

WHAT IS **Performance Art** **?**





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THE WHAT IS_ IMMA Talks series ?

There is a growing interest in contemporary art yet the ideas and theoretical frameworks which inform its practice can be complex and difficult to access. The what is_? programme, which is intended for a general audience, aims to provide an introduction to some of the key concepts and themes in modern and contemporary art and also to provide information about the materials and methodologies employed by artists in the creation of their work.

This programme acknowledges the inherent problems and contradictions in attempting to outline or summarise a wide-ranging, constantly changing and contested sphere of art theory and practice and also the limitations of employing summary terms to describe a range of practice, much of which emerged in opposition to such totalising tendencies. Taking these challenges into account, the intention of this programme is to promote information sharing and to encourage critical thinking, debate and discussion about art and artists.

Drawing on expertise and experience from lecturers, artists, curators and critical writers, the series offers a range of perspectives and is neither definitive nor exhaustive. Each topic is addressed by a talk and supported by an information booklet which includes a summary, the presenter's essay, a reading list, a glossary of terms and a resources list. This information can also be found on IMMA's website along with more detailed information about artwork and artists featured in IMMA's Collection at www.imma.ie.

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WHAT IS Performance Art ?

introduction

The Irish Museum of Modern Art is the national cultural institution for the collection and presentation of Modern and Contemporary Art. IMMA exhibits and collects Modern and Contemporary Art by established and emerging Irish and international artists. The Temporary Exhibitions Programme features work by established and emerging artists, and includes work ranging from painting, sculpture, installation, photography, video and performance. IMMA originates many of its exhibitions but also works closely with a network of international museums and galleries. IMMA's Collection includes artworks spanning a range of media and genres, acquired through purchase, donations, loans and commissions, many in association with IMMA's Temporary Exhibitions Programme and, on occasion, IMMA's Artists' Residency Programme.

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This introductory text provides a brief overview of the context in which Performance Art has evolved as a form of contemporary arts practice. Terms associated with Performance Art are indicated in CAPITALS and are elaborated on in the glossary on p.23. We invited Amanda Coogan, artist and researcher, to write an essay on Performance Art entitled *What is Performance Art?*, which makes reference to artists and artworks in IMMA's Collection as a means of describing and contextualising this area of contemporary arts practice. We hope to draw attention to the body of artworks in IMMA's Collection by artists associated with Performance Art, such as Marina Abramović, Nigel Rolfe, Dennis Oppenheim and Gilbert & George. We also hope to draw attention to the potential of IMMA and its Collection as a growing resource for further exploration and consideration of this subject.

what is performance art?

PERFORMANCE ART is a form of arts practice that involves a person or persons undertaking an action or actions within a particular timeframe in a particular space or location for an audience. Central to the process and execution of Performance Art is the live presence of the artist and the real actions of his/her body, to create and present an ephemeral art experience to an audience. A defining characteristic of Performance Art is the body, considered the primary MEDIUM and conceptual material on which Performance Art is based. Other key components are time, space and the relationship between performer and audience.

Primarily an INTERDISCIPLINARY practice, Performance Art can employ any material or medium across any discipline, including MUSIC, DANCE, LITERATURE, POETRY, ARCHITECTURE, FASHION, DESIGN and FILM. While Performance Art employs strategies such as RECITATION and IMPROVISATION associated with



THEATRE and DRAMA, it rarely employs plot or NARRATIVE. Performance Art can be spontaneous, one-off, durational, improvised or rehearsed and performed with or without scripts. Performances can range from a series of small-scale intimate gestures to public rallies, spectacles or parades presented in solo or collaborative form. In contrast to conventional methods of theatre production, the visual artist is the performer, creator and director of the performance. Performance Art can be situated anywhere: in ART MUSEUMS, GALLERIES and alternative art spaces or in impromptu sites, such as cafés, bars or the street, where the SITE and often unknowing audience become an integral part of the work's meaning.

Performance Art can trace its early influences to medieval performances by poets, minstrels, troubadours, bards and court jesters and also to the spectacles and masquerades of the RENAISSANCE. However, the origins of Performance Art are more commonly associated with the activities of early twentieth century AVANT-GARDE artists, in particular those associated with FUTURISM, CONSTRUCTIVISM, AGITPROP, DADA, SURREALISM and the BAUHAUS.

Celebrating all things modern, Futurist artists devised new forms of art and artist-led events, such as repetitive actions, lectures, manifestos, mass demonstrations, and live street TABLEAUX, to express the dynamism of modern

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urban life. Artists drew inspiration from all forms of performance, including popular entertainment formats, such as the variety show, circus, cabaret and opera. Live public engagement was paramount and performances involved improvised, unpredictable and often chaotic programmes delivered by artists, poets, actors, architects, critics and painters, frequently accompanied by discussions and debates to spread and initiate new cultural ideas.

Other formative influences on the development of Performance Art include the socially-orientated, utilitarian ethos of Constructivism with its emphasis on audience participation; the underground theatre of Agitprop; the nihilistic, anti-art agenda of Dada with their anarchic collaborations, cabarets and performances; the experimental performances, films and theatre productions of the Surrealists and the innovations of the Bauhaus school and its influence on interdisciplinary arts education. These experimental and innovative art movements contributed to the displacement of the art object as the locus of artistic engagement and the establishment of performance as a legitimate form of artistic expression. They also set a new precedent for interdisciplinary COLLABORATION, where artists employed a range of art forms to create new modes of performance and artist-led events.

The influx of European artists into America in the 1930s and '40s, in particular those associated with Surrealism and the Bauhaus, contributed to the emergence of ABSTRACT EXPRESSIONISM and ACTION PAINTING as the dominant modes of artistic expression during the 1940s and '50s. The development of Performance Art is associated with the photographic and film documentation of action painters. Artists perceived the action of creating the art object as a potential for performance in itself, and reinterpreted this through live painting performances using the human body as a paint brush.

The MULTIDISCIPLINARY events and performances known as HAPPENINGS in the late 1950s and early '60s had a significant influence on the development of Performance Art. Happenings emphasised the importance of chance in artistic creation, audience participation and the blurring of the boundary between the audience and the artwork. Similarly, the interdisciplinary approach employed by FLUXUS artists sought to blur the distinction between art and the everyday.

Prompted by the social, cultural and political changes during the 1960s, artists became concerned with the increasing COMMODIFICATION of art and the relationship of the art institution to broader socio-economic and political processes. Informed by new developments across a range of theoretical and practical disciplines, such as FEMINISM, POSTCOLONIALISM and CRITICAL THEORY, and drawing on earlier strategies of disruption, artists devised new forms of practice, such as temporary, TEXT-BASED, DIDACTIC and performative work, to complicate the perception of the art object as commodity.

By the 1970s the term Performance Art had come into general usage and was closely associated with CONCEPTUAL ART, which emphasised the production of ideas over art objects. The ephemeral, corporeal and radical potential of Performance Art appealed to artists committed to destabilising the material status of the art object. The potential for Performance Art to bypass the museum or gallery and mediate directly with the public instigated a surge of ARTIST-LED

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INITIATIVES and alternative spaces in which experimentations in performance could be devised. Performance Art employed many of the tendencies of SITE-SPECIFIC ART and INSTITUTIONAL CRITIQUE in its consideration of space, context, site and intervention.

The proliferation of Performance Art in the 1970s resulted in the emergence of new forms and categories of Performance Art. Prompted by the political and social upheaval of the 1960s, activist-based performances, such as ACTIVIST ART, STREET ART and GUERRILLA THEATRE, sought to draw attention to political and social issues through satire, DIALOGICAL and protest techniques. Body-based performances were influenced by the emergence of feminist theory and critique in the 1960s and '70s which re-evaluated traditional representations of the female body. Artists used their bodies to challenge restrictive definitions of sexuality, actively exhibiting their own naked bodies to undermine conventional notions of female nudity. Similarly, artists used their bodies to test the limits of the performing body, pursuing themes of endurance, self-control, transformation, risk and pain. The body was interpreted as a universal READYMADE which gave rise to offshoots of Performance Art, such as BODY ART, FEMINIST ART and LIVING SCULPTURE.

PHOTOGRAPHY, Film and VIDEO played a central role in the DOCUMENTATION of Performance Art and these mediums became the primary means by which Performance Art reached a wider public. By the 1980s, performance artists were increasingly incorporating technological media into their practice, such as SLIDE PROJECTION, SOUND, DIGITAL MEDIA and COMPUTER-GENERATED IMAGERY to create associated art forms such as VIDEO ART, SOUND ART and INSTALLATION ART.

Having circumvented the museum and gallery for decades, more and more Performance Art is situated and performed within museum and gallery spaces. The ephemeral and transient nature of Performance Art presents challenges with regard to its conservation, archiving and re-presentation. However, many contemporary museums and galleries are restaging early works, presenting new work, adopting interdisciplinary programming and acquiring live performances into their collections. There are numerous organisations, training programmes and festivals dedicated to Performance Art and an increasing body of professional practitioners continue to address its boundaries, relevance and significance as a form of CONTEMPORARY ART.

For bibliography and further reading see p. 22.

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What is Performance Art? Amanda Coogan

what is this thing
called performance?

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performance -
a broad church

'How was your performance today?' I could be asking a teacher, a driver, a stockbroker or a lover. 'Performance' is a recurrent term within today's general lexicon, yet practitioners and theorists in the field of Performance Studies disagree as to what constitutes this nebulous art form. In the context of the contemporary art world it allows us to suggest a practice full of paradoxes, wilfully refusing to be fenced in.

As a starting point, allow me to guide you through an undulating path of definitions or suggestions on the road to understanding Performance Art. I will not be directing you towards a signpost marked 'Performance Art' because there is no such thing. But if there were, you would find a plethora of practitioners squabbling at its base, with the live durational performance artists staging an infinite sit-in.

Performance is an 'essentially contested concept'.¹ Practitioners and theorists occupy this space of disagreement, allowing the field to unfold and incorporate a multitude of practices. Amelia Jones explains that 'Body art and performance art have been defined as constitutive of postmodernism because of their fundamental subversion of modernism's assumption that fixed meanings are determinable through the formal structure of the work alone'.² Performance Art cannot be described simply in terms of a particular structure or work. All forms and media are at the artist's disposal. Santiago Sierra's work *Veterans of the Wars of Northern Ireland, Afghanistan and Iraq facing the corner*, 2011 at the Manchester Gallery of Art simply installed a performer in a bare room for seven hours a day over nine days. Pauline Cummins and Louise Walsh collaborated on their 1992 *Sounding the Depths* video, photographic and sound installation, projecting mouths onto each other's bodies; proclaiming bodily ownership amid this turbulent period of lack of control over Irish women's bodies.

Indeed, Performance Art cannot be said to stem from any one particular discipline: theatre, dance or the visual arts. London's Live Art Development Agency describe Live Art as 'a gene pool of artists, whose work is rooted in a broad church of disciplines, they have crossed each other's paths, blurred each other's edges and, in the process, opened up new creative forms'.³ With practices from different art forms performing (excuse the pun), Performance Art is, then, interdisciplinary, collapsing the boundaries between disciplines. This essay, however, focuses on performance in the visual arts, a practice ubiquitous in the contemporary art world.

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body - site -
audience - time

Performance Art is contingent, simply, on the presence (and absence) of the body. The body, site, audience and time are its four pillars, with corporeal action the central axis. Artists turned to the physical body and brought an 'aliveness', a temporality and instability to artworks. Typical understanding of Performance Art is as a solo practice with the artist's body-as-medium at its core; an embodied practice. But the practice may also incorporate other bodies: performers and audience members. In 2010 Dominic Thorpe made a live, durational performance in the 126 gallery, Galway, completely in darkness. *Redress State, Questions Imagined* gave the audience small torches to illuminate the darkened performance site as they wished, engaging the viewer in an auditory, sense experience. Thorpe's removal of one of our senses refocused our experience of his work into a physical, embodied one.

It is the action of the body, the authenticity of an activity, that frames it as Performance Art. RoseLee Goldberg describes the context thus: '... the live presence of the artist, and the focus on the artist's body, became central to notions of "the real", and a yardstick for installation and video art.'⁴

Performance Art, from its beginnings, occurred in both alternative and formal locations. Site is a potent element in the framing of the work. A work of live performance on the street will have a distinct reading to one viewed in a gallery context. Indeed a performative video or photograph shot on the street has a different interpretation to one shot in a studio. This essay is littered with examples of live performance works with the site listed as a significant element to the manifestation of the works.

Time, or what is called duration in Performance Art, is a critical element. Performance Art is a time-based practice. Durational work – generally anything over three hours – is a particular strand of practice and inevitably brings with it elements of endurance. Endurance comes in different forms; from the grande endurance or masochistic performance⁵ to the petite endurance, occurring in performances that explore everyday life.⁶

what kind of
activity?

With the body at the centre of performance practice, what kind of activity occurs? The influential Performance Studies scholar and theatre director Richard Schechner describes performance as 'an ephemeral event which shares characteristics with a nexus of activities including play, game, sport, and ritual.'⁷ Consider the following artworks:

Chris Burden, *Shoot*, 1971. Burden walked into F Space gallery, California and had himself shot in the arm.

Marina Abramović /ULAY, *Rest Energy*, 1980, ROSC '80, Dublin. A bow and arrow is held taut by the performers' body weight, the arrow pointed directly at Abramović's heart. One slip or break in concentration and the arrow could pierce Abramović's heart.

Franko B, *I Miss You!*, 2002, Tate Modern. Franko walked up and down a catwalk, bleeding from the veins in each arm, painting the canvas-covered floor with his blood.

Works such as these are often thought of when considering Performance Art; sensational and risky, they challenge the very integrity of the corporeal body, and are emblematic of grande endurance works. Performance practice, even from the 1960s and '70s, also includes works focusing more on participation and transforming everyday actions:

Dennis Oppenheim, *Reading Position for Second Degree Burn*, 1970.

A photographic work in two parts. Oppenheim lies on the beach, firstly with a book over his chest and latterly without the book, displaying evidence of sunburn with the shadow of the absent book.

Joseph Beuys, *Bureau for Direct Democracy*, 1972. A live performance. Over the 100 days of Documenta 5, Beuys invited the audience to engage in conversation with him on democracy and politics.

Pipilotti Rist, *Ever is Over All*, 1997. A performance to video. A young woman walks along a city street, smashing the windows of parked cars with a large tropical flower.

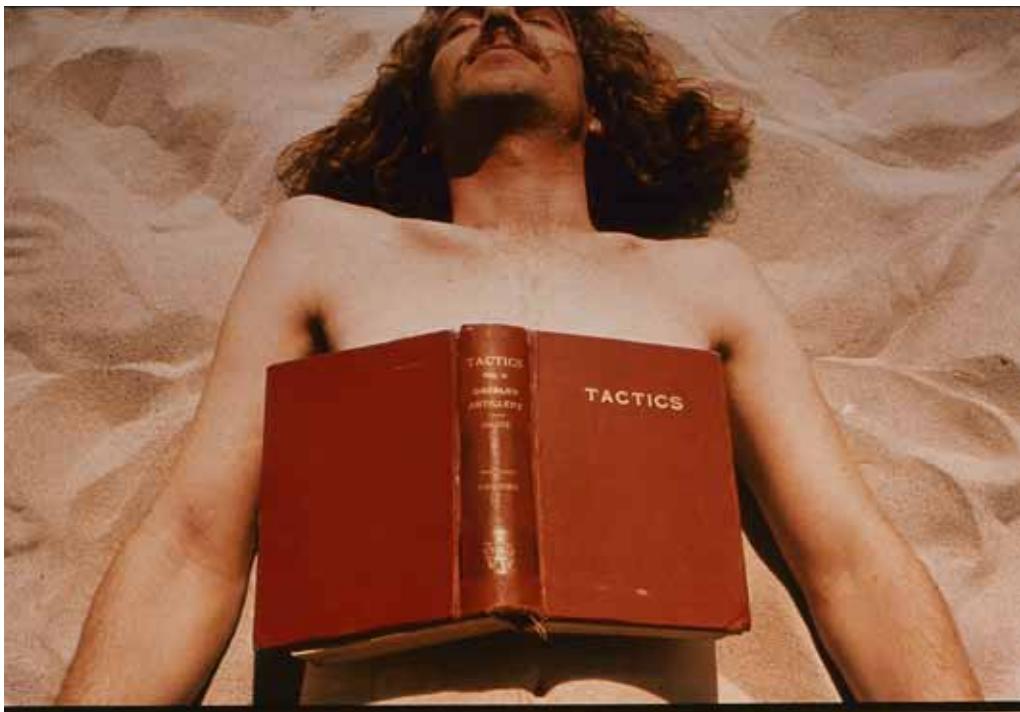
performance art -
the performing arts

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is the performance
artist acting?

The Performing Arts refers to theatre, dance, opera and the circus. Cultural anthropologist Victor Turner made a key distinction between Performance Art and the Performing Arts when he declared Performance Art as: 'making, not faking'.⁸ Put simply, the artist is actually shot in the arm, car windows are really smashed, skin is truly sunburned. These are not illusions but actual bodily experiences. In the 1970s, Performance Art stood in direct opposition to theatre. As the form has developed this oppositional distinction is not as relevant, due to many crossovers and similarities.

Performance occupies an in-between place. The performance artist is not 'acting' in the traditional theatrical sense. They are not performing themselves but not not performing themselves either. The performance frame is contingent and temporary, holding the performer in a liminal, provisional and suspended place. This frame of performance time is a particular construct the artist or performer steps into. Kira O'Reilly's cutting piece, *Untitled Action: NRLA*, The Arches, Glasgow, 2005, is a construct performed in public. While in action it may relate to forms of self-harm, made public and placed in the Live Performance frame, it offers the viewer an empathetic human-to-human encounter. Precisely because O'Reilly performs live, inhabiting the same place and time as the audience, and is the artist/maker constructing the action, the work becomes an intersubjective experience.⁹ Josette Feral illucidates: '... "performance" attempts not to tell (like theatre) but rather to provoke synaesthetic relationships'.¹⁰



READING POSITION FOR SECOND DEGREE BURN
Stage I, Stage II. Book, skin, solar energy. Exposure time: 5 hours. Jones Beach. 1970



a short and
rocky road into
the history of
performance

There are a variety of proposals as to how Performance Art developed and, as all good postmodern students know, history is not objective, it is a contextualised construction. From the perspective of a practitioner in the field of performance from the visual arts, allow me to sketch the relatively brief history of Performance Art.

RoseLee Goldberg's book, *Performance Art: From Futurism to the Present*, first published in 1979, dates the beginning of Performance Art very precisely to 20 February 1909: the day the first Futurist Manifesto was published in *Le Figaro* newspaper. She charts her theory on the development of the art form up through Constructivism, Dada, Surrealism and Bauhaus and cites the significant influence of the Black Mountain College in the US as foundational, referring to John Cage in music, Merce Cunningham in dance and Allan Kaprow's Happenings. Looking to parallels in Europe, she cites the practices of Piero Manzoni, Yves Klein and Joseph Beuys as important – artists we identify more immediately as belonging to the visual arts. Goldberg's arc of Performance Art encompasses the different disciplines of theatre, dance, visual art and music into the family of Performance Art. Goldberg explains that "... by its very nature performance defies precise or easy definition beyond the simple declaration that it is live art by artists. Any strict definition would immediately negate the possibility of performance itself."¹¹

Another historical perspective from close to the emblematic era is *Performance by Artists*, edited by A. A. Bronson and Peggy Gale and also published in 1979. In her Introduction, Gale opens by making two clear distinctions in practice between Canada/US and Europe. She cites European practice as 'more theoretical, more intellectualised – if only because of the apparent rejection of those qualities of narration and entertainment [as seen in Canadian and US works]... [European practice employs] tableaux vivants... [and is]... a form of extended sculpture.'¹²

Looking at this from the globalised world of the twenty-first century, it is informative to note that in the days before the multifarious biennials and blockbuster exhibitions criss-crossing the world there was a proposal suggesting two clear branches of practice. Gale cites a foundational figure in each location: Vito Acconci in Canada/US and Joseph Beuys in Europe.

Thomas McEvilley, in a less historically-focused trajectory, suggests three fountains of interest as noteworthy in the development of Performance Art practice:

1. Performance emerges from the history of theatre and begins as a counterpoint to realism.
2. Performance emerges from the history of painting and gains its force and focus after Jackson Pollock's 'action painting'.
3. Performance represents a return to investigations of the body most fully explored by shamans, yogis and practitioners of alternative healing arts.¹³

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Performance Art – Live or mediated presentation?

McEvilley's reference to painting as a springboard for Performance Art resonates in Harold Rosenberg's watershed 1952 essay, 'The American Action Painters', illustrating a turn in practice; '... what was to go on the canvas was not a picture but an event [...] The image would be the result of this encounter.'¹⁴ Performance artworks are events that have at their core a living, breathing body presented in an art frame.

Hans Namuth's 1950 documentary film of Jackson Pollock at work is also influential, aligning the medium of film with an artist's action. Performative practice is extant in the contemporary art world. At a cursory glance we can cite Matthew Barney's mammoth *Cremaster* series and Cindy Sherman's *Untitled Film Stills*, with the artist taking on different guises, staging (or performing) images of feminine stereotypes.

Looking at this trajectory it is interesting to note that even from its emblematic period, performance practice was not contingent on the presence of a live audience. Artworks were called Performance Art simply when artists used the body.

Works performed to camera in the artist's studio include:

Bruce Nauman, *Self-Portrait as a Fountain*, 1966-67, in front of an invited audience; Gilbert & George, *The Singing Sculpture*, 1970, at the Nigel Greenwood Gallery in London, and sometimes in front of an unintentional audience; Tehching Hsieh's *One Year Performance*, 1981-1982. Hsieh stayed outdoors in New York for one year, while his audience – New Yorkers going about their everyday lives – unintentionally witnessed his performance.¹⁵

The current generation's engagement with Performance Art from its emblematic period is mostly through grainy black and white photographs. These images themselves become iconic references to influential works, and are unavoidably dislocated from the context of their live presentation. They live bound up in the mythology of the event. It is the re-presentation of these ephemeral events that excites; the absent made present, the disappeared reappearing in the form of photography, video and stories.

Alanna O'Kelly made her 1995 live performance *Omós* in St Mary's Abbey, Dublin. In the darkly-lit twelfth-century chapel, O'Kelly's feet and calves were illuminated as she ran on the spot. The hairs on her legs stood out, the sound of her breath audibly taxed. I did not witness this live performance and have only seen fleeting video documentation of it, but it lives in the annals of Performance Art folklore. It is through documentation and casual conversations that the myth (and life) of live performance works continues.

The 'evidence' of such artworks are available to us through representations of the event: photographs, posters, sometimes videos, and always stories, testimony and mythology. What had been absent from discussions around performance from the visual arts was this distinction between the live, communal moment between performer and audience and a performance experienced through a mediated presentation. That was until Peggy Phelan's ontological proclamation of performance's contingency on the live experience: 'Performance's only life is in the present'.¹⁶

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Performance Art and the death of the object

Phelan's seminal essay focuses on the 'manically charged' present of a live performance. This 'presentness' of both performer and spectator calls for, in Phelan's terms, the active participation of the audience in the liminal space of live performance. The audience become interpreters or co-creators when experiencing live performance; the emancipated spectator that philosopher Jacques Rancière writes of.

This spotlight on the relationship between the live performer and live audience refocused discussion about Performance Art to its liveness and its relational bond with the audience. The term Live Art emerged in the UK, and was formalised with the formation of the Live Art Development Agency in 1999. Live Art centres on the temporality and ephemerality of Performance Art in its widest sense.

Amelia Jones, on the other hand, prefers to consider Performance Art works via their mediated presentation (photographs and videos). She opts to refer to the works as Body Art rather than Performance Art and claims the viewer can also have this performative relationship with an image from a performance work.¹⁷ (Here we are challenged by the multiple contemporary uses of the term 'performance'. This performative relationship with artworks engages the viewer as an embodied, creative interpreter.) The mediated document, Jones claims, is equally as valid as the live performance and indeed is more neutralised and set apart, allowing the viewer to consider it outside of the manically charged present of live performance.

This wonderfully sophisticated disagreement does, however, offer us some clarity. With Phelan's declaration of the 'presentness' of Performance Art and the emergence of the term Live Art on the one hand, and Jones' subsequent hypothesis and focus on mediated works/documentation – Body Art – we may glimpse the possibility of a distinction in modes of presentation, all of which come under the umbrella term Performance Art.

Live Performance Art:

Live presentation in front of an audience, corporeal activity made public:

Performance Art/Live Art

and

Performative Work:

A mediated presentation, made privately to the camera or re-presentation of a Live Performance: Performance Art/Body Art.

Ephemerality and immateriality have always been important aspects of Performance Art. For some practitioners in the 1960s and '70s this immateriality was a form of protest directly against the art market. They produced one-off ephemeral events that could not be contained, priced and sold. In the contemporary era of service industries and commodified events, this political stance against the art market is especially complicated.



BUT CAN WE HAVE
IT ALL?

17

the audience

Tino Sehgal's performance works are hinged purely on live encounters. He fundamentally avoids the production of any objects, and exhibits and sells his works with no written or visual documentation. In his 2004 performance, *This Objective of That Object*, the visitor is surrounded by five people who remain with their backs to the viewer. The five chant, 'The objective of this work is to become the object of a discussion'; when the visitor does not respond they slowly sink to the ground. If the visitor engages with them they begin a discussion. Sehgal's works have been collected by a number of significant institutions around the world, including the Tate, London and the Museum of Modern Art, New York.¹⁸ On the sale of his work, the artist stipulates that there are no written instructions, no written receipt and no images. Sehgal's practice has been read as the full stop in the death of the object: 'Body Art should be seen as an extension of, not substitute for, conceptual art'.¹⁹

Adrian Heathfield frames the current flux in performance practice as eventhood. 'Eventhood allows spectators to live for a while in the paradox of two impossible desires: to be present in the moment, to savour it, and to save the moment, to still and preserve its power long after it has gone'.²⁰ There are, of course, no rules: performance artists may make ephemeral events and produce images, videos or objects around those events, or structure their work to live purely in the moment of its live performance. Heathfield's distinction suggests that the detritus and documentation of live action functions as a relic of an event passed into memory but, as Jones asserts, these subsequent performative artworks hold their own potency independent of the live moment.

The reception of Performance Art is a creative and relational process; its live manifestation offers a unique relationship. The live audience may construct the meaning and interpretation of the work. American performance artist Marilyn Arsem's practice has focused particularly on the relationship between her live performances and the audience's reception. Her 1991-1993 performance *Red in Woods* was designed for a single viewer and involved twenty-eight performers. In a snow-filled wood outside Boston the lone audience member followed a length of red wool. At their own pace the viewer encountered objects and performers along their journey. 'Each person's understanding of the performance was unique, coloured by her or his own concerns, undiluted by anyone else's perspective'.²¹ Live performance lives in the experiential, a process made public, an encounter inviting the viewer to engage, bringing their own personal meaning to the work.

An exciting and potent part of live performance is the mythology that develops around a one-off temporal event; the creative reverberations that come from the audience. Art writing plays an important role, from the formal essays and reviews to the social media forums such as blogs, Facebook and Twitter, where the audience's transformative experience is communicated.

Live performance from the visual arts in Ireland is currently a vibrant practice, grounded in responding with the physical body and psychological self. There are many theories on how and why this kind of practice has developed, with suggestions that such evolution is closely connected to the Troubles, amid which artists felt conventional forms of art making failed to express the experiences happening outside the door of the studio.²²

The significance of Alastair MacLennan within Irish practice cannot be underestimated: a teacher in Belfast from the mid '70s, MacLennan asks his audience to witness and co-inhabit the visceral territories he explores. In 1988 MacLennan made a seminal work, *The Burn*, in the shell of the building adjoining the old Project Arts Centre in Dublin. In an eight hour non-stop actuation (MacLennan's term for his performance installations), he moved slowly around the burned-out shell of the building amid rubble and specifically placed objects, including pigs' heads and burned-out flags, electrifying the site-specific installation with the human body.

Another important point of reference is Brian O'Doherty/Patrick Ireland's performative stance in response to the political situation in Ireland. In 1972, O'Doherty changed his name to Patrick Ireland in a ritual performance, again at the Project Arts Centre, in protest against the Bloody Sunday massacre in Derry. He vowed to sign all of his subsequent artworks as Patrick Ireland. In 2008 O'Doherty buried Patrick Ireland in a Live Performance in the grounds of IMMA in recognition of the progress of the peace process.

Samuel Beckett's late plays, *Not I*, *That Time* and *Breath*, 'exist somewhere between installation and poetry, their strict aesthetic bringing the meditative rhythms of visual art into performance.'²³ His works are essential pivots for performance practitioners globally, but clearly have special significance for Irish artists.

and currently ...

Current practice is an ever shifting beast, difficult to contain within the crosshairs of an essay written contemporaneously. Nevertheless, Performance Art currently stands at a particular moment of evolution. As collections around the world attempt to reflect and collect performance works, there has been some significant examination into methods of extending, capturing and archiving the ephemerality of performance works both in theory and in practice.

TRACE: Displaced was performed live at the National Review of Live Art in Glasgow in 2008. In a replica of the TRACE art space in Cardiff, five artists (Andre Stitt, Beth Greenhalgh, Lee Hassall, Phil Babot and Roddy Hunter) performed durational over four days. On a table outside the installation, Heike Roms made a live documentation of the live performance using Post-it notes, polaroids and typed sheets of paper. At one point she noted one of the performers making an action in the centre of the installation - the site, she noted, in the gallery in Cardiff that Northern Irish artist Brian Connolly had buried his time capsule during his 2002 live performance *Initiate*. Roms layered the live action we were viewing with shadows of past performances and a

history of the Cardiff site. Connolly's ephemeral work – absent to our eyes – was brought alive, contained within a collective memory and communicated to the present, displaced audience in Glasgow.

Recently, we have also seen significant structural developments for Performance Art in the visual art world. In 2009 the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York appointed their first Curator-in-Chief for Performance Art, and the Whitworth Gallery, Manchester cleared its permanent collection and installed fourteen durational performances for a three-week exhibition.²⁴ 2010 saw the first retrospective of a performance artist: Marina Abramović's *The Artist is Present* at MoMA.

Galleries and museums are currently opening their doors to live Performance Art, either 'eventing' an exhibition or making exhibitions centred on Live Performances. This development opens the white cube to a messy unpredictability. Live performance is often a chaotic beast, with the collision of the fluctuating unknowns of action, site, time and audience. Part of the excitement of anything witnessed live is this tantalising unknown; each iteration of a live performance is unique and unrepeatable.

Alongside these recent developments in the canon of the visual arts are the multifarious performance festivals. In many countries around the world significant festivals of Performance Art show a wide range of Live Performances over concentrated periods of time. The National Review of Live Art in Glasgow, set up in 1979, is one of the longest running festivals of Live Art in the world, showing a variety of Performance Art practices. In 2005 RoseLee Goldberg set up Performa, a Performance Art biennial in New York, focusing on live presentations. In 2001 IMMA hosted the performance event *Marking the Territory*. Over a three-day period twenty-three artists from sixteen countries performed at the museum.

Live Performance can happen anywhere, at any time, for any duration. Bbeyond, the Northern Irish performance collective, perform regularly on the streets of Northern Ireland – often unannounced but sometimes framed within an arts festival – making dynamic interventions in public spaces, outside galleries or cultural institutions. Abramović, on the other hand, performed live in the cathedral of contemporary art, MoMA, New York in 2010 for three months.

Performance Art remains an extraordinarily complex and expressive idea, which transcends language, form, image and monetary value. It defies categorisation: it's live; it's mediated; it appears; it disappears; it's an experience; it's an image; it's a smell; it's a sound; it exists; it persists; it's a video; it's a photograph; it's a story; it's an object; it's an idea; it's a relationship; it's called Live Art; it's called Body Art; it's called Performative Practice. It is Performance Art, asking 'us what it means to be here, now'.²⁵

- 1 Strine, Long and Hopkins in their 1990 survey article 'Research in Interpretation and Performance Studies: Trends, Issues, Priorities', cited in Dwight Conquergood, 'Of Caravans and Carnivals: Performance Studies in Motion', *TDR*, Vol. 39, No. 4, Autumn 1995, pp. 137-141. Also see Marvin Carlson, 'What is Performance?', in Henry Bail (ed.), *The Performance Studies Reader*, London: Routledge, 2004.
- 2 Amelia Jones, *Body Art/Performing the Subject*, University of Minnesota Press, 1998, p. 21.
- 3 Live Art Development Agency, London, http://www.thisisliveart.co.uk/about_us/what_is_live_art.html (accessed 11/5/2011), The Live Art Development Agency 2009.
- 4 RoseLee Goldberg, *Performance Art: From Futurism to the Present*, London: Thames and Hudson, 2001, p. 9.
- 5 See Kathy O'Dell, *Contract with the Skin: Masochism, Performance Art, and the 1970s*, University of Minnesota Press, 1998, which describes masochistic performance practices, including Gina Pane, Vito Acconci, Chris Burden and early Abramović/ULAY.
- 6 See Peggy Phelan, 'On Seeing the Invisible: Marina Abramović's The House with the Ocean View', Milan: Charta, 2003. Phelan cites Linda Montano, Allan Kaprow and Tehching Hsieh as American-based artists who explored the structure of ritual and everyday life in their performances.
- 7 Richard Schechner, as cited in Mike Pearson, 'Theatre/Archaeology', in *TDR*, Vol. 38, No. 4, Winter 1994.
- 8 Victor Turner, *From Ritual to Theatre: The Human Seriousness of Play*, New York: PAJ Publications, 1984, p. 93.
- 9 See Rachel Zerihan, 'Revisiting Catharsis in Contemporary Live Art Practice: Kira O'Reilly's Evocative Skin Works', in *Theatre Research International*, Vol. 35, No. 1, pp. 32-42.
- 10 Josette Feral, 'Performance and Theatricality: The Subject Demystified', in *Modern Drama*, Vol. 25, 1982, p. 179.
- 11 Goldberg, pp. 8-9.
- 12 A. A. Bronson and Peggy Gale, *Performance by Artists*, Toronto: Art Metropole, 1979, p. 1.
- 13 Thomas McEvilley, *Stages of Energy: Performance Art Ground Zero?*, as cited in Peggy Phelan, 'On Seeing the Invisible: Marina Abramović's The House with the Ocean View', Milan: Charta, 2003, p. 174.
- 14 Harold Rosenberg, 'The American Action Painters', in *The Tradition of the New*, originally in *Art News* 51/8, December 1952.
- 15 See Adrian Heathfield and the Live Art Development's 2009 book *Out of Now* for a full discussion on the significance of Hsieh's practice.
- 16 Peggy Phelan, *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance*, London: Routledge, 1993, p. 146.
- 17 See Amelia Jones, *Body Art/Performing the Subject*.
- 18 IMMA have yet to add a work of Live Performance Art to their collection (1/10/2011).
- 19 Jon Erickson, 'Performing Distinctions', in *PAJ: A Journal of Performance and Art*, Vol. 21, No. 3, September 1999, p. 101.
- 20 Adrian Heathfield, *Live: Art and Performance*, London: Routledge, 2004, p. 9.
- 21 Marilyn Arsem, *Red in Woods*. See www.marilynarsem.net (accessed 23/7/2011).
- 22 Andre Stitt, Lecture for Points d'Impact, Performance Art Festival, Centre for Contemporary Art, Geneva, 2009.
- 23 Alison Croggon, Review of 'Beckett's Shorts', *Theatre Notes*, 23 April 2009 (Web accessed 27/5/2011).
- 24 *Marina Abramović Presents ...* at the Whitworth Gallery of Art, Manchester, 3-19 July 2009. Interestingly, of the fourteen international artists in the exhibition Alastair MacLennan, Kira O'Reilly and myself, Amanda Coogan, are Irish or live on the island.
- 25 See http://www.thisisliveart.co.uk/about_us/what_is_live_art.html (accessed 11/5/2011). The Live Art Development Agency 2009.

amanda coogan

amanda coogan is a performance artist based in dublin and is currently a phd candidate at the university of ulster. coogan is also a research scholar with the graduate school of creative arts and media (gradcam), coordinating their performance research seminars. central to coogan's practice is durational live performance; these live events are fundamental to her videos and photographs. coogan curated the first live performance-based exhibition in ireland, 'accumulator', in 2009 for visual, carlow's new centre for contemporary art. in 2010 coogan co-curated a live group exhibition of twenty irish performance artists for 'right here, right now' in dublin's kilmainham gaol. coogan exhibits and performs her works widely and was awarded the allied irish bank's art prize in 2004.

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22

performance art: glossary

23

ABSTRACT EXPRESSIONISM
American abstract art movement in the 1940s and '50s which emphasised a non-figurative, emotionally engaged approach to painting. Predominantly New York-based, it was also referred to as the New York School.

ACTION PAINTING
A form of painting associated with Abstract Expressionism, which emphasised gesture and physical expression. The drip paintings of Jackson Pollock and the expressive brush work of Willem de Kooning were considered to be examples of Action Painting. Other artists, such as Barnett Newman and Mark Rothko, emphasised the flat surface of the painting through the application of thin layers of paint, the elimination of gesture and emphasis on colour. This approach is also referred to as Colour Field Painting.

ACTIVIST ART
Arts practice which employs collective action in the public domain, such as demonstrations, protests, banners, signs and leaflet distribution, informed by issues of political or social injustice.

AGITPROP
A Soviet Russian term derived from agitation and propaganda, which refers to a form of underground political theatre concerned with social and political change. Associated with cabaret and folk theatre, Agitprop theatre developed in environments of social and political oppression.

ARCHITECTURE
The discipline concerned with the planning, design and construction of the built environment in terms of its aesthetic, functional and social considerations.

ART MUSEUM
A venue for the collection, preservation, study, interpretation and display of significant cultural objects and artworks.

ARTIST-LED INITIATIVES
Projects or organisations, such as studios or galleries, set up and run by artists, often on a collective or cooperative basis.

AVANT-GARDE
French for advance guard or 'vanguard', a military term to describe an advance army group. The term is used to describe innovative, experimental or cutting edge artists and movements.

BAUHAUS
An influential school of art, architecture and design founded by Walter Gropius in Weimar Germany in 1919. Influenced by Constructivism and De Stijl, the Bauhaus style, associated with the International Style, emphasised practicality, harmony between function and design and lack of ornamentation. Closed in 1933 by the Nazis, its teachers and students, many of whom went into exile, exerted considerable influence on subsequent art education programmes and developments in art and design, especially in the US.

COMPUTER
A mechanism for storing data and executing instructions called programmes in relation to that data. Software applications for personal computers include word processing, spreadsheets, databases, Web browsers, e-mail, games, and specialist software.

COMPUTER-GENERATED IMAGERY (CGI)
Computer graphics generated by computer software applications and programmes. Associated with 3D computer graphics and special effects in film and video.

BODY ART
An art form which takes the artist's body for its subject, medium and object in which to create performances, sculptures or videos. Executed in private or public, Body Art is often concerned with body decoration, self-inflicted pain and ritualistic acts of endurance.

COLLABORATION/ COLLABORATIVE ART
A form of arts practice where two or more artists, often from different disciplines, collaborate in the creation of an artwork.

COMMODITY/ COMMODIFICATION
A product or article of trade which is marketed for a commercial exchange of equal value. The influence of the art market on the nature, production and distribution of art is often referred to in terms of commodification.

COMPUTER
A mechanism for storing data and executing instructions called programmes in relation to that data. Software applications for personal computers include word processing, spreadsheets, databases, Web browsers, e-mail, games, and specialist software.

COMPUTER-GENERATED IMAGERY (CGI)
Computer graphics generated by computer software applications and programmes. Associated with 3D computer graphics and special effects in film and video.

CONCEPTUAL ART
Originating in the 1960s, Conceptual Art emphasises the idea or concept rather than the production of a tangible art object. The ideas and methodologies of Conceptual Art continue to inform Contemporary Art practice.

CONSTRUCTIVISM
An abstract art movement founded by Vladimir Tatlin and Alexander Rodchenko in Russia around 1915, which embraced developments in modern technology and industrialisation.

CONTEMPORARY ART
Refers to current and very recent art practice. Attributed to the period from the 1970s to the present, it also refers to works of art made by living artists. Contemporary Art can be driven by both theory and ideas, and is also characterised by a blurring of the distinction between art and other categories of cultural experience, such as television, cinema, mass media, entertainment and digital technology.

CRITICAL THEORY
A range of theories, drawn mainly from the social sciences and humanities, and associated with the Frankfurt School, which adopt a critical approach to understanding society and culture.

DADA
An international, avant-garde art movement founded in 1916, which used a variety of media, including collage, sound, nonsense texts

and absurd performances, to protest against the social, cultural and political conditions prevailing in Europe during World War I. Originating in Zurich, the movement spread to Paris, Berlin, Cologne, Hanover and New York.

DANCE

The movement of the body in a series of prescribed or improvised gestures often accompanied by music. The term also refers to the art form discipline concerned with the theory and practice of dance.

DESIGN

The plan or scheme to create or construct something: clothing, a building, furniture, etc.

DIALOGICAL AESTHETICS

An umbrella term used to describe socially-engaged arts practice where the emphasis is placed on dialogue and communication rather than the production of an art object.

DIDACTIC

To adopt an approach which conveys a message, knowledge or information.

DIGITAL MEDIA

Electronic media such as computers and telephones which can store and transmit data

DOCUMENTATION

The process of making records with the use of photography, film, video, audio or text to identify or report factual details.

DRAMA
See Theatre

FASHION

The term applied to prevailing trends in clothing, accessories, design and behaviour. The term also applies to the discipline concerned with the design and production of clothing, footwear and accessories.

FEMINISM

A social, political, intellectual and philosophical movement advocating equal rights and representation for women in all aspects of society.

FEMINIST ART

Arts practice informed by feminist theory, which aims to reflect and effect change in relation to the role of women in society.

FILM

The medium used for the creation of still or moving images. The term is also used to describe a motion picture which is a sequence of images projected onto a screen, collectively referred to as cinema. In Contemporary Art discourse, film is referred to as an artform.

FLUXUS

An international, avant-garde art movement in the 1960s which included artists, writers, filmmakers and musicians creating experimental, multimedia work in film, video and performance informed by social and political activism.

FUTURISM
Early twentieth century movement which originated in Italy and embraced all things modern, including technology, speed, industrialisation and mechanisation. It also embraced violence and nationalism and was associated with Italian Fascism.

GALLERY

An internal space or series of spaces dedicated to the exhibition of artworks.

GUERRILLA THEATRE

A form of subversive theatre practice comprising spontaneous acts and performances in unusual spaces and to an unsuspecting audience. Attributed to the San Francisco Mime Troupe, active in the 1960s who created performances in protest at the prevailing social and political conditions.

HAPPENINGS

Associated with US artist Allan Kaprow, the term Happenings emerged in the 1950s to describe time-based performances, events or situations that rely on artistic chance and improvisation to provoke the interaction of the audience.

IMPROVISATION

A spontaneous act, involving acting, singing, talking or reactions created in the moment, informed by internal and external response to stimuli from the immediate environment.

INSTALLATION ART
A broad term applied to a range of arts practice which involves the installation or configuration of objects in a space, where the totality of the objects and the space comprise the artwork.

INSTITUTIONAL CRITIQUE

A systematic interrogation of the workings of the art institution, through art practice and discourse,

which exposes and challenges assumed normalities, such as the autonomy and neutrality of the museum or gallery space. Associated with both Minimalism and Conceptual Art, and with artists such as Hans Haacke, Andrea Fraser, Marcel Broodthaers and Daniel Buren.

INTERDISCIPLINARY

The combining of two or more specialisms or disciplines, such as music, visual arts or dance, with the aim to synthesise a range of perspectives.

LITERATURE

An art form concerned with the composition and expression of language in prose and verse.

LIVING SCULPTURE

Endorsed by conceptual artists Gilbert & George, the term refers to a form of performance-based practice in which the artists exhibit their own bodies or employ models as a means to close distinctions between art and life.

MEDIUM/MEDIA
In general usage, media refers to forms of communication, such as newspapers, magazines, television, radio and the Internet. In the arts, media - the plural of medium - refers to the materials, methodologies, mechanisms, technologies or devices by which an artwork is realised.

Traditional media include painting, sculpture and drawing and the specific materials used, such as paint, charcoal or marble, can also be referred to as media. In Contemporary Art practice artists use a wide range of media, such as technology, found materials, the body and sound.

MULTIDISCIPLINARY

The involvement of several disciplines in a collaborative process which maintains their respective independence.

MUSIC

The expression of sound in the form of compositions comprising elements such as harmony and melody. The term also refers to the art form discipline concerned with the theory and practice of music.

NARRATION/NARRATIVE

A story or sequence of events told through any medium, such as film, literature, theatre or the visual arts.

PERFORMANCE ART

Involves an artist undertaking an action or actions where the artist's body is the medium.

Performance Art is closely associated with Video Art as this was the primary means of recording this ephemeral art form.

PHOTOGRAPHY

The process of recording an image – a photograph – on light-sensitive film or, in the case of digital photography, via a digital electronic or magnetic memory.

POETRY

A genre of literature concerned with the aesthetic and expressive potential of language, employing elements such as sound, meaning and rhythm.

POSTCOLONIAL THEORY/ POSTCOLONIALISM

An intellectual discourse of the late twentieth century drawing on theories from literature, film, philosophy and social and political science, concerned with the cultural legacy of colonialism in terms of national and cultural identity, race and ethnicity.

READYMADE

A term used in manufacturing to distinguish between handmade and manufactured goods, adopted by French artist Marcel Duchamp to describe the selection and modification of a manufactured object by an artist to create an artwork.

RECITATION

A performed reading or presentation of text, poetry or music in which to expand understanding or provide instruction on a subject.

RENAISSANCE

A French word for rebirth, the Renaissance was a cultural movement originating in Italy in the late fourteenth century, prompted by the revival of ancient classical sources. Extending until the sixteenth century the movement spread throughout Italy and Europe affecting all aspects of social, political and cultural life. Characterised by the adoption of a humanist approach, Renaissance artists placed an emphasis on naturalism and the use of linear perspective.

SITE

The space in which an artwork is located either temporarily or permanently, such as a gallery space, a space in an art fair or biennial, a public space or a site-specific space where the artwork is created in response to the conditions of the space.

SITE-SPECIFIC ART

Artwork that is created in response to a specific site with the intention of being located in the site and where removal from the site would change the meaning of the artwork. Often associated with Installation Art, Land Art and Public Art.

SLIDE PROJECTION

A mechanical process to facilitate viewing photographic transparencies on a large scale, usually projected onto a white screen.

SOUND/SOUND ART

A form of arts practice concerned with sound, listening and hearing, often involving an interdisciplinary approach. Sound Art encompasses acoustics, electronics, audio media and technology, the body, ambient sound, etc.

STREET ART

A form of subversive arts practice situated in public urban spaces. Comprises graffiti, street poster campaigns, video projection, interventions and installations.

SURREALISM

An avant-garde, literary and visual art movement founded in 1924 by André Breton and influenced by Dada, Psychoanalysis and Sigmund Freud's theories of the unconscious.

TABLEAU

An elaborate pictorial narrative or story, staged and presented in a single image in the form of a painting, photograph or installation.

TEXT/TEXT BASED

Artwork created using written or printed words as the material and/or subject matter.

THEATRE

The art form concerned with writing, producing, directing, performing and presenting dramatic texts such as plays. The term also refers to the art form discipline of drama concerned with the theory and practice of drama.

VIDEO

Technology used to record, store and project static images in a moving format similar to film. The production of lightweight, low-cost video technology, such as the Sony Portapak in the late 1960s contributed to the growth in experimental video-making during this period.

VIDEO ART

Artwork created using a video recording device. Video Art emerged in the 1960s and 1970s as a means of documenting ephemeral performance and Conceptual Art practice. It is regarded as an art form in its own right and is a prevalent medium in Contemporary Art.

**performance art:
general resources**

The following is a select list of resources. A more detailed list of resources can be found on IMMA's website www.imma.ie

**Information Websites
and Organisations**

General

Art21

www.pbs.org/art21

Artcyclopedia

www.artcyclopedia.com

The Artists

www.the-artists.org

Intute

www.intute.ac.uk

New Work Network (NWN)

www.newworknetwork.org.uk

STOT

www.stot.org

Performance Art

Beyond, Belfast

www.beyondperformance.org

Collecting Live Art

www.collectingliveart.com

Contemporary Performance Network

www.contemporaryperformance.org

Fado Performance Art Centre, Toronto, Canada

www.performanceart.ca

Gallery SoToDo

www.sotodo.org

Grace Exhibition Space,
New York

www.grace-exhibition-space.com

Home Live Art
www.homeliveart.com

Liveartwork
www.liveartwork.com

Live Art Development Agency
www.thisisliveart.co.uk

Live Art UK
www.liveartuk.org

Le Lieu, Centre for Live Art,
Quebec, Canada.
www.inter-lelieu.org

Performance Matters
www.thisisperformancematters.co.uk

PSI, Performance Studies International
www.psi-web.org

Biennales / Art Fairs / Festivals

General

Art Basel, Switzerland
www.artbasel.com

Documenta, Kassel, Germany
www.documenta.da

Frieze Art Fair, London
www.friezeartfair.com

Istanbul Biennial, Turkey
www.iksv.org/bienal

Liverpool Biennial, UK
www.biennial.com

Manifesta, European Biennale of Contemporary Art
www.manifesta.org

Moscow Biennale, Russia
www.moscowbiennale.ru

Bienal de São Paulo, Brazil
www.biensaopaulo.globocom

Shanghai Biennale, China
www.shanghaibiennale.com

Skulptur Projekte Münster, Germany
www.skulptur-projekte.de

Venice Biennale, Italy
www.labienne.org

Performance Art

Alkantara Festival, Lisbon,
Portugal.
www.alkantaraestival.pt

Bone: Festival of Live Art, Bern, Switzerland
www.bone-performance.com

EPAF, European Performance Art Festival, Warsaw, Poland
www.epaf-festival.blogspot.com

Live Action, Annual International Performance Art Festival, Göteborg, Sweden
www.liveaction.se

LIVE, International Performance Art Biennale, Vancouver, Canada
www.livebiennale.ca

MPA-Berlin, Month of Performance Art, Berlin
www.performberlin.wordpress.com

National Review of Live Art
see New Moves International

New Moves International
www.newmoves.co.uk/new-movesinternational.php

New Territories: International Festival of Live Art, Scotland
see New Moves International

Performa
www.performa-arts.org

RIAP: Rencontre Internationale D'Art Performance, Quebec, Canada
www.inter-lelieu.org/riap2010/home.html

Spill, Festival of Performance, London, UK
www.spillfestival.co.uk

Tulca, Contemporary Visual Art, Galway, Ireland
www.tulca.ie

TUPP Performing Arts Festival, Uppsala, Sweden
www.uppsalastadsteatre.se

Uovo Festival, Milan, Italy
www.uovoproject.it

**performance art:
journals and
magazines**

General	Third Text www.tandf.co.uk/journals/titles/09528822.asp	Acknowledgements Published by the Irish Museum of Modern Art, Royal Hospital, Kilmainham, Dublin 8, 2011.	Georgie Thompson, Assistant Curator: Collections Hilary Murray, Collections	All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the written permission of the publishers.
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Art Monthly www.artmonthly.co.uk	Variant www.variant.randomstate.org			
Art Newspaper www.theartnewspaper.com				
Art Review www.artreview.com	The Visual Artists News Sheet www.visualartists.ie			
Circa Art Magazine www.recirca.com	Performance Art			
Contemporary www.contemporary-magazines.com	The Act: A Journal of Performance Art www.inventivity.com/PP/#info	Text: <i>What is Performance Art?</i> , Amanda Coogan All other texts written and edited by Sophie Byrne and Lisa Moran	Technical Support: Mark Grehan, Technician, IMMA Design: Red&Grey Design www.redandgreydesign.ie	Images Every effort has been made to acknowledge correct copyright of images where applicable. Any errors or omissions are unintentional and should be notified to the Irish Museum of Modern Art <i>What Is ...?</i> programme.
Critical Inquiry www.criticalinquiry.uchicago.edu	Inter, Art Actuel, Periodical of Le Lieu , Centre for Live Art, Quebec, Canada. www.inter-lelieu.org	Editors: Lisa Moran, Curator: Education and Community Programmes Print: Print Library www.print-library.com	With thanks to: Georgie Thompson, Assistant Curator: Collections; Christina Kennedy, Head of Collections; Séán Kissane, Head of Exhibitions; Helen O'Donoghue, Head of Education and Community Programmes and Enrique Juncosa, Director, IMMA.	List of Illustrations Page 2 Gilbert & George, <i>Smoke Rising</i> , 1989, Mixed media, 338 x 568 cm, Collection Irish Museum of Modern Art, Purchase, 1993.
E-flux www.e-flux.com/journal		 What Is ... Team: Lisa Moran, Curator: Education and Community Programmes Copy Editor: Imelda Barnard	 Texts © Irish Museum of Modern Art and authors 2011	Page 5 Brian Duggan, <i>Door</i> , 2005, Video, 1 min. 39 sec. Collection Irish Museum of Modern Art, Purchase, 2006.
Flash Art www.flashartonline.com	International Journal of Performance Art and Digital Media , Intellect Books www.intellectbooks.co.uk/journals/viewJournal.id=120/	 Research: Sinead Carey	 Images © Irish Museum of Modern Art and artists 2011	Page 8 Nigel Rolfe, <i>Blood of the Beast</i> , 1990, Cibachrome photographs (3 panels), 150 x 100 cm (each), Collection Irish Museum of Modern Art, Purchase, 1991.
Frieze Art Journal www.frieze.com				
The International Journal of Cultural Policy www.tandf.co.uk/journals/titles/10286632.asp	PAJ: A Journal for Performance and Art , MIT Press www.mitpressjournals.org/loi/paj	 Image Sourcing: Maggie Connolly, Administration Assistant: Education and Community Programmes		
Irish Arts Review www.irishartsreview.com	Performance Kunst : A Resource for Nordic Live Art www.performancekunst.no			
Journal of Visual Culture www.sagepub.com/journals	P-Form : A Journal of Interdisciplinary and Performance Art No website available			
KunstKritikk , Nordic online journal www.kunstkritikk.no				
Printed Project www.visualartists.ie				

What is series 1

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'Performance' is a recurrent term within today's general lexicon, yet practitioners and theorists in the field of Performance Studies disagree as to what constitutes this nebulous art form. In the context of the Contemporary Art world it allows us to suggest a practice full of paradoxes, wilfully refusing to be fenced in.'

Amanda Coogan

What is Performance Art? is the final in series 1 of the *What is..?* programme of booklets and live talks which aim to provide a general introduction to key concepts and themes in Contemporary Art. *What is Performance Art?* provides a brief overview of Performance Art, both as an influential movement, and as a framework for creating and understanding art. This is accompanied by an essay by **Amanda Coogan**, titled *What is Performance Art?*

