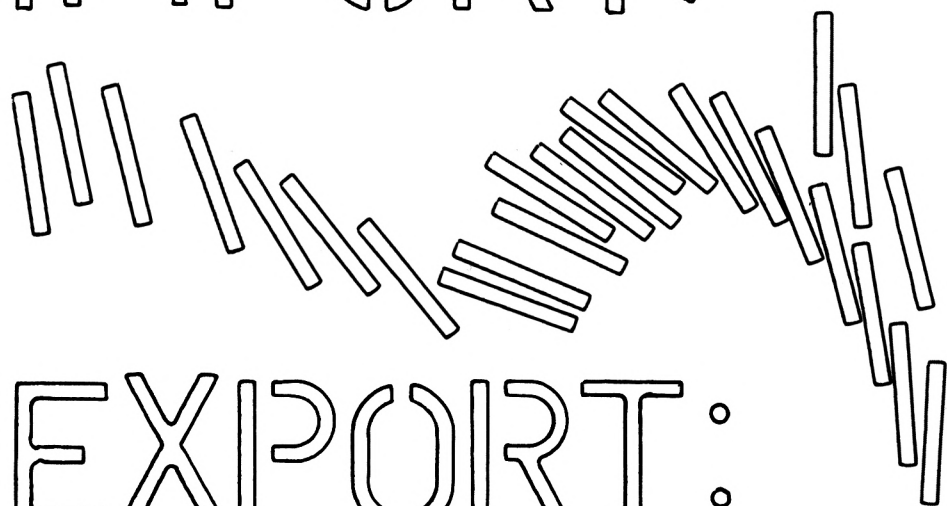


IMPORT/



EXPORT:

A GUIDE THROUGH
PERFORMANCE ART
CURATION, SPACE
AND
DOCUMENTATION



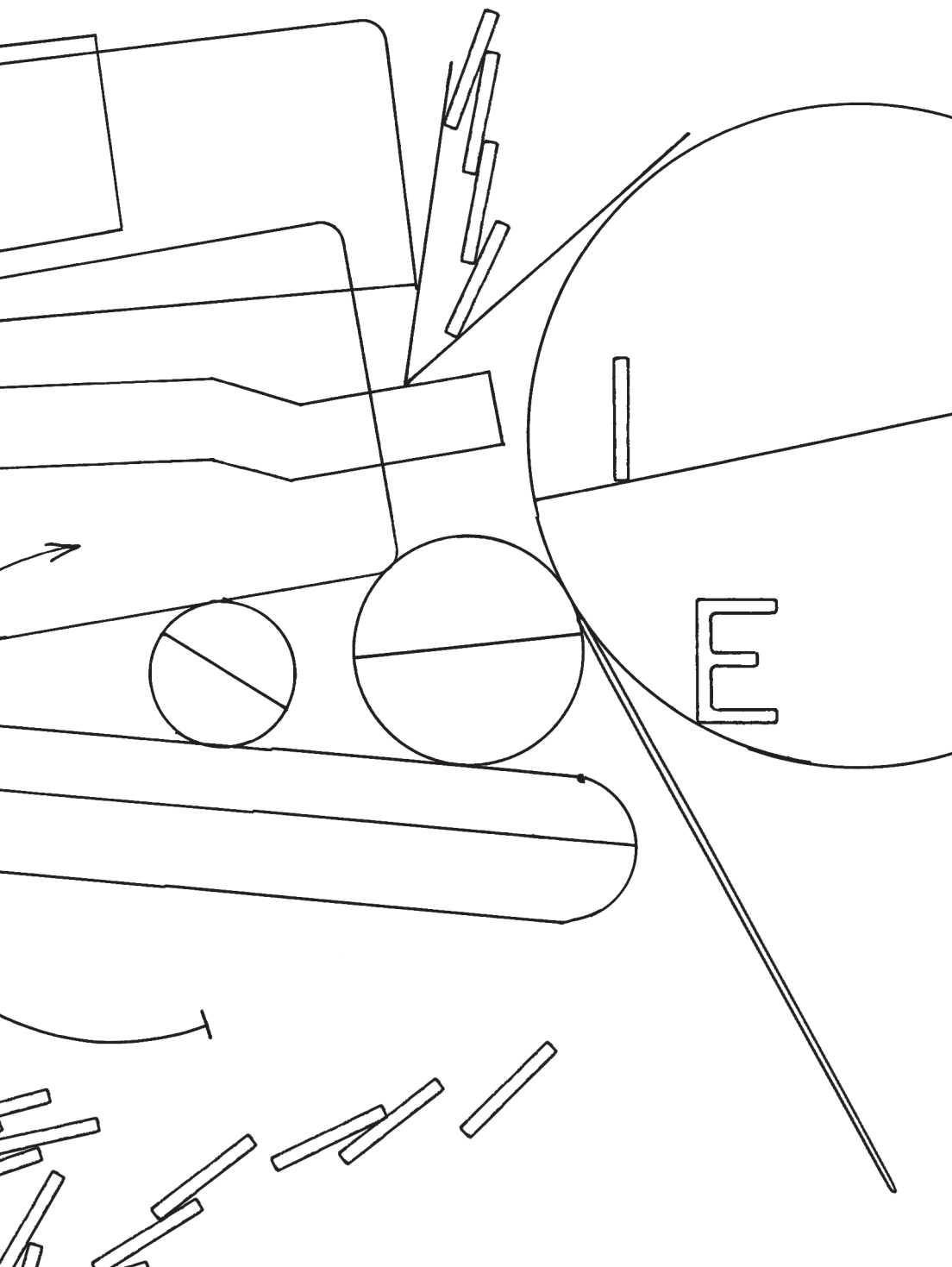


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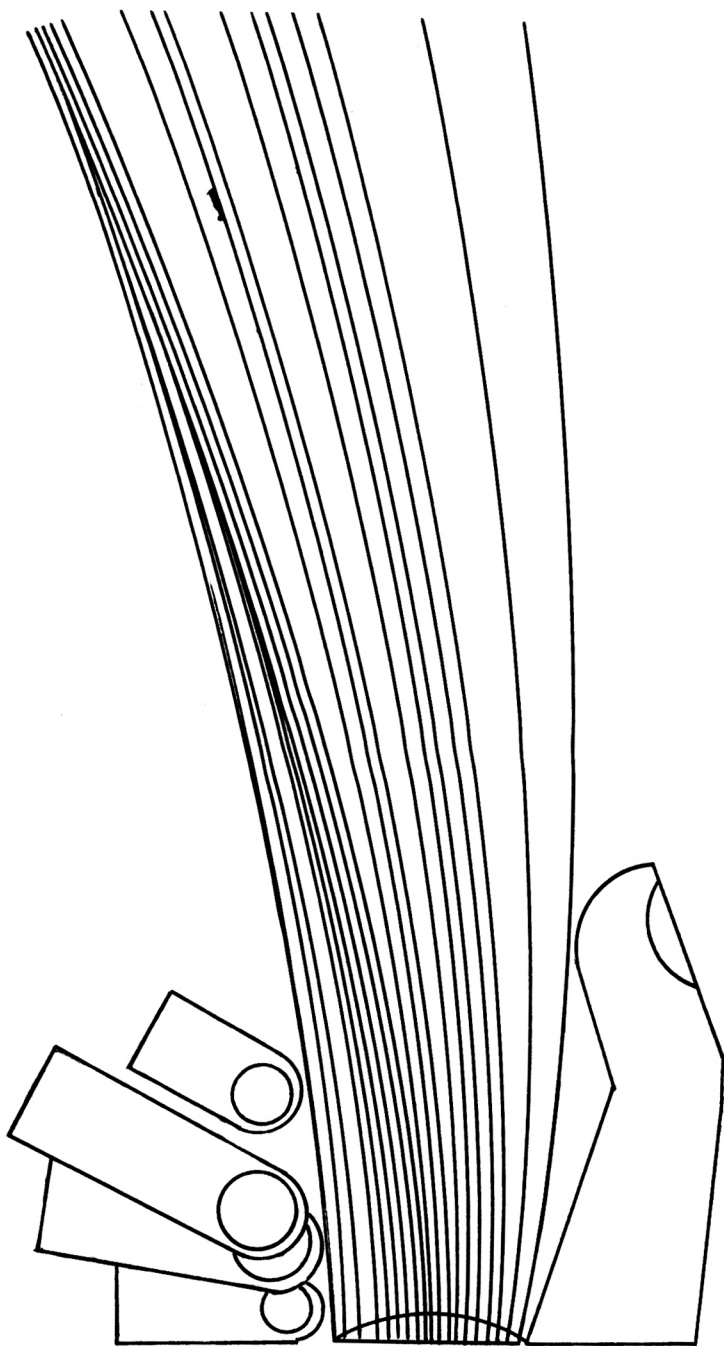
WHAT IS A PERFORMANCE ART GUIDE, AND HOW DO YOU EVEN USE IT?

The primary challenge in developing a practical guide to performance art curation, spatial practice and documentation lies in translating a practice-based project into a structured resource, while thoughtfully integrating the experiences and insights gained over the past several years. We want to avoid merely summarizing events and expecting readers to infer our lessons indirectly.

Instead, our intention is to present a guide that navigates between theory and practice, as well as the universal and the particular, treating these elements not as separate but as mutually informative. Each chapter addresses a unique set of complex issues related to contemporary performance art. *Why Do We Need Projects Like IMPORT/EXPORT? Performance Art, Community, Exchange and Education* considers the social, educational, and collaborative frameworks that shape contemporary performance art practices and communities. *Curating Performance Art* delves into the decisions, ethics, and labor involved in framing live work within both institutional and independent contexts. *Performance and Space* examines how location—its history, politics, and physical conditions—shapes and is shaped by performance. *Documentation and Performance Art*[■] confronts the tension between the live event and its remnants, exploring what is preserved, what is lost, and who gets to decide. Finally, *Looking at IMPORT/EXPORT: How to Organize a Festival of Performance Art, Critical Perspectives, and New Awareness* reflects on the project itself, considering what three cities, numerous collaborators, and several years of collective work have produced and left unresolved.

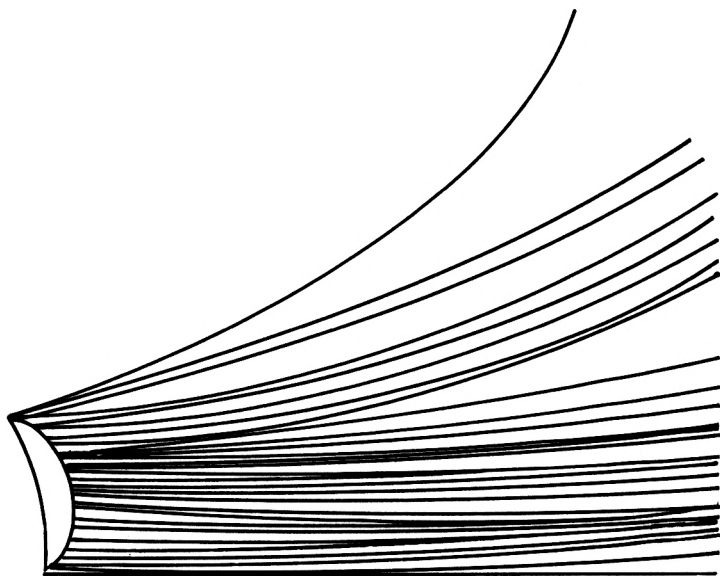


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This guide is intended for artists, curators, and cultural professionals, but equally for those who are new to performance art, seeking both a practical foothold and a theoretical framework from which to think more deeply about it. It does not assume a single reader nor a single need. You may read it cover to cover, following the arc of the argument as it builds. Or you may come to it with a specific question, about documentation, about space, about what it means to curate a body rather than an object, and navigate accordingly. The guide also includes questions, checklists, and suggestions for further reading intended to provoke thought rather than provide closure, alongside glossaries of IMPORT/EXPORT performances and additional programs, as well as key terms linked to the pages where they are discussed in greater depth. These elements are not supplementary; they function as entry points in their own right, offering ways of reading shaped more by necessity than by sequence.

In this sense, the guide mirrors the structure of IMPORT/EXPORT itself: there is no single center, no prescribed path through it. It is a tool, and like all good tools, it is most useful when it is used—picked up, worn down, and returned to.



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PROLOGUE:
IMPORT/EXPORT, A NOMADIC
PERFORMANCE ART PLATFORM (2022-2026)

Every human action carries a performative, poetic, and political dimension. In an increasingly digital and individualistic world, much of our experience remains rooted in concrete, collective physical exchange: our actions are not isolated. It is this very capacity to affect through shared presence and empathy that positions performance art as a direct, democratic form, holding a strong potential for individual and collective transformation.

Echoing Donna Haraway's refrain "it matters what stories we tell to tell other stories with"¹, the nomadic performance art platform IMPORT/EXPORT operates on the principle that *it matters what actions we take to take other actions with*. Over the past four years, we carefully designed the processes needed to build a platform for performance art that remained true to the artform, prioritizing transparency and functional communication between artists, networks and presenting spaces. Through three thoroughly studied, site-specific events[■], we aimed to create relational and professional contexts where the needs of all participants—artists, spectators and collaborators—were equally honored.

■ MORE ABOUT THIS ON PAGE 190

This initiative builds on shared ground. We, the core group and founders of the nomadic platform[■] – Maria Novella Tattanelli, Darius Bogdanowicz, Sharon Estacio, Tiina Lehtimäki, Enrico L'Abbate, and Aleksander Zain – first met while performing under the

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¹ Donna J. Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016), 12.

Marina Abramović Institute and its European retrospective, *The Cleaner*. Drawing from this intense process and work experience, we began to research a new structure, recognizing our collective strength and potential to ignite positive change. Despite different worldviews, performance art is what unites us. It is originally what brought us together—presenting our performing bodies in galleries, alternative spaces, and contemporary art institutions. And it is where we all felt the need to share our knowledge concerning artists' working conditions, where literature is scarce.

This initiative was developed through a close collaboration with three cultural organisations rooted in the home cities of members of our core group: mo-wan teatro (Livorno, Italy), led by Claudia Caldarano and Alessandro Brucioni; Flutgraben e.V. (Berlin, Germany), with Matthias Krause Hamrin; and U10 Art Collective (Belgrade, Serbia), under Sanda Kalebić. This collective effort enabled the successful support for an ambitious, four-year collaborative programme by Creative Europe, realised through a series of live, site-specific events in each city. This publication reflects the commitment of the partnership and the culmination of this process, bringing together the methodologies, practices, and insights developed throughout the programme.

IMPORT/EXPORT: A Guide through Performance Art Curation, Space and Documentation offers a unique vantage point, written and produced by five curators proposed by U10 who accompanied the entire process of IMPORT/EXPORT: Jovana Trifunjesko, Bojana Jovanović, Ana Simona Zelenović, Dunja Belić, and Maja Petrović. It bridges theory and practice acquired along these years, providing both candid reflections on organizing performance art in the 2020s and practical tools derived from our extensive and nomadic working process.

**Three years, three cities
three main venues, a multitude
of communities**

Although every event featured unique artists, venues, themes and local concerns, each of the IMPORT/EXPORT gatherings shared a core structure: all activities were free of charge, lasted one week, and were divided into two distinct programs. **IMPORT** hosted ten artists/collectives performing simultaneously over two evenings, whose works integrated diverse aspects of the venues with a particular sensitivity towards site-specificity. This format allowed spectators to move freely between long-duration and shorter pieces, witnessing moments of transformation in time and space and curating their own unique experience by coming and going as they wished. **EXPORT**, taking place during the first half of the week preceding the performances, comprised residencies, workshops, symposiums, and other contextual activities. This program helped bridge visiting artists with the local community, encouraging learning, engagement, and new partnerships within an ever-growing platform of performance artists and lovers.

Our selection process for the artists, cultural agents, and collaborators present at each of these events prioritized coherence and fairness. Rather than dispersing our energy and limited resources on massive open calls, we extended *Invitations to Apply* to our expanded network, exploring our identity through multiplicity.

Each IMPORT program united a diverse cast of topics, backgrounds and worldviews, bringing cross-cultural dialogue and reflection on contemporary socio-political issues, engaging the audience with realities including gender equality, feminism, transphobia, race and global warming. Each piece was either site-specific, site-responsive[■], or site-adaptive[■], engaging the local environment and collaborating institution to create an immersive, integrated experience. To ensure continuity while testing our ex-



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perimental platform, at every event, a part of the six founding artists presented their works in rotation.

While the IMPORT program did not revolve around a specific theme, each year the EXPORT week presented a central research focus, eventually shaping the arguments of this guide. **In Livorno (September 2023)**, produced with mo-wan teatro at the historic Fortezza Vecchia, research centered on **how to document performance art**, contemplating its forms, aspects, and definition. Various workshops and activities were distributed around the city, making the portuary city a “capital for performance art”² for the week: EXPORT events took place in venues Carico Massimo, Ondalab, Cinema Teatro 4 Mori, and Pietro Mascagni Music Institute. **In Berlin (September 2024)**, hosted by Flutgraben e.V. – a building once an integral part of the Berlin Wall, the focus shifted to **performance art’s usage of space**, addressing the ongoing gentrification of the city, the venue’s historical weight, and the production challenges of creating site work (selecting space and understanding how to activate it). While the core team curated these first two events, **the Belgrade gathering (October 2025)** marked a turning point. Operating under the umbrella of **curatorial practices of performance art**, the curation of this event was headed by the curatorial team creating this publication. With this final event, they reimagined spatial distribution – rather than a single venue, it unfolded as a tour across central Belgrade, utilizing a network of venues: the U10 Art Space, SULUJ Gallery, and the Cultural Center of Belgrade’s exhibition space in Flower Square, as well as the Goethe Institut and Artget Gallery (Cultural Center of Belgrade) for the EXPORT program.

This active collaboration and exchange between artists, audiences, curators, collaborators and venues, this careful play between practice and theory has for now culminated in what we are proud

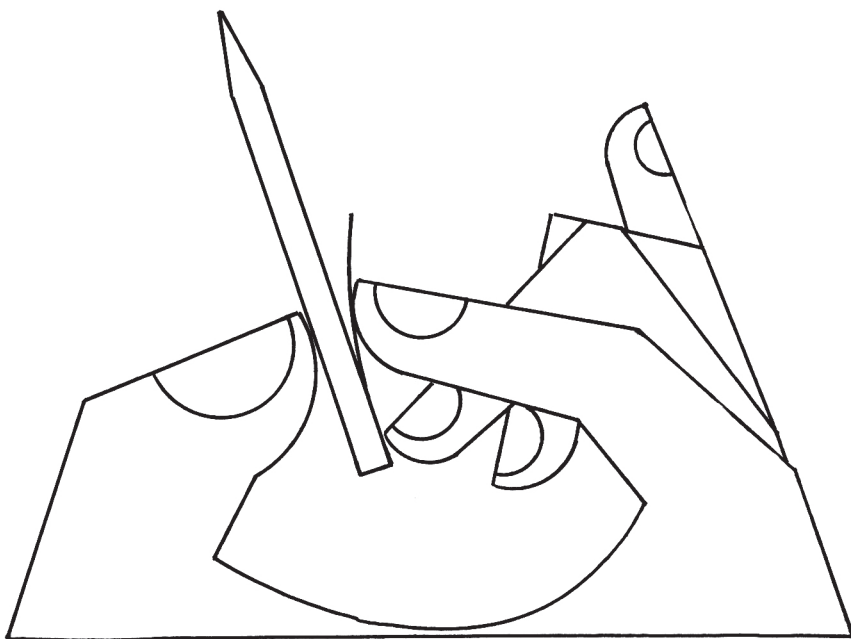
2 “Import/Export, Livorno capitale d’Europa.” *La Repubblica* (Firenze), September 18, 2023, Firenze Attualità sec., 11.

to call the IMPORT/EXPORT events. Three distinctive journeys of transnational artistic exchange brought a unique performance experience to approximately 1000 audience members and participants, as well as fair working conditions to more than 50 artists, cultural agents and professionals.

And with this taste we have for expansive collaboration, in the pages following you will find the research and results of each of the collaborating curators. We leave you, dear reader, in good hands.

Aleksander, Enrico, Tiina, Sharon, Darius and Maria Novella

the creators of IMPORT/EXPORT,
a nomadic performance art platform



WHY ID

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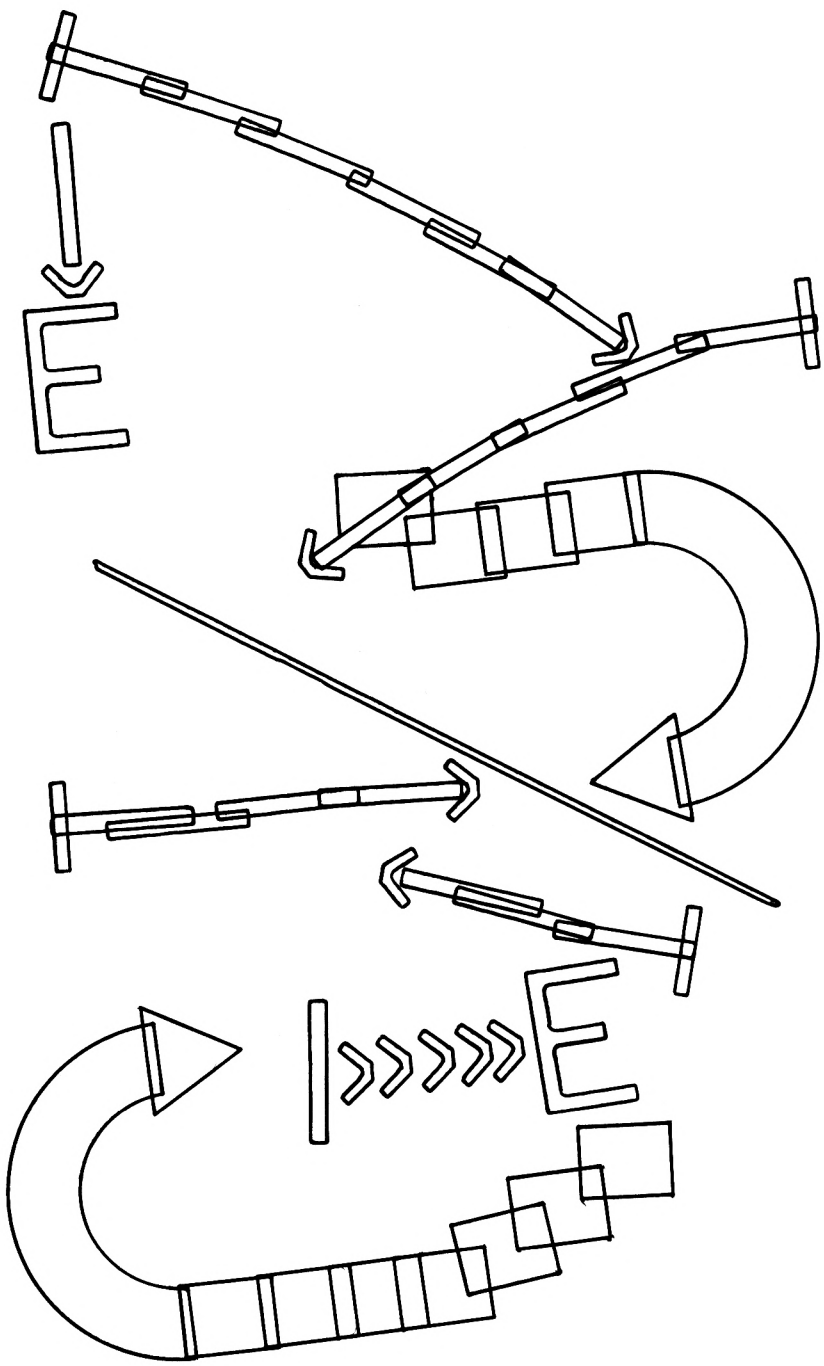
NEED
PROJECTS

LIKE

IMPORT/ EXPORT?

PERF
OR
COMM^{MA}NCE
UNITY, ART,
EXCHANGE
AND
EDUCATION

Jovana Trifuljesko



WHY DO WE NEED PROJECTS LIKE IMPORT/EXPORT? PERFORMANCE ART, COMMUNITY, EXCHANGE AND EDUCATION

JOVANA TRIFULJESKO

1. **What is IMPORT/EXPORT?**

Exploring the mechanics of the IMPORT/EXPORT project reveals a significant transformation in the art world, characterized by increased collaborative efforts, a cultural shift toward care, and important questions about the nature of artistic labor within its evolving context. The methodological approach of the IMPORT/EXPORT team was influenced by the treatment of performance artists within Europe's cultural institutions, where fundamental rights and needs of performance artists often become overshadowed by the limitations of humanity and labor in an object oriented world.

As someone who has closely worked with and observed performance artists, I have noticed that viewers frequently prioritize their own experiences as participants over the needs, well-being, and humanity of the performers. This oversight neglects the interdependence between the performer and the audience. Since embarking on this project, I have often reflected on my own participation in performances. Was I pulling out my phone too frequently, creating a barrier with the screen? Was I more focused on future interactions with the artwork rather than being fully present in the moment? Did I approach the experience with genuine care, or did I fall into the object-viewer paradigm?

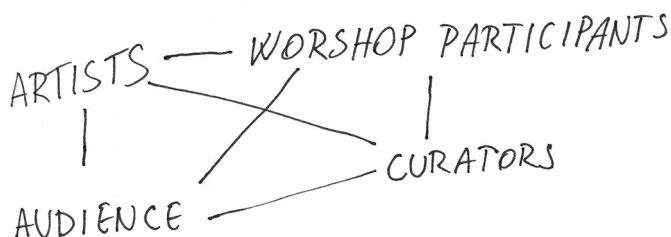
IMPORT/EXPORT emerges from a convergence of artistic and individual experiences that sparked a greater desire to research a new type of performance art platform. Developed by the core

team of artists consisting of Maria Novella Tattanelli, Tiina Lehtimäki, Enrico L'Abbate, Aleksander Zain, Sharon Estacio, and Darius Bogdanowicz, its methodological format prioritizes transparency in a functional working environment, cultivating communication between performing artists, artist networks, and spaces presenting performance art. As a transnational project, it has the potential to explore a multitude of different artistic and social structures, realities that are very much of this world, and not just dismantled in theory. Rooted in forming new communities and international partnerships, the project is oriented not necessarily toward the finalization of an artwork but toward questions of community: how can we share the stage and our knowledge in ways that benefit artists, participants, and visitors alike?

The structure of IMPORT/EXPORT highlights this approach, emphasizing that a performance isn't something that just happens, imprints on a space, and leaves documentation to be exhibited afterward. Instead, it is perceived as a constellation of events. The program consists of two parts: IMPORT, which features two nights where multiple artists showcase their work simultaneously; this setup allows the audience to experience an immersive and kaleidoscopic blend of topics, influences, and identities. The second part, EXPORT, precedes the evenings of the IMPORT program and includes artist residencies, workshops, lectures, and other contextual activities that enable artists to engage with the city and its community through their art.

As a starting point, each event was linked to a significant aspect of performance art: Livorno focused on documentation, Berlin emphasized location, and Belgrade centered on curating performance art. The EXPORT program, and, more often than not, the performances, exemplified this interconnected approach, simultaneously deconstructing and questioning these important themes while also developing a program that continuously raises new questions about performance. This guide will thoroughly explore these themes, both universally and in relation to the performances that took place in those three locations.

IMPORT/EXPORT, as a nomadic platform, is rooted in many ever-shifting communities, employing various collaborative methods that encourage connections among intertwined groups of people.



This dialogue enhances the artists' research, generating ideas for new performances to be showcased in future events, cities, and venues. It ensures that each event is interconnected, contributing to an ever-growing and evolving community. I emphasize this structure because each element relies on the other. To truly question, practice, and understand performance art today, one cannot solely depend on theory or past works, our consumption of art and artistic images has shifted significantly. Presence and care, while also considering the advantages and drawbacks of collective work, represent the most accessible and relevant approach for cultural workers today.

This structure straightforwardly questions and addresses the needs of artists, moving away from typical precarious conditions and nurturing a sense of community, a collective body at work. Through IMPORT/EXPORT, we propose an alternative approach to curating and exhibiting performance art that exists between festivals, exhibitions, and residencies—a model that integrates education, collective action, and simultaneous performances where there is no center, no single superstar artist or curator overshadowing the sustainable exchange.





THERE IS NO REALITY BESIDES CORPOREALITY
A WORKSHOP BY MARINA MARKOVIĆ
BELGRADE, 2025
PHOTO: TANJA DROBNJAK

2. The Exquisite Cadaver of the Multitude

This collaborative approach reflects broader shifts in contemporary art practices. In her work *Complications; On Collaboration, Agency and Contemporary Art*, Maria Lind observes: “Collaboration is without a doubt a central method in contemporary art today. Artist groups, circles, associations, networks, constellations, partnerships, alliances, coalitions, contexts, and teamwork—these notions have been buzzing in the air of the art world over the last two decades.”¹

This shift did not occur in a vacuum. Claire Bishop traces how the identity of participants in art has been continuously reimagined throughout the twentieth century, from crowds and masses to communities and, most recently, to volunteers whose engagement mirrors the logic of reality television and social networking. Crucially, Bishop cautions that this trajectory, while appearing to grant audiences greater agency and co-authorship, can equally be read as a story of their increasing voluntary subordination to the artist's will, and of the quiet commodification of human participation within a service economy.²

The significance of this collective turn goes beyond practical methodology; it represents a fundamental reconceptualization of group dynamics and social organization. Hardt and Negri effectively articulate this shift through their concept of “multitude.” The multitude differs from “the people” by embracing internal differences rather than reducing them to a single unity. Unlike “the masses,” it retains these differences instead of submerging them in indifference. Additionally, it contrasts with “the working class” by being an

1 Maria Lind, “Collaborations; On Collaboration, Agency and Contemporary Art,” *Public*, no. 39 (2009): 53. <https://public.journals.yorku.ca/index.php/public/article/view/30385>.

2 Claire Bishop, “Participation and Spectacle: Where Are We Now?,” in *Living as Form: Socially Engaged Art from 1991–2011*, ed. Nato Thompson (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2012), 39.

inclusive concept that encompasses all diverse figures of social production in today's evolving global economy, where creating a "common" through communication and cooperation is essential. It consists of a set of singularities, each social subject maintaining its unique identity.³

The turn toward collective practices in contemporary art signifies more than a tactical choice; it is a philosophical shift that challenges traditional notions of authorship and artistic production. Unlike outdated views of collectives as homogenous, unified bodies, contemporary collective creativity navigates "a complex terrain... where projects of concrete social transformations merge with ideas of radical individuation."⁴ This reevaluation of collective action becomes especially urgent when we reflect on our shared histories of institutionalization. As Liz Allan and Yolande van der Heide point out in the Introduction of *Unlearning Exercises – Art Organizations as Sites for Unlearning*, "Who has not been institutionalized or organized at some point? Who, as a result, has not internalized the divide between reproduction and production, and the devaluation of reproductive labor[■] for economic gain?"⁵ These collaborative practices bring opportunities to engage in the process of unlearning inherited hierarchies, creating spaces to address pressing issues such as those brought forward by IM-PORT/EXPORT: unpaid participation in performances, authorship questions, gentrification, and the basic comfort of performing an art piece. By focusing on the exchange, we encourage a deeper dialogue about these concerns.

■ MORE ABOUT THIS ON PAGE 189

3 Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 2005), XIII–XV.

4 What, How & for Whom (WHW), "New Outlines of the Possible," in *Collective Creativity / Kollektive Kreativität*, ed. Birgit Eusterschulte (Frankfurt am Main: Revolver – Archiv für aktuelle Kunst, 2005), 14.

5 Liz Allan and Yolande van der Heide, "Introduction," in *Unlearning Exercises: Art Organizations as Sites for Unlearning*, ed. Annette Krauss, Binna Choi, and Yolande van der Heide (Utrecht: Casco Art Institute, 2018), 9.





THE BUILDING HAS A SHAPE OF THE RIVER
TANJA OSTOJIC
BERLIN, 2024
PHOTO: CLAUDIA CALDARANO

How do we connect collective practices to performance art, defining them as mutually important and beneficial? To begin addressing this, we must consider the concept of the “autopoietic feedback loop”⁶, as described in Erika Fischer-Lichte’s *The Transformative Power of Performance*. Performance resists definitive understanding due to its reliance on a dynamic feedback loop involving all participants. Self-generation requires everyone’s participation, yet no single participant can plan, control, or produce it alone. Thus, it becomes challenging to distinguish between producers and recipients; instead, the performance generates spectators and actors. Through their actions and behaviors, both actors and spectators contribute to the feedback loop, which in turn produces the performance itself. In this way, actions create the performance, highlighting transformation as a key aesthetic element that aims to involve all participants, encouraging a reciprocal relationship of influence. The feedback loop thus positions transformation as a fundamental aspect of the aesthetics of the performative.⁶

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This understanding of performance as a relational and unstable exchange resonates with Bishop’s argument that the most compelling participatory art does not seek to collapse the distinctions between artist and spectator, individual and collective, or art and life, but rather holds these polarities in productive tension. Drawing on both Félix Guattari’s concept of transversality and Jacques Rancière’s notion of the mediating spectacle, Bishop suggests that art’s power lies precisely in its refusal to fully reconcile with the social, instead maintaining a continuous friction between the two. It is within this friction that transformation becomes possible.⁷

Following the same structure, IMPORT/EXPORT complicates the equation by adding the prerequisite of exchanging collective knowledge before the performance. For example, during the Berlin event,

6 Erika Fischer-Lichte, *The Transformative Power of Performance: A New Aesthetics*, trans. Saskya Iris Jain (London and New York: Routledge, 2008), 50–51.

7 Bishop, “Participation and Spectacle,” 40.

this exchange focused on the location, exploring its history, discussing gender, gentrification, and deconstructing various phenomena that the performances would encapsulate in the following nights. Attending the workshops was not mandatory, but the interaction among **artists – workshop leaders – spectators – participants** offered the potential to create a community.

This community-building approach stands in productive tension with the institutional trajectory of performance art over recent decades. Despite initial activist roots, performance art has become a ubiquitous and enduring element of the visual arts, fueled by a cultural demand for spectacle and its reproduction. Its subsequent archiving and historicization have transformed it into a more object-oriented and visual form, now integral to artists' methods and museum holdings, thereby shaping the communication of knowledge within exhibition spaces.⁸

To ensure the productive tension between live and mediated performance persists – preventing both the loss of collective memory and the formation of a narrow, exclusionary history of performance art—a hybrid media and discursive approach is crucial. This framework would enable all participants to explore how each medium influences the analysis and creative redefinition of the other. In this sense, the exhibition space itself becomes a site where episodic encounters and deeper semantic meaning-making converge, forming the conditions for a living cultural memory, one that is collectively authored and never fully fixed.⁹

→

DOCUMENTING AND NARRATING PERFORMANCE
A WORKSHOP BY FEDERICA COSESCHI
LIVORNO, 2023
PHOTO: LAURA SGHERRI

8 Barbara Clausen, "On Curating Performance Art and Its Histories," in *Performing the Sentence: Research and Teaching in Performative Fine Arts*, ed. Carola Dertnig and Felicitas Thun-Hohenstein (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2014), 113.

9 Ibid., 119.





3. Why Do You Care?

In *The Care Manifesto* by The Care Collective, the authors assert the urgent need for a politics that prioritizes care. They define care not only as the hands-on work of attending to the physical and emotional needs of others—though this aspect is undeniably critical—but also as a social capacity and activity that nurtures everything necessary for the welfare and flourishing of life. To place care at the forefront means recognizing and embracing our interdependencies.¹⁰ ■

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This need for connection is exemplified in various projects such as IMPORT/EXPORT, where an intricate web of care is formed. The curatorial team collaborates closely with the core team and partner coordinators in each city to communicate effectively with artists and program participants, leveraging our interdependencies as strengths. Reflecting on the often-overlooked aspects of affective labor ■ essential to the arts, particularly performance art, I am reminded of the “green room space” created for artists before and after performances. This space provided a safe environment for sharing meals, anticipation and fears, as well as for finding solitude. It nurtured a sense of belonging, without the need for lengthy explanations of basic human needs which are frequently required in institutional settings. Instead, this space emerged organically, shaped by individuals who intuitively understood one another’s needs.

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Additionally, events like Afterhours, where the entire team gathered with participants and the audience after workshops, facilitated the exchange of personal interpretations and impressions, further enriching our collective experience.

Ultimately, these practices embody the vision of caring institutions, ones that do not simply accommodate human needs as an after-

10 The Care Collective, *The Care Manifesto: The Politics of Compassion* (London: Verso Books, 2020), 5.

thought but actively organize around them. The green room, shared meals, and informal exchanges of Afterhours are not peripheral to the work; they are essential to making the performance possible. They illustrate that when care is woven into the fabric of collaborative practice, interdependency transforms from a perceived vulnerability into a powerful source of collective strength.

IMPORT/EXPORT: A Guide through Performance Art Curation, Space and Documentation is the result of interconnected labor developed over the past few years of project activity. It encapsulates our shared experiences and poses the question of how we can use these experiences to weave an even larger tapestry, connect with more people, and serve as a helpful tool for questioning and addressing both theory and practice.



QUEER MATERIALISM
A WORKSHOP BY OLYMPIA BUKKAKIS
BERLIN, 2024
PHOTO: ALFONSO MORAL



SCHELETRO DELLA VITA
RASCAL BLACK
LIVORNO, 2023
PHOTO: LAURA SGHERRI

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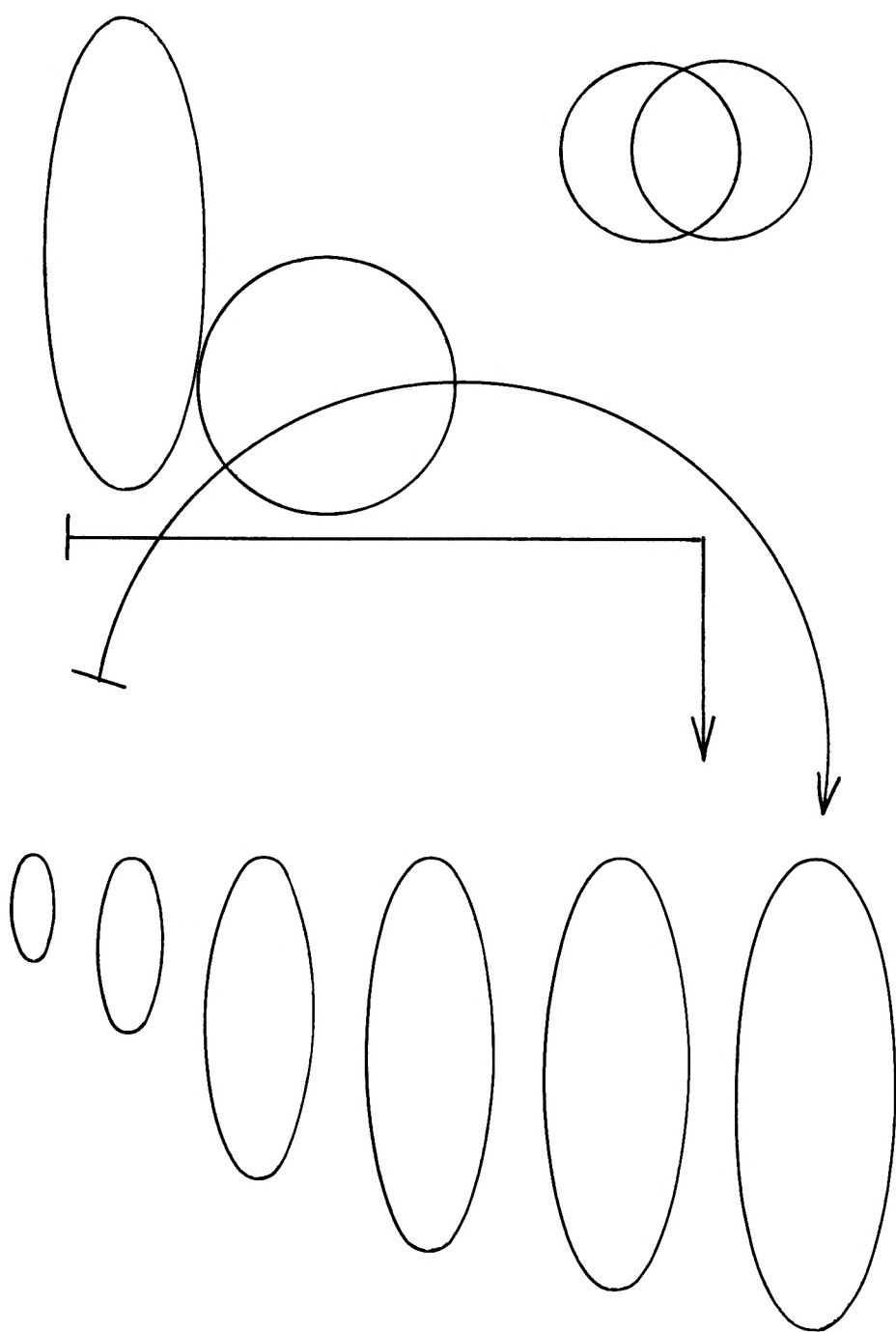
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ART

Ana Simona Zelenović



CURATING PERFORMANCE ART
ANA SIMONA ZELENović

1.
So You Want to Curate
Performance Art?
Good Luck

Curating performance art is a relatively young practice, whose evolution is directly conditioned by the development of performance art itself. To understand our current challenges and the complexities of performance art curation, we must look at how the relationship between artist, curator, and institution has shifted over the last six decades. This history mirrors the broader transformation of curatorial practices: from the spatial criticism of the 1960s, through the institutional negotiation of the 1970s and the dramaturgical exhibition-making of the 1980s, to the ascendancy of the curatorial gesture in the 1990s and, finally, today's process-oriented practices that question the very essence of curation.

Today, the curator's role takes many different forms. It sometimes looks back nostalgically to the 1960s; other times, it adheres to an institutionalized, capitalized performance curator vocation and, often, it embraces the erasure of boundaries between art and curation. To understand what we achieved in the IMPORT/EXPORT project, we must look at this rich heritage that continuously inspires us to move forward.

1960's

THE ARTIST AS CURATOR, THE CURATOR AS ARTIST.

Blurring boundaries
between Art and Life



MAIN CONCEPTS

Process > Products



KEY EVENTS

"Play of Happenings" (1963)

Ken Dewey, Charles Lewsen, Mark Boyle

Edinburgh Festival

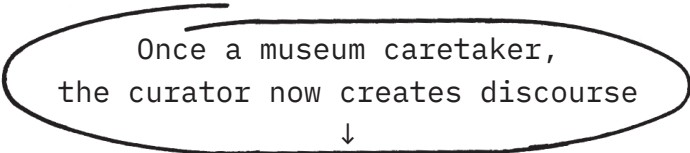
"When Attitude Becomes Form" (1969)

Harald Szeemann

Kunsthal Bern

1970's - 80's

FROM CURATOR-AS-AUTEUR TO THE STAR CURATOR



Once a museum caretaker,
the curator now creates discourse



MAIN CONCEPTS

The "Great Exhibition"
(Großausstellung)

Curating as Art Practice



KEY EVENTS

"Documenta 5" (1972)

"Documenta 7" (1982)

Harald Szeemann

"Venice Biennale" (1980)

Giovanni Caradente

1990's

CURATOR=FACILITATOR (OF OPEN-ENDED) SITUATIONS

From exhibiting works,
to structuring relationships



MAIN CONCEPTS

Neo - criticality

Relational aesthetics

Open - ended situations



KEY EVENTS

"Traffic" (1996)

Nicolas Bourriaud

CAPC



"Out of Actions" (1998)

Paul Schimmel

MOCA



2000's TO TODAY

INSTITUTIONALIZATION AND CURATOR AS "DRAMATURG OF THE REAL"

Institutional integration
at a cost



MAIN CONCEPTS

Critical vs. Corporate
Re-performance[■] and archiving
"Live art"



KEY EVENTS

Marina Abramović's "The Artist is Present" (2010)

PROGRAMS

Tate Live

MOMA's performance program

MoMA



2. A Brief History of Curators Becoming Main Characters

2.1 The Revolutionary '60s: The Decade Everyone Became a Curator

The beginnings of curating performance date from the '60s alongside the neo-avant-garde rise of live art[■], body art, and happenings across Europe, the USA, and Japan. Initially, the first seeds of curation grew among the artists themselves, as a response to the need to contextualize these new forms. Artists began planning the space, audience, and concept of their own work, effectively blurring the line between creator and curator. Similar tendencies emerged among art critics, directed toward institutional critique and the art world as a reflection of broader social conditions. The curation of performance ended up, just as performance art did, as a form of institutionalization in both art history discourses and the market.

■ MORE ABOUT THIS ON PAGE 187

This lineage of the artist as curator traces back to early avant-garde movements—from Russian Constructivism's *total environments* to Italian Futurists' *serate* and Dada's *Cabaret Voltaire*—which destabilized the division between art and life. These figures did not merely perform; they actively staged, framed, and contextualized their work, anticipating the model of the artist-curator responsible for the conceptual, spatial, and temporal logic of the event. By blending manifesto readings, chaos, and audience provocation into unified acts, these early practices established a legacy where creation and curation were one and the same: heritage still echoed in contemporary performance work.

A pivotal moment occurred at the 1963 Edinburgh Festival during *The Theatre of the Future*, a gathering of writers, critics, and theater directors convened to discuss the future of the medium. In-

stead of giving a scheduled talk about happenings, artist Ken Dewey presented his *Play of Happenings*, effectively turning the conference itself into a happening. With flickering projections, discordant sounds and shouted instructions, the piece hijacked the symposium, dissolving the boundary between the intellectual speakers and the audience.¹ As a direct response to the formal setting, this functioned as sharp institutional critique. Here, the artist stepped into the curatorial role not just to present a work, but to structure the very context of its reception. This prefigured the curator's modern role as a mediator who structures how the public interacts with live art, shifting the focus from mere presentation to the active construction of meaning.

A significant milestone in the development of the curatorial role came in 1969 with Harald Szeemann's exhibition *Live In Your Head: When Attitudes Become Form*, which marked a shift in the understanding of exhibition-making.² It brought together emerging Post-minimalist and Arte Povera practices, not as a survey of objects but as a constellation of gestures, processes, and attitudes. Szeemann's approach created the exhibition as a discursive space—one that could hold contradictions and tensions in meaning.

This show demonstrated the general character of exhibitions as live performances. As theorist Beatrice von Bismarck noted, this approach highlighted the “dynamic field” of curating, defined by “process” and the challenge of “how to actually not allow things to harden.”³ Here, the permanent proximity to failure and chance

1 Edinburgh model Anna Keseler was wheeled out in the nude; a sheep's skeleton was hung from the ceiling; men stood from windows seventy feet above; a piper played; tape-recorded voices of the audience's own skepticism were heard; and when American actress Carroll Baker jumped from the platform to pass over the audience to the exit, people stood up, craned, and shouted.

2 The scandal over *When Attitudes Become Form* coincided with Szeemann's decision to leave the Kunsthalle Bern where he had been a director since 1961, and with his resignation, at least officially free of all institutional affiliations, he worked from that day on as a freelance curator.

3 Beatrice von Bismarck, “Exhibiting Performances,” in *Cultures of the Curatorial*, ed. Beatrice von Bismarck et al. (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2012), 23–24.

were not seen as flaws, but as the core of the medium. Consequently, the processual nature of exhibitions became a favoured characteristic in curatorial practice, normalizing unpredictability and proximity of effects, allowing curators to embrace experimentation and performativity within the curatorial process.

2.2

The 70's and 80's: From Curator-as-Auteur to the Star Curator

Historically rooted in the visual arts, the curator emerged as a caretaker of institutional collections. However, driven by the radical shifts of the 1960s, this role transformed in the 70s. No longer merely preserving objects, curators began to interpret, contextualize, and stage meaning within shifting socio-political terrains. These developments contributed to the emergence of the independent curator. As artists dematerialized the art object, exhibitions moved away from historical and taxonomic structures to be organized instead by concepts and ideas. Curating became *discourse*, with the curator as its key subject and producer. Pioneers like Harald Szeemann, Lucy Lippard, and Seth Siegelaub actively shaped curatorial practice as an instituting endeavor. They redefined curatorial power, shifting it away from institutional boundaries to shape and direct discourse in alternative spaces.

This transformation is what Jonathan Watkins terms the Curator-as-Auteur⁴. It is exemplified by Harald Szeemann's concept of "the modern-day Großausstellung" (great exhibition), in which artworks are tied to a central concept and are assembled into new and often surprising interrelationships⁴. Drawing on Oscar Wilde's idea that critics transform objects through writing, Watkins

■ MORE ABOUT THIS ON PAGE 185

4 Bertie Ferdman, "From Content to Context: The Emergence of the Performance Curator," in *Curating Live Arts: Critical Perspectives, Essays, and Conversations on Theory and Practice*, ed. Dena Davida, Marc Pronovost, Véronique Hudon, and Jane Gabriels (New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2018), 18.

argued that curating itself had become a form of artistic practice.⁵ Paul O'Neill marks 1987⁶ as the pivotal year this shift was conceived: moving from vocational institutional work to an independent, critically engaged, and experimental practice.⁷ Bertie Ferdman sees a parallel in performing arts, describing it as a shift from the *logistics of programming* to a *concept for programming*.⁸

As group exhibitions and biennials expanded during the late 1980s, the independent curator became an art celebrity, whose role began "to be understood as a constellation of creative activities, akin to artistic praxis".⁹ Biennials acted as interfaces between art and larger publics—simultaneously local and global, resident and nomadic, non-specialist and art-worldly. This spread placed new visibility and responsibility on the curator, turning mega-exhibitions into vehicles for the production of knowledge and intellectual debate.¹⁰ Curating has since operated on an increasingly international, transnational, and multinational scale, where the local and the global remain in constant dialogue.

Curators became mediators of artistic sensations and producers of experience¹¹, a shift that raised critical questions about curating

5 Jonathan Watkins, "The Curator as Auteur," *Art Monthly*, no. 111 (1987): 27.

6 O'Neill highlights the role of Hal Foster and the Whitney programs like Whitney Museum's Curatorial Program and Critical Studies Program in 1987, headed by Foster, in the development of alternative curatorial forms and challenges to the established conventions.

7 Paul O'Neill, *The Culture of Curating and the Curating of Culture(s)* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2012), 2.

8 Bertie Ferdman, "From Content to Context: The Emergence of the Performance Curator," in *Curating Live Arts: Critical Perspectives, Essays, and Conversations on Theory and Practice*, ed. Dena Davida, Marc Pronovost, Véronique Hudon, and Jane Gabriels (New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2018), 15–27.

9 Paul O'Neill, *The Culture of Curating and the Curating of Culture(s)* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2012), 1.

10 Elena Filipovic, "Debates on Contemporary Art Exhibitions and Biennials," in *The Manifesta Decade: Debates on Contemporary Art Exhibitions and Biennials in Post-Wall Europe*, ed. Barbara Vanderlinden and Elena Filipovic (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006), 66.

11 Eckersall, Peter, and Bertie Ferdman, eds. *Curating Dramaturgies: How Dramaturgy and Curating Are Intersecting in the Contemporary Arts*. London and New York: Routledge, 2021

in alternative spaces, and redefined the relationship with the audience and the production of knowledge. Benjamin Buchloh captured the ambiguity of this role, observing that the curator functions as an agent: one who offers exposure and prominence “in exchange for obtaining a moment of actual practice that is about to be transformed into myth/superstructure”.¹²

2.3 The 90's: Neo-criticality and Relational Aesthetics

The ascendancy of the curatorial gesture in the 1990s established curating as a nexus for discussion, critique, and debate, partially replacing the role traditionally occupied by criticism. During this period, curators and artists engaged with this neo-criticality by extending the parameters of the exhibition form to incorporate more discursive, conversational, and geo-political discussion within the ambit of the exhibition.

From the 1990s onward, performance curation entered a phase of intensified reflexivity, articulated through site-specificity, identity politics, and institutional critique. Landmark exhibitions defined this shift: Paul Schimmel's *Out of Actions: Between Performance and the Object, 1949–1979* (MoCA, 1998) traced the residue of performance across media, questioning how to curate performance through its remains. Nicolas Bourriaud's *Traffic* (1996) mapped the rise of relational aesthetics, diffusing the performative into social relations and participatory formats that blurred the line between viewer and co-producer. Bourriaud's dialogic process invited artists whose practices were already performative, creating a format that did not prescribe outcomes. The exhibition became a platform for temporal, informal, and affective relations to unfold. The curator becomes less a director and more a facilitator of open-ended dramaturgy.

¹² Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, “Figures of Authority, Ciphers of Critique,” in *October* 51 (Spring 1989): 3–34.

These strategies shared a heightened awareness of performance as a method, site, and form of critique. Increasingly, artistic directors, programmers, and artists focused not only on what gets seen, but conceptualizing how, where, when, why, and for whom such events are structured and presented.¹³

2.4

From the 00's to today: Welcome to the Museum, Performance Art!

The 2000s mark a crucial shift in performance art curation, as performance becomes fully integrated into museum and biennial programming. Curatorial practice moves from occasional live events toward systematic institutional frameworks for presenting, archiving, and reperforming performance. Museums and major art institutions begin to develop dedicated performance programs. Curators such as Hans Ulrich Obrist and Klaus Biesenbach helped develop exhibition formats where performance was embedded into the structure of institutions themselves — no longer treated as marginal or temporary, but as a central curatorial medium. This visibility came with a cost: following the 2008 economic crisis, a corporate turn reshaped institutional priorities, with budgets increasingly dictating programs and audiences reframed as consumers. Many institutions today navigate uneasily between critical and corporate strategies.

The concept of New Institutionalism[■], developed by curator Jonas Ekeberg in the early 2000s, marked a decisive shift in how art institutions understood themselves. The institutional critique that had defined the practice of artists such as Andrea Fraser, Fred Wilson, and Hans Haacke across the preceding decades — a critique di-

■ MORE ABOUT THIS ON PAGE 187

13 Bertie Ferdman, "From Content to Context: The Emergence of the Performance Curator," in *Curating Live Arts: Critical Perspectives, Essays, and Conversations on Theory and Practice*, ed. Dena Davida, Marc Pronovost, Véronique Hudon, and Jane Gabriels (New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2018), 17.

rected at institutions — was now increasingly internalized by institutions themselves. Rather than a site of display, the institution became a space for production, critical debate, and research.

As performance entered institutional exhibition programs, curators developed broader curatorial frameworks that combined performances with talks, workshops, artist residencies, publications, and other discursive activities. Exhibition programs expanded to emphasize participation and exchange, resulting in a proliferation of formats and activities.¹⁴ Performance became a key medium for encouraging dialogue and experimentation, leading curators to design programs that emphasized temporality, audience interaction, and interdisciplinary collaboration.

At the same time, institutionalization also shaped the kinds of performances that were curated. Because museums and galleries operate within specific logistical, financial, and audience-oriented structures, curators often favored works that could be repeated, extended over the duration of exhibitions, integrated into larger institutional programs, or performed by different performers. This shift reflects how curators had to negotiate between maintaining the experimental and critical nature of performance art while adapting it to the expectations of institutions—attracting audiences, justifying funding, and fitting performances into exhibition formats. Consequently, the institutionalization of performance art in the 2000s not only expanded its visibility but also transformed curatorial practice by encouraging more programmatic, context-driven approaches to presenting live art.

The 2000s also saw the emergence of platforms bringing together performance, dance, theatre, sound, and social practice, often described as *live art*. Curating performance increasingly involves interdisciplinary collaboration, long-duration programming, participatory formats and audience interaction. The visual arts are becoming

14 Rie Hovmann Rasmussen, "Are You Not Entertained? Curating Performance within the Institution," in *Curating Live Arts: Critical Perspectives, Essays, and Conversations on Theory and Practice*, edited by Dena Davida, Marc Pronovost, Véronique Hudon, and Jane Gabriels (New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2018), 349.

an expanded media that include a more developed dramaturgical awareness of performance. As performing artists increasingly employ site-based practices, challenge modes of spectatorship, and create live encounters that blur the boundaries between what is real and what is staged, we have seen a shift in what we could call the dramaturgy of liveness and a “dramaturgy of the real”¹⁵.

As art curator Kathy Halbreich articulates: “the curator is also becoming analogous to a dramaturg, unpacking the context and the meaning, helping the cast move forward with that understanding, enriching the sense of the performance. The dramaturg also keeps track of the history of the play, of its innards, which I think is similar to what a curator does”.¹⁶ With the advent of the performative turn in museums and galleries, as well as the interest in visuality in contemporary performing arts practices, there is now considerable crossover between curating and dramaturgy, to an extent that boundaries between them become almost unrecognizable.

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AMERKÁNA
SHARON ESTACIO
BELGRADE, 2025
PHOTO: TANJA DROBNJAK

15 Carol Martin, *Theatre of the Real* (London and New York: Routledge, 2012)

16 Bertie Ferdman and Peter Eckersall, *Curating Dramaturgies: How Dramaturgy and Curating Are Intersecting in the Contemporary Arts* (London and New York: Routledge, 2021), 5.

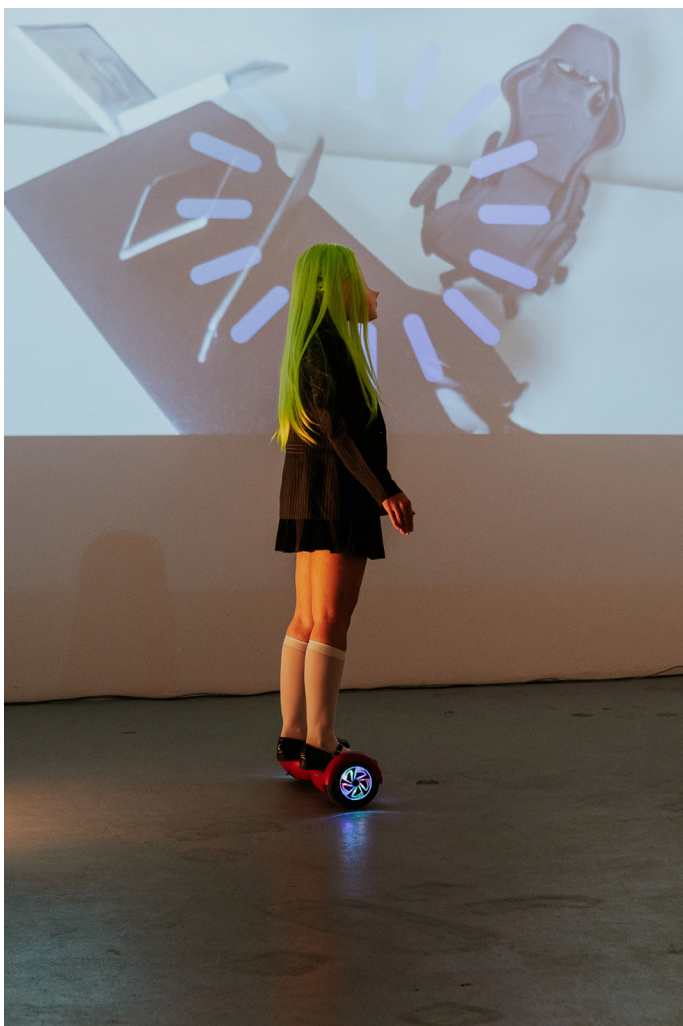
LIST OF WORDS OR FLAGGED AGENCIES

abortion accessibility A
affirmative action, affirmative action program
agrivoltaics air pollution all-inclusive allyship
autism aviation fuel barrier(s) belong bias
biogas biologically female biologically male biopoc
breastfeed+ resort Cancer moonshot carbon emissions miti
changing climate ChestFeed+ person ChestFeed+ people clear
climate consoling climate crisis climate model(s) climate re

WORDS BANNED BY FEDERAL IN THE U.S.A.

accessible - activism activists advocacy advocate(s)
ms affirming care, affordable home affordable housing agricultural water
p alternative energy anti-racism antiracist asexual assigned at birth at risk
biased Biased toward biases Biases towards bioenergy biofuel
biomethane bisexual Black Black and Latinx breastfeed+people
gation carbon footprint carbon markets carbon pricing carbon sequestration CEC
n energy clean fuel, clean power clean water climate change climate climate accountability
resilience climate risk climate science





4EVER CONNECTED
ANASTASIA PAVIĆ
BELGRADE, 2025
PHOTO: TANJA DROBNJAK



AUTONOMOUS AGENT
ALMA GAČANIN
BELGRADE, 2025
PHOTO: TANJA DROBNJAK

3. What Actually Happens When You Curate Performance Art Together?

**Almost all conclusions in this chapter are drawn from the author's experience participating in the curation of events in Belgrade. As this event was more explicitly focused on performance curation and involved a more elaborated curatorial process compared to those in Livorno and Berlin, this chapter primarily concentrates on the results and experiences derived from the Belgrade event.*

The general history of curation of performance and the role of the curator in performance are important for understanding the complexity of the role of an independent curatorial collective, as well as for understanding what it means to curate a three-year-long performance art project. Having both history and our experience in mind, I would like to share insights and conclusions on how to curate performance art.

The curatorial idea behind the IMPORT/EXPORT project was to connect different performance art practices from three different cultural contexts, with the aim to create all performance exhibitions that navigated between the form of a performance festival and a multi-dimensional art event that combines art talks, workshops and lectures with public and gallery performances.

1. Curator as caretaker, producer, auteur, dramaturge, mediator—all at once

- ↳ The role of curator has changed throughout history, but in our collective work it depended and shifted mostly in accordance with division of labour and responsibilities. The curator(ial team) has to be prepared for everything, even if someone else takes over part of their role.

- ↳ Curators should take care of the executional part of their idea, they should be able to observe and control the process and the result. Here, they are acting in capacities of producers. The mediating role persists and is one of the most challenging roles curators have—to keep in mind different personal perspectives, needs and expectations of collaborators, artists and audience. Successful execution of the performance requires adequate resources and infrastructure, including technical equipment, rehearsal space, funding, and staff support. That is why during IMPORT/EXPORT it was essential for curators and coordinators to be well connected with local institutions, galleries, informal spaces and technical staff working on set up for the show. Choosing experienced collaborators outside of the team and choosing partners for the project as well as spaces required experience and research among curators. Our roles therefore expanded from concept creators to organizers, producers and executives.
- ↳ The curatorial team needs to take into account the interrelatedness of everything: concept, context, discourse, individual differences, personal styles of work, budget, technical equipment, capacities of artists and audience, time, people's capacity for patience and endurance, adequacy and possibilities of space, interpersonal relationships in the team, documentation, previous artist experience, possible negative outcomes, alternative plans.

2. The curatorial process is not linear

- ↳ Curation in this project meant not only the selection of artists and their already existing artworks into a coherent whole, but also the participation in the process of creation of new performances. From the first artist proposals of performance work to the final phase of execution of the work, curators were directly involved in the decision making and creative processes. This set the groundwork for teamwork that lasted three years, a trustful environment that eroded the wall between creators and curators, artists and their critics.

- ↳ Curation of performance art starts with the conceptual phase but also returns to it in the end. We learned from the history of curation to accept and even embrace chaotic parts of the process, they are necessary preconditions for creativity and successful collective work. It differs from classical curation in the need for a more open approach and need for more readiness to accept unpredictabilities. Since there are many factors that do not depend on the curator—for example, if the performance is happening in a public place or with an invitation for the audience to participate, the curator must remain open to change in the perception of the artwork, depending on events happening *in situ*. The concept can gain a whole new dimension depending on circumstances. Also, during the early stages of the Belgrade event, it happened more than once that the artist had shifted their vision from the proposed idea. Their curators needed to engage critically and calmly in this shifting—trusting the artist and the process, but at the same time maintaining the event theme. This is exactly where a curator must stay sharp in critical thought, creative enough to understand an artist's vision and determined enough to arrive at a mutual vision.

3. The curatorial process is negotiation and requires flexibility

- ↳ The curators for IMPORT/EXPORT were chosen among two collectives—the core team that curated events in Livorno and Berlin, and the curatorial team that curated events in Belgrade. We collaborated without hierarchical order among us. Principles of non-hierarchy that applied to every aspect of the project embodied the value system of two collectives, making this project a socially responsible one in terms of conditions of work and power relations. The curatorial process was a negotiating one, open for mutual criticism and new ideas, taking into account every opinion expressed during meetings, often lasting hours, in which everyone needed a lot of patience and understanding for not necessarily similar opinions. Instead of a hyper-individualistic and neoliberal capi-

talist approach where the curator is almost like a celebrity or star of the show, IMPORT/EXPORT enforces collaborative, open, transparent, negotiation-oriented and non-hierarchical-ly structured team work, thus putting the ideals of a more democratic approach into practice.

- ↳ Choosing different topics for different events (documentation in Livorno, space in Berlin and curation in Belgrade) that connected all participants in a coherent performance week event, working with more than 50 participants, and with two teams collaborating over the course of three years demanded a great amount of curatorial flexibility. Even though every curator had their own preferences regarding the field of research and work and ideological lenses, the nature of concept conditioned each of us to think outside individual methods of work and experiences to create encompassing topics as a thread that intertwined all artworks. The social dimension of performances played a key role in conceptualizing major focuses of events. This aspect served as a tie in connecting different contexts and approaches, indicating that performance is always personal and political at the same time.
- ↳ It was also crucial for us as curators to remain flexible, ready to adjust schedules, spatial arrangements, or production methods as the project developed, since performance is a process-based and unpredictable art practice. Considering that curators hired on the project never or at least rarely have only one job, sensitivity to individual differences and personal understanding was mandatory for good coordination of the project. Unpredictability together with high responsibility created a stressful environment, which needed to be handled by lots of mutual respect, patience and solidarity.

4. The selection process as a double-edged sword

- ↳ The selection process was guided by the main idea of correspondence between the various artistic practices and was a true challenge to curatorial work. Curators had to have in mind the specific local contexts in which artworks emerged, specificities of artistic spaces available for the project, but also the differences in socio-political contexts of cities and countries where the performances would take place. The greatest challenge was to conceptualize a coherent whole that functions across all these contextual differences, taking into account also the difference in audiences and artistic scenes. What made the selection and conceptual part so hard for us as curators was the amount of effort it took to encompass similarities and differences at once, and to recognize and connect tendencies in a comprehensive three-part project. Having one year in between every event in a different country influenced this process of curation. For example, the event in Belgrade was defined and changed in accordance with a huge shift in social circumstances, since it seemed ignorant and irresponsible to curate a performance week without considering a year long social resistance movement led by students across the whole country. Socially responsible curation meant, in this case, adjusting the whole agenda—spaces, artworks, collaborators, topics—to an idea that could fit into newly created circumstances. This placed the emphasis on performance art as an act of rebellion in both the selection of artworks and educational programmes that followed performances. Those choices echoed the curatorial principles during the '90s and early '00s that relied heavily on social criticism and principles of solidarity and art as rebellion.
- ↳ The Invitation-to-Apply model was used for all the events because, were we to have extended a global open call, we would not have had the possibility to dedicate ourselves properly and thoroughly to the process of selection, since it would have meant reviewing and commenting many more applica-

tions than we were capable of handling. On the other hand, the risk of this model is the possible lack of transparency that creates not only distrust, but a sense of futility in many artists, as it creates the appearance that only a very few artists are supported, often repeatedly, while others are repeatedly turned down, or are never in contention to begin with.

- ↳ What we gained with this model is certainty in production, communication and execution, since, for the Belgrade event, the curators suggested artists they had already worked with. Also, in general, we gained possibilities for greater coherency in creating concepts of all three events because its curators were included from the very start in the process of conceptualization and production of artworks.

5. Performance curation is a methodologically hybrid practice

- ↳ The curatorial concept of IMPORT/EXPORT takes inspiration from a diverse curatorial heritage: collaborative/collective, discursive[■] and research-based curating, with elements of participatory curating. Collaborative curating[■] is visible in already mentioned methods and structures, based on collective decision-making and interdisciplinary collaboration, implying that curation of performance is itself a form of political and social practice. It is a research-based project, emerging from three years of group research, rather than a single curatorial idea. Events included lectures about the history of performance, artist talks, guest speakers, workshops with artists that were guest participants, all ending with debates, which makes curation a discursive practice, a platform for dialogue and critical reflection. Meaning is produced both in the process of curation and afterwards when the process engages with its audience.

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6. Communication and transparency - keys to collaborative work

- ↳ This method of curation also meant confrontation with the artist, direct communication and criticism, as well as openness for suggestion and change. The lack of distance between artists and curators created conditions that demystified the artistic process, showing the amount of effort it takes for performers to materialize their artistic idea. It also allowed lack of defensiveness among the artists when given suggestions, and gave curators a sense of involvement in the creation process. This meant relying on heritage rooted in the collaborativeness of curatorial practices of early neo-avantgarde in Yugoslavia, and Watkins's concept of curator-as-auteur.
- ↳ The most important precondition for collaborative curation is excellent communication. It is essential in collaborative curation of performance art because performance is a time-based, processual, and often collective practice that depends on coordination between multiple participants. Unlike object-based exhibitions, performance involves artists, curators, technicians, institutions, and audiences working together in real time. Clear communication helps ensure that artistic intentions, logistical needs, and collaborative relationships are aligned. In collaborative curation, communication allows curators and artists to negotiate the conceptual framework of the project. Performance works are often highly dependent on context, duration, and spatial conditions, so dialogue between collaborators helps in clarifying expectations and avoiding misunderstandings about how the work should be curated and presented.
- ↳ The goal of IMPORT/EXPORT is to create a more sustainable and transparent platform for performance art that prioritizes open communication through cultural and intellectual exchange between performing artists, curators, networks and spaces. For curators, this meant that the whole process needed to be transparent and documented, which enforced

a more responsible approach towards the obligations, functions, and results, as well as towards the curatorial choices themselves. During the three year period, the project included approximately 50 participants, a curatorial team of 5 art historians, partner coordinators in each city, and the 6 artists who co-created the project. Experiencing working with numerous performers in many different venues across three cities pushed the curatorial team to expand upon the usual way of thinking when it comes to curating performance. Concept dictated the rhythm of work and imposed structure, prioritizing organizational skills and communication over the individual curatorial preferences.

- ↳ The importance of communication in curating performance art also arises from the fact that performances frequently require careful coordination of schedules, rehearsals, technical equipment, and spatial arrangements. Effective communication between participants ensures that the production process runs smoothly and that the conditions necessary for the work are respected. The collaborative nature of IMPORT/EXPORT challenges traditional hierarchies, allowing artists and curators to contribute equally to shaping the exhibition or performance program. Communication is also crucial in the relationship between the curatorial team and the audience. Performance art often relies on participation, dialogue, or audience interaction, making clear contextualization, mediation, and public programming important elements of the curatorial process.

7. Trust as a key element in curating performance

- ↳ Trust is the key precondition for curating performance art, especially when it comes to collective work and performances that exhibit the body of the performer. Because performance frequently involves the presence of the artist's (at times, nude) body and direct interaction with audiences, trust between collaborators becomes the cornerstone of the process.

Performance often involves experimentation and vulnerability, so performers must feel supported and respected within the curatorial process.

- ↳ More often than not, performing artists experience states of anxiety, unrest, panic days or right before performance. In these situations, it is important for a curator to maintain the trust performers give you as their curator and kindly give them support and reassurance in those crucial moments. Sometimes simple eye contact with the performer, a smile or a nod while standing from the audience can mean a lot.
- ↳ Transparent and soft communication skills help establish ethical working conditions and mutual respect and trust between participants. Aside from communication, trust is also gained through constant validation of shared values when it comes to work and wider social ethics.

3.2

Checklist(s)

Building on the understanding of curating as a reflective and context-responsive practice, the following checklist outlines key considerations in defining performance, navigating institutional frameworks, and structuring collaboration:

a) The definition of performance itself

Selecting and conceptualizing the artworks meant rethinking the very definition of the medium. Many performance proposals were on the edge of what was traditionally conceptualized as performance art, and were more close to dance or theatrical practices. This is where the concept of “live art” can be introduced to the scene. We chose the term performance art, but in fact the curatorial team was open to expanding the definition of performance to what is called live art in art theo-

ry and criticism. The idea behind this choice is to question the traditional performance art definition, to explore theoretically what the essence of transcultural definition is today, including boundaries between different artistic media, all in order to propose a new, open and evolving hypothesis of all that performance art could be.

- How is performance defined within the curatorial framework?
- Does the project adhere to traditional definitions of performance art?
- How are boundaries between media (performance, dance, theatre) negotiated?
- What is the theoretical intention behind expanding or questioning these definitions?
- Can the curatorial approach propose a new, open, and evolving hypothesis of performance?

b) Navigating between critical and commercial

Previous experiences with The Marina Abramović Institute encouraged the IMPORT/EXPORT core group to prioritize transparency and to avoid marketing-oriented practices. One way can be to focus more on concept and less on the idea of an artist as a celebrity figure, placing more emphasis on concept relevance rather than performance as an event or spectacle. Also, it is important to maintain a healthy balance between collaboration with institutions and independent curation. Staying independent brings critical liberty and authen-

tic curatorial insights, while collaboration with different state or private institutions, or NGOs, brings resources on a higher level in light of finance and expertise.

- What is the balance between critical inquiry and institutional or market pressures?
- Is the focus placed on:
 - ↪ artistic concepts and discourse, or
 - ↪ spectacle, visibility, and artist branding?
- How does the project negotiate:
 - ↪ independent curatorial autonomy, and
 - ↪ collaboration with institutions?
- What are the benefits and risks of each position?
- Does the project resist market-driven logic (e.g. celebrity, spectacle)?

c) Diffusion of responsibility

Although non-hierarchical collaboration encourages shared authorship and teamwork, it is important to define who is responsible for which specific tasks (conceptual development, production, technical coordination, documentation, etc.). Since the curatorial role is often one with diffused boundaries and definitions, it must be clearly and contextually defined. Clear

roles help avoid confusion during the production process, especially in projects like IMPORT/EXPORT, which took place in three different countries involving more than 50 participants. Set roles in advance, checking regularly to see if there is a need for some changes in accordance with capacities.

- How are roles and responsibilities distributed within the team?
- Who is responsible for:
 - ↪ Conceptual development
 - ↪ Production
 - ↪ Execution
 - ↪ Technical coordination
 - ↪ Documentation
 - ↪ Communication
 - ↪ Finances
- Are these roles clearly defined in advance?
- Is there awareness of the diffused nature of curatorial authorship?
- How is collaboration structured across participants and institutions?

- Are there mechanisms for:
 - ↳ regular check-ins
 - ↳ re-evaluation of roles and capacities
- How does the project handle large-scale or transnational coordination?
- Does the structure support both collective input and functional clarity?
- Are the curatorial and production processes transparent?

What to avoid – a checklist

- ↳ Diffused responsibility
- ↳ Ambiguous concepts
- ↳ Unclear communication
- ↳ Ego issues and stubbornness
- ↳ Doing things without consulting others
- ↳ Rigidity in concept and form
- ↳ Tension in communication and negotiation

- ↳ Meetings that last more than 1.5h
- ↳ Unnecessarily burdening performers with details or problems if they are solved easily

What to practice—a checklist

- ↳ Friendly tone in communication
- ↳ Curiosity for ideas of others
- ↳ Practice radical empathy and trust
- ↳ Flexibility regarding concept and form
- ↳ Patience in chaos and in conflict
- ↳ Having alternative plans
- ↳ Double-check everything
- ↳ Spatial awareness
- ↳ Time awareness
- ↳ Documentation awareness
- ↳ Keep an eye on capacities of others and yourself (to avoid burnout and anger)
- ↳ Check technical equipment and tech support multiple times

- ↳ Check on the emotional and mental state of performers multiple times (days before, right before and after performance)
- ↳ Be available to those in need (within your capacities)
- ↳ Clear labour and responsibility division
- ↳ Clear and systematic follow-ups on process
- ↳ Make good distribution of resources and needs
- ↳ Contextual constraints

4. So What Did We Learn?

As we have seen, throughout history, the concept of curation of performance was continuously changing as performance itself changed in form and institutional position and social function. Mostly, it is seen in the constant change of the curator's role, as well as in the position performance art had regarding institutionalization. While the '60s brought the "artist-as-curator" concept, the '70s and '80s popularized the "curator-as-auteur" concept, both crossing the strict lines of defining the separate roles of artist and curator. Institutionalization of performance art and development of the global art market during the late '90s and '00s influenced the role of performance art curator, moving it more towards neoliberal ideas of art producer or agent. Today, curation of performance art can be understood as a form of dramaturgy, where the role of a curator expands to that of "dramaturge".

Several key differences in curating performance in comparison to curating visual arts can be noted, taking into account the experience we had as a curatorial team of IMPORT/EXPORT.

- ↳ First of all, there is *time and space specificity*. Unlike artwork as a physical object or static projection of artwork, performance art materializes in a moment. It is time-based, and thus it is the role of a curator (and producer) to be aware of this ephemerality in order to provide proper conditions for the event, to produce the proper documentation, and to communicate time specificity to the audience.
- ↳ Curators must consider *how to document the work* (video, photography, text, oral history) while respecting the artist's intent.
- ↳ Also, the curator should think about *how audiences would engage* over time—would it be through video documentation, would it be through repeated performances, guided tours, lectures and artist talks, catalogs and photo documentation.
- ↳ There is also specificity regarding the *approach towards the audience*. The curator should always be aware of what and how the performance involves participation so it can be navigated regarding the ethical and practical concerns taking into account accessibility, consent, engagement levels, and safety measures. The practical issues of preparation for performance are often neglected and are mostly fragmentarily disseminated among many people with different experiences.
- ↳ The whole process of producing and curating a performance piece has to be highly collaborative and extremely well-communicated. More often than not, *communication*, especially about the responsibilities and resources among curators, performers, producers, and institutions is the main issue.
- ↳ The curator is often partly a producer and an executive. There are many things to be considered when it comes to the organizational part: rehearsals, logistics, conditions, requisites, scenography, the sound system, the lights, photography, space specificities, individual capacities of participants, and last but not least, responsibilities.

As for the role of curator, I would love to refer to the origin of the concept: the Latin word *curare* (to take care). Instead of collections and objects, curators of performance art have to take care of human beings, which means handling different types of fragility. Function can change—artist, critic, dramaturge, producer—but the core transformation in the role of curator when it comes to performance art is that they are essentially a “caretaker”. E. Ricci cites Braidotti, showing that care can be examined by looking at a definition from the field of ethics:

“Care entails qualities of attentiveness, responsibility, competence and responsiveness that can help construct better citizens, as well as making better moral agents. Care allows for neither neutrality nor distance and calls for self-reflection and constant reappraisals of one’s condition. In my language, care is a situated and accountable practice. Care is the key to social accountability and responsible citizenship.”¹⁷

This is what curation of performance art teaches us throughout history and in this collaborative project: that a curator needs to be responsible and accountable, to practice social values that we present in our theories and curatorial texts, to stay self-reflective and self-critical, open, communicative and curious, solidary, and above everything, patient.

→

FALLEN BIRD
RILABEN
LIVORNO, 2023
PHOTO: LAURA SGHERRI

17 Elisa Ricci, “Curating Live Arts,” in *Curating Live Arts: Critical Perspectives, Essays, and Conversations on Theory and Practice*, ed. Dena Davida et al. (New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2018), 41.





JAETTU/SHARED
TIINA LEHTIMÄKI
BERLIN, 2024
PHOTO: ALFONSO MORAL



HEAVEN SPOT
FLORENCE LAM
LIVORNO, 2023
PHOTO: LAURA SGHERRI





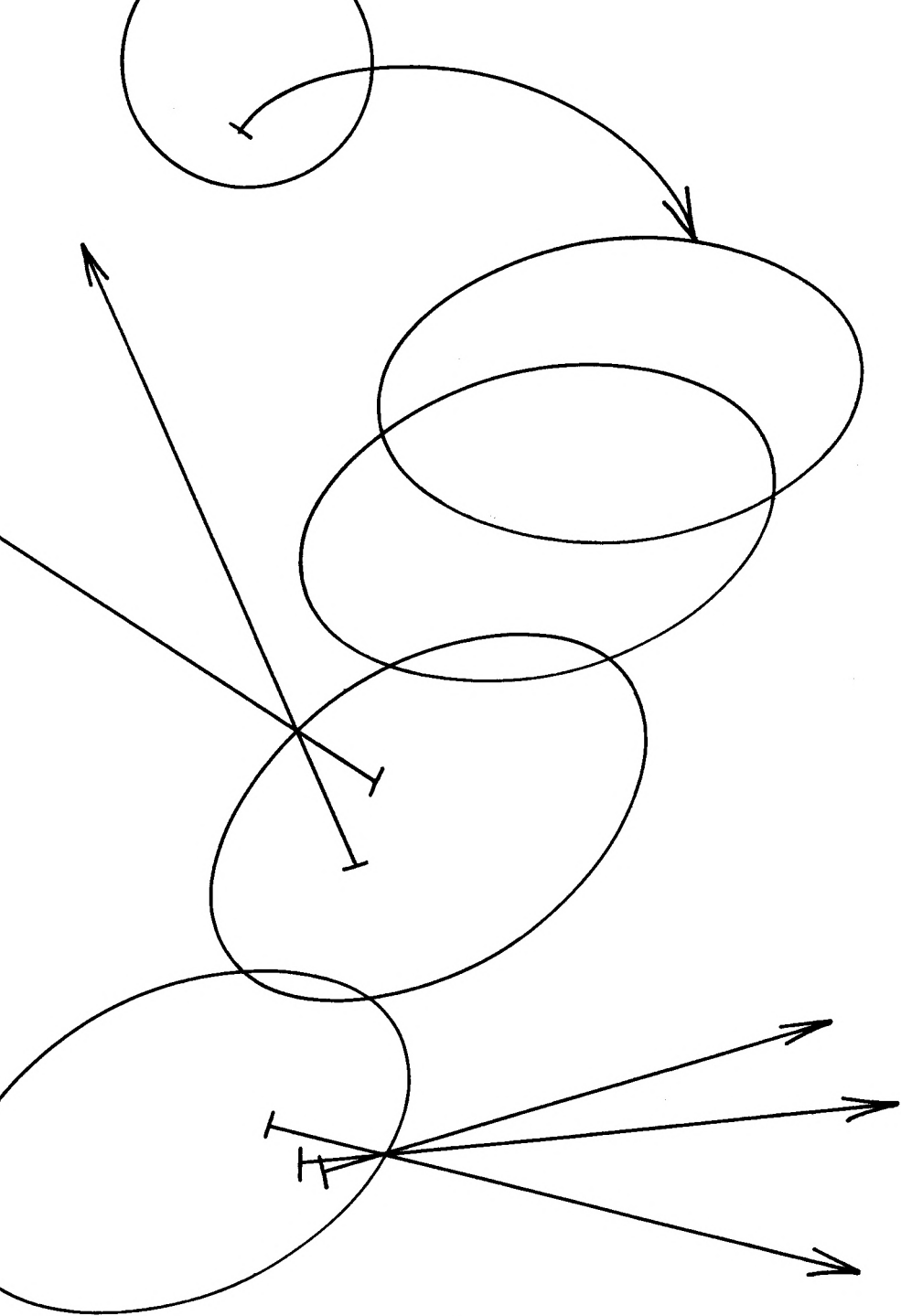
WOUNDED RHYMES
CHOLLADA PHINITDUANG AND THOMAS ROHE
BERLIN, 2024
PHOTO: ALFONSO MORAL

PER
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P A C E

Bojana Jovanović



PERFORMANCE AND SPACE
BOJANA JOVANOVIĆ

1.
**What I Talk About When
I Talk About Space**

Space is the one thing performance can never avoid. Even when it tries.

Space is one of those words that feels abstract until we start paying attention to it. We move through it constantly, inhabit it, shape it with our bodies, yet rarely stop to ask what it actually does. In performance art especially, space is never just a background. It is something we carry with us, something that shapes how we move, speak, listen, and perceive others. Sometimes it is architectural and concrete: a room, a street, a staircase. Sometimes it is social or emotional, created through proximity, tension, or shared attention. Art, in many ways, emerges as a response to these conditions: what we encounter around us and what those encounters produce within us. When artists speak about space, they are therefore rarely speaking only about location or about physical characteristics such as walls, floors, or coordinates, but also to the social, historical, and symbolic layers that space carries. They are speaking about experience, perception, and the invisible structures that organize how bodies coexist.

Nick Kaye, in his work *Site-Specific Art: Performance, Place and Documentation*, emphasizes that space is a contextual foundation

and a shaper of meaning.¹ Space becomes a crucial medium for shaping artistic messages and expression. Kaye notes that space is not passive; it is an active agent that can shape both the perception of a performance and its meaning.

Within site-specific art, the physical presence of bodies and objects in space does not exhaust the scope of artistic intervention. Space bears traces of previous uses, social connotations, and invisible rules of behavior. The distinction between a neutral and specific space is a false dichotomy; every space is specific once it functions in the realm of meaning. For this reason, artistic practice must be aware of the architecture and also of the semiotic and political potential of the place.

Kaye defines site-specificity as something that articulates and defines itself through properties, qualities or meanings produced in specific relationships between an “object” or “event” and a position it occupies. This definition is useful because it shifts the discussion from physical space to relational space[■]. A performance does not simply happen somewhere. It becomes what it is because of where it is. Kaye also complicates the idea of “place” by drawing on Michel de Certeau’s “Space is a practiced place.” This short formulation is crucial. A street becomes space only when it is walked. A gallery becomes space only when it is inhabited. A digital interface becomes space only when it is activated.

■
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In the three-year trajectory of the project IMPORT/EXPORT, space proved to be neither stable nor singular. Over time, different spatial logics emerged: institutional frameworks, temporary urban occupations, workshop environments, digital dissemination, and performative documentation. What began as a site-responsive initiative gradually expanded beyond classical site-specific definitions.

1 Nick Kaye, *Site-Specific Art: Performance, Place and Documentation* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000).

At certain moments, the work functioned within the parameters Kaye outlines: responding to architectural, historical, and social contexts. At other moments, it exceeded them. Delegated performances[■] redistributed agency, allowing others to inhabit the performative frame. In these cases, space was not just a location but a transferred condition. The body itself became a site. Duration, repetition, endurance, and relational proximity transformed corporeality into a spatial event. If space is produced through practice, then the body is its most immediate medium.

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2. The Symbolism of Space in Performance

2.1 How Space Can Carry Inherent Meaning

Space never comes empty. It is always already inscribed through laws, history, and collective memory. A performance that takes place in a church, a school, a hospital, or an abandoned factory cannot escape the symbolic codes these places carry. A church suggests ritual, a disused factory evokes decay, a digital interface points toward disembodiment. In that sense, space can be approached almost like a text: something that can be read, interpreted, and re-read through different actions.²

If a site becomes readable, then it is also unstable. A space does not carry one meaning, but layered, sometimes conflicting histories. Nick Kaye reminds us that site-specific work emerges through the relationship between an event and the position it occupies. A site is not a neutral ground but a set of material, institutional and discursive coordinates that produce meaning. The artist does not simply enter space; the work is articulated through it.

2 Ibid., 1–3.





AMERKÁNA
SHARON ESTACIO
BELGRADE, 2025
PHOTO: TANJA DROBNJAK

This becomes visible when comparing different spatial contexts in which performances at IMPORT/EXPORT unfolded.

Livorno's old fortress, Fortezza Vecchia, operates differently. A historical military structure turned cultural venue, it embodies stratified memory: defense, authority, architecture of power, later cultural re-activation. To perform within such a space is to enter into dialogue with monumentality and historical sedimentation. A gesture inside such a structure inevitably resonates differently than in a contemporary gallery.

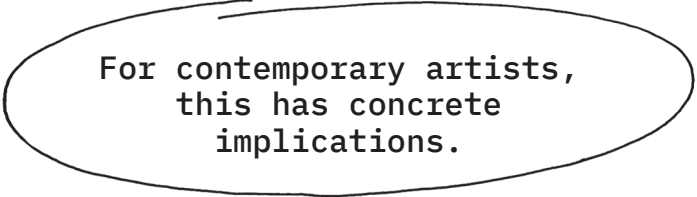
Berlin's independent art centre Flutgraben e.V., located in a former industrial complex, carries the symbolic weight of post-industrial transformation. Its rough architecture, history of alternative artistic production, and relative autonomy from commercial structures generate a context in which performance often resonates with experimentation, collectivity and resistance. The space itself performs a certain narrative of independence and cultural negotiation.

In Belgrade, the situation shifts again. U10 Art Space and SULUJ Gallery offer institutional interiors that carry their own histories of emerging contemporary practice, negotiation with funding structures, and fragile sustainability. Meanwhile, the public space Flower Square, where an annex of the Cultural Centre of Belgrade is located, introduces another layer: exposure, unpredictability, and civic circulation. Public space is porous. It introduces contingency[■], interruption, and non-consensual spectatorship. What becomes particularly significant in the Belgrade context is the instability of space itself. There were uncertainties, changes, and practical limitations regarding originally imagined locations. Ideas conceived for one spatial configuration had to be rethought, adapted, or condensed.

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Kaye insists that site-specific practice cannot assume full control over its environment; the site resists total authorship. In this sense, the adjustments required in Belgrade were not deviations from site-specific logic, but an intensified form of it. The perfor-

mance did not merely respond to space, it was forced to reconfigure itself through space. The shift of venue altered scale, proximity, visibility and duration.



For contemporary artists,
this has concrete
implications.

First, space is not a fixed parameter but a collaborator that may change unexpectedly. Flexibility is not a compromise; it is part of the methodology. The ability to adapt an idea without dissolving its conceptual core becomes a practical skill. Second, instability does not invalidate a work. When an originally imagined spatial context is replaced, the work is tested against reality. Some elements fall away, others intensify. What remains is often structurally stronger because it has been negotiated rather than imposed. Third, documentation becomes even more relevant in such conditions. When space shifts, documentation records not only the event but the negotiation. It registers the difference between intention and realization.

Heathfield writes that performance imprints itself in spaces and objects as much as in bodies.³ This imprint is reciprocal. Spaces shape performance, but performance also leaves traces that subtly reconfigure how the space will be remembered. Flutgraben e.V., Fortezza Vecchia, U10, SULUJ and Flower Square, each becomes part of the work's distributed site. They enter its ontology. For artists working today, especially in contexts marked by infrastructural uncertainty, this means that space should be approached neither romantically nor defensively. It is not an ideal container waiting to be found, nor an obstacle to overcome. It is a condition to negotiate.

3 Adrian Heathfield, "Then Again," in *Perform, Repeat, Record: Live Art in History*, ed. Amelia Jones and Adrian Heathfield (Bristol: Intellect, 2012), 28–29.

Sometimes the originally imagined space will disappear. Sometimes the permit will not arrive. Sometimes the technical setup will be reduced. In these moments, site-specificity becomes real rather than theoretical. The work either collapses, or it transforms. In practice, this means thinking spatially from the beginning, not only aesthetically, but also institutionally and politically. Who owns the space? Who authorizes it? Who can interrupt it? Who can document it? Space never comes empty. And neither does performance.

2.2

What Do Spaces Want?

Before we start asking what artists do with space, it might be worth reversing the question for a moment. Anyone who has worked with performance long enough knows that spaces rarely behave like neutral containers. Some rooms encourage silence. Some provoke confrontation. Some simply refuse to cooperate. A street does not behave like a gallery, a fortress does not behave like a studio, and a former industrial building almost always carries ghosts of its previous lives. Artists like to believe they enter a space with a concept, but very often the space answers back. And sometimes, quite stubbornly.

This question, in addition to being a direct reference to the book *What Do Pictures Want?* by W. J. T. Mitchell, also carries clear political and performative implications. In the book, Mitchell asks us to consider images not as passive objects, but as entities that seem to demand, desire, and act upon viewers in specific cultural and ideological contexts. Similarly, spaces regulate behavior: public space suggests a collective body, private space nurtures introspection or exclusion, while institutional space imposes authority. Virtual spaces introduce dislocation and fragmentation, offering the illusion of hybrid presence. A performance that enters these spaces inevitably becomes a meta-commentary on their functions and norms. Spatial dramaturgy[■] depends on the history of the place, its memory, and its erasures. Abandoned industrial structures, ruined former institutions, or spaces of violence car-

■ MORE ABOUT THIS ON PAGE 189



GOLD DIGGERS
 DANAÏ GALEOU AND DARIUS BOGDANOWICZ
 LIVORNO, 2023
 PHOTO: LAURA SGHERRI

ry emotional and political weight that performance cannot ignore. This co-authorship becomes especially visible when we look at the specific contexts of Livorno, Berlin and Belgrade.

In Berlin's independent art centre Flutgraben e.V., space carries the residue of industrial labor, post-wall transformation, and a long-standing alternative art ecology. The building itself, partly embedded in the Spree River and located directly on the former Berlin Wall, operates as a threshold between histories. In Tanja Ostojić's *The Building has a Shape of the River*¹, the artist does not simply perform inside Flutgraben, she physically enters the river, pulls bricks from it, and maps the façade with her body. The architecture

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becomes material. The river becomes dramaturgy. The site's layered memory of division and reconstruction is not illustrative but constitutive of the work. The performance could not mean the same elsewhere because its gestures are calibrated to that specific historical and spatial tension.

Similarly, Sharon Estacio's *ordine*[■] at Flutgraben e.V. mobilizes the building's liminality between East and West Berlin. By cleaning windows with her hair and inscribing words that are legible only from certain distances, she activates the building as a membrane between visibility and invisibility, personal heritage and collective history. The labor of cleaning is not neutral; in that space, it resonates with migration, service work, and transnational identity. The architecture frames the act, but the act also reframes the architecture.

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In Livorno's Fortezza Vecchia, the symbolic weight shifts. Aleksander Zain's *ACTA DISTANTIAE 2.18*[■] makes this spatial shift particularly clear. In Livorno, the project followed the artist's physical walk from Venice to Livorno, culminating within the fortress context. Space was measured through duration and bodily endurance; the architecture intensified the contrast between movement and enclosure. The walk tested literal and metaphorical distance, questioning how experience is witnessed and narrated.

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In Belgrade, however, the same work appeared as a video installation. The journey was no longer unfolding but remembered. The audience lay down in a darkened room, listening to the artist's inner monologue while watching the recorded walk. Here, space shifted from landscape to interior, from trajectory to contemplation. The distance between Venice and Livorno was translated into acoustic and psychological proximity.

What this demonstrates is not a simple transition from live to mediated form, but a re-siting[■] of the work. In Livorno, space was crossed. In Belgrade, space was inhabited. The performance did not remain the same; it recalibrated. Belgrade introduces another

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er configuration of space and tension. In front of the Pavilion on Flower Square, Dariusz Bogdanowicz's *White Sheet (Street Poetry on Passive Body)* unfolds in open public circulation. Here, space "wants" unpredictability. It wants interruption. The artist's still body, offered as a writable surface, enters a civic flow that cannot be fully controlled. Words such as "revolution of our time" or "happiness" are not only inscriptions on skin; they are inscriptions within a charged public sphere.

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Inside U10 Art Space, works such as *Dear Lucy* or *Autonomous Agent* by Rilaben and Tina Salvadori Paz encounter another spatial logic: institutional intimacy. The contained gallery environment concentrates attention, but it also frames the body within the conventions of exhibition. Archival letters, projected fossils, autobiographical monologues — these elements resonate differently because they unfold within a space already coded as contemporary art infrastructure. The gallery stabilizes and legitimizes, yet it also imposes a certain discipline of spectatorship.

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In SULUJ Gallery, *Eclissi Urbane / Urban Eclipses* by Maria Novella Tattanelli and Laura Sgherri operates within an ambient installation environment where documentation and performance coexist. The space becomes tautological: performance is surrounded by its own traces. The gallery folds iteration into iteration, forcing the audience to navigate between the live act, photographic residue, and video record. The question of whether we are witnessing an event or its echo becomes spatially embodied.

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In these examples, space does not "want" in any literal sense. Rather, it structures expectation. It amplifies certain meanings while muting others. It conditions how a body appears, how an action is read, how a gesture resonates. To ask "What do spaces want?" is therefore not to anthropomorphize architecture, but to recognize that spaces carry agendas embedded in history, function, and memory. Just as Mitchell asks what pictures want in order to expose their agency within visual culture, this question shifts attention from what artists impose onto space to what space already demands.

3. Can We Manipulate Space and Will It Respond in Kind?

Manipulating space implies intervening in its function, perception, and meaning. Key strategies include *alteration* (changing existing elements), *adaptation* (adapting the artwork to the space), and *intervention* (imposing new narratives). However, space is not passive material; it responds. Kaye warns that the artist never operates in a vacuum: “the site resists total authorship.” This means the artistic act enters into a process of negotiation[■] with material limitations, symbolic meanings and existing bodies and rules.

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A clear example of this negotiation can be seen in Olympia Bukkakis’s *Heavy Duty Beauty*[■] at Flutgraben in Berlin. The performance grew directly out of a workshop held in the same space, and the materials used during the workshop were later reactivated within the performance itself. Rather than neutral props, these construction materials, wrenches, drop sheets, sledgehammers, carried the industrial and historically masculine connotations of the Flutgraben building.

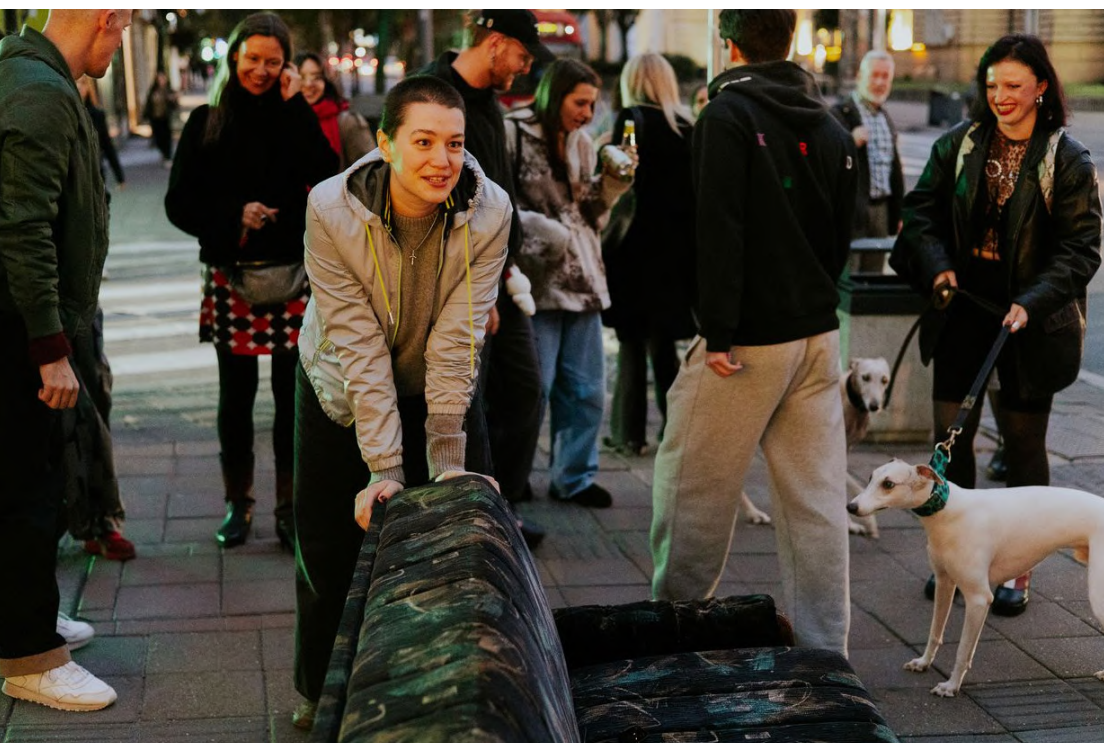
■ MORE ABOUT THIS ON PAGE 198

Here, manipulation of space did not mean transforming architecture physically, but re-signifying its material vocabulary. Tools associated with labor and structural force became earrings, second skins, and performative extensions of drag personae. The industrial residue of the site was neither erased nor romanticized. It was queered. In this sense, space “responded” not through resistance in a literal way, but through symbolic friction. The industrial context framed the performance’s exploration of gender, queer materialism, and beauty standards. Olympia’s work makes visible what Kaye suggests: manipulation is never unilateral. The artist intervenes, but the site pushes back through its history, texture, and cultural coding.



DEPARTURE
MARINA ARIENZALE
BERLIN, 2024
PHOTO: ALFONSO MORAL

This dynamic was further sharpened through explicit political gestures embedded in the material language of the piece. Olympia introduced yellow and blue tubes referencing Ukraine, alongside a kufiyah hung from a fence, invoking solidarity with Gaza. These elements appeared at a moment when artists in Berlin were facing censorship for speaking about Gaza, making their inclusion both deliberate and risky. Rather than functioning as separate symbols, they folded into the existing logic of the work, extending its vocabulary of industrial materials into a charged geopolitical register. In doing so, the performance did not just queer space; it politicized it, layering questions of labor, identity, and resistance with the pressures of contemporary conflict and cultural suppression.



THERE AND BACK
 TIINA LEHTIMÄKI
 BELGRADE, 2025
 PHOTO: TANJA DROBNJAK

A different, more introspective negotiation unfolds in *Anonima* by Cecilia Ventriglia in collaboration with Davide Calvaresi, presented in Livorno[■]. Structured as a durational performance, the work centers on the artist's interaction with a life-sized cardboard puppet bearing a striking resemblance to Jesus. Rather than transforming the space through accumulation or intervention, Ventriglia operates through reduction. The scenography is minimal, almost emptied out, allowing gesture, repetition, and duration to become the primary tools of spatial manipulation.

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Within this stripped-down environment, space begins to respond not through material resistance, but through temporal and perceptual shifts. Each posture the puppet assumes, and each mirrored gesture performed by the artist, accumulates meaning over time. The careful adjustment of lighting and the precise alignment of bodies produce a subtle but persistent reconfiguration of the space's atmosphere. What initially appears static becomes charged through duration, inviting the audience into a state of sustained attention that borders on the meditative.

Here, the “resistance” of space lies in its demand for time and presence. The longer the action continues, the more the space reveals layers of symbolic tension: between human and divine, subject and object, control and surrender. The cardboard figure, at once inert and iconically loaded, pushes back against the artist's authorship by carrying its own cultural and religious weight. In this sense, manipulation is again not unilateral. The artist proposes a structure, but meaning emerges through an ongoing negotiation between body, object, and the perceptual field of the space itself.

3.1 Limitations of Space

Artists love to imagine ideal conditions: the perfect room, the perfect light, the perfect audience that understands exactly what is happening. Reality, of course, rarely cooperates. Spaces are smaller than planned, sound travels badly, and something inevitably breaks five minutes before the start. In other words, limitations appear. As Leonard Cohen famously wrote, “There is a crack in everything, that's how the light gets in.” Performance artists know this perhaps better than anyone. The crack is not a problem to eliminate. Very often, it is where the work actually begins.

Literature on site-specific and live art consistently shows that limitations are not external obstacles but structural conditions of the work. Kaye reminds us that site-specific practice is always rela-

tional, which means that scale, acoustics, access, and circulation are not secondary technical matters. They shape the encounter itself. A low ceiling changes vertical movement. Poor acoustics demand proximity or silence. A public setting introduces interruption. A permit requirement alters duration.

In practice, this means that artists do not simply design a work and then “place” it somewhere. They adjust tempo, volume, distance, and even conceptual emphasis in response to the site. Or at least, they should. That is precisely why we are talking about all of this in the first place. A durational work may shorten because of institutional hours. An intimate performance may intensify because the room is smaller than expected. A participatory piece may shift because the audience refuses engagement.

In real time, handling spatial limitation requires three skills:

First, elasticity. The core idea must remain intact even when its physical expression changes. If the work collapses because the light is different or the room is smaller, it was too rigidly conceived. Second, awareness of thresholds. How many people can safely enter? How long can they remain? What sensory intensity can the body tolerate? These are not bureaucratic details. They define experience. Third, acceptance of unpredictability. Especially in public or semi-public contexts, the audience will not always behave as imagined. Participation may exceed expectations or fail entirely. A limitation can reveal the conceptual skeleton of the work more clearly than ideal conditions ever could.

A telling counter-example can be found in *Una Fantasmagoria* by Maria Larocca[■], realized in the tower of Fortezza Vecchia in Livorno. Conceived as a highly site-specific installation, the work filled the tower with dense smoke, visible even from the outside, framing the space as an environment of immersion and exposure. The audience entered one at a time, without time restriction, free to linger,

rest, or withdraw. On paper, the piece carefully addressed thresholds and duration. Yet, precisely because of its dependence on a controlled atmosphere and tightly scripted conditions, it revealed a certain rigidity. The experience hinged on a fragile balance between visibility, sensation, and spatial containment. When that balance shifted—whether through audience behavior, timing, or the unpredictability of the environment—the work risked losing coherence.

Rather than diminishing the piece, this tension makes it useful here. It shows how a lack of elasticity and limited accommodation of unpredictability can expose the boundaries of a concept. The space did not simply host the work, it tested it. And in doing so, it made visible how much the piece relied on maintaining specific conditions rather than adapting to them.

For contemporary artists, spatial limitation is less a disruption and more a diagnostic tool. It tests whether the work is adaptable or dependent on control. In many cases, constraint sharpens clarity. When technical resources are reduced, gesture becomes more precise. When space is tight, relationships become more immediate. Space sets the parameters. The artist works within them. And sometimes, what appears as restriction becomes the defining intensity of the piece.

3.2

The Advantages of Creative Use of Space

Space can generate dramaturgy: columns become barriers, walls become canvases, the audience is guided by light or sound. Space has the power to transform performance from a linear narrative into a spatial composition.

This potential was explicitly explored in the workshop *Spirit of Places* led by Tho Mas Proksch at Flutgraben. Rather than ap-





WHITE SHEET (STREET POETRY ON PASSIVE BODY)
DARIUS BOGDANOWICZ
BELGRADE, 2025
PHOTO: TANJA DROBNJAK

proaching space as a neutral container, participants were invited to engage with the concept of *Genius Loci*, the spirit of a place, as a dramaturgical starting point. Through movement, sound, sensory exercises, and collective reflection, the building was treated as an active partner in the creative process.

The workshop encouraged heightened bodily and sensory awareness, asking participants to register how architecture, memory, and atmosphere shape perception. In this sense, dramaturgy did not emerge from a script but from spatial encounters. The building's textures, history, and surrounding environment became compositional elements.

At the same time, the experience revealed something important: openness alone does not automatically produce strong spatial dramaturgy. When structure becomes too loose, the relationship between performance and site risks dissolving into a general atmosphere. The creative use of space requires both intuition and clarity. It demands not only sensitivity to environment, but a defined performative framework capable of transforming that sensitivity into articulated form.

For contemporary practitioners, this is a practical reminder. Space offers material—acoustic, architectural, historical—but it does not organize itself. In reality, artists often discover the dramaturgy of space only after they have already entered it. Plans rarely survive the first encounter with architecture.

→

ORDINE

SHARON ESTACIO

BERLIN, 2024

PHOTO: CLAUDIA CALDARANO



4. Presence, Documentation, and Altered Modes of Viewing

4.1 Performance After the Audience: Media Presence and Heuristic Tensions

Most of us like to believe that someone is watching, or at least thinking about us. Not necessarily all the time, but enough to make the moment feel witnessed. A story becomes more real when it is retold. A photograph confirms that something actually happened. Even a message from a friend saying “I wish I had seen that” gives the event a strange afterlife. Performance has long been associated with the immediacy of the live encounter between artist and audience. Yet the moment someone documents, remembers, reposts, or narrates what took place, the performance quietly continues elsewhere.

Yet this assumption has increasingly been challenged. As Philip Auslander argues, the presence of the original audience does not hold ontological primacy, documentation may not simply record an event but participate in producing its meaning and reception.⁴ Adrian Heathfield similarly suggests that performance is always entangled with its traces. Rather than disappearing entirely or persisting unchanged, it “leaves and lasts,” generating an afterlife through photographs, testimonies, reenactments, and archives.⁵ What follows the event is therefore not merely documentation but a continuation of the work across different media and contexts.

4 Philip Auslander, “The Performativity of Performance Documentation,” *PAJ: A Journal of Performance and Art* 28, no. 3 (2006): 1–10.

5 Heathfield, “Then Again,” 9–10.

From this perspective, the “after” of performance is not secondary. Documents do not simply record an event that once occurred elsewhere; they become spaces in which the work continues to unfold. Photographs, videos, and critical texts function as new sites where performance is reframed, reinterpreted, and redistributed. This shift complicates the traditional opposition between ephemerality and permanence. Performance is neither entirely fleeting nor fully fixed. Its identity unfolds through circulation, repetition, and reinterpretation.

For contemporary artists, this has practical implications. Documentation can no longer be treated as an afterthought. It becomes part of the dramaturgy and spatial strategy of the work. Cameras, edits, captions, and platforms all participate in shaping how the performance will exist beyond its initial moment. A performance that occurs in front of a small audience may circulate to thousands through its mediated traces. The live moment does not disappear, but it becomes only one layer within a broader ecology of reception.

4.2

Documentation Is Not a Witness, It Is a New Performance

Memory is a strange editor. Sometimes an event seems to continue long after it has ended. It survives in photographs, fragments of conversation, a line in a notebook, or a story someone tells later from memory. Each version shifts emphasis slightly, reframing what the event was. What remains is not a stable record, but a series of traces that keep reorganizing the meaning of what once took place.

Photography, video, and digital recordings do not function merely as passive records of an event. Through them, performance often transitions from the site of its physical enactment into media space, where its meanings are reorganized and extended. As Amelia Jones notes, the experience of performance is never accessed in a pure or unmediated form but is always structured through per-

ception, memory, and representation.⁶ Rather than acting as neutral witnesses, documents frame how a performance is perceived, remembered, and circulated. In this sense, documentation participates in producing the conditions under which the work becomes visible within artistic, institutional, and archival contexts.

Within the context of this guide, the broader theoretical debates surrounding performance documentation are discussed in detail in Dunja Belić's chapter *Documentation and Performance Art*[■]. For the purposes of this discussion, it is sufficient to emphasize that documentation also produces a spatial shift. The work moves beyond the site of its original enactment into new environments such as the archive, the publication, the exhibition space, or the digital platform.

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4.3

Heuristic Difference: Production ≠ Reception?

Have you ever found yourself at a performance and suddenly felt that watching was no longer enough? That perhaps you should step closer, help, interrupt, touch, or somehow enter the field of action unfolding in front of you? Sometimes the impulse is to participate, sometimes to intervene, sometimes simply to check whether what we are witnessing is real. These moments reveal something fundamental about performance: the boundary between observing and acting is far more fragile than we tend to assume.

Erika Fischer-Lichte introduces the distinction between the aesthetics of production and reception not to preserve it, but to deconstruct it.⁷ Performance erases this division, because the audi-

6 Amelia Jones, *The Artist's Body* (London: Phaidon, 2012), 18–21.

7 Erika Fischer-Lichte, *The Transformative Power of Performance: A New Aesthetics*, trans. Saskya Iris Jain (London and New

ence is no longer just a “receiver.” In participatory, relational, and immersive practices, the audience modifies, transforms, or even (re)generates the act itself. There is no longer a clear line between watching and participating, between document and event, between performance space and reception space.

This collapse becomes tangible in Marina Arienzale’s *Departure*[■], a performance that turns the exhibition space into a sealed, slowly suffocating chamber, filled with fumes from a continuously running small engine whose circular movement structures the work. The audience is not invited to participate in any explicit, interactive sense, yet their bodily endurance becomes constitutive of the work. As the smell from the small engine gradually renders the space intolerable, spectators leave one by one. The performance is completed only when the last body exits or the engine runs out of fuel. Here, reception literally produces the form of the work. The viewers’ threshold of tolerance becomes dramaturgical material. Fischer-Lichte’s notion of the “autopoietic feedback loop” between performers and spectators is no longer abstract; it is olfactory, physical, almost involuntary.⁸ The audience does not interpret the work from a distance; they enact its ending.

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A different but equally precise destabilization occurs in *Hader Halal* by Fehras Publishing Practices[■]. Framed as a lecture performance about the Afro-Asian Solidarity Movement and the magazine *Lotus: Afro-Asian Writings*, the piece moves between speech, choreography, archival material, and enforced audience relocation. When spectators are suddenly instructed to move between marked zones, simulating forced displacement that directly echoes the Gaza genocide, they become participants in a structure that stages mobility and restriction simultaneously. The knowledge shared through voice and archive is not passively received; it is embodied through spatial reorganization.

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York: Routledge, 2008).

8 Ibid., 38–40.

In this sense, *Hader Halal* also resonates with what Claire Bishop defines as “delegated performance,” where presence is distributed across a group and authenticity is no longer anchored in the singular artist’s body but outsourced to a collective or social formation.⁹ Although Fehras Publishing Practices perform themselves rather than hiring nonprofessionals, the work still operates within a logic of redistributed authorship: the audience’s movement, compliance, hesitation, or confusion become part of the work’s visible structure. Reception becomes a performed role.

A further destabilization of the production—reception divide appears in *Control Out of Control* by Tijana Petrović, Katarina Čvorović, Ana Stojković, and Ivanja Todorović[■]. Through a double-channel projection—one documenting the artists’ journey to the Horgoš border crossing and the other streaming a live surveillance camera feed—the work situates the audience within a regime of visibility. The artists’ live reading of poetic fragments composed from their travel documents reactivated the recorded material, collapsing documentation and event into the same spatial moment. Spectators were not simply observing a performance about control; they were positioned within its logic of monitoring and exposure. Reception here becomes spatial implication. Watching becomes participation in a system of surveillance that extends beyond the artwork itself.

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The heuristic distinction between production and reception therefore fails not because it is theoretically weak, but because performance continually produces situations in which spectatorship is already action. What we call “viewing” is revealed as embodied negotiation. And once the audience’s body becomes structurally necessary, there is no clean separation left to defend.

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CONTROL OUT OF CONTROL
TIJANA PETROVIĆ, KATARINA ČVOROVIĆ,
ANA STOJKOVIĆ, IVANJA TODOROVIĆ
BELGRADE, 2025
PHOTO: TANJA DROBNJAK

9 Claire Bishop, “Delegated Performance: Outsourcing Authenticity,” *October* 140 (Spring 2012): 92–93.



4.4

New Audiences = New Spaces = New Meanings

At the moment when the audience is no longer temporally or spatially limited, the ontology of performance changes. The act of performing no longer happens once and only then. It repeats, recodes, reactivates every time someone engages with its document. Reception thus becomes a performative act: the audience, by watching, produces meaning. Space becomes the gathering point for these potentials: physical, digital, institutional, imaginary.

What shifts here is not only duration but scale. A work that once unfolded for a specific group in a specific room can circulate across platforms, institutions, and discourses, encountering audiences with different cultural, political, and generational frameworks. Each context re-anchors the work differently.

New audiences bring new frames of reference. A performance read in Berlin may resonate historically; in Belgrade it may be politically immediate; online, it may become aestheticized or fragmented. The work does not remain identical as it travels. It accumulates interpretations, tensions, even contradictions.

5.

Public vs. Private: Spatial Contexts of Performance

5.1 Performance in Public Spaces

There is a well-known philosophical question: if a tree falls in a forest and no one is there to hear it, does it make a sound? Public performance raises a similar thought experiment. What happens when art leaves the protected ecosystem of the gallery and enters the street? Suddenly the work shares space with commuters, pigeons, police regulations, and people who absolutely did not

plan to attend a performance that day. Public space has a way of testing artworks against reality, and reality, as it turns out, is notoriously unreliable.

Performing in public spaces like streets, squares, open urban environments, means engaging directly with everyday life and bypassing the traditional art-viewing frameworks. Artists associated with the Happenings movement, and later Fluxus, turned to the street not only to destabilize aesthetic conventions but also to democratize artistic experience. As Adrian Heathfield notes, many of these actions emerged as forms of cultural resistance to orders of temporal regulation and acceleration,¹⁰ invoking a different temporality and spatial politics outside the institutional frame. In public settings, the performer is exposed to contingency, spontaneous interactions, and unfiltered social dynamics. These spaces open the possibility of co-presence and rupture, offering moments that are ephemeral, unrepeatable, and radically situated. As Amelia Jones reminds us, live and/or performance art presses together modes of being, meaning, and value that have historically been considered incompatible.¹¹

Public space therefore does not merely expand the physical field of performance; it shifts its conditions of visibility and legitimacy. Unlike the gallery or theater, the street does not guarantee an audience prepared to watch. It produces accidental spectatorship, distraction, interruption, even resistance. The work must negotiate with traffic, noise, weather, police regulation, and indifference. In this sense, public performance is always relational in a heightened way: it unfolds within social reality rather than alongside it.

Nick Kaye's understanding of site as a set of spatial and institutional coordinates becomes particularly relevant here. In public con-

10 Amelia Jones and Adrian Heathfield, eds., *Perform, Repeat, Record: Live Art in History* (Bristol: Intellect, 2012), 59–75.

11 Jones and Heathfield, *Perform, Repeat, Record*, 59–75.

texts, those coordinates are unstable and politically charged. The site is never neutral. It is regulated, surveilled, owned, contested.¹²

What does this mean in practice for contemporary performance artists?

In real terms, performing in public space means accepting that the work is never insulated. It exists within economic systems, political climates, and social tensions. It may become a form of resistance, interruption, or quiet insertion into everyday rhythms. But it cannot remain autonomous in the way institutional art sometimes pretends to be. As Adrian Heathfield suggests, performance often operates against dominant regimes of time, labor, and regulation, inserting alternative temporalities into everyday structures. Public space makes this political dimension visible. The claim to autonomy dissolves.

5.2 Performance in Private and Institutional Spaces

Conversely, institutional and private spaces such as galleries, theaters, and museums often frame performance within curated contexts, offering controlled environments but also layers of historical, political, and economic codification. These settings can generate distance between audience and artist but may allow for focused intensity and intentionality. Heathfield emphasizes that these spaces are not just sites of display but also of labor, memory, and production.

Fluxus artists, notably George Brecht, actively challenged the sanctity of institutional spaces, advocating instead for everyday life as a

12 Kaye, *Site-Specific Art*, 15–18.

valid arena for artistic intervention. Such acts questioned the museum's role as a "mummifier of the present," inviting critical reflection on where and how art should be performed and experienced.

This tension has continued into contemporary practice. Institutional space promises legitimacy, preservation, and visibility, but it also frames the work within systems of funding, curatorial authorship, and audience expectation. Marina Abramović's retrospective at MoMA, for example, transformed live endurance into a museum-compatible format, raising questions about repetition, institutional endorsement, and the choreography of spectatorship.¹³ What once functioned as radical endurance was now carefully scheduled within museum opening hours.

Similarly, re-performances of historical works, whether in biennials or museum retrospectives, reveal how institutions stabilize what was once unstable. What began as an ephemeral or antagonistic gesture becomes part of art history, catalogued and archived. As Amelia Jones suggests, this does not necessarily neutralize the work, but it undeniably shifts its frame of meaning.¹⁴

Institutional space therefore offers protection and constraint simultaneously. It allows for concentration, technical precision, and historical continuity. Yet it also disciplines behavior: silence is expected, attention is directed, the body of the spectator is regulated. Unlike the street, the institution pre-structures spectatorship. In practical terms, this means that contemporary performance artists working within institutions must negotiate different questions than those in public space. How does one maintain immediacy within a curated frame? How does a work resist becoming illustration or spectacle? How does it inhabit the institution without being fully absorbed by it?

13 Klaus Biesenbach, ed., *Marina Abramović: The Artist Is Present* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2010).

14 Amelia Jones, "'Presence' in Absentia: Experiencing Performance as Documentation," *Art Journal* 56, no. 4 (Winter 1997): 11-18.

The institutional space is not neutral, but neither is it purely restrictive. It is a site where visibility, critique, preservation, and control intersect.

This dynamic becomes visible when comparing the institutional contexts of Livorno, Berlin, and Belgrade. In Livorno, Fortezza Vecchia, although historically monumental and charged, functions today as a cultural venue that frames performance within heritage architecture. Durational or intimate performances unfold under the weight of stone walls and historical authority, inevitably intensifying their symbolic dimension.

In Berlin, Flutgraben e.V. operates differently. As an independent art centre situated within a former industrial complex that was once an integral part of the Berlin Wall, it carries both institutional framing and a legacy of alternative production. The space offers curatorial structure, yet retains traces of experimentation and infrastructural roughness. Performances there oscillate between autonomy and institutionalization, between rawness and cultural codification.

In Belgrade, U10 and SULUJ Gallery present yet another variation. These spaces are clearly embedded in contemporary art infrastructure, but their scale produces proximity rather than monumentality. The white cube becomes intimate. Audience and performer share constrained space, making distance difficult. Institutional framing[■] is present, yet fragile, dependent on local funding structures, independent initiatives, and shifting cultural policies.

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HEAVY DUTY BEAUTY
OLYMPIA BUKKAKIS
BERLIN, 2024
PHOTO: ALFONSO MORAL



6. The Absence of Space and the Absence of the Body: To Be or Not to Be... in Space?

6.1 Displacement and the Immaterial Performance Space[■]

In an era of radio transmissions, video streams, and virtual events, performance no longer requires a stable or physical locale. Site becomes relational, distributed, even imagined.¹⁵ These phenomena can be described as recursive dissemination, where performance imprints itself in memory, in testimony, in documents, and in space. Performances that occur outside defined physical space—via digital platforms, sound-only formats, or conceptual instructions—expand our understanding of what it means to be present. The live body is not inherently more “authentic” than its mediated counterpart.

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The immaterialization of performance space does not imply disappearance, but displacement. Space migrates into archive, discourse, repetition, and affect. As Jones and Heathfield suggest, performance carries within itself the conditions of its reiteration and historicization.¹⁶ This displacement becomes evident in *Hader Halal* by Fehras Publishing Practices. Although enacted within a concrete architectural setting, the operative space of the work extends far beyond the room. It unfolds across historical networks of Afro-Asian solidarity, the legacy of the Bandung Conference, and the circulation of the magazine *Lotus*. The performance activates an archival and geopolitical space that exceeds its physical site. The audience is momentarily repositioned within that dispersed historical field. Space here is not only architectural, it is ideolog-

15 Jones and Heathfield, *Perform, Repeat, Record*, 9–24.

16 Heathfield, “Then Again,” 12–18.

ical and mnemonic. The body becomes a conduit through which displaced histories resurface.

6.2

Where Did the Body Go?

Similarly, performances that forego physical corporeality—whether through avatars, pre-recorded voices, or audience-activated installations—do not lack presence; they reconfigure it. The body, in these contexts, becomes spectral, symbolic, or distributed. As Jones explains, “there is no singular, authentic ‘original’ event to refer to... all experience is subjectively enacted and retrieved.” Tehching Hsieh’s durational works are exemplary in this regard. His practice navigates the paradox of being radically present through self-removal or silence, using time and disappearance as central components of the work.¹⁷

In *Paranoia Raum* by Andreja Kargačin[■], the question “Where did the body go?” acquires a different inflection. The performer is physically present, writing fears onto the wall, moving among archival objects, activating documents. Yet the body does not function as a stable center. It appears fragmented, split between inherited narratives, mediated history, personal memory, and found materials. Presence is not anchored in physical immediacy but dispersed across layers of testimony and trace.

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The surrounding objects—passports, photographs, recorded speeches, diary fragments—carry as much performative weight as the living body. The artist’s gestures do not dominate the space; they circulate within an already charged field of documents. In this sense, the body becomes one element among many in a distributed system of meaning production. It is neither absent nor sovereign. Jones’s ar-

17 Adrian Heathfield, “Out of Now,” in *Perform, Repeat, Record: Live Art in History*, ed. Amelia Jones and Adrian Heathfield (Bristol: Intellect, 2012), 27–34.

gument that the live body cannot guarantee authenticity becomes tangible here. The performance does not rely on bodily endurance or spectacle. Instead, it stages vulnerability as archival entanglement. The performer's presence is inseparable from the mediated fragments that surround her. The body becomes a relay point between past and present, rather than the origin of truth.

If Hsieh radicalizes presence through duration and self-erasure, *Paranoia Raum* radicalizes it through fragmentation. The body does not disappear, it becomes unstable. It is mediated by history, by inherited trauma, by technological residues. The question is no longer whether the body is there, but how it is there, and through which layers of mediation it becomes perceptible.

The disappearance of a unified body does not signal the end of performance. It signals a shift. Presence is redistributed. It persists in voice, in inscription, in documentation, in memory. The body has not gone anywhere. It has multiplied.

7. Virtual, Cyber, and Hybrid Spaces:■ A New Dimension of Performance

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7.1 Have We All Gone Cyber?

With the rise of the internet, social media, virtual reality, and live-streaming platforms, performance has entered a new phase where the boundaries between physical and virtual dissolve. These new environments activated and opened the past within the present, revealing that performance is now variously manifested in global documentary, archival and discursive representations. Echoing the early Fluxus explorations of mail art and telecommunication, contemporary artists are exploring digital interaction as a new form of liveness. Projects like Mieko Shiomi's *Spatial Poems* laid the groundwork for a networked, globalized

art practice that transcends geography and expands the very notion of performance space. What distinguishes contemporary hybrid performance from earlier experiments is not simply the use of technology, but the normalization of distributed presence[■]. The audience is no longer gathered exclusively in one location; it may be dispersed, asynchronous, mediated through screens, or participating through text, image, or algorithmic systems. Liveness becomes a condition negotiated across platforms rather than guaranteed by co-presence.

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In this context, an off-program event *Space of (Not) Free Expression* by Anna Shevchenko that happened in Flutgraben e.V. , offers a subtle but revealing example. Although enacted physically, the work operates through a logic that resembles networked communication. Handwritten texts accumulate like posts in a feed, fragments are collected, deconstructed, recomposed. Authorship becomes layered and collective. Expression is not singular or stable but assembled through multiple voices. The second-day live reading does not simply present content, it performs circulation. What was private becomes public, what was individual becomes shared, what was written becomes re-spoken.

The work demonstrates how contemporary performance often inhabits a hybrid zone: materially grounded yet structurally similar to digital exchange. If early networked art relied on postal systems or telecommunication lines, today's hybrid practices operate within infrastructures we barely notice anymore. We no longer “enter” the digital. We carry it in our reflexes. The question “Have we all gone cyber?” is therefore less about technology and more about habit. We already think in fragments. We already edit ourselves mid-sentence. We already anticipate circulation while we speak.

For contemporary artists, this changes the stakes. Hybrid performance is not about adding a screen to the stage. It is about recognizing that audiences arrive pre-conditioned by feeds, timelines, compression, and scroll speed. Attention is layered. Memory is externalized. Authorship is unstable. If you are making work

now, you are not competing with theatre or even with other performances. You are competing with notification logic. Virtual and hybrid performance does not replace physical space, it sits on top of it like a second atmosphere. The room is still there, but it is porous. Words travel. Images detach. Documentation begins before the work ends. A gesture is already thinking about its afterlife.

What does this mean in practice? It means clarity without simplification. It means understanding circulation as part of dramaturgy. It means accepting that presence will be partial, interrupted, mediated, and using that instead of fighting it. The body has not disappeared. It has acquired backup copies. The stage is no longer a rectangle. It is a network. And whether we like it or not, we are already logged in.

7.2

Artist–audience Relations in Digital Environments

Digital performance destabilizes the traditional artist–audience divide. Participation becomes co-creation because the performer may be absent while the audience activates meaning. What changes here is not only the level of interaction, but the structure of responsibility. The audience is no longer positioned exclusively as a witness. It circulates, comments, archives, reframes. It amplifies or ignores. In digital environments, attention itself becomes a material.

The distinction between production and reception becomes less stable, but not because everything merges into horizontal collectivity. Rather, agency is redistributed across interfaces, timing, and access. A streamed performance, a recorded action, or a participatory online format does not depend on simultaneous presence. It depends on engagement. Watching, sharing, screenshotting, translating, these are not neutral gestures. They extend the work.

At the same time, digital proximity does not automatically mean intimacy. Distance can intensify interpretation. Asynchronous participation can deepen reflection. The absence of the performer's body does not produce emptiness; it produces space for projection.

7.3

Technological Mediation and the Aesthetics of Presence

New technologies such as VR, AR, and AI not only enable remote performances; they reorganize how space itself functions. In these hybrid contexts, space is more an operating system. It is structured through interface, latency, code, and access. Heathfield's notion of stretched duration becomes palpable here: attention no longer unfolds in a single room but across multiple temporal layers and platforms.¹⁸

What is at stake is not simply distance, but modulation. A performance may be live, buffered, replayed, translated by software, filtered through avatars, or partially generated by artificial systems. The site becomes programmable[■]. The frame becomes dynamic. The environment can update in real time.

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For artists, this shifts the question from "Where do I perform?" to "Through which system does this work circulate?" VR space, algorithmic feeds, AI-assisted environments, these are not neutral tools. They are structured fields with built-in hierarchies, blind spots, and permissions. Entering them means understanding their architecture as carefully as one would study the acoustics of a theater or the politics of a public square. The future performance space may not announce itself as space at all. It may appear as a platform, a shared server, a generated environment, or an immersive simulation. So perhaps the question is not whether per-

18 Heathfield, "Then Again," 9–24.

formance survives technological mediation. It clearly does. The more pressing question is: how do we work inside infrastructures that are invisible but decisive? How do we remain attentive when attention itself is engineered? The door is open. The question is whether the artists enter as users, or as authors.

Some key considerations in thinking space and performance include:

- ✧ **Spatial Intention** – What kind of space does your work assume or require? Is space treated as a neutral container, a collaborator, or a resisting force? What changes when the space changes?
- ✧ **Relational Conditions** – How do bodies (performers and audience) produce space through their presence, movement, and proximity? Does your work depend on co-presence, or can it function through distance and mediation?
- ✧ **Site Specificity vs. Flexibility** – Is your work tied to a specific site, or can it be adapted? What remains constant when the location shifts, and what must be reconfigured?
- ✧ **Symbolic and Political Layers of Space** – What histories, power structures, or social codes are embedded in the space you are working with? How do they shape or interfere with your work?
- ✧ **Audience Position** – Is the audience observing, participating, or structurally necessary for the work to exist? At what point does reception become production?

- ✧ **Spatial Limitations** – What constraints does the space impose (scale, sound, access, visibility)? Do these limitations weaken the work or reveal its core?
- ✧ **Documentation as Re-siting** – How does documentation relocate your work into new spaces (archive, exhibition, digital platforms)? Does it extend, distort, or redefine the performance?
- ✧ **Afterlife of the Work** – Who encounters your work after the live moment, and where? How do different contexts (institutional, digital, cultural) reshape its meaning?
- ✧ **Public vs. Institutional Context** – How does your work behave differently in public space versus within an institution? What kinds of control, exposure, or unpredictability emerge?
- ✧ **Hybrid and Mediated Environments** – Does your work exist only in physical space, or does it extend into digital or networked environments? How does technology reshape presence and attention?
- ✧ **Authorship and Responsibility** – Who produces the work: the artist, the audience, the space, or the system through which it circulates? How is authorship distributed?
- ✧ **Ethics of Presence and Capture** – Does documentation alter behavior, participation, or consent? What are the ethical implications of recording bodies, especially in participatory or public contexts?

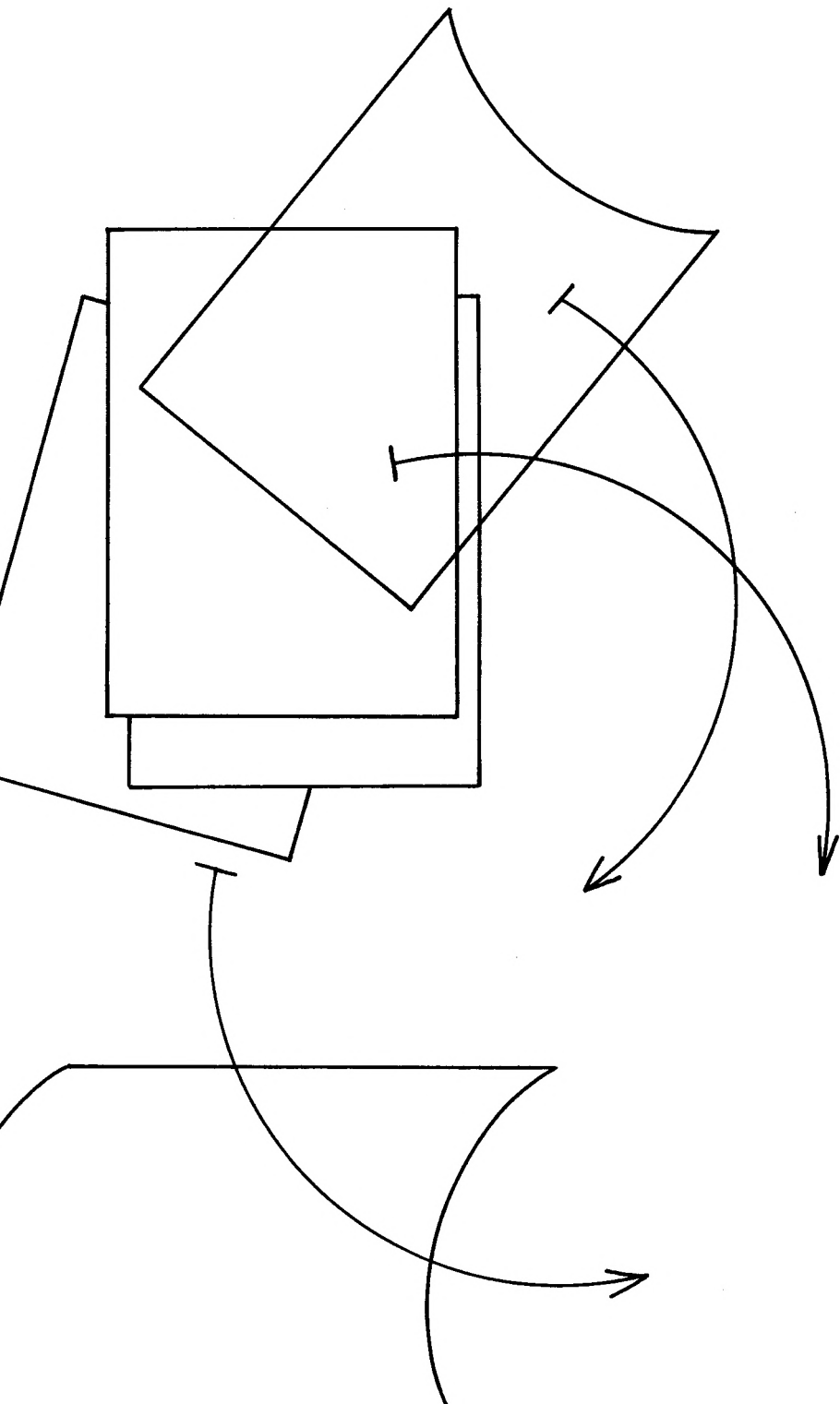
DOCUMENTATION
AND

PERFORMANCE
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Dunja Belić

ART



DOCUMENTATION AND PERFORMANCE ART

DUNJA BELIĆ

1.

So You're Conceptualizing a Performance... / Why Go Beyond Presence

The circumstances around the early institutionalization of performance art made prevalent the reading of performance as an ephemeral art practice, one using the artist's body as a medium, and thus resisting all forms of commodification. Presence was centralized in the discourse around many movements and practices of the 1950s and 60s that were historicized under this umbrella term (action, live art, body art, direct art, happening), thus privileging the live event over its mediation. RoseLee Goldberg connects the prevalence of this approach to the heyday of conceptual art in the 1970s, providing in her seminal 1979 history of performance an alternative history, tracing this form back to the avant-garde movements of the early 20th century.¹

As a result, in the process of conceptualizing a new work, communicating the piece through documentation tends to be intuited as secondary to the performance as an event. However, a less thorough approach to documentation can lead to issues such as miscontextualization or inaccurate readings down the line. Documentation assumes the role of the event's advocate, and what it communicates about it depends on its form, scope and utilization. This text is meant to be used as a tool to jumpstart active think-

¹ RoseLee Goldberg, *Performance Art: From Futurism to the Present* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1988), 7.

ing about the possibilities and problems of documenting a performance in the making. The aim is to provide the early career artist or curator with crucial considerations and possible avenues to navigate this aspect of performance through examples from the IMPORT/EXPORT catalogue and beyond.

Contemporary practice deals with a multiplicity of performance modes—some works are meant for a live audience, while others are created exclusively for the camera (video performance)[■], some artists delegate their presence, and some structure their performances already with reenactments in mind. The diversity of these approaches necessitates that a strategy for documentation be an integral part of a performance's identity and conceptualization, rather than an afterthought. The process of conceptualizing a performance art piece raises many questions in relation to the content and context of the piece: For what purposes is the artist documenting? What is the most appropriate medium and form for documenting? What status does the artist grant the document, and what status may it gain over time? The following sections will strive to provide deeper insight into each of these dilemmas.

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2. Is Performance Documented or Constructed? / Key Theoretical Frameworks

When ascertaining the approach you should take to documentation, a critical concern to grapple with is to which degree the document will be autonomous from the performance as an ephemeral event. Post-performance stages such as reception, critique, research, curation, and collecting rely heavily on documentation. In practice, the document tends to gain more leverage on the negotiation of the performance concept and context as time goes on. This section will provide a brief analysis of some key theoretical arguments for understanding the event – document relationship, and the ways these can be transferred to one's artistic practice.

2.1

Auratic Presence vs Auratic Document

Performance art theory has long perceived presence and its mediation as elements in perpetual tension. A foundational thesis, borrowed from Walter Benjamin, would support a sharp distinction between the two. In comparing theater to film, Benjamin ties his concept of the *aura* (specific aesthetic quality tied to its immediacy and singularity) to the presence of the actor, categorically denying the possibility of there being a replica possessing this quality.² Following this view, performance art documentation would be a continuation of other means of reproduction, providing wider access to the artwork, yet unburdened by the original's aura. Canonic pieces such as Marina Abramović's *The Artist is Present* (2010), predicated on the live encounter with the artist,³ adopt this framework of presence as a conduit for aura.

Although this view can seem intuitive to a young practitioner, a century of developments in technology and media, as well as artistic and theoretical reinterpretation, lead to a landscape where the concepts of document and presence in relation to aura can be understood in a multiplicity of ways. For an example of a discursive practice, Maria Novella Tattanelli's *Eclissi Urbane/Urban Eclipses*[■], performed in two acts at the IMPORT/EXPORT Berlin and Belgrade events, operates in a space of ever-shifting aura. Mediation is especially important for this piece, which was cre-

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ECLISSI URBANE / URBAN ECLIPSES
MARIA NOVELLA TATTANELLI IN
COLLABORATION WITH LAURA SGHERRI
BERLIN, 2024
PHOTO: ALFONSO MORAL

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ECLISSI URBANE / URBAN ECLIPSES
MARIA NOVELLA TATTANELLI IN
COLLABORATION WITH LAURA SGHERRI
BELGRADE, 2025
PHOTO: TANJA DROBNJAK

2 Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," in *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt (New York: Schocken Books, 1969), 229.

3 For an interesting deconstruction of "presence" in this piece, see: Amelia Jones, "'The Artist is Present': Artistic Re-enactments and the Impossibility of Presence," *TDR: The Drama Review* 55, no. 1 (Spring 2011): 16-45.





ated in collaboration with photographer Laura Sgherri. The performance positions the artist's body as a canvas, slowly being engulfed in dripping purple paint. Through an almost art-historical juxtaposition of the artist's gendered body and the medium of painting, the piece plays on romanticism themes of the flow of time and the fading of beauty. Considering the collaborative nature of this piece, the photographic and video documentation most directly serves as a continuation of the performance. The photographs and video recordings serve more as the next stage in this time-based practice, highly aestheticized artworks in and of themselves, than as neutral documents of an event. Finally, during the Belgrade event, the artist recontextualized the events by creating an installation based on these performances. In this work, the performance's aura shifts through its mediation, challenging the binary of live versus documented. To make the mediation—presence net even more complex, as part of the installation in the Belgrade event, Tattanelli reperformed Act II of *Eclissi Urbane*. In this context, reperformance⁴ functions both as an act of presence and as another mode of documentation, layering the exhibited videos and collaged photographs. After the reperformance, the space was kept as the performer left it, providing yet another example of documentation through a sort of post-performance artifact.

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This shift can be connected to the theoretical approach of Philip Auslander, who redefined the theory of performance art documentation in his article "The Performativity of Performance Documentation". For him, the act of documenting is itself the core performative act, through which a performance is created.⁴ Following this argument, the piece is constructed by its document for the first time, rather than the document serving as a means to recreate, reactivate or reconstruct the live event. A performance art piece therefore cannot exist independently of its documentation, and moreover, the document is the primary form of a perfor-

4 Philip Auslander, "The Performativity of Performance Documentation," *PAJ: A Journal of Performance and Art* 28, no. 3 (2006): 1–10.

mance piece. Auslander goes so far as to argue that the performance is mere raw material for the documentation, through which it gains identification and further circulation.⁵ Contemporary performance forms such as video performance bring this understanding most comprehensively into practice, but theoreticians such as Auslander and Widrich are predominantly concerned with the performativity of photographs and narrative documentation (be it textual or oral). Auslander based his analysis of the photograph's performativity on iconic examples such as Yves Klein's *Leap into the Void* and Chris Burden's *Shoot*, where the photograph acts as a conduit for the (re)creation of the performance in the recipient's mind. Mechtild Widrich's seminal article on the reception and reperformance of Valie Export's *Genital Panic* goes even further, questioning the assumed connection between the photograph and the past performance. In her view, Valie Export's case serves to showcase the pivotal role of a document in the reception and narrativization of a performance, while its function as a proof could be brought into question. The photograph is therefore the symbol of an *imaginary performance*, serving as a trigger for the creation of a socially negotiated fiction of a performance.⁶ Framing, posing, editing and stylizing are all possible meanings added to the event through the photograph.

One could argue that Aleksander Zain's *ACTA DISTANTIAE*, performed as part of the *IMPORT/EXPORT* series, exists solely in this ambiguous space of post-presence, continuously renegotiating its identity and the veracity of the event. The performance revolves around the performer's journey from Venice to Livorno, conducted mostly on foot, serving as a space-time boundary for the interplay of the performer's experience and thoughts. The only audience for this piece was the camera. Zain utilized short Instagram live broadcasts, providing snippets of mediated immediacy. While this approach was partly informed by the technical

5 Ibid, 3.

6 Mechtild Widrich, "Can Photographs Make It So? Repeated Outbreaks of VALIE EXPORT's *Genital Panic* since 1969," in *Perform, Repeat, Record: Live Art in History*, ed. Amelia Jones and Adrian Heathfield (Bristol: Intellect, 2012), 97.





ACTA DISTANTIAE
ALEKSANDER ZAIN
LIVORNO, 2023
PHOTO: LAURA SGHERRI

limitations (a full live stream proved unsustainable), it also provided a layered web of unshared performer experience, mediated liveness⁷, and post-event reactivation through document. At the Livorno event, the frustration of this inaccessibility became formalized. The now-present audience observed the performer while he edited the footage of his journey, thus further alienating his experience (the beginning point of the stated artistic concept) from both the document and the observer. On the second night of the Livorno event, Zain performed the walk along the wall of the fortress, creating at the same time a sort of associative document (as bodily presence or as a reperformance in a nutshell) and a self-sufficient performance piece. The event in Belgrade brought the document to its final function, as part of a curated installation. The institutional framing⁸ made it entirely possible to approach *ACTA DISTANTIAE* as a video work, rather than any form of performance art documentation. Developing a strategy for documentation could remain open to such pivots in function and form, while crucially keeping in mind how these possible transformations would affect the overall meaning and context of the piece. If this relationship is compromised, a photograph of a performance might completely shift to the realm of myth-making, which, as succinctly explained by Barthes, comes to be artificially once the image is the sole creator of the concept (the signifier constructs the signified).⁷ ■

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Other theoretical positions might perhaps be able to diffuse the tension between presence and its mediation. Amelia Jones explores the symbiotic relationship between the two: just as the event needs the photograph as proof of it having happened, the photograph relies on the event as its ontological anchor. Through the photograph, the performance gains symbolic status and a position within broader cultural narratives.⁸ She points to the phantasmagorical nature of the concept of presence, and its constant constructing upon the

7 Roland Barthes, "Myth Today," in *A Barthes Reader*, ed. Susan Sontag (New York: Hill and Wang, 1983), 116–18.

8 Amelia Jones, "'Presence' in Absentia: Experiencing Performance as Documentation," *Art Journal* 56, no. 4 (Winter 1997): 13.

materiality and duration of a performing body which is constantly “escaping into the past”⁹. By building on Derrida’s deconstruction of presence as continuously compounded with “nonpresence”¹⁰, Jones positions the document as a logical continuation of the performance, rather than its conceptual antithesis.

2.2 The (Body) Politics of Archiving

A performance piece interfaces with the broader cultural context through the framework of an archive. While both performance as an event and the installation of documentation in exhibition format are ephemeral, an archive aims at a more long-term temporality. A physical or digital performance archive can collect various documents produced by the artist—photos and video of the event as well as preparatory material (text, sketches, photos). These are often institutionalized in museums, private collections and foundations, and used in the process of reactivating the performance through research and exhibiting. Crucially however, the work’s identity becomes entangled with post-event documents produced outside the artist’s control—by the audience, the researchers, and the media. Widrich’s analysis of *Genital Panic* again offers a historic example, exploring the performativity of posed photographs in relation to an undocumented event (of questionable veracity), and how a performance’s identity can shift through subsequent narrativization and reperformance.¹¹

Two positions that defined contemporary art’s relation to archiving were elaborated in Boris Groys’s *Art in the Age of Biopolitics* and Hal Foster’s *An Archival Impulse*. Foster examines the trend of creating pieces that function as collections of data, archives that

9 Amelia Jones, “‘The Artist is Present’: Artistic Re-enactments and the Impossibility of Presence,” *TDR: The Drama Review* 55, no. 1 (Spring 2011): 18.

10 Ibid, 19.

11 Widrich, “Can Photographs Make It So?,” 97.

collapse the dichotomies of public vs. private, fact vs. fiction, production vs. consumption. Central to this current in contemporary art is a sort of historical positioning and questioning, which is evident through the use of historical formal and informal archives to curate new collections of narratives and connotations.¹² Groys flips the presence—documentation relationship on its head by connecting art documentation to biopolitics. Some contemporary art forms practice creation as an ongoing activity, rather than staying in the traditional lane of producing art-objects. Here, art documentation might function as an affirmation of this lifelike, unending activity. In situating these often bureaucratic forms within continuous artistic research, art documentation can at once evoke artificiality and repetitiveness of contemporary condition, and produce unique and living effects.¹³

In relation to the process of archiving, performance art has a storied and developed critical approach, the foundational premise of which can be found in Derrida's *Archive Fever*. Derrida brings into the foreground the structures of memory and control which shape the archive as a place producing authority, selecting for what is to be remembered and what forgotten.¹⁴ Performances which are conceptualized along the lines of archive fever, or Groys's biopolitics, are by default predicated on the use of documents. This usually comes with a deeper cultural and historical context, which is vulnerable at the point this performance is itself documented. The artist and the documenter themselves create a new archive, a new authoritative discourse within the context of the performance. Inadequate documentation of this piece may lead to misconstructions around the cultural events it weaves into itself.

Some works instead can function as an exploration of archives as a document of historical networks. *Hader Halal* performed by

12 Hal Foster, "An Archival Impulse," *October* 100 (Fall 2004): 3–22.

13 Boris Groys, "Art in the Age of Biopolitics: From Artwork to Art Documentation," in *Art Power* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2008), 53–66.

14 Jacques Derrida and Eric Prenowitz, "Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression," *Diacritics* 25, no. 2 (1995): 9–63.

Fehras Publishing Practices at the Berlin event represents a good example, tracing the networks of knowledge and experience dissemination through the Cold War-era literary magazine *Lotus: Afro-Asian Writings*.

IMPORT/EXPORT presented multiple performances predicated on archives. Andreja Kargačin's *Paranoia Raum* sourced video, photos and objects from 1989 to the present, weaving a performative installation from a combination of private and public histories. The basis for the performance is a focused selection which creates parallels between the artist's family and personal experiences and triggers of cultural / sociopolitical memory. Her approach was decidedly site-specific, utilizing Berlin's Flutgraben e.V. as a conduit for communicating the personal and familial narrative, as well as the Serbian position in the broader context of the Cold War. The psychological mechanisms of paranoia served as the work's conceptual core. Although the archive was multi-layered and chronologically diverse, the photography and video of the performance focused on the performer's relation to this constructed spatial representation of paranoia. The performance documentation strategy[■], in this case, entailed creating an integral representation of the event out of parts of the installation. The documenter's focus seems to have been on the psychological and somatic experience (of both the artist and the audience) in this space, rather than exploring how specific pieces of the archive relate to the historical and social context the performance draws upon. Representative images[■] such as these are necessary for artists' portfolios, as well as publications, but they stay firmly in line with favoring the performance as an ephemeral event, and its document as an ambivalent agent that has the potential to aid the narrativization of the event (be it true or false) and even be treated as an artwork in its own right. Section 3 of the text will interrogate the possibility of documenting in a way that does away with, or at least minimizes the reifying effect of, creating representative images of performances. A documentation effort that strives to keep all the layers of a performance visible and easily legible might be appropriate for an archive-based performance.

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PARANOIA RAUM
ANDREJA KARGAČIN
BERLIN, 2024
PHOTO: ALFONSO MORAL



IN THE NAME OF THE MOTHER AND THE DAUGHTER
IVANA RANISAVLJEVIĆ
LIVORNO, 2023
PHOTO: LAURA SGHERRI

Ivana Ranisavljević's work shows how the artist's body functions as an archive in its own right. As part of the IMPORT/EXPORT program, she performed three pieces: *In the Name of the Mother and the Daughter* in Livorno[■], and *In the Veil of Speaking Bitterness* and *REDEFINE* in Berlin[■]. During the performances, Ranisavljević embroiders words onto her skin, working in the area of redefining female authorship and technique within oppressive systems. But the words remain on her body long after the events, in the form of scars. Here, Rebecca Schneider offers a valuable theoretical insight, highlighting the limits of conceptualizing performance as ephemeral. Drawing on non-Western alternatives to archiving, she argues that histories are constantly inscribed onto bodies, which in turn become a sort of document.¹⁵ For the artist in the initial phases of conceptualizing a piece, this provides an interesting viewpoint. It encourages awareness of the meanings already inscribed onto them via knowledge/power systems. But beyond that, thinking through how a performance-event becomes part of the performer's personal and artistic history, as well as how their body may continue to function as a document to that history, may prove fruitful to certain artistic practices.

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3. The Forms and Functions of Documentation

The subsequent reception and institutional recognition of a performance piece is largely dependent on documentation. This section provides a breakdown of different contexts through which the documentation is most often activated in practice, and subsequently briefly summarizes the different forms and scopes the artist might want to consider.

15 Rebecca Schneider, "Performance Remains," in *Perform, Repeat, Record: Live Art in History*, ed. Amelia Jones and Adrian Heathfield (Bristol: Intellect, 2012), 137–151.

3.1

Representation, Research, and Community Building

Following the thesis by Amelia Jones previously discussed (part 2), through the document the performance gains its symbolic status. In practice, this is done through research and writing on performance, as well as exhibiting and collecting documentation. In this paradigm, the document always functions as a representative of the entire concept and context of the performance. It is utilized first by art critics and writers, who may use it to reactivate the experience and memory of the event for themselves while writing, and also to represent it for their audience in publications. Then, curators who operate outside and within institutions, may base their research of the performance art scene on the documentation present on artists' websites and portfolios, as well as various artistic databases. In exhibition practice, the documents again shift context and are reinterpreted within larger narratives and contexts, sometimes as artworks in their own right. Institutional infrastructure, especially within museums and foundations, offers the possibility to preserve the document for longer, and for the performance to gain wider recognition. Here, the role of art historians is crucial in evaluating a piece's positioning. With clear art historical positioning, a performance gains the potential for meaningful reperformance in different contexts, either by the original author, or by a different performance artist. All of these processes rely heavily on documentation, not only of the event, but also of the preparation for it, as well as subsequent interviews and secondary documentation. So to document is to build the basis for institutional and historical framing of a performance.

The artist has traditionally had control over access to the documentation at the beginning of its dissemination, but today there are many frameworks dictating the spread of images and text related to the performance, such as IP laws and conscious consent forms (a tool of special note to delegated performances). Actors related to the production of a performance (such as festivals or galleries) as a rule of thumb have a protocol for producing their

own documentation, which is then stored and used in-house. IMPORT/EXPORT is no different, having organized photo and video documentation during all three events. Needless to say, participants and spectators will make their own snapshots (unless otherwise instructed) and subsequently share them, which opens up a whole new area of performance transmission and representation, one which is not directly controlled by either party engaged in the creation process. For certain performances, the social media proliferation and online representation aspect might be a crucial aid in their recognition.

As can be gleaned from all the above mentioned functions a document may take on, the preparation for documenting a performance has to create the output that is both flexible enough to be legible in different contexts, and stay clearly aligned with the concept of the piece. The IMPORT/EXPORT event in Livorno presented possibilities to navigate this process. In particular, the workshop *Documenting and Narrating Performance* by Federica Coseschi created a communal creative atmosphere among the participants, who had the role of documenters. In its most important outcome, the workshop effectively proved the close correlation of creating clear communication within the team behind a piece and the documentation strategy that responds to its needs. The participants talked to Marta Capaccioli and Lucrezia Palandri, the performance artists whose work - *Dreams About Dying_funeralia*[■] - they were to document the following day, and built mutual understanding and trust through discussing the artists' vision for the performance. This might seem obvious, but if open communication is not actively practiced, it very easily gets deprioritized in the numerous individual considerations (and workloads!) each party must engage with.

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DREAMS ABOUT DYING_FUNERALIA
MARTA CAPACCIOLI AND LUCREZIA PALANDRI
LIVORNO, 2023
PHOTO: LAURA SGHERRI



3.2

Medium, Scope and Co-authorship

This section will, at last, concretize the above-referenced different media that fall under the umbrella term of performance art documentation, and examine the process of choosing the right form and scope.

Photography has deep historical ties to the emergence of performance art. As a medium, it necessitates an author, and this author may be a fellow artist, conceptualizing the document as their own piece, as previously discussed. However, if the artist intends to continue constructing the piece as a performance (rather than a photographic artwork or installation), it is crucial that the scope of photo documentation remains as closely related to the event as possible. This is an especially interesting problem when dealing with durational¹⁶ and endurance performances, where documentation can steer into *highlight reel* territory. When it comes to the formal aspects, early performances were most often documented in black-and-white photography, and this trend outlived any technical constraints. This aestheticization of performance photography has been described as a sheen that makes the documentary value more “believable”¹⁶. This effect might be too leading or theatrical when working with some performance pieces, and should in either case be a reasoned choice. The same applies for video, which operates with even more ambiguity. It more closely approaches the integral experience of the event, but editing and blocking frame a certain perspective of the live experience.

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DEPARTURE
MARINA ARIENZA
BERLIN, 2024
PHOTO: ALFONSO MORAL

16 Auslander, “The Performativity of Performance Documentation,” 2.



Visual documentation is crucial to a performance's afterlife, but it is still relevant to consider possible ways to conserve experiences through text. An oral histories approach, interviews, or artist statements can highlight important intangible elements of a piece. For example, *Departure* by Marina Arienza utilized a minibike to bring the observer's eye into the piece by creating perpetual motion. The performer drew subsequent figure-eights until the gas depleted, which, in a literal sense, had a tangible effect on the atmosphere in the room. The experience of observing repeating motion and breathing in the fumes is integral to the piece, and would most fully be documented through a recorded account.

Lastly, the ideal conditions for documenting are scarcely possible in practice, but still important for the artist to have in mind and strive for. *IMPORT/EXPORT* had technical constraints, as many festivals tend to have to work around. Therefore, it was especially important to communicate the specific scope and format of possible documentation to every collaborator, so that they could choose to supplement the organizers' documentation with their own, where necessary. In this way, each party had clear expectations for the end result, and the performer was appropriately supported through the documentation process.

3.3

Moving Beyond Representation

While documentation had historically functioned as a mechanism for bringing performance back into commodity-oriented, object-based institutional frameworks, in contemporary constellations it might be possible to create modes of documenting that serve the creation of multilayered experience and knowledge, rather than serve a representative function for the performance-event. What this means in practice is that, resources and time permitting, approaching documentation more holistically might be prudent, by including interviews, oral histories, drafts and sounds.

Erin Walter highlights the methodology of layering documentation while presenting ongoing PhD research on performance art documentation. A particularly interesting point she raises is the impulse to move beyond documentation as a souvenir of experience into it functioning as an engine for renewed experiences.¹⁷ This would imply that a sufficiently sensitive approach to documentation can bear fruit in more contextually rich reperformances and archive-based installations, as well as stronger artist networks.

Major art institutions have published resources on developing a documentation strategy. One of these toolkits is the *TATE Documentation Tool: Performance Specification*.¹⁸ While developed specifically for the needs of collecting performance (and documentation), the list of questions it outlines may be useful for any artist looking to negotiate their work with an institution (and vice versa). These questions regard seven key areas: artwork requirements, space, duration, performers, physical components, audience, and broader logistics. The more production-intensive a specific work is, the more benefit there will be in outlining answers to these questions in a way that is clear to communicate to collaborators. Furthermore, creating documentation on these aspects helps the longevity of the author's conceptual framework, ensuring that each reperformance and exhibiting has a way to assess its relation to the original performance-event.

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SALVANDO LAS DISTANCIAS AND WHITE SHEET
(VIDEO DOCUMENTATION)
DARIUS BOGDANOWICZ
BELGRADE, 2025
PHOTO: TANJA DROBNJAK

17 Erin Walter, "Reimagining Performance Art Histories," CI-DOC Museum Documentation Channel, YouTube, accessed February 20, 2026, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0WgxdXC43F0&t=198s>.

18 Louise Lawson, Acatia Finbow, and Hélia Marçal, "Documentation Tool: Performance Specification," in *Documentation and Conservation of Performance*, Tate Research Publication, 2020, <https://www.tate.org.uk/about-us/projects/documentation-conservation-performance/performance-specification>, accessed February 28, 2026.

 KOWADEC
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PERFORMANCE
ART PLATFORM

FULL PROGRAM





4.

Smile for the Camera: Between Video Performance and Video Documentation of a Performance

So far, we assumed an artistic practice that stages in-person performance-events, which are documented through various media. Where does this leave terms such as video performance? How does the documentation–presence relationship morph in different contexts?

The emergence of performance is deeply related to video art. Many performance artists working in the late 1960s onwards were interested in working with the camera, treating it and its implied end-point—the screen—as constitutive elements of the work rather than mere witnesses. As Birringer notes, this period saw performance-oriented videos redefine the problem of physical presence. The body disappears, replaced by a mediated double, and the site of the video feedback is central to the work.¹⁹ Paik's observation that "in video art, space is a function of time"²⁰ reminds us that the video medium does not document an event that precedes it but generates its own spatiotemporal logic. Video documentation is based, by contrast, on the desire to preserve or transmit an event that occurred elsewhere, in real time, before a live audience. Yet the theoretical consensus has moved away from treating documentation as a secondary record.

Let's come back once again to Auslander's assertion that documentation precisely constitutes the performative moment, rather than merely recording the performance-event. In his work, *Liveness*, he deconstructs the privileged space the "real" or "live" event had had in performance art theory, arguing that liveness itself only becomes visible through mediation and technical reproduc-

19 Johannes Birringer, "Video Art / Performance: A Border Theory," *Performing Arts Journal* 13, no. 3 (1991): 69.

20 Ibid.

tion.²¹ The documentation provides extended afterlives to the performance-event, allowing for reconstruction, analysis, interpretation. Auslander therefore concludes that the presence of an initial audience makes no substantial difference to the performance.²²

This overview reveals that the distinction between video performance and video documentation was always partly ideological. Video performance claimed immediacy while depending on mediation, while video documentation claimed veracity while transforming its object. In contemporary practice, particularly in network and internet-based contexts and when performance is conceived with its documentation already in mind, this distinction is of limited use. The camera is never a passive witness but an integral condition. The question for both a video-performer and a performer documenting an event is therefore what aesthetic and political obligations the camera entails.

5. A Possible Checklist

A summary of the questions raised throughout previous sections would be based on a couple of key theses. Firstly, that documentation is intrinsically linked to the reception of a performance piece, and possibly its constitutive performative element. And following this, that the strategy for documenting is best developed as part of the initial conceptualization process, and should represent a logical continuation of the core concepts, in relation to the possibilities and constraints of the context of the piece. Before the event, discussions around official and unofficial documentation should take place. This makes the process smoother and makes sure the outcome meets the subsequent needs of the artist and

21 Philip Auslander, *Liveness: Performance in a Mediatized Culture* (London: Routledge, 1999), 53–54.

22 Auslander, "The Performativity of Performance Documentation," 6.

the performer. Moreover, the more opportunity there is to discuss, the more solid the relationships between the constituents of a piece will be. By creating trust and clearly communicating concepts and needs, the event itself will have greater potential, and its afterlives through documentation will be able to transmit this potential further.

Some key considerations in creating a pre-performance consensus on documentation include:

- ✧ **Artistic concept** – What is the essence of your performance? What are the critical points to be captured?
- ✧ **Format of the performance** – Which experiential aspects are crucial? Is it movement-based, predicated on text, or sound? Is it durational, participatory? Uninterrupted video aided by photography might work best for durational performances, while audio quality could be crucial for sound-based works. If the piece relies on audience interaction, consider capturing reactions.
- ✧ **Future functions** – How do you want to present the documentation in the future? Are you open to exhibiting it in a museum or gallery setting? Is it a part of a larger artistic process? Could it gain a certain degree of autonomy as a separate artwork, and is this a positive or negative outcome?
- ✧ **Archiving, accessibility and longevity** – Do you want the work to be revisited through documentation? Which parts of the archive are to be public, and which private? Consider reliable formats, the quality of the footage, and storage.

- ↘ **Available resources** – Once you have imagined the best-case scenario, deal with the contextual constraints. Do you have access to professional recording equipment, or a DIY setup? Who is responsible for documentation, and what are their abilities? Or are you alone performing and documenting? This may limit your choice of medium and scope.

- ↘ **Ethics** – Some legal contexts necessitate mechanisms such as prior informed consent for the creation and distribution of photos and videos. In the case of IMPORT/EXPORT, event programs handed at the entrance contained a notice that the event would be documented. Even when not legally required, it is valuable to consider the ethics of the documentation process. If your piece is participatory, does documenting it change the participants' behavior? If the piece is delegated, obtaining prior consent should be considered. In all cases, clearly communicate the documenter's role and level of authorship in the process.

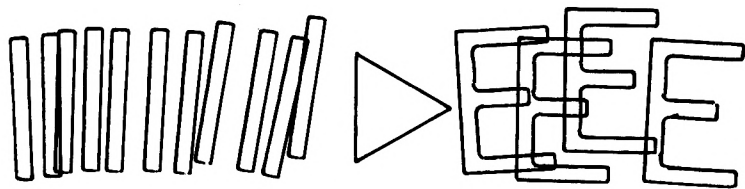
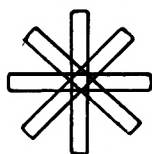
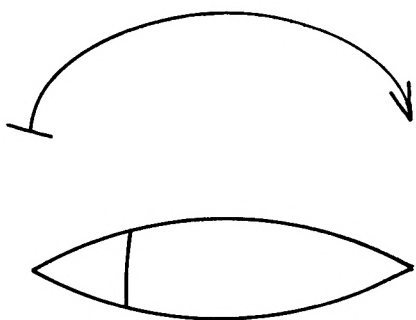
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HOW TO
ORGANIZE
A
FESTIVAL OF
PERFORMANCE
ART,
CRITICAL
AND NEW PERSPECTIVES,
AWARENESSES

Maja Petrović



LOOKING AT IMPORT/EXPORT: HOW TO ORGANIZE
A FESTIVAL OF PERFORMANCE ART, CRITICAL
PERSPECTIVES, AND NEW AWARENESS
MAJA PETROVIĆ

IMPORT/EXPORT, in one of its aspects, is a project initiated by the shared experience of a group of artists who, having identified shortcomings and problems in the realization of performance art projects, sought to establish a platform that would create an example of good practice. They attempted to do so striving not to repeat these mistakes, addressing them instead as constitutive, practical, organizational, and theoretical questions.

Attempting to encompass the three-year span of the project events, as well as the knowledge and experience produced during this period, I realized that my retrospective perspective is compatible with the project's initial position: in both cases, it is a matter of drawing conclusions and lessons from empirical experience. Precisely because this position brings together theoretical insights and practical knowledge, this text offers a view of the project through the lens of the intersection of theory and practice.

Throughout the four years of IMPORT/EXPORT, the community that took shape became a space for exchanging and debating knowledge, opinions, and questions about performance. The traces of these encounters, realized through workshops, performances, presentations of documentation, and informal gatherings, have remained largely ephemeral and unrecorded. Considering the project's overall trajectory and its three editions in Livorno, Berlin, and Belgrade, the decision to create a written record of its outcomes seems fully warranted.

Therefore, the first part of this text, titled *Theory and Practice Kiss* ;*, will attempt to understand, describe, and define projects such

as IMPORT/EXPORT through the problematic relationship between theory and practice. In this context, it unpacks the methodology of such a project, which will be analyzed in greater depth in the following section.

As a continuation of this empirical understanding of the research process, the lessons learned, the problems we resolved, as well as the questions that remained unanswered, will be addressed in the next chapter, titled *What Have We Learned: Conversations with Participants*. This second part will focus on questions that emerged but did not go unnoticed, as by-products and concrete outcomes of the project—issues that surfaced at the center of our discussions held in more traditional settings of intellectual exchange: in hotel rooms after events, over dinners and drinks during informal moments, on phone calls as we shared impressions and recounted what had happened, and during numerous online meetings in which different aspects of the performances were discussed throughout the project's organization.

The text within this chapter is derived from interviews and conversations with participants, organizers, colleagues, and audiences, and is therefore part of a shared, collective, and collaborative authorship. My contribution lies in structuring the material and drawing conclusions from the rich corpus of conversations and responses I received.

2. Theory and Practice Kiss ;*

The gap that exists between theory and practice in the art world can be approached in multiple ways. This problem appears across several different domains: as one of the themes addressed within curatorial studies; as part of the history of exhibitions as a distinct art-historical approach; as a reality faced by actors in the art world engaged in practice-based research or artistic research; and finally, the relationship between theory and practice is embedded

in art history, art theory, and criticism as a kind of generative fissure, since their theoretical frameworks are usually grounded in existing artistic practice. Our approach to this issue can be understood as a combination of all the aforementioned perspectives, but also as a result of operating within the contemporary moment. If knowledge production is possible without a significant historical distance, then we may argue that projects such as *IMPORT/EXPORT* attempt to address questions that are simultaneously closely connected to both the practical and experiential domain of performance art, and to its theoretical investigation. They do so from several positions: artistic; curatorial (by establishing a project model realized through three editions, each targeting a distinct problem area); and through writing (via the engagement of a team composed of five art historians, whose final undertaking within the project is the writing of this publication).

In this sense, the creation of this guide faced a very concrete task: on the one hand, to encompass practice—what actually took place—and on the other, theory, that is, the knowledge we possess and access through existing literature, in order to generate knowledge grounded in experience.

Since the project was realized in three events, we had the opportunity on three occasions to participate, to a certain extent, in both the planning and the realization of the program. Those three years may seem too short a period in which to produce new knowledge and formulate answers to all the questions that arise, yet at the same time long enough to forget the initial position from which we began. What do I mean by this? On a personal level, I find it difficult to speak about what this project taught me or how it shaped my thinking, because I can no longer access the person I was three years ago.

At this point, I will leave aside the personal perspective and return to the problem of theory and practice, though I would like to add a small piece of advice, something I learned that seems fitting for a guide such as this. It might be useful for anyone embarking on a multi-year project at the end of which they will be expected to



AFTERHOURS
BELGRADE, 2025
PHOTO: TANJA DROBNJAK



AFTERHOURS
BELGRADE, 2025
PHOTO: TANJA DROBNJAK

provide some form of evaluation or to articulate the knowledge and experience they have gained. At the beginning of such a project, it might be wise to write a short text, no more than 500 words, addressed to oneself, outlining the information available at that moment and what one expects the final outcome of the project to be. Of course, such a note may ultimately prove to be entirely irrelevant and could easily be discarded once the project is completed. But it might also serve as material that, through comparison, allows for a more adequate assessment of the knowledge and experience that have been gained. Such a text should not carry greater value than that of a hypothesis, something akin to what is obtained through the experience of reading: "...a moment of hesitation or syntactic slide, when the reader is invited to make a certain kind of sense only to discover (at the beginning of the next line) that the sense he has made is either incomplete or simply wrong".¹

Beyond this more or less useful piece of advice, the intention of this text is to map the relationship between theory and practice within this project. I also wish to defend the hypothesis that IMPORT/EXPORT, by making both of these segments constitutive elements of the project, succeeded in bringing together theory and practice overcoming their division and distance, thus advancing our knowledge and experience in both fields.

In order to trace the connection between theory and practice, it is first necessary to determine what exactly constituted practice and what constituted theory within this project. Theory was present at the very inception of the idea of IMPORT/EXPORT, before the project itself was realized. Naturally, the starting point was a problem. Questions concerning how performance artists are treated by institutions and audiences, as well as how performance art itself is perceived, formed the primary point of departure. From these con-

1 Chris Dorsett, "Exhibitions and Their Prerequisites," in *Issues in Curating Contemporary Art and Performance*, ed. Judith Rugg and Michèle Sedgwick (Bristol: Intellect, 2007), 80, quoting Stanley Fish, "Interpreting the Variorum," in David Lodge, ed., *Modern Criticism and Theory: A Reader* (New York: Longman Inc., 1988), 311.

cerns, theoretical problems emerged as points through which performance art could reflect upon itself, its own professionalization, development, and theorization. More precisely, through the formulation of thematic problem areas (i.e. documentation, location, and curation), it was expected that performance, as a domain of practice, would engage with its own theory. It is here that theory and practice meet for the first time. At the same time, it could also be argued that if the idea for the project arose from the shared experience of the core team in their own performance practice, and if they chose to address the identified problem by organizing their own event, then practice was what initially brought them together. The reason I insist on the question of what came first is to avoid later claims that practice emerged from theory. What we are dealing with here is a long-standing issue within performance art: the aspects of institutionalization and theorization often lag behind practice.

The platform through which theory manifested itself within the project consisted of its three editions, the events which addressed documentation, location, and curating as themes. During the development of the program (through the selection of performances, workshops, and lectures), attention was paid to how these elements related to the central topic—that is, to what extent they offered a response to or a reflection on the given problem framework. Their realization, their transformation into concrete events, constituted practice. Practice was embedded in all the elements that made up the planning, organization and execution of the events, as well as in their aftermath when impressions were summarized, reports written, administrative tasks completed, and future steps planned.

If we attempt to dissect the dialectics of the project based on the division between IMPORT and EXPORT events, we will see that these, too, represent practice and theory. On the one hand, practice: two evenings dedicated to the performance of live works. On the other hand, theory, or a combination of theory and practice: artistic residencies, workshops, and lectures developed through the exploration of various themes of performance.

IMPORT/EXPORT succeeded in linking theory and practice within an unpretentious, collectively organized event that avoided several common pitfalls: the curatorial imposition of theoretical concepts, the reduction of the artistic project to a mere illustration of theory, and the elevation of curating above the art that was realized during the project.

I do not claim a neutral position when I describe the principle of curatorial dominance as a “trap”—not because I deny that curating can be a demanding endeavor capable of functioning as an artistic project in its own right, but because such practices often prove susceptible to the construction of a cult of personality, where it becomes more important who curates an exhibition than how it actually looks. This, in turn, sustains a narrow circle of experts who are perceived as desirable, attractive, and prestigious, thereby reinforcing the hierarchization and elitization of an already limited and financially unsupported community of artists and art historians.

In this respect, IMPORT/EXPORT managed, through a division of responsibilities within a team primarily rooted in practice (performers who conceived the project on the basis of their own experience and with the aim of creating better conditions for performing), to avoid the trope of culturepreneurship and the narrow forms of labeling and specialization that are almost inevitable in projects financed through calls and grants. These funding structures often impose rigid alignments with specific target groups, institutions, or missions. Over the course of three years, IMPORT/EXPORT addressed a wide range of issues, of which the three main themes were only a part. Among its participants were both students and lecturers, individuals working in capital cities as well as those active in smaller towns, members of the established scene as well as those belonging to alternative circles. The events were realized in open public spaces, in state institutions, private institutions, and independent art venues. This heterogeneity and openness ultimately serve as a useful reminder that the labels and divisions within the art world function less as fixed boundaries and more as permeable membranes.

The final rounding off of this conjunction of theory and practice within the IMPORT/EXPORT project takes place precisely in the creation of this publication, which represents a post-production outcome that developed throughout all stages of the project, and whose central intention is to shape what was done during the project into a theoretical manual intended for practical use. For this reason, in the continuation of this text, I will attempt to approach the lessons of this guide by also employing the theoretical frameworks it offers.

3. What Have We Learned: Conversations with Participants

In addition to writing the concluding text for this book, my role over these three years also involved conducting interviews with project participants and gathering their experiences in order to synthesize their key insights. What I observed is that these reflections often referred to the already mentioned notions of a culture of care and collaborative labor (as discussed in Jovana Trifunjesko's introduction), to the flexibility highlighted by Ana Simona Zelenović, but also to openness and the possibility of change suggested in Bojana Jovanović's piece on performance and space.

In order not to repeat previously articulated positions, I organized the responses I received through conversations, particularly those that recurred or that I considered important to highlight, into several distinct thematic units, not exhaustive of all the questions, issues, and topics for discussion that I encountered. These chapters are titled *Troubles*, which should not be understood as a term with a necessarily negative connotation, since in several instances I am referring to inconveniences that we were able to overcome and improve upon. The reason for using this term is a reference to what I consider one of the most important works for understanding performance art, Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble*:

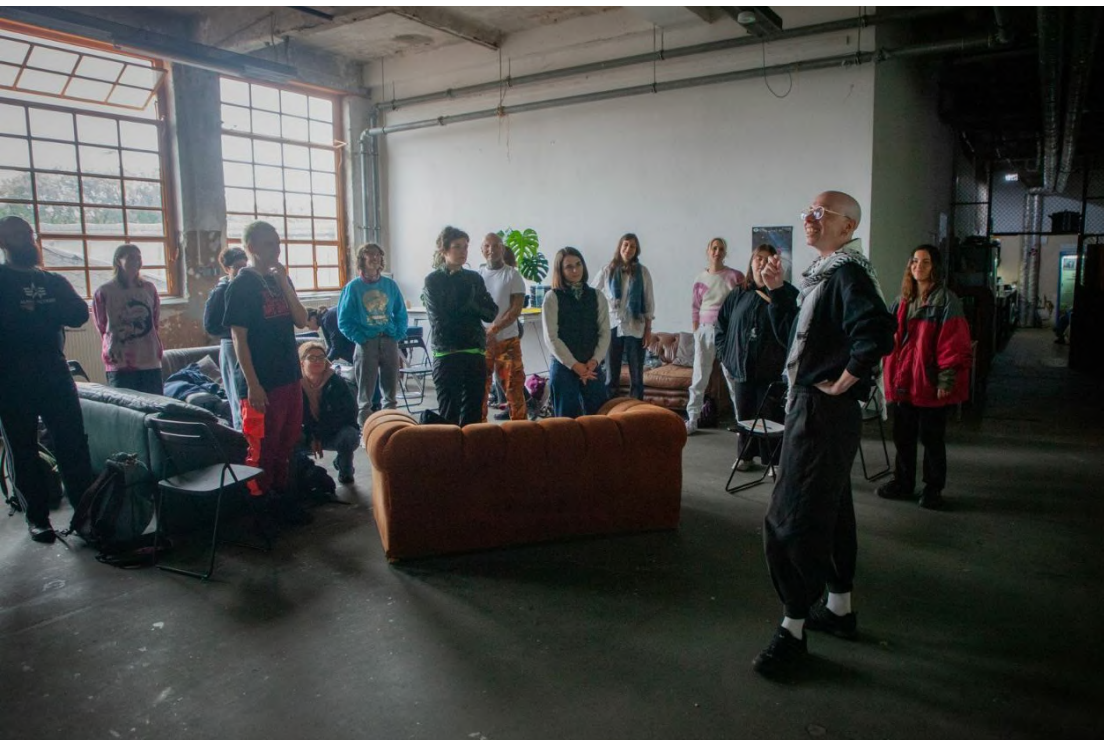
Feminism and the Subversion of Identity (1990)². I use the space of this guide and its pragmatic orientation to emphasize a piece of advice that I consider crucial for anyone interested in performance art: reading professional literature is always the best option, regardless of whether you have experience or not, and regardless of whether you feel you lack theoretical or practical knowledge.

Trouble with terminology

Throughout the collaboration between the core and curatorial teams, particularly during the preparatory stages of program planning and the selection of works submitted through the *Invitation to Apply*, the process of evaluation and final selection was conceived as a collective effort to reach consensus among all members. Yet this very process revealed a central tension: no clear agreement existed among individual team members on what is perhaps the most fundamental question for projects of this kind, namely, what constitutes performance art.

This issue opened up a space for discussion both within the curatorial team, together with Sanda Kalebić, and between the core and curatorial teams. It prompted a reconsideration of the selection process, bringing into sharper focus a set of key questions: Is this proposal situated within performing arts, such as theatre, dance, or music, or within performance art, in the context of IM-PORT? Does it correspond to this year's thematic focus—documentation, location, curating—in relation to the EXPORT segment of the project? And, more fundamentally, does it align with, or

2 Here I should emphasize that my insight into the works of Judith Butler as tools for understanding performance art, and particularly the meaning of the term performativity, I owe to the History and Theory of Performance Art classes, which I will discuss in more detail in the following footnote.



QUEER MATERIALISM
A WORKSHOP BY OLYMPIA BUKKAKIS
BERLIN, 2024
PHOTO: ALFONSO MORAL

depart from, our own understanding of performance art? Two outcomes proved particularly significant. On the one hand, the selection process became more attentive and precise, with arguments during discussions grounded in these problem-based distinctions. On the other hand, discussion extended beyond formal meetings, developing into an ongoing exchange that actively shaped our understanding of the project. One such exchange is worth highlighting, as it left a strong impression on me due to the intensity with which it unfolded. It took place between Jovana Trifuljesko, Sanda Kalebić, and myself after the second performance evening in Livorno, when several works presented on the first evening were repeated. Encountering them again raised a question: had

we, in fact, seen the same works? More precisely, to what extent do variable conditions of performance, including time of day, audience reception, and the emotional and psychological states of the performers, alter the work itself, even when it takes place within less than 24 hours and in the same location? Do such variations produce a different performance altogether? This debate on reperforming has a theoretical background that should be addressed in a footnote³. At the moment in which it occurred, however, it remained unresolved, making visible not a lack of clarity, but the persistence of the problem itself.

A proposed approach to addressing this difficulty: The lack of consensus regarding the definition of key concepts, as well as the terminology in use, can be addressed at the very outset of projects that bring together teams with differing professional and experiential backgrounds. One possible approach would be to in-

3 I consider it important to note here what I see as a direct stimulus and point of reference for this discussion. Sanda Kalebić, Ana Simona Zelenović, Bojana Jovanović, Jovana Trifuljesko, Dunja Belić, and myself all completed our undergraduate studies in art history at the Faculty of Philosophy, University of Belgrade. At the time this discussion took place, however, Jovana had already attended an elective course within the MA program in art history, while I encountered its syllabus and reading list only the following year. The course, taught by Professor Jasmina Čubrilo and titled History and Theory of Performance Art, is structured around a series of thematic units, including the definition of performance, the concept of performativity, the notion of reenactment, among others. The discussion described here was directly prompted by debates on these topics that took place within the course, in which, at that point, only Jovana had participated.

roduce a collective exercise aimed at producing a shared index of terms. The glossary that emerged from the IMPORT/EXPORT project, through the process of developing the guide texts, offers a model for such a practice and a starting point for further projects.

Trouble with formulating taste

At the beginning of this chapter, I find it necessary to return once again to the *Invitation to Apply*, as it served as the initial point of departure for clearly articulating what the project set out to achieve, namely the implementation of a care-oriented approach, the establishment of adequate working conditions, and the fair compensation of performers. This, in turn, further complicated the selection process, as a greater emphasis on care also implied a greater investment of time, attention, and labor. I would like to emphasize here that the focus on care within the context of this project was not merely an attractive keyword or a phrase with good traction in funding applications. For some of the project participants, a care- and support-based approach proved to be not only an enabling condition, but a prerequisite for the realization of their own performance work.

The process of selection was therefore not limited to aesthetic or conceptual criteria, but extended to the conditions under which the work could be realized. Particular attention was given to questions of care, including safety, preparation, recovery, and modes of documentation, acknowledging performance as an embodied and time-based practice. In this sense, curatorial decision-making was inseparable from the articulation of working conditions.

The *Invitation to Apply* functioned as a key instrument in this process, operating not only as a selection mechanism but also as a transparent framework through which expectations, resources, and constraints were articulated in advance. By defining fees, budgets, timelines, and modes of participation, it enabled a more conscious negotiation between artistic intentions and production realities.



FESTIVAL, A PERFORMATIVE READING
DARIUS BOGDANOWICZ
BELGRADE, 2025
PHOTO: TANJA DROBNJAK

In addition, a less significant point of tension lies in the lack of alignment in aesthetic criteria, which, in collaborative work or in the merging of different teams, must be understood as the most likely circumstance (and should be understood by the margin of error). The result brings together our perspectives, practices, understandings, interpretations, tastes, and criteria in such a way that it is constituted as a unified and unrepeatable outcome. However, not every individual would claim that all elements of the project were such, nor would everyone agree that all proposed performances, workshops, and lectures met their personal criteria. The final result is, we would agree, something that all members of the core and curatorial teams recognize as good and successful, and which, whether considered across its three iterations or as a whole, can be understood as a form of constructing taste and value. What do these constructions speak to? What was important for us to express and demonstrate through our selections? What kinds of compromises would we not accept? All of these questions would require individual texts and further research. Therefore, I would say that, despite divergences that proved to be fertile ground for the work and improvement of the project, our consensus, constancy, and a field of shared core values is the space in which artistic, but also curatorial work is simultaneously political. The reader is invited to consult the list of performed works included in this guide to trace these shared principles. Within the context of the methodology applied throughout the IMPORT/EXPORT project, the insights gathered from the Q&A with the core team highlight a perspective not yet addressed: the principle that knowledge should not be viewed merely as 'know-how,' but as a responsibility to take a position. This involves sharing knowledge in a non-hierarchical and non-colonial way, specifically prioritizing a queer perspective. Such an approach allows the team to address discussions through personal experience and lived reality, deliberately avoiding 'normalized' or predetermined paths in favor of a more authentic, political engagement.

A proposed approach to addressing this difficulty: Shared starting points and value systems among collaborators on a project do not necessarily have to be those that can be described through artistic or art-historical terminology. In this sense, the

emerging project becomes a field of empirical and collaborative production of shared knowledge, in which certain preconceptions are revealed as falsifiable hypotheses, while specific areas of interest are further deepened. One possible approach to addressing this difficulty emerges from reflections offered by one of the core team members, who suggested that, where the framework and temporal structure of a project allow for it, more time could be invested in building partnerships in order to ensure a degree of shared and realistic expectations about what lies ahead, as well as a sense of ownership of, and engagement with, the project among all participants.

Trouble with the margin of error

Participation in the realization of a four-year project of this scale has highlighted—for many of us encountering such an extensive and demanding framework for the first time—the primacy of process over final outcome. Periods of planning and overcoming organizational difficulties thus became genuine platforms for learning and for the development of our own knowledge and skills. What consistently emerges, however, is a paradox: communication occupies the largest share of working time and is the most extensively used tool, yet it appears to be the least developed aspect of collaborative work. An area in which communication was significantly improved was communication with the audience, achieved through the use of questionnaires. One of the project's key objectives was to shape a curatorial and organizational approach that would establish a clearer and more accessible relationship with the audience. Over the course of the three events, this became increasingly visible in the way the program was structured and communicated, allowing audiences to navigate a complex performance context with greater awareness and involvement. This shift was closely tied to a continuous process of feedback

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*PERFORMANCE AS AN ACT OF
TRANSGRESSION AND RESISTANCE*
A LECTURE BY IVANA RANISAVLJEVIĆ
BELGRADE, 2025
PHOTO: TANJA DROBNJAK



and adjustment, through which modes of communication were gradually refined.

Alongside communicative processes, temporal coordination and the distribution of responsibilities emerge as the most frequently cited challenges, while at the same time being identified as the areas in which participants report the greatest degree of improvement, as well as the knowledge most directly transferable to future work. Taken together with financial and production-related constraints, these factors can be understood as constituting a domain that may be described as a set of structural inevitabilities of error within which collaborative projects of this scale necessarily operate, and for which they should anticipate a space within the margin of error.

It is difficult here to offer practical advice that would not resemble commercially oriented pragmatic literature, just as it is difficult to engage in a form of professional self-reflection without the entanglement of personal and private. On several occasions during conversations with participants, it was noted, within the organizational and production domain, that projects of this kind are funded and supported in a way that transforms the project, its development, and our roles within it into a bureaucratized system whose language, mechanisms, and dynamics appear entirely artificial and unfamiliar. The project's dynamics, to which we are all subject, are dictated by financial constraints alone, which are by no means sufficient, and any deviation from the imposed timeline, even before resulting in further financial shortfall, leads to a breakdown of trust and interpersonal relations, since if every action implies a reaction, then in team-based projects every lack of timely action results in compensatory action by another colleague. The question of what happens to our professional personas after such a project leads to the following conclusion, which I reached by observing that responses tended to fall broadly into two positions: adaptation, understood as the attempt to refine one's professional persona for future opportunities; and rupture, where the project concludes one's interest in this mode or field of work, leading to a shift in direction. This experience further confirms the status of such projects as

platforms for learning, and the fact that these dispositions are similar to the decisions made by students at the end of a stage of education points to a completed and rounded process of learning and of finding answers to one's own questions.

A proposed approach to addressing this difficulty: Here I will draw again on one of the responses received during interviews with members of the core team, which points to the importance of critically assessing one's own readiness, perspective, and expectations when first engaging with large-scale projects. The suggestion is that, for anyone currently interested in producing an event, it would be valuable to pause once funding is secured, or even prior to that stage, and to reflect honestly on the actual needs of one's practice: on what it means to initiate or conclude a project; on what feels genuinely aligned with one's intuition and motivations, including what is currently perceived as personally fulfilling; and finally, on what can be realistically sustained within financial limits while still allowing for continuity and future work.

Trouble with trouble

Another significant dimension of the project lies in the adaptability demonstrated by its organizers, namely their capacity to respond to conditions that frequently arise in projects of this scale and can, to a certain extent, be anticipated. After the first year of implementation, co-funding was absent until the very end, requiring substantial adjustments to the project's structure and execution. At the same time, the project encountered- particularly in its final stage- circumstances that, at least for us as a team in this configuration, were entirely unprecedented. At the planning stage, it had been envisaged that the third phase would take place in Belgrade in the autumn of 2025. However, no one could have anticipated the large-scale student and civic protests that unfolded in Serbia during that period. These events not only profoundly reshaped our lives, but also brought into focus a broader shift in priorities and values, raising the question of whether it was possible to dedicate attention to such a project, and whether it was ethically defensible



RESTROY
A WORKSHOP BY MAJA SIMIŠIĆ
BELGRADE, 2025
PHOTO: TANJA DROBNJAK



FLUTGRABEN'S HISTORY
A LECTURE BY CHRISTINE BRECHT WITH A GUIDED
TOUR BY MATTHIAS KRAUSE HAMRIN
BERLIN, 2024
PHOTO: MATTHIAS KRAUSE HAMRIN

to proceed at a moment when students, minors, and citizens were being detained and violently assaulted on a daily basis.

A resolution was found on the other side of this ethical dilemma. To suspend the project would have meant a form of defeatism, while the material we would have chosen not to present as our selection of cultural and artistic values would, in effect, become material that never entered the public sphere, work for which no struggle is registered and whose very conditions of future emergence can be decisively foreclosed. Continuing therefore meant realizing the project despite everything. This *everything* includes not only the absence of funding or the lack of results from public calls for cultural financing (as is the case with the City of Belgrade Secretariat for Culture and the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Serbia), but also a broader context marked by significant production and organizational difficulties, the cancellation or reduction of the programme in cultural spaces due to lack of resources, and the loss of previously established collaborations and venues. In the context of these constraints, it is important to note that many participants with whom I spoke emphasized the project's remarkable adaptability in response to the financial difficulties that followed its first year of implementation.

This brings us to two distinct fields of gained knowledge. The first concerns the production conditions under which the project unfolded, while the second opens a set of questions regarding the sustainability of the nomadic platform itself. On the one hand, a number of reflections point to the necessity of greater financial realism and more precise planning of resources, both temporal and economic. The scale and ambition of the project often exceeded the available means. Members of the core team gained invaluable insight into the modalities of production work, which led some of them to note that their perspective had expanded from an understanding of the position of the unpaid artist to an understanding of the scope of work carried out by the unpaid producer.

On the other hand, the nomadic structure—while generative in terms of exchange, mobility, and the expansion of networks—si-

multaneously exposed its own limitations. The need to repeatedly establish new contexts, rebuild relationships, and operate within already saturated local scenes introduced a level of instability that calls into question the long-term sustainability of such a model. In this sense, the nomadic platform emerges as both an inspirational but a demanding format, whose continuity would require forms of return, continuity, and re-engagement.

Another contradiction that emerges within the domain of organization concerns the distribution of responsibilities. The absence of clearly defined roles was frequently identified as a problem by members of the core and curatorial teams, particularly in relation to efficiency and accountability. At the same time, this very lack of fixed structure was also understood as something that developed organically over the course of the project, and as a field in which participants reported significant growth. Although such a condition, which can be understood as a negative byproduct of open and horizontal working structures in terms of organization, was often interpreted as a shortcoming, within the artistic domain this openness was more frequently perceived as a positive factor. For the artists participating in the project, who had the opportunity to develop their artistic approaches within a single edition not only through performance (IMPORT), but also through workshops or lectures (EXPORT), this openness and variability of roles constituted a key and productive feature of this type of project.

These principles were also reflected in the way in which, after the selection of the IMPORT and EXPORT programmes, dialogue with participants was conducted and their ideas were gradually developed. On the other hand, from the perspective of the curatorial team, roles, responsibilities, and levels of engagement also shifted over time, and in this sense the core team was responsive to the curatorial team's needs regarding involvement in the project.

In many responses, teamwork itself was ultimately recognized as one of the project's strongest values. The fluidity of roles enabled a continuous exchange of knowledge and skills, producing a form of collective labor that, while often demanding and at times unsus-

tainable, allowed for a more complex and responsive working process. This was further reinforced by the encounter between two teams with markedly different backgrounds, where collaboration and the construction of heterogeneous working groups were recognized as a process that enables greater stratification and complexity in modes of perception and understanding.

4. So... Would We Do It Again?

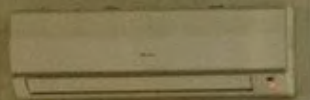
Looking back at the IMPORT/EXPORT project, a series of dispersed results and outcomes can be identified, extending beyond those visible in the formation of a nomadic community and the implementation of a care-based methodology in performance art production. These outcomes are equally present in singular, individual experiences, learnings, and forms of advancement. This text has attempted to trace certain recurring points along the trajectory of the project, while also offering suggestions for addressing challenges that range from differing understandings of concepts and terminology to questions of organization, logistics, and production. Due to its structure, the text could not fully assume the form of a practical manual; instead, through experiential observations and proposed approaches to anticipating or confronting these challenges, it seeks to contribute to one of the project's fundamental characteristics—the conjunction of theory and practice. This relationship constituted the central concern of both the theoretical and empirical dimensions of the text, which aimed to render these interdependent elements visible and operational within the project's structure, thus establishing them as a productive field for further reflection and development. The importance of such an approach becomes particularly evident when the project is considered within the framework of artistic research. In this sense, IMPORT/EXPORT can be understood as a form of continuous, process-based research that exceeds the boundaries of disciplines, professions, and institutional frameworks. Through its three editions and the collaborative work of artists, curators, and

professionals in the field of arts and culture, the project functioned as a platform for the production of situated knowledge, grounded in concrete working conditions, shared responsibility, and collective reflection.

The research shaped through the texts within the guide unfolded in parallel with, and inseparably from, all stages of the IMPORT/EXPORT project, where individual texts represent theoretical elaborations and contributions while simultaneously translating practical experience into operational formats. Particularly significant in a pragmatic and applied sense are the check lists at the end of the texts, as well as the unified glossary. The inclusion of concrete tools such as checklists and clearly formulated working principles indicates a shift from documentation toward the production of transferable knowledge. In this sense, IMPORT/EXPORT analyzes its own processes and actively constructs a set of methodological proposals that can be adopted, tested, and further developed in future contexts.

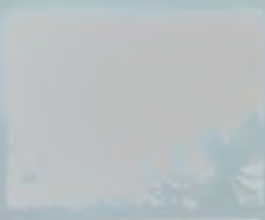
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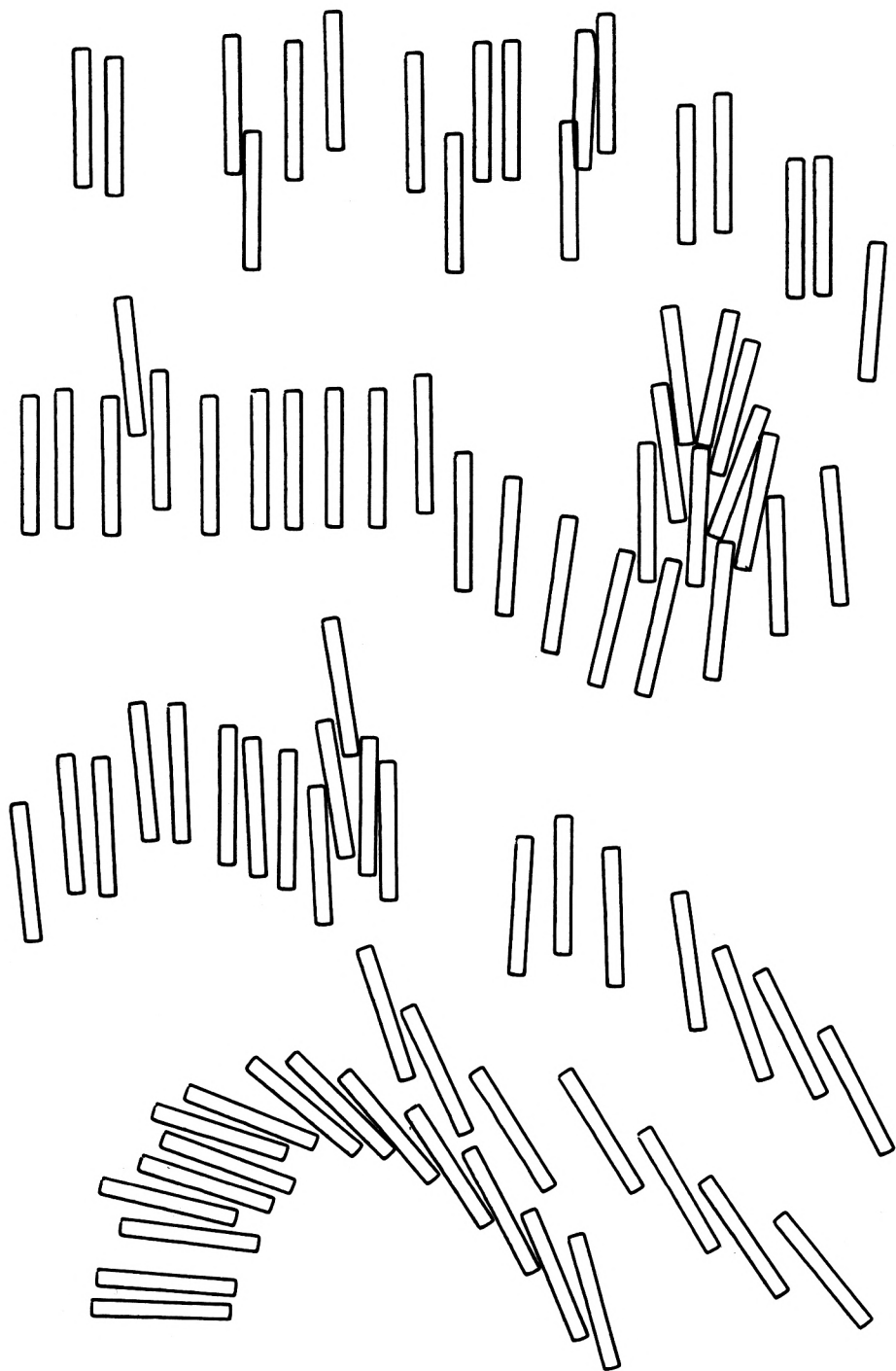
*SHORT HISTORY OF PERFORMANCE
ART AS A HISTORY OF RESISTANCE*
A LECTURE BY ANA SIMONA ZELENVIĆ
BELGRADE, 2025
PHOTO: TANJA DROBNJAK



The current guide content

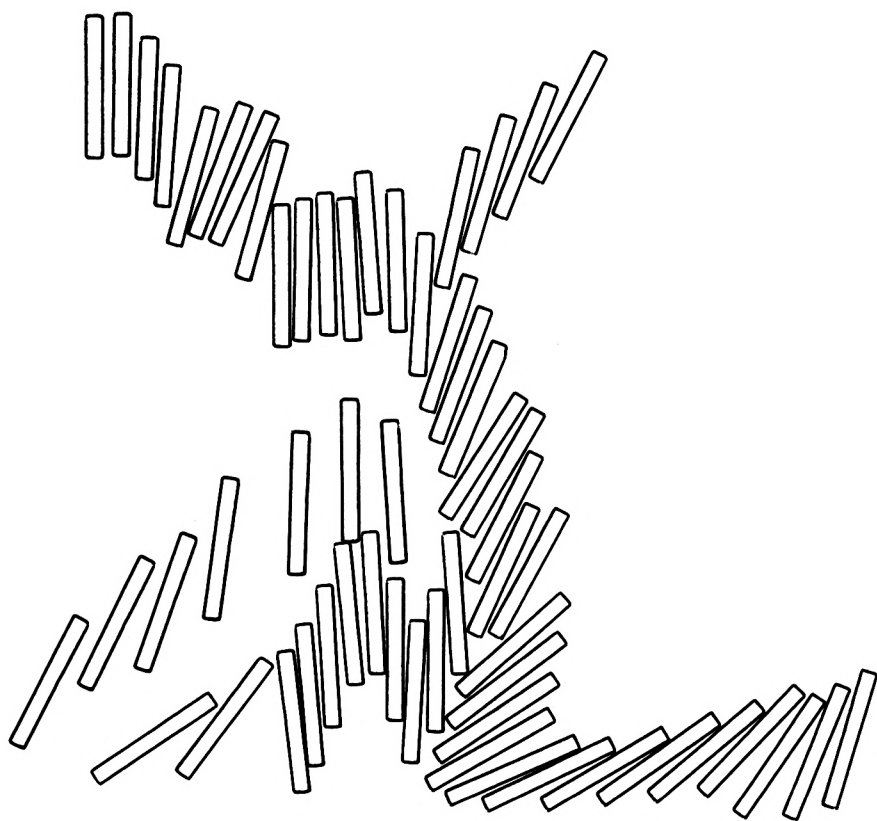
- Description of the set of objectives
- Objectives and priorities
- Examples on the practical use of the available data
- Evidence-based synthesis, coordination, and action, technical advice





GLASS
ARRAY

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GLOSSARY

Affective Labor

An often invisible labor based on producing or managing feelings, relationships, and social connections. In the context of performance art and collaborative projects, affective labor often includes the emotional and relational work of building trust, a safe environment, maintaining community, and attending to the wellbeing of artists and participants—work that is often underestimated and uncompensated.

Archival Afterlife

The continued existence of a performance through documentation, citation, and reinterpretation

Audience Agency

The capacity of spectators to influence, modify, or complete the structure of a performance.

Autopoietic Feedback Loop

The dynamic exchange between performer and audience through which performance emerges as a shared, continuously shifting event.

Collective / Collaborative Curating

A curatorial approach in which an exhibition is developed through collaboration between curators, artists, and sometimes audiences, challenging hierarchical structures within institutions.

Curator-as-auteur

A concept in curatorial studies that describes a model in which the curator functions as the primary creative author of an exhibition, shaping its conceptual framework, narrative, and structure in a way similar to how a film director authors a film.

Delegated Performance

A performative structure in which authorship or bodily agency is redistributed across participants, audiences, or social formations.

Discursive Curating

A curatorial approach popular during the 2000s in which exhibitions expand beyond display to include talks, workshops, seminars, and debates, becoming a discursive platform for dialogue and critical reflection.

Distributed Presence

A condition in which presence is not limited to physical co-presence but unfolds across documentation, memory, mediation, and circulation.

Documentation Strategy

A pre-planned, intentional approach to how a performance will be recorded, preserved, and transmitted. Rather than treating documentation as an afterthought, documentation strategy is developed as part of the performance's conceptualization.

Durational Aesthetics

An approach to performance that foregrounds extended time, endurance, repetition, or sustained attention as structural elements.

Hybrid Space

A layered environment where physical and digital realities overlap, producing multiple modes of perception and participation.

Immaterial Performance Space

A spatial condition not defined by architecture, but by discourse, memory, digital mediation, or relational structures.

Institutional Framing

The set of curatorial, economic, and historical conditions that influence how performance is presented, received, and legitimized within institutional spaces.

Interdependency

The condition of mutual reliance between individuals, communities, and institutions; a fundamental aspect of social life which serves as a basis for building more caring and equitable structures of collaboration.

Live Art

A broad term used to describe time-based artistic practices that involve the presence of the artist and/or audience in real time. It is often used as an umbrella concept that includes performance art, experimental theatre, dance, body art, actions, and other interdisciplinary practices that occur live rather than as static objects. The term became widely used in the 1990s and 2000s, particularly in the UK, to describe experimental and hybrid performance practices that did not fit neatly into traditional categories such as theatre, dance, or visual art.

Mediated Liveness

A form of presence negotiated across technological systems, where “live” experience is shaped by recording, streaming, or digital circulation.

Mediatization

Following Auslander’s reading of Derrida, the structural embedding of mediation within any claim to immediacy. Mediatization means more than use of media, approaching the constitutive relationship between liveness and its technical reproduction.

New Institutionalism

A shift in curatorial and institutional practices that emerged in the late 1990s and early 2000s, in which art institutions began to rethink their role beyond simply exhibiting

artworks. Instead of functioning only as spaces for display, institutions started to operate as sites of production, research, dialogue, and social engagement.

Nomadic Platform

A term representing a structure that does not belong to a fixed location or institution but rather moves between cities, communities, and contexts, adapting to each while maintaining a consistent set of values and methodologies. IMPORT/EXPORT operates as a nomadic platform, allowing it to engage with different social and artistic realities without being anchored to any single one.

Performance Documentation

Not merely a record of an event, but a constitutive element that generates new contexts, meanings, and afterlives for the work.

Performative Curating

Curatorial approach in which the act of curating itself is treated as a performative, temporal, and experiential practice, rather than a static display of objects.

Programmable Space

A technologically structured environment, such as VR, AR, or AI-mediated systems, where spatial experience is shaped by interface, code, and connectivity rather than architecture alone.

Public Space Contingency

The unpredictability and exposure inherent in public performance contexts, where interruption, resistance, and accidental spectatorship shape the work.

Relational Space

Space, understood not as fixed architecture, but as something produced through interaction, practice, and encounter.

Reperformance

The restaging of a performance work, either by the original artist or by others, in a new context. It functions both as an act of presence and as a mode of documentation.

Representative Image

A photograph or video still that functions primarily as a legible summary of a performance or event. Although useful for portfolios, publications, and institutional communication, it tends to favor the reading of a performance as an ephemeral event and its document as secondary.

Reproductive Labor

The term encompasses work that sustains life and social relationships, including caregiving, emotional support, and domestic tasks. Historically, this type of labor has been devalued because it does not directly contribute to economic output. Within cultural institutions, reproductive labor often goes unrecognized, despite its essential role in creating the conditions necessary for artistic production.

Re-siting

The process through which a performance acquires new meaning when transferred into another context, whether through documentation, reinterpretation, or relocation.

Site-Adaptive Performance

A performance approach designed to adjust to different spatial conditions while maintaining its conceptual core. Unlike strictly site-specific work, it allows for flexibility and transformation in response to changing architectural, social, or institutional contexts.

Site-Responsive Performance

A performance that engages with or responds to a specific location but is primarily concept-driven. The work focuses on thematic elements of a site. Because its structure is less likely to be locked to a site's dimensions, the performance

can be dynamically adapted to different, though thematically related, venues.

Site-Specific Performance

A performance conceived in direct relation to a specific location, where meaning emerges from the interaction between the work and the spatial, historical, and institutional conditions of the site.

Spatial Dramaturgy

The use of architecture, environment, and spatial relations as compositional elements shaping the structure and experience of performance.

Spatial Negotiation

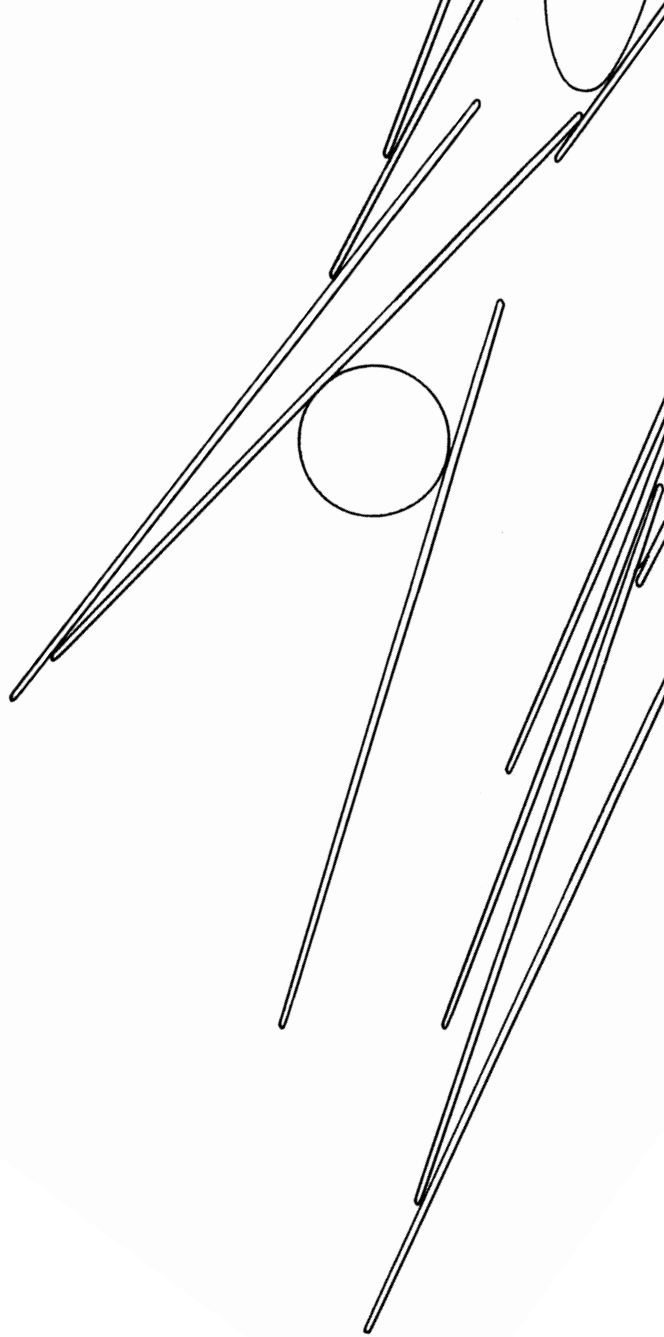
The process through which artists adapt their work to institutional, political, and material conditions of a site.

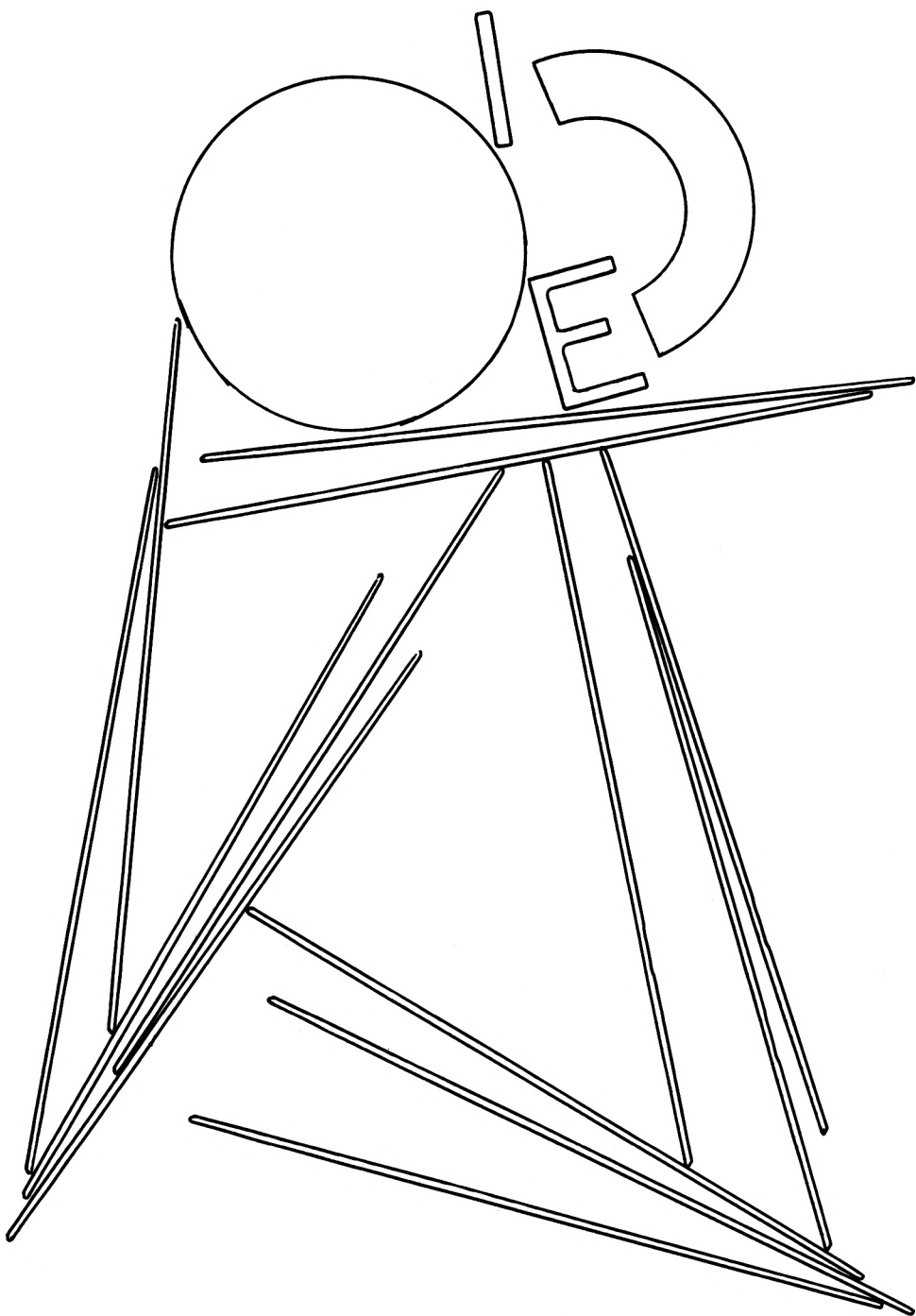
Unlearning

A concept referring to the active process of identifying and dismantling internalized hierarchies, assumptions, and divisions. Unlearning is understood as a collective and ongoing practice rather than a singular event.

Video Performance

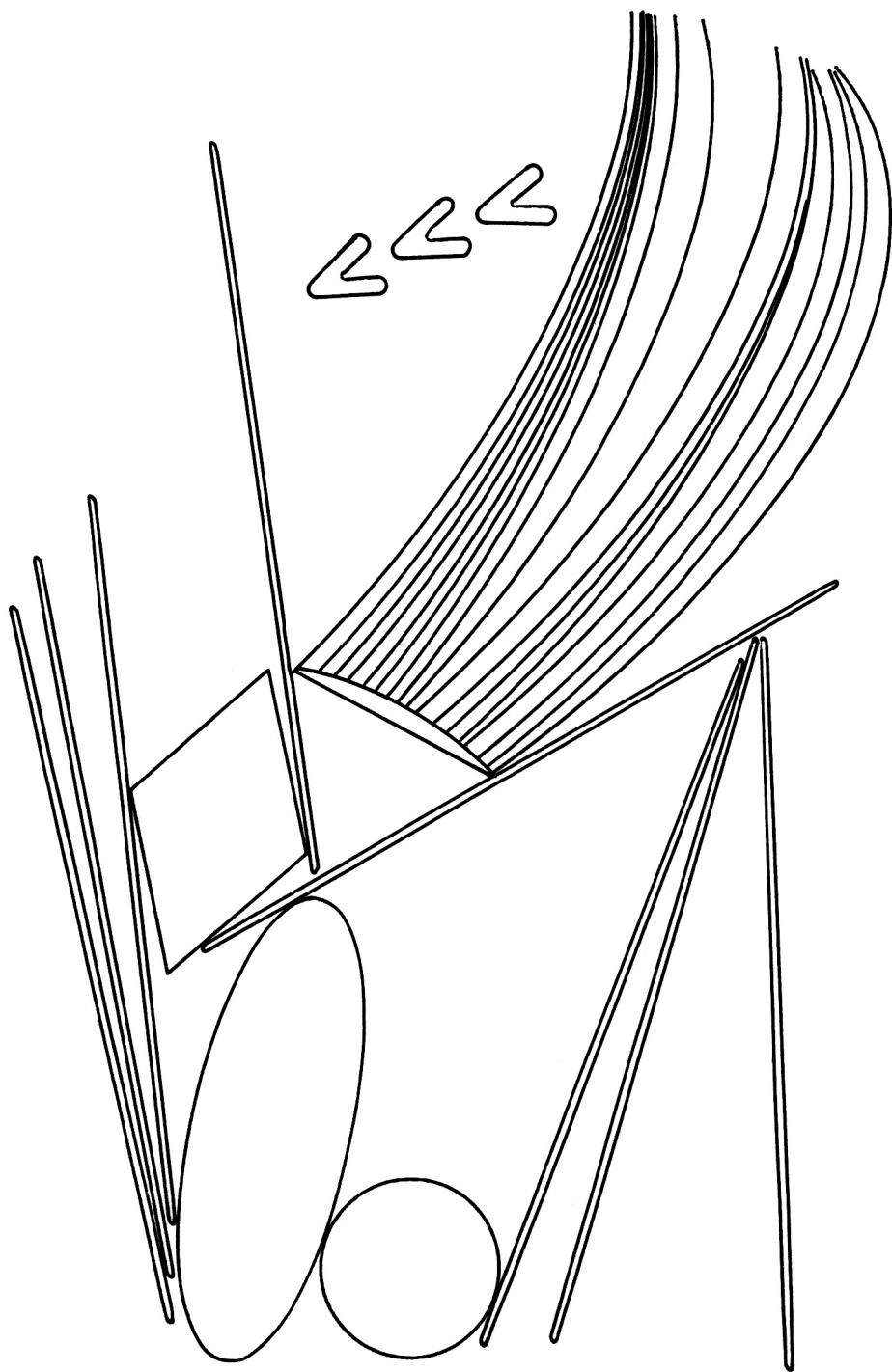
An artistic medium in which the camera and screen are treated as constitutive elements of the work, rather than external witnesses to a separate live event.





IMPORT/
EXPORT

PERFORMANCE
GLOSSARY



IMPORT PERFORMANCE GLOSSARY



**First Event: Livorno
Fortezza Vecchia,
September 22–23, 2023**

- **“Picture of Resistance” by Alireza Ostovar** focuses on the oppression of human rights faced by Iranian women. It is conceived as an expression of solidarity and support in public space, employing precise and direct language to confront the complex issues surrounding this subject matter and transmit a symbolic message of freedom.
- **“ACTA DISTANTIAE 2.18 (The Journal of Distance 2.18)” by Aleksander Zain** fuses live performance and video presentation on the act of walking the distance from Venice to Livorno. The subtitle 2.18 refers to Google Maps’ calculated walking time of 2 days and 18 hours between the two ports. The work explores the relationship between metaphorical and literal aspects of a personal journey, playing with the dialectics of witnessed presence and secondary account, individual and collective experience. The walk was performed live on the second night along the perimetral wall of the Fortezza Vecchia, challenging the understanding of temporal, spatial, and experiential determinism.
- **“Scheletro della Vita” by Rascal Black** is a participatory performance addressing environmental pollution through an homage to the fashion designer Alexander McQueen and Marina Abramović’s *Rhythm 0*. The public is invited to reappropriate waste by dressing the artist in it. By using local human waste found in the Livorno area to burden the human body, the artist critiques and transcends anthropocentric contexts. Within this framework, a unique and symbolic link is formed, connecting the human body, the collective body (anthropos), and the materiality of the environment, underscoring their interdependence.
- **“Fallen Bird” by RILABEN, Enrico L’Abbate** uses gravity as a constitutive formal and conceptual element, examining imagination, the dream of flight, loneliness and solidarity. Gravity is understood as an entry point to questioning the universality of laws, norms,

and emotions, prompting a critical examination of standardisation and governance, contrasting the notions of openness, plurality, and adaptability against rigidity, determinism, and inevitability.

- **“In the Name of the Mother and the Daughter” by Ivana Ranisavljević** consists of two distinct performances linked by a common theme. The first explores women’s experiences and the divergence between universally recognized human rights and their real-world implications, employing concepts of breaking silence and assertive communication. The second introduces multimedia elements into a broader exploration of transgenerational norms, familial burdens and gender discrimination, incorporating audience participation, video work and an installation environment.
- **“Heaven Spot” by Florence Lam** involves the artist carving car wreckage in the Sala Cannoniera of Fortezza Vecchia in an act of destruction, emotional release, and connection to civilization’s past and future. The work questions the notions of humanity, public property, and morality.
- **“Una Fantasmagoria” by Maria Larocca** was a site-specific installation within the highest tower of Fortezza Vecchia, the Mastio di Matilde, which was filled with thick smoke visible from the outside. Entry to the tower was available for one person at a time, without a time-limit, allowing visitors to engage with the concept of exposure and the experience of time. For the duration of the installation, the audience had the freedom to take breaks, find solace, enjoy moments of silence, and partake in auditory experiences.
- **“Anonima” by Cecilia Ventriglia, in collaboration with Davide Calvaresi**, is a durational performance featuring the performer’s interaction with a life-sized cardboard puppet bearing a resemblance to Jesus. The artists explore the full spectrum of movements this object can undertake, reflecting on duality between humanity and divinity, men and women, individuals and objects, and the intricate relationships of power.
- **“Dreams About Dying_funeralia” by Marta Capaccioli and Lucrezia Palandri** is a performance art piece exploring the theme of mortality through performing a funerary ritual. The work offers a unique perspective on the interconnectedness of life and death and the transformative power of saying goodbye. The performance took place in a deconsecrated chapel on the fortress grounds.

- **“Gold Diggers” by Danaï Galeou and Darius Bogdanowicz** is an interactive and participatory performance that revolves around themes of volition, desire, need, and the juxtaposition of collective versus individual. The artists utilize group motions to create a collective body, mirroring the descent of the sun.

**Second Event: Berlin
Flutgraben e.V.
September 20–21, 2024**

- **“The Building has a Shape of the River” by Tanja Ostojić** is a site-responsive performance exploring the relationship between the body, architecture, and the Spree River. Through physical interaction with the building and the water, the artist evokes the layered history of the site, including its proximity to the former Berlin Wall. The act of pulling bricks from the river intensifies the work, symbolically reconnecting the space to its natural past.
- **“o r d i n e” by Sharon Estacio** is a performance focused on invisible labor, identity, and language, where the artist cleans windows with her hair and inscribes words visible only from a distance. Blending personal and collective narratives, the work reflects on liminality and transnational experience. It challenges stereotypes while making marginalized identities more visible.
- **“Eclissi Urbane/Urban Eclipses” by Maria Novella Tattanelli** is a visually striking performance about transience and transformation, in which paint slowly alters the artist's body over time. The contrast between bodily vulnerability and the raw industrial setting reinforces themes of decay and change. The work reflects on the instability of beauty and the passage of time.
- **“Paranoia Raum” by Andreja Kargačič** is an immersive and unsettling environment where the artist writes about her fears on the walls while surrounded by objects from her great-uncle's life. The basement-like setting, filled with fragments of personal and historical memory, creates an atmosphere of anxiety and inherited paranoia. The work intertwines personal narrative with post-Yugoslav histories and contemporary fears.

- **“Within the Veil of Speaking Bitterness” and “REDEFINE” by Ivana Ranisavljević** form a diptych addressing patriarchy and violence through the body, text, and audience participation. In the first part, visitors share experiences that are collected and later voiced, while the second uses the artist’s body as a site for redefining femininity. The work opens space for collective confrontation and release.
- **“Jaettu/Shared” by Tiina Lehtimäki** is a participatory performance in which the artist invites others to share the physical burden of carrying a metal bar. The audience’s reluctance becomes central to the work, revealing limits of collective responsibility. At the same time, the piece disrupts movement through space, forcing visitors to adjust their paths.
- **“Wounded Rhymes” by Chollada Phinitduang and Thomas Rohe** is a dynamic dance performance exploring the emotional traces left by human relationships. Through movement, breath, and sound, it reflects on connection in a time of global instability. The shifting locations within the space create a layered and immersive experience.
- **“Heavy Duty Beauty” by Olympia Bukkakis** is a hybrid of drag and performance art that uses industrial materials to examine gender, identity, and queer aesthetics. Tools and construction elements are transformed into costumes and symbols, destabilizing normative ideas of masculinity and femininity. The work balances theatricality with critical inquiry.
- **“Departure” by Marina Arienza** is a performance centered on smell, filling the space with fumes that gradually drive the audience out. The repetitive movement of a small engine and the artist’s presence create a tension between discomfort and absurdity. The work reflects on departure, transition, and the relationship between body and space.
- **“Hader Halal” by Fehras Publishing Practices** is a lecture-performance revisiting the legacy of the Afro-Asian Solidarity Movement and the magazine “Lotus.” Combining speech, movement, and audience participation, it stages a simulation of forced migration. The work connects historical narratives with present-day experiences of displacement and solidarity.

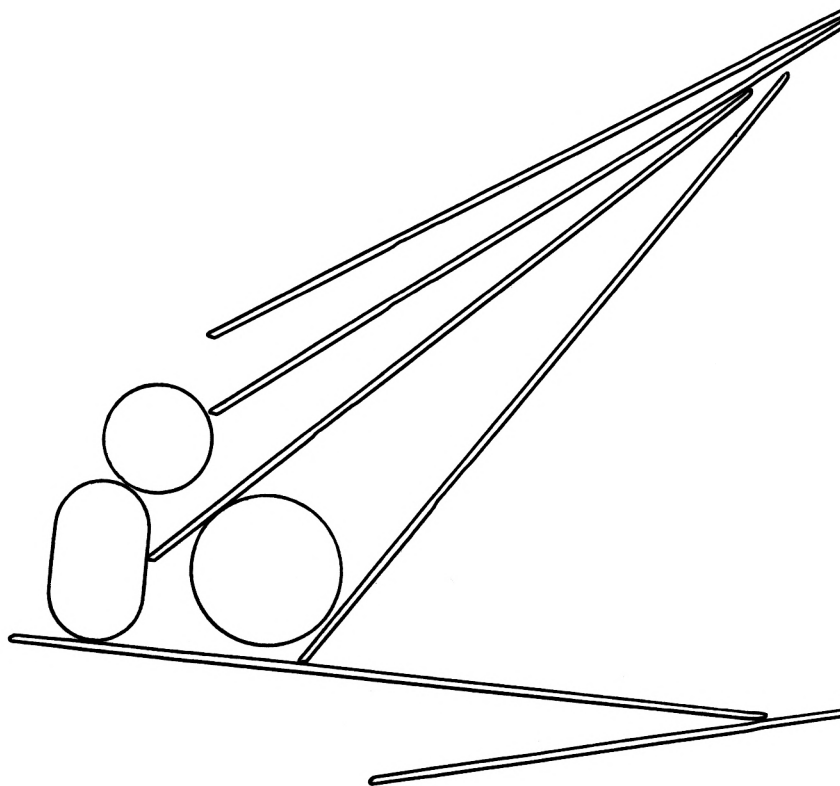
Third Event: Belgrade
U10 Art Space, SULUJ Gallery, Flower Square
(Cultural Centre of Belgrade),
October 8–11, 2025

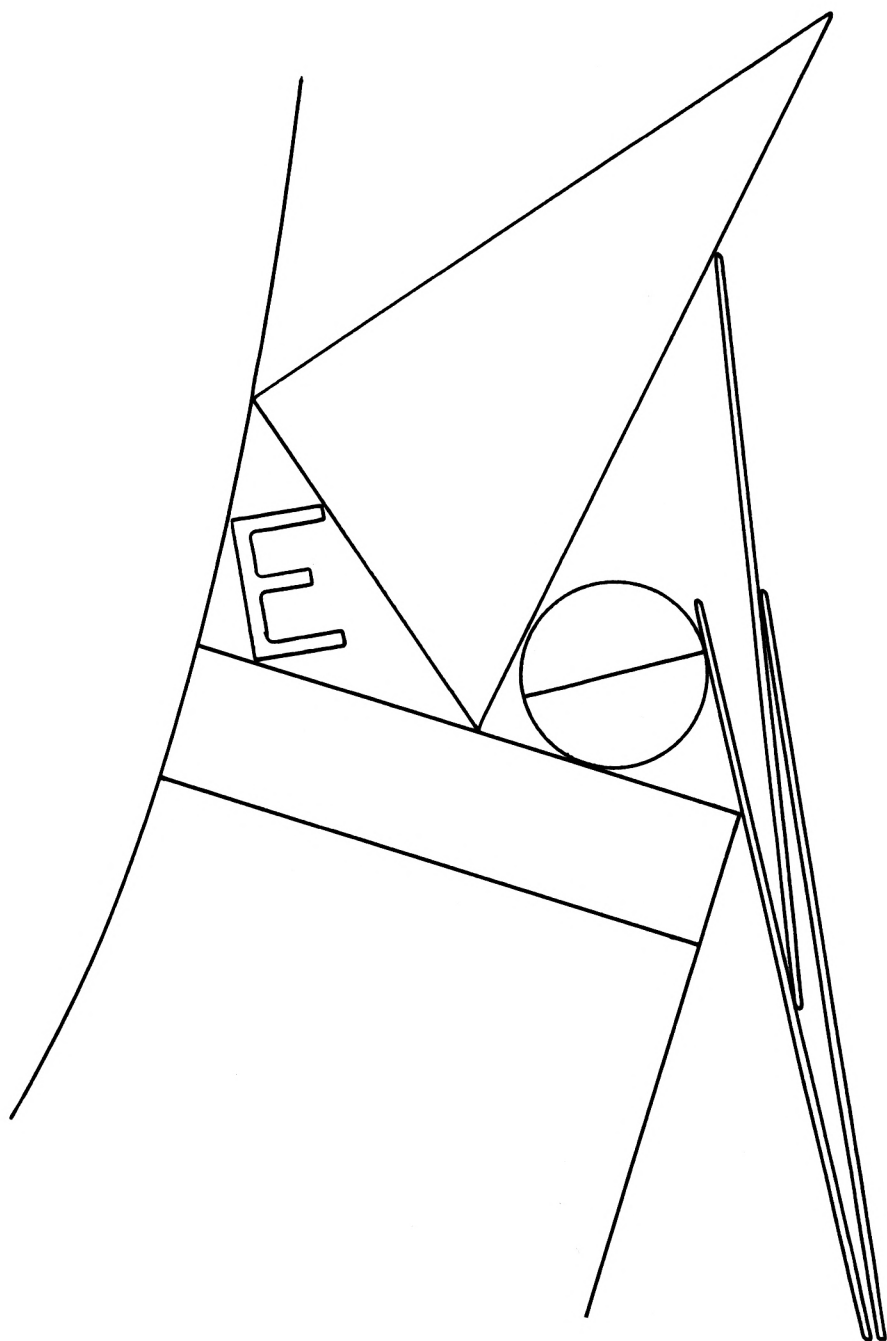
- **“Amerkána” by Sharon Estacio** is an interactive performance structured around word games as acts of quiet resistance, where participants collectively build a shared vocabulary through conversation. The work creates a temporary space for reflection, only to dissolve it again, emphasizing the fragility of collective memory and language. It subtly addresses censorship, shifting meanings, and the politics of discourse.
- **“Eclissi Urbane/Urban Eclipses” by Maria Novella Tattanelli & Laura Sgherri** is an expanded installation-performance presented as a cohesive ambient work, combining video documentation, photographic pieces, and a live re-performance. By staging the work within its own exhibited environment, it invites reflection on the relationship between performance, documentation, and curatorial framing. The interplay between body, image, and space raises questions about human interaction with artificial environments and challenges the anthropocentric perspective in art.
- **“White Sheet (Street Poetry on Passive Body)” by Dariusz Bogdanowicz** is a durational public performance in which the artist offers his body as a surface for others to write on. As passersby inscribe words and messages, the body becomes a living text shaped by collective expression. The work reflects on vulnerability, authorship, and the fluid boundary between the individual and the crowd.
- **“ACTA DISTANTIAE” by Aleksander Zain** is a video-based performance documenting a long-distance walk, presented as an intimate, meditative experience. Through voiceover and immersive viewing conditions, the work traces the artist’s physical and emotional journey. It reflects on endurance, transformation, and the non-linear nature of both artistic and personal processes.
- **“There and Back” by Tiina Lehtimäki** is a performative journey through public space, where moving a couch becomes a catalyst for spontaneous encounters. Moments of labor alternate with rest and conversation, forming temporary micro-communities. The work

blurs private and public space while exploring hospitality, cooperation, and shared vulnerability.

- **“Dear Lucy” by RILABEN and Tina Salvadori Paz** is a performance-installation connecting family archives with colonial history through letters, movement, and sound. By linking personal memory to the figure of Lucy, the *Australopithecus afarensis* discovered in Ethiopia, the work bridges biological and historical time. It raises questions about inheritance, memory, and the ethics of preserving and interpreting the past.
- **“Salvando las Distancias” & “White Sheet (video documentation)” by Dariusz Bogdanowicz** The first is a video work centered on a performative border crossing, where two participants exchange positions across a fence, destabilizing notions of inside and outside. Framed by migration contexts, it reflects on the arbitrariness of borders and shared human conditions. Presented alongside video documentation of the performance “White Sheet,” it invites comparison between different collective realities.
- **“4EVER CONNECTED” by Anastasija Pavić** is a video performance in the form of a fictional monologue addressed to machines, exploring technology’s influence on identity and relationships. Through the figure of an anime-inspired assistant, the work reflects on beauty standards, gender roles, and emotional projection. It creates an unsettling yet empathetic space for reconsidering contemporary desires and values.
- **“Control Out of Control” by Tijana Petrović, Katarina Čvorović, Ana Stojković, Ivanja Todorović** is a multi-channel performance combining documentary footage, surveillance imagery, and live reading. By engaging with the logic of border spaces, it examines surveillance, control, and the constructed nature of mobility. The work uses humor and repetition to expose the absurdity of systems that govern visibility and movement.
- **“Am I Talking to a Wall?” by Dragana Žarevac** is a performative exploration of communication in the face of political silence, where the artist addresses a wall using varied vocal and ritualistic techniques. Drawing from multiple cultural references, the work channels resistance through voice and repetition. It reflects frustration, persistence, and the limits of being heard.

- **“Autonomous Agent” by Alma Gačanin** is a deeply personal performance blending monologue and multiple identities shaped by gender, labor, and social roles. Through shifting voices across different life stages, the artist reflects on survival within patriarchy and capitalism. The work exposes the tension between autonomy and dependence, highlighting systemic pressures faced by women.





EXPORT WORKSHOPS & LECTURES GLOSSARY



First Event: Livorno

Cinema Teatro 4 Mori, Carico Massimo, Fortezza Vecchia, Ondalab, Conservatorio P. Mascagni, September 18–23, 2023

- **“The Paradoxical Pedagogy” by Pietro Gaglianò** arises from a central question: is it possible to teach performance as an artistic language? Through several sessions, each participant is guided to develop their own response, as well as an original teaching proposal.
- **“Documenting and Narrating Performance” by Federica Coseschi** is a course aimed at the acquisition of narrative skills through the documentation of live arts, offering participants the opportunity to reflect on what it means to document a performance and how to do it in conversation with the performing artists.
- **“Transition. Transgression. Transformation” by Ivana Ranisavljević** explores how to go from idea to action in the creation of an artistic performance, working through the concepts of transition, transgression, and transformation—from the physical, psychological, and emotional preparations of the performer, to the provocation of transgressive acts, to performance as a force of change for both artist and public.
- **“Transcultural music and interdisciplinary art” by Alireza Ostovar** explores how the combination of different musical cultures drives the creation of transcultural electroacoustic music, inviting participants to experiment with these processes across music, performance art, and interdisciplinary works.

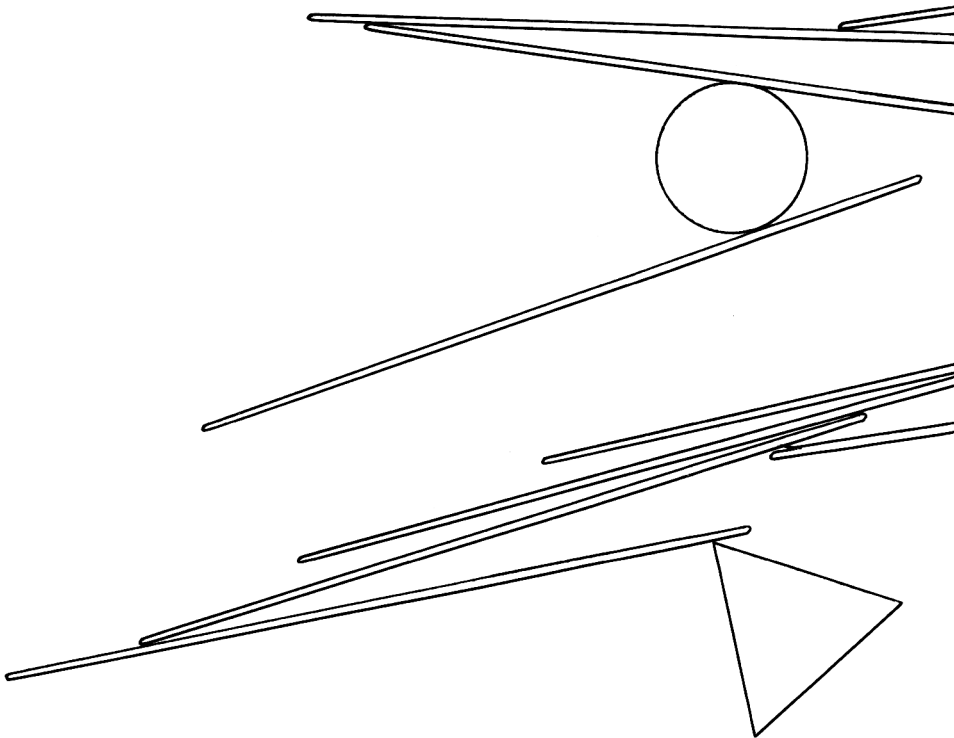
Second Event: Berlin
Flutgraben e.V.
September 16–20, 2024

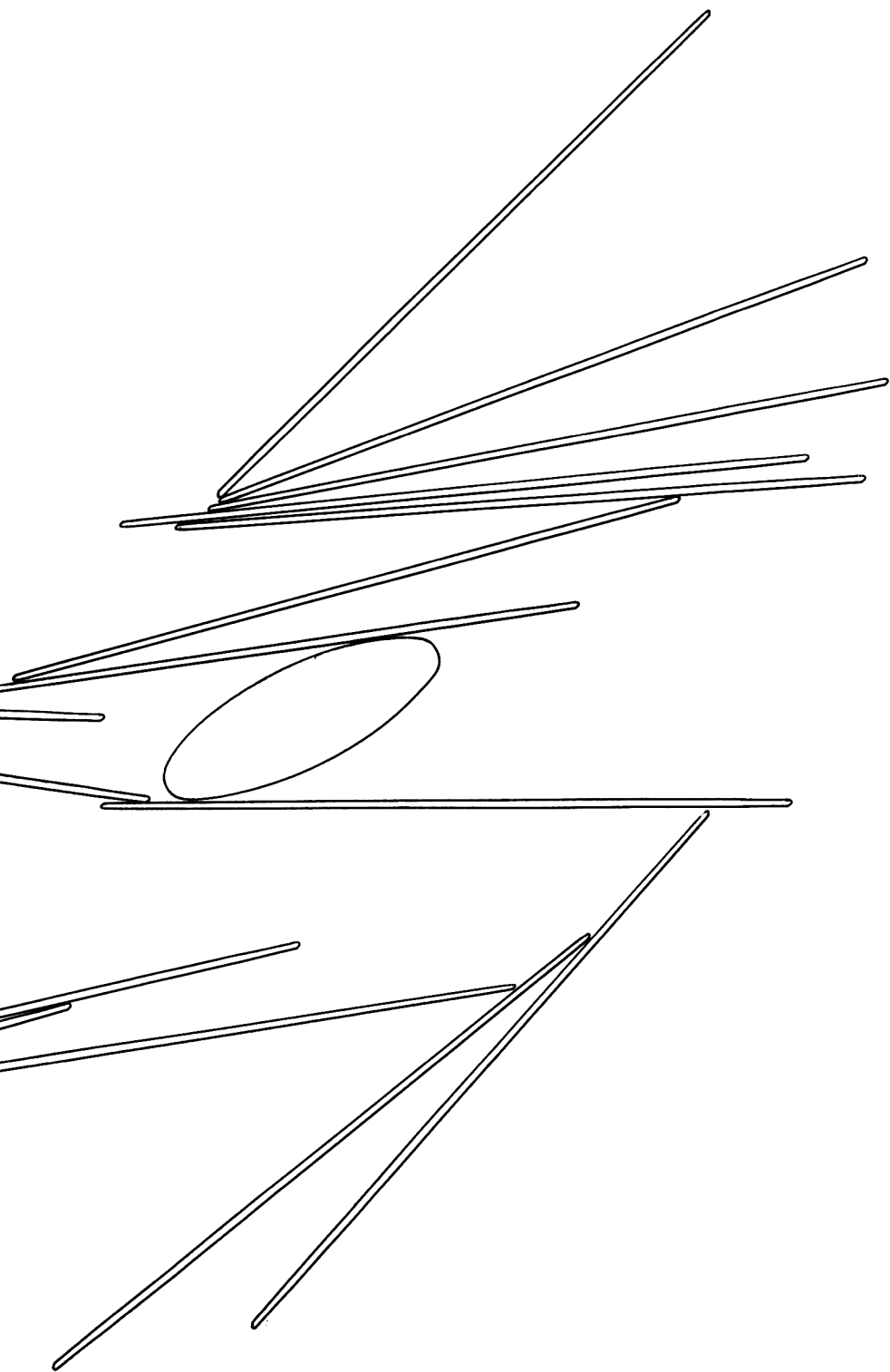
- **“Queer Materialism” by Olympia Bukkakis** is a workshop inviting participants to work with hardware store objects: wrenches, drop sheets, sledgehammers, to discover their latent queer potential as props, costume, set, and persona inspiration, exploring the ways objects in our environment are gendered and how they shape our gendered existence.
- **“Flutgraben’s History” by Christine Brecht**, with a guided tour by Matthias Krause Hamrin, is a lecture and tour revisiting the history of the Flutgraben building and its surroundings, drawing on Brecht’s book *Spurensuche im Mauerland*, held as part of a community gathering that included a shared lunch at Flutgraben’s weekly community table.
- **“Spirit of Places” by Tho Mas Proksch** is a workshop exploring the concept of *Genius Loci* — the spirit of a place — through collective, intuitive investigation of the relationship between humans and their environment, welcoming any form of creative expression including movement, voice, painting, poetry, and music.
- **“Space of (Not) Free Expression” by Anna Shevchenko** (*Off Program*) is a participatory performance in which visitors write and exchange handwritten texts over several days, culminating in a live reading dedicated to the theme of freedom of expression, its transformation, and fluidity.
- **“Bodies in Alliance – Towards a Solidarity-based Politics of Space” by Open/Occupy and Guests** is a panel and workshop exploring the potential of body-based and performance art to resist neoliberal forms of dispossession, departing from Judith Butler’s essay *Bodies in Alliance and the Politics of the Streets* and concluding with a collective exploration of how such interventions can materialise in public space.

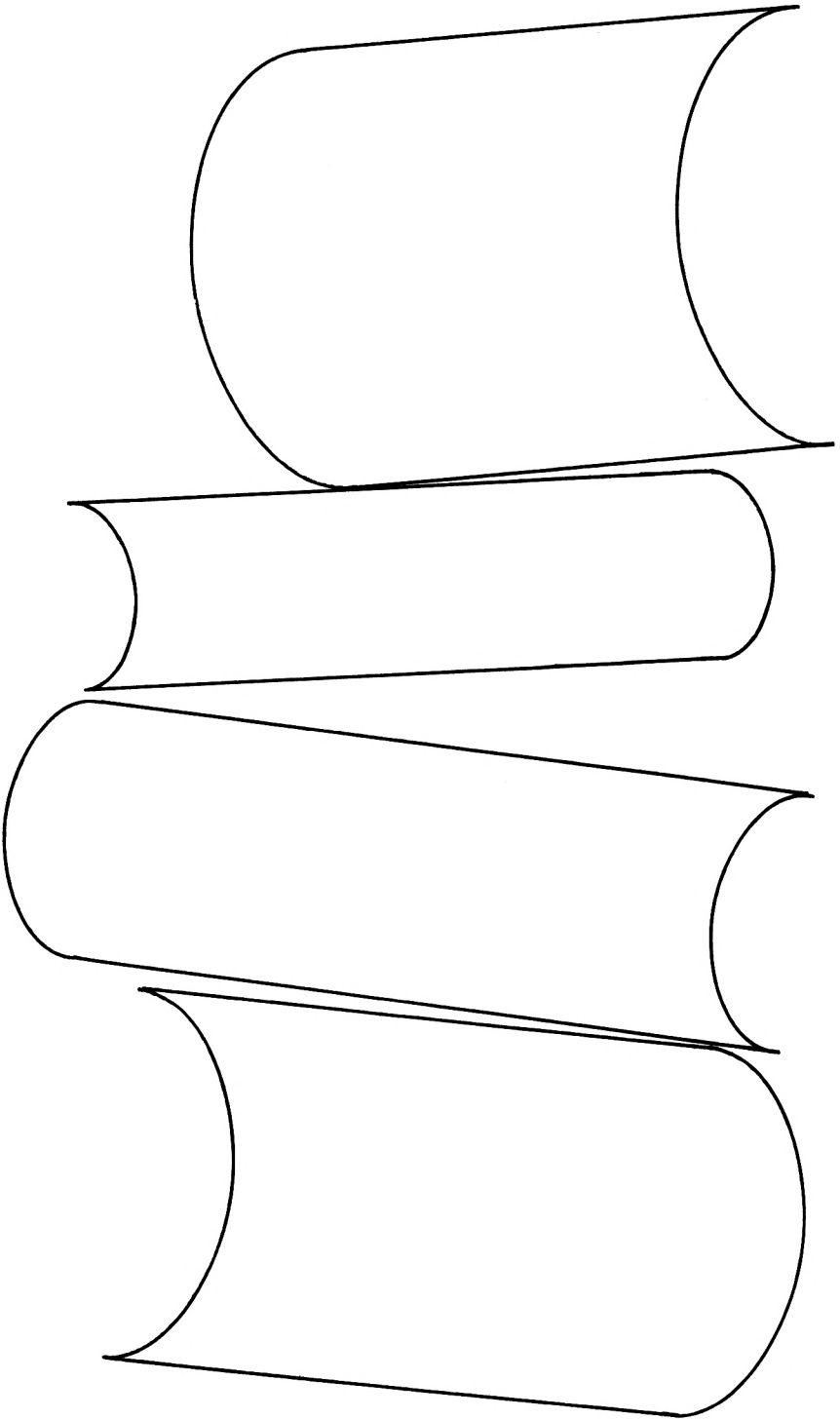
Third Event: Belgrade
U10 Art Space, Artget Gallery (Cultural
Centre of Belgrade), Goethe Institut
October 6–8, 2025

- **“Performance as an Act of Transgression and Resistance” by Ivana Ranisavljević** is a lecture speaking from the position of an artist who uses performance as a strategy of resistance and provocation, connecting it with the contemporary social context and the protests in Serbia, and addressing why performance, for her, is a space of vulnerability, liberation, and transformation.
- **“Festival” by Darius Bogdanowicz** is a performative reading set around the Moria detention camp on the island of Lesbos, weaving literature, live reading, and documentary photography to reflect on the violences of Fortress Europe and the inhumane politics affecting people on the move.
- **“There Is No Reality Besides Corporeality” by Marina Marković** is a performance workshop structured around tasks that engage the body as a site of tension, inscription, and negotiation, exploring how corporeality emerges under constraint—through repetition, proximity, duration, or interruption.
- **“Short History of Performance Art as a History of Resistance” by Ana Simona Zelenović** is a lecture examining the genealogy of performance art in Serbia from the late 1960s to the present, situating it within the socio-political framework of Yugoslavia and tracing its transformation through the 1990s and 2000s into contemporary practices of resistance and embodied critique.
- **“Restroy” by Maja Simišić** is a workshop in which the artist shares her personal methodology for creating art by taking a tradition, topic, ritual, or aspect of everyday life and destroying it, building something new from its ashes—a form that plays with the aesthetics of the uncanny valley, familiar yet unsettling.

- **“Afterhours” by IMPORT/EXPORT** is a recurring social gathering held every evening upon conclusion of daily events, opening the space to the local and international community for continued exchange and sharing of experiences. It took place across all three editions, in Livorno, Berlin, and Belgrade.







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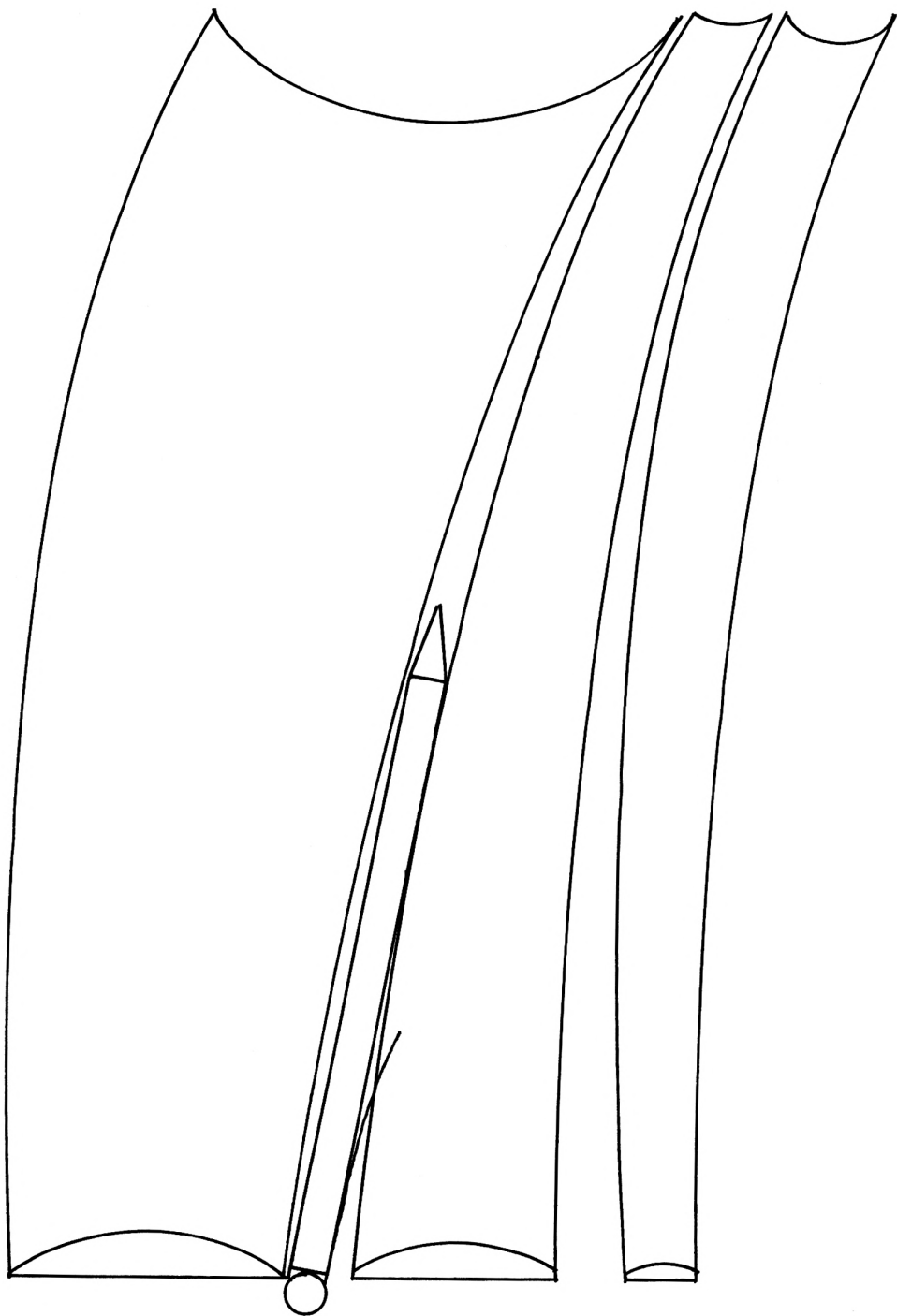
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IMPORT/EXPORT: A Guide through Performance Art Curation, Space and Documentation

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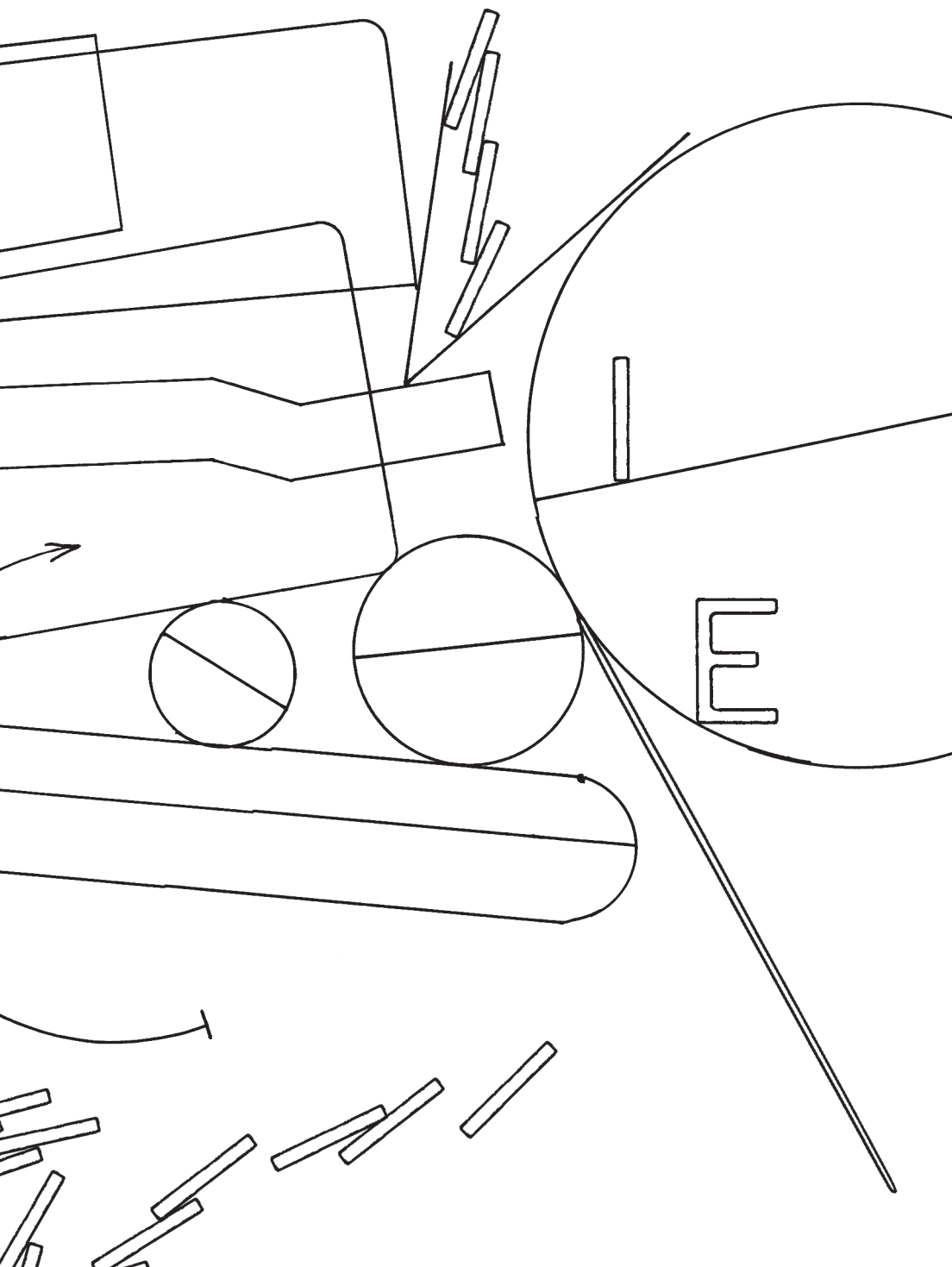


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FLUTGRABEN





What is a Performance Art Guide, and How Do You Even Use It?

This guide is intended for artists, curators, and cultural professionals, but equally for those who are new to performance art, seeking both a practical foothold and a theoretical framework from which to think more deeply about it. You may read it cover to cover, following the arc of the argument as it builds. Or you may come to it with a specific question—about documentation, about space, about what it means to curate a body rather than an object—and navigate accordingly. It also includes questions, checklists, and suggestions for further reading, intended to provoke thought rather than provide closure. Alongside these are glossaries of the performances presented at the three IMPORT/EXPORT events, as well as key terms linked to the pages where they are discussed in greater depth. These elements are not supplementary; they function as entry points in their own right, offering ways of reading shaped more by necessity than by sequence. In this sense, the guide mirrors the structure of the IMPORT/EXPORT project itself: there is no single center, no prescribed path through it. It is a tool, and like all good tools, it is most useful when it is used—picked up, worn down, and returned to.

