

How to perform?

Re-enactment and documentation in performance art

Symposium, May 6, 2006, Kunsthalle Fridericianum, Kassel

On the occasion of the opening of the exhibition *Seven Easy Pieces* by Marina Abramović in the Kunsthalle Fridericianum, a symposium on the current state of performance art and its mediation is in preparation. The symposium will relate to the exhibition, which consists of seven documentation videos of Marina Abramović's re-enactments of historical performances by Bruce Nauman (*Body Pressure*, 1974), Vito Acconci (*Seed bed*, 1972), VALIE EXPORT (*Action Pants: Genital Panic*, 1969), Gina Pane (*The Conditioning*, 1973), Joseph Beuys (*How to Explain Pictures to a Dead Hare*, 1965) and of her own works (*Lips of Thomas*, 1975 and her new piece *Entering the Other Side*, 2005).

While the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum hosted the *Seven Easy Pieces* as live performances and the Kunsthalle Fridericianum presents a mediation of these re-enactments, the essence of *Seven Easy Pieces* remains the same; a set of remarkable performances of the 1960s and 1970s are brought to life, embodied and transmitted to a contemporary audience.

This exhibition situation and proposition as regards the challenge of tracing ephemeral art works raises several highly relevant issues that the symposium will be addressing. Our prime concern is thus the re-enactment, embodiment, historicity and documentation of performances in both the present and historical contexts of performance art. Artists, art historians and art critics will be invited for the discussion panels and lectures to confront the practice of performance with its historicisation.

Re-enactment and documentation – Does the future of performance art derive from its past?

Re-enactment means acting out a performance again, re-making it with all the sentiments and knowledge engendered by the initial event and the here and now. It differs from pure mimicry or quotation in that it is often based on (collective and individual) memories and thus entails *translation* from one time to another, one narrative to another, one performer to another, and from one audience to another. The symposium will focus on re-enactment as an act of re-positioning historical performances as well as the positioning of performance today. Performances relate in a particular way to time and presentation epitomized in the question of mediation (to an audience) e.g., in a museum and on the art market. Many performances

from the 1970s can be accessed only through documentation and relicts or are now simply inaccessible. Contemporary performance artists now often integrate documentation as part of their performances, yet some insist on the particularity of the moment in which a performance takes place – why? This part of the symposium is dedicated to the implications of documenting and re-enacting performances, of copyright and authorship in these regards. What is the relationship between initial performance and re-enactment? How is meaning and experience transported in time through repetition of a performance? Can one speak of an ‘original’ performance? How is the documentation incorporated or reflected in the conception of performances in the media age? What distinguishes a performance from everyday actions? What is the difference between an artist investing his or her embodied self in a performance and when he or she instructs other as actors and audience?

Speakers:

- **Marina Abramović** (Artist, New York)
- **Maja Bajević** (Artist, Sarajevo and Paris)
- **Erika Fischer-Lichte** (Theoretician of Drama, Director of the interdisciplinary research project „Kulturen des Performativen“ at Freie Universität, Berlin)
- **Judith Hopf** (Artist, Berlin)
- **Jaroslav Kozlowski** (Artist, Poznan)
- **Steven Henry Madoff** (Art Critic, Writer, New York)
- **Stefanie Trojan** (Artist, Frankfurt)
- **Sandra Umathum** (Theoretician of Drama)
- **Dorothea von Hantelmann** (Art Historian and Curator, Berlin)