pages of their coverages, sign them with his name, and preserve them in his archives.³² To the ultimate goal of “image amplification,” Katō not only had the members avidly self-document and produce graphic ephemera such as posters, artist books, and zines, he collaborated with such underground filmmakers as Miyai Rikurō, Matsumoto Toshio, and Oe Masanori to gain a moving-image platform, and later himself directed the group’s films.³³

Non-Art in the Wilderness (1): Information as Sakubin

In both the mainstream and wilderness of contemporary art, a major engine for dematerialization was conceptualism. In performative practices, it shifted the emphasis from the dominant physical presence of bodies and objects in Anti-Art to the more idea-based strategies in Non-Art. Among a few major developments was the confluence of *kōi* and information via mail art, as represented by Horikawa Michio’s *Mail Art by Sending Stones*.³⁴

The mainstreaming of contemporary art came hand in hand with the maturation of contemporary practices. For a young Horikawa, who began training as an art teacher in 1964, there were a number of predecessors to learn from, both Japanese and otherwise. And he was a good student with a knack for inventive interpoetics. In February 1970, as a lead member of GUN (Group Ultra Niigata), he followed the path of Shinohara Ushio, in collaboration with the photographer Hanaga Mitsutoshi, and staged *Event to Change the Image of Snow*, a magnificent, one-off painting act on the snow field of his hometown.³⁵ For his own work, he launched a mail-art project in July 1969, inspired by the Apollo 11 mission’s moon rock gathering.

Notably, Horikawa combined two acts, gathering earth stones and mailing them to earthlings. This is another example in which expression and operation were inextricably merged. Here, Horikawa followed the precedent set by the New York-based Kawara On,

who, too, merged expression and operation in his *I Got Up* series (1968–79), in which “getting up” is the first conscious act most humans perform after involuntarily waking up. Conceptualizing it as “Mail Happening,” Horikawa interpoetically recast Kawara’s strategy with his original ideas.³⁶ Horikawa’s mailing is a happening, in the original sense of the word, because an unexpected or unusual event takes place throughout the proceeding of each mailing – at the sender’s end, during the transport, and at the recipient’s end. His mail happening even had a potential to continue between the sender and the recipient, eliciting further exchanges in mail or even in person.

From the beginning, record keeping was integral to the project, because the artist was keenly aware that he would have nothing left on his hand once his stones were sent. While sending one stone to himself by way of the record, he utilized a stack of leftover data cards from an unrealized artist-book project to organize a range of mailing information. The first mailing, *The Shinano River Plan: 11*, is commemorated in a collage with an artist’s statement (published in a school paper), documentary photographs, an addressees list, and student assistants’ comments. He continued to accumulate information on data cards, which became a site of reflection and stimulated new ideas to incorporate in the series. For *The Shinano River Plan: 12* in conjunction with the Apollo 12 mission in November 1969, he devised a scheme to orchestrate interactions with recipients by using the receipts from the mailing (he thus extended the potential of his “mail happening” and expanded the scope of his project). In April 1970, he marked his participation in *Tokyo Biennale 1970: Between Man and Matter* with *The Nakanomata River Plan: 13* in conjunction with the Apollo 13 mission by creating an artist book, which he mailed to the biennale administrator Minemura Toshiaki.

However, it was not until December 1969, when he was invited to participate in the Psychophysiology Research Institute (Seishin Seirigaku Kenkyūjo), that Horikawa came to realize that these data cards constituted his *sakuhin*. A short-lived mail-art collective, Psychophysiology Research Institute was organized by two art students, Ina Ken’ichirō and Takeda Kiyoshi, at Tokyo Zōkei University, together with Shimamura Kiyoharu, friend of Ina’s.³⁷ The project required the invited participants nationwide to perform an act at the specified date and time and make a report on it by sending related information (records), which ranged from photographs to diagrams to texts, to Ina, who would, with fellow participants, collate and duplicate them for circulation. To conclude their project, Ina published an artist book consisting of data cards in August 1970.

Non-Art in the Wilderness (2): Information for Communal Engagement

In the Psychophysiology Research Institute, an intriguing example was offered by Matsuzawa Yutaka, known for his immaterial conceptualism. In his second contribution, Matsuzawa devised an elaborate scheme to combine the real and the imaginary acts using text as records. The date specified for this round was the opening day of the legendary *Tokyo Biennale 1970: Between Man and Matter*, in which he presented two panels, *My Own Death*, hanging at two entrances to the assigned gallery, which he otherwise kept completely empty. In this empty space, the artist performed a guerrilla act, as described in his textual contribution, “Real and Imaginary of Matsuzawa Yutaka at May 10, 1970, noon,” to the mail-art project. It reads:

The real I had one of an unspecified many people touch my heart in my room of My Own Death at Tokyo Metropolitan Art Museum, in order to anticipate My