

Amelia Jones

The Body as Archive/The Archive as Body: Live Art in Los Angeles 1970-75,
A Case Study

Countering the usual opposition between the "live" (believed to be authentic) and the "document" or "archive" (usually posed as secondary and thus as inferior), this paper will propose that the body can be understood itself as an archive and the archive as a "body." I use a specific research project attempting to historicize otherwise lost performance art practices from early 1970s Los Angeles to muddy this opposition, pointing to the continuum among the various levels through which performance art can be experienced: through first-hand viewing or participation, through later interviews with artists and participants, through documents, reenactments, and other detritus that find their way into archives.

Focussing on the case study of live performance art in Los Angeles from 1970-1975, this essay will explore the limits of how we can excavate and write histories of specific periods or practices of live art. Drawing on my personal experience of the LA creative community starting a decade later (that is, as a researcher arriving late on the scene who can always only look back to a history of which she was not a part), archival and interview research, and existing written histories and documentary traces of LA performance in this period, I hope both to sketch the possibility of writing this partial history and the limits of what we can know about events that took place over time and in the past. Is it enough to ask an artist to explain past works and contexts? Is it enough to look at photographs, albums, sketches, flyers, and ticket stubs in local archives? Where does the "truth" of these past performance practices lie? Ultimately the paper will seek to begin to understand our persistent disavowal of the obvious impossibility of knowing either present or past performances (our insistence on discussing live art "as if" we can fix it in place and time, even though we can never know even what we see before us in this instant).

Andrea Fraser

Performance or Enactment

Andrea Fraser will talk about psychoanalytic theories of enactment and their impact on her approach to teaching and to performance.

Barbara Clausen

Curating Performance

Performance art is increasingly recognized as a process based and discursive medium, both nurtured and conflicted by its codependent relationship to academia and the institutional art world. Performance arts' rising popularity, institutionalization and historization has brought up a whole range of questions for theorists, artists, and curators; that find a fertile ground for discussion in art academies and art history departments: How do practices such as curating, teaching and writing on performance art influence the medium and the practice? How can performance arts' claim of authenticity not just be reproduced and showcased but further developed and transpired within the setting of an installation? Can an exhibition context simultaneously function as a pro-scenium setting as well as a site of knowledge production? Academic research as well as an ongoing exchange with students and peers alike has been vital for the past and present performance series and exhibitions I have curated on my own and in collaboration, such as „After the Act, On the (Re)Presentation of Performance Art“ (2005), „Wieder and Wider, (Again and Against) - Re-enactment and Appropriation“ (2006), and the most recent exhibition and performance series „Push and Pull. Turning Points“ at the Museum of Modern Art Stiftung Ludwig Vienna. The latter in collaboration with the Tanzquartier Vienna and TATE Modern London, where it will reappear in the Spring of 2011. I would like to speak about how these projects have served as an outset for discussing the representational politics and reception of recent historical surveys, Blockbuster performance exhibitions and events, or the seemingly never ending series of re-enactments, in my teaching. Asking how performance art as a method, a medium, and a practice

of many histories can be (re) defined today within an institutional and educational context?

Carrie Lambert-Beatty

Post-Performance: The Academic Condition of Contemporary Art

For at least twenty years theoretical conversations about performance art have revolved around the question of presence: Is performance essentially a present-tense art, or is presence an effect performance produces after the fact? Are documents and re-enactments anathema to the performance aesthetic, or essential to its function and meaning? Recent attempts by museums to reckon with the history of performance art have given some new life to these issues, but ultimately what the renewed conversation suggests is that they have been more or less settled: in our time, the dialectic between liveness and mediation, presence and iterability is what performance is.

And yet the presence question has not gone away. It has simply been transferred to discourse about contemporary art itself. Within event culture all art is a kind of performance, and again “you had to be there”: the art world’s governing assumption is that the best, most meaningful way to experience art is to catch exhibitions and installations during their mayfly lives in the halls of biennials and art fairs around the globe.

The academy is to the biennial what photography was to performance. Just as assumptions about the “merely” supplemental document had to be deconstructed, we need to think more carefully about the seemingly secondary arena of art-historical texts, seminar rooms, and lecture halls. What lessons does the critique of presence in performance discourse have for thinking about contemporary art more broadly? In this talk I will use performance theory to argue for the centrality and value of the academy for art now. I propose that despite (or because of) its contradictions the new academic subfield of “Contemporary art history” is not only intrinsic to the way art production and dissemination are currently organized, but essential to art’s very existence in the present.

Carrie Lambert-Beatty & Simone Forti

Beyond "Huddle"

Simone Forti and Carrie Lambert-Beatty will discuss Forti's half-century in dance: her work, its changing contexts, and her perspectives on performance now and in the past.

Sabine Gebhardt Fink & Margarit von Büren

Floating Gaps: Die Performance Chronik Basel als Versuch, Performance Kunst der 1970er Jahre zu re-konstruieren

Die 70er Jahre waren eine „amazing decade“ nicht nur für Performance-KünstlerInnen, wie die amerikanische Theoretikerin Moira Roth meint, sondern überhaupt für politische AktivistInnen, KuratorInnen und Publica. Waren zum Beispiel bereits Ende der 60er Jahre erste performative Arbeiten in Basel zu sehen, so kam es im Verlauf der 70er Jahre zu einer regelrechten Performance Euphorie bei AkteurInnen, AktivistInnen, KritikerInnen und beim Publikum. Als wichtige Impulsgeber werden von den von uns (den HerausgeberInnen der Performance Chronik: Muda Mathis, Margarit von Büren und mir) in Videos und Gesprächen interviewten ZeitzeugInnen immer wieder folgende Größen genannt: die Kunsthalle, in der damals Tanz-Performances von Anna Winteler oder Trisha Brown gezeigt worden sind, das Theater Basel, die Galerie Stampa, die Ende der 60er Jahre gegründet wurde und damals aktuelle künstlerische performative Positionen wie Coop Himmelblau oder Valie Export vermittelt hat sowie unabhängige politische AktivistInnen wie die „Damengöttinnen“. Ausgehend von der Fülle der in Basel gezeigten performativen Arbeiten der 1970er und 1980er Jahre erstellen wir im Augenblick eine künstlerisch-wissenschaftliche Publikation. Wir möchten in unserem Vortrag auf exemplarisches Material daraus eingehen, insofern es in wichtige Fragestellungen, Arbeitsprinzipien und Anliegen der Zeit und des Ortes einführt. Weiter soll im Vortrag auch die Methodik unserer „kollektiven Performance-Geschichtsschreibung“ zu Diskussion gestellt werden. (www.xcult.org/C/performancechronik/).

Judith Hopf

Some Thoughts on Performative Emanzipation

In Bezugnahme auf Jacque Rancières (1) Lektionen über die intellektuelle Emanzipation, nehme ich an, dass sich "Performance" aber auch sonst nichts sich im herkömmlichen Sinne "lehren" lässt - ich möchte mich also dem Konzept des "Unwissenden Lehrmeisters" anschließen, wie er von Joseph Jacotot 1818 vertreten und von Rancière in seinem Buch eben über dessen Philosophie nachgezeichnet wird: Die große Lektion von Jacotot ist, dass die Bildung wie die Freiheit ist: Sie wird nicht verliehen, sondern sie wird sich genommen werden- über mögliche Strategien, eine solche Haltung und Denkleistung auch in der Praxis von künstlerischer Performance sichtbar gemacht werden kann und ob sie genau dort wirksam werden wird, sollte an Hand einiger Praxen und Arbeiten gemeinsam debattiert werden.

1. Jacques Rancière, "Der unwissende Lehrmeister, Fünf Lektionen über die intellektuelle Emanzipation", Passagen Verlag, 2007

Martha Wilson

Transformations, Invasions and Pushing Boundaries

This lecture chronicles the interwoven stages of Wilson's creative contributions within the context of early feminist and socially engaged studio practice as well as her dissemination of the work of like-minded individuals through the auspices of Franklin Furnace. Central to the discussion is Wilson's presence as an agent of transformative change, initially in her artwork and then her facilitation of cultural change through her Directorial presence at Franklin Furnace. Wilson's selection of 30 projects from 30 years of programming at Franklin Furnace also becomes a self-portrait of sorts as she highlights works that are historically significant for pushing boundaries within exhibition and display culture as well as society at large.

Philip Auslander

Reactivations: Toward a Hermeneutics of Performance Documentation

I seek to develop a theory of performance documentation focusing on the audience's phenomenological relationship to the performance document rather than the document's ontological relationship to the original performance. No documented piece is performed solely as an end in itself: the performance is always at one level raw material for documentation, the final product through which it will be circulated and with which it will inevitably become identified.

Over time, the documentary image turns into the historical truth of the original event. If performances are made to be documented and are constituted through documentation, and the original performance is not definitive but is inevitably replaced by its representations, the spectator's primary action with respect to performance art is not the witnessing of live events but the imaginative reconstitution of performances from images, whether held in memory or available through documentation. I draw on the hermeneutics of the German philosopher Hans-Georg Gadamer who argues that understanding something does not consist of revealing an objective truth inherent in it, waiting to be discovered. Rather, "understanding proves to be an event" (Gadamer) something that emerges through dialogue, this case the dialogue between the performance document and its audience. In this sense, our imaginative recreation of a performance from its documentation is not a process of retrieving information about something that took place in the past but is itself a performance in the present, in which we take part.

Susanne Neuburger

Performing Vienna

Die Frage nach dem österreichischen Kontext einer in Diskurs und Praxis erfolgreichen Performance-Szene kann sich historisch gesehen an verschiedenen Eckpunkten festmachen. Man könnte sie zeitlich in den 1960er Jahren beginnen lassen, als Brus in seiner legendären Aktion am Heldenplatz

aus dem Auto ausstieg. Geographisch wäre sie zwischen Albertinaplatz und Heldenplatz zu verorten, bezieht man jene Projekte mit ein, die als Erinnern und Gedenken immer schon eine speziell österreichische Variante ausmachten. 1988, als das Hrdlicka-Denkmal eröffnet wurde, war auch das Jahr von Hans Haackes Grazer Auftritt. 1988 projiziert Krystof Wodicko auf den Balkon der Hofburg, auf dem Hitler 1938 sprach, das Zeichen von Noricum innerhalb einer das ganze Gebäude umfassenden Projektion, der im Flakturm im dritten Bezirk ein Reiter antwortet, wie er ähnlich am Heldenplatz steht. Ende der 1980er, Anfang der 1990er Jahre war in Wien ein internationaler Schub zu bemerken. Veranstalter wie das museum in progress oder die Wiener Festwochen lenkten den Blick auf die Stadt, die vermehrt Austragungsort einer Konzept- und Aktionsbezogenen Kunst wurde. Der Frage, in wie weit hier eine historische Basis mit möglichem Einflusspotential vorliegt, geht in einzelnen Beispielen der Beitrag nach, der auch nach dem theoretisch motiviertem Hintergrund fragt und einzelne Aktionen zueinander in Bezug stellt.