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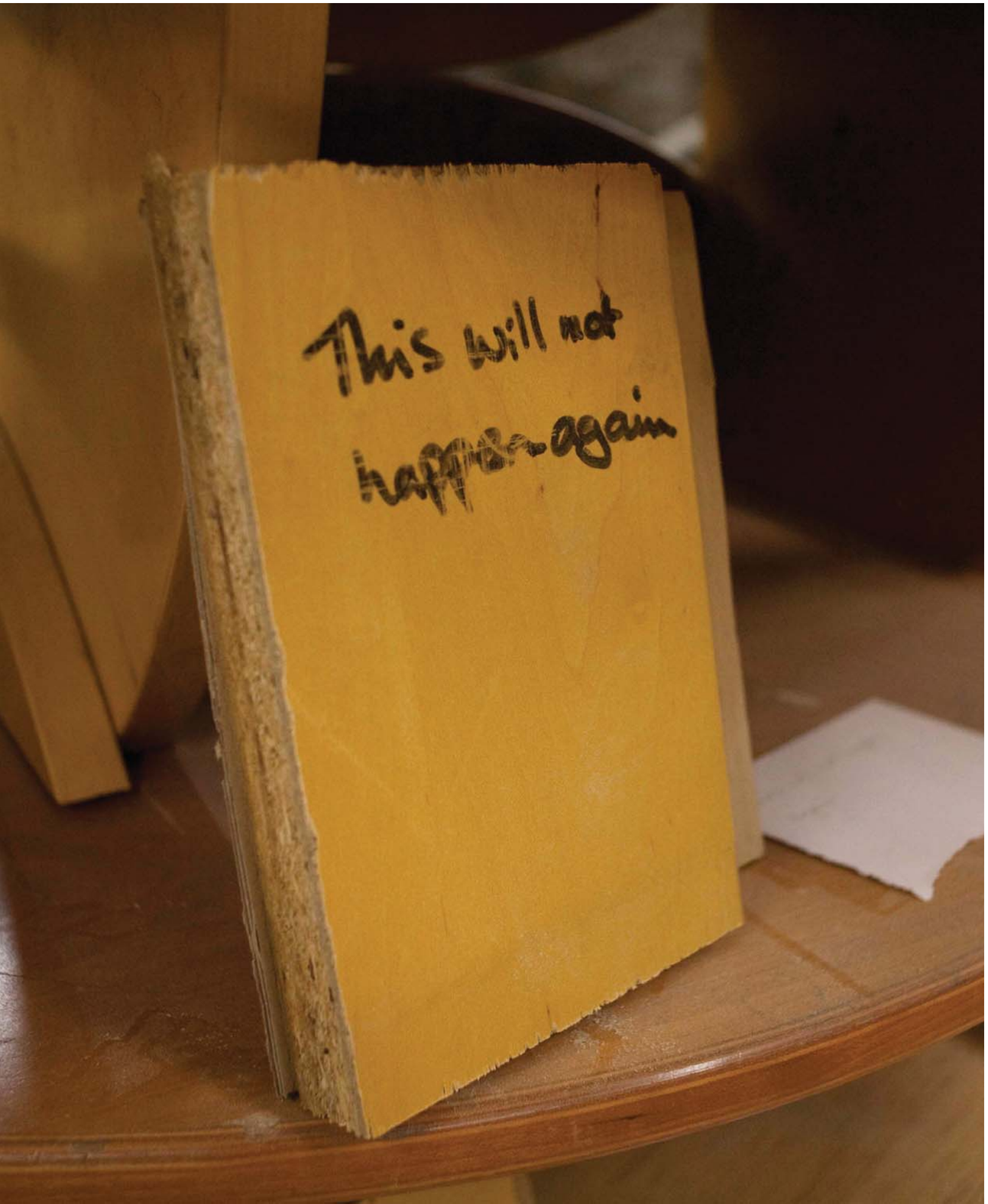

Graham Hudson, *Proposal 6, Archive Furniture*, 2009, installation detail, *NOTES on a return*, Laing Art Gallery, 2009 (artwork © Graham Hudson; photograph by Stephen Collins)

Performance Art: Live or Dead

Amelia Jones

Introduction

Performance or live art provokes an encounter with history that art history as a discipline is unprepared to accommodate fully without distorting the very claims for the immediacy of the "live" which supposedly make performance art unique. This distortion is made clear in the recent retrospective of Marina Abramović's performance career at the Museum of Modern Art, New York (MoMA), which trumpeted in its subtitle the most commonly purveyed (and paradoxical) belief about performance art: "The Artist is Present." Abramović's durational performance at the center of the show in the MoMA atrium (which is now of course "past") aside, if the "artist is present," then what were the vitrines of performance relics, rows of photographic documents, and video footage, not to mention the reenactments (also now "past") by younger performers throughout the galleries, doing in relation to past performances?[1]

Performance art, in the context of art history and its institutions, throws in question the most basic assumptions about how we "do" history in a field constitutionally attached to material things (such as artworks, buildings, archival documents).

While art history has of course shifted and mutated across the decades, the discipline in its deepest formations and assumptions is based on the capacity to "freeze" the object of study as paradigmatic of its kind and/or as a masterpiece. Kantian aesthetics, key to the establishment of the discipline and still foundational to the way we teach, exhibit, write about, and market art, demands a moment of encounter wherein the work of art can be apprehended and judged. The visual arts are the only form of culture linked directly to a global market that in turn depends upon the hierarchical disposition of "original" and "unique" objects to be bought and sold. Curatorial practice and the global art market in particular depend upon this freezing—after all, something tangible (whether a painting, plans for a Renaissance garden, a conceptual art statement, or a performance art document) must be evidenced in order for us to exhibit, describe, and market what we call art. Art history classes depend upon the projection of digitized images and/or (increasingly) film and video clips. And so on.[2]

This need for things (the "present" artist and/or documents substantiating the past existence of the live event) is at odds with the common claim that performance is ephemeral and thus actual and immediate. In turn, if the artist were indubitably present, if the performance were always already immediate, there would be no need for objects, putting the lie to this claim so often made in art history and in performance studies texts on performance art histories. It is, in fact, for historians that these questions become the most acute and contested, since a performance as we are watching can be said to be actual (whatever that means), but a performance as always already over must be known through other means. And this is the case even if we witnessed the performance firsthand. After all, memory is not a simple transcription of the real but (as Henri Bergson elaborated at the turn of the twentieth century) is itself a complex representational process of referring our body-mind complex to past experience in order to make sense of the present for the future.[3]

I am grateful to Christopher Bedford, Chief Curator of Exhibitions at the Wexner Center in Ohio, who initially sparked my interest in this project but was unable to contribute.

1. I have explored these issues at length in my introductions to *Perform Repeat Record: Live Art in History*, coedited with Adrian Heathfield (New York and London: Routledge, forthcoming), and in "'The Artist is Present': Artistic Re-Enactments and the Impossibility of Presence," *TDR* 55, no. 1 (Spring 2011): 16–45.
2. For a longer discussion of the specificity of art history in relation to live art, see my essay "Live Art in Art History: A Paradox?" in *The Cambridge Guide to Performance Studies*, ed. Tracy C. Davis (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2008).
3. See Bergson, *Matter and Memory* (1896; trans. from 5th ed. of 1908), trans. Nancy Margaret Paul and W. Scott Palmer (New York: Zone Books, 2002).

Walter Benjamin's ruminations on history and the relics of past events in his *Theses on the Philosophy of History* were written just before his own annihilation while escaping the Nazis in 1940. These ideas have had enormous weight and influence, what one could argue to be a performative agency, over the past fifty years. Benjamin wrote: "The past can be seized only as an image which flashes up at the instant when it can be recognized and is never seen again. . . . To articulate the past historically does not mean to recognize it 'the way it really was'. . . . It means to seize hold of a memory as it flashes up at a moment of danger."[4]

In what I see as the best writing on live art (within art history and performance studies), performance has been thought of not as confirming presence but as provoking, precisely, "moments of danger" that flash up and (if we are open to it) open the possibility for acknowledging the impossible folds in time that defeat every desire to write history in the old-fashioned, art-historical sense as a final and true choreography of objects progressing over time. The evanescent nature of a live act reminds us that we cannot fully know or codify the past, whether it flashes up to us in the form of objects, text, speech, or what have you. In what I see as the weakest moments in performance art's histories, the folds in time have been ironed out. The art critic, or art or performance historian purports to deliver the performance as a final truth—whether through her own memories of a supposedly unmediated encounter with the artist herself (as many of the visitors who sat across from the artist at the Abramović have claimed)[5] or via elaborations on a key iconic document or set of documents. It is at such moments that performance art is often claimed to secure presence—and also to promise a particular kind of physically immediate, intense, and emotionally authentic experience that ensures aesthetic, personal, and/or political transformation. Ironically, as noted, this claim takes place inevitably through memories, documents, and other detritus from the act itself, which can never go on forever.

I would suggest, in contrast, that the writing of histories about performance, carefully thought through, can be just as affecting and effective as the experience of performance itself.

In fact, as Bergson and others have made clear, the profound paradox of live events (such as, in our case, performance art) is that they are only accessible through human perception; even in the live "instant" (if we can imagine such a thing), we perceive and make sense of performances through bodily memory, itself impossible to pin down or retrieve in any full state.[6] This is the paradox of live art—that it articulates the impossibility of securing presence (the graspability of the "now," as well as the immediacy of the artist) even as it claims to define itself on the basis of doing so. Performance art thus exposes the radical conundrum that continually bedevils human existence (not to mention performance and art theory): the impossibility of knowing, keeping, or anchoring the present (present experience) without it slipping away.

I have worked extensively in recent years on the problem of the *live* addressed from an art-historical perspective informed by performance studies. Briefly, I argue that both fields make different but equally impossible claims for performance art. Coming from the perspective of aesthetics, where (as Kant argued) things in the world become "art" because we can engage with them through a disinterested (nonsensory) capacity of appreciation, and thus they are to some degree fixed in their qualities, art history (and its attached marketplaces) demands that art be frozen in time, construed in the form of objects or images that can be accommodated by curatorial and representational practices (including Power Point presentations and class lectures, magazine spreads, and art exhibitions). While most contemporary art historians are aware of the limitations of eighteenth-century aesthetics, the deep logic of structures of knowledge about what we call art remain, as I have argued extensively elsewhere, bound to these earlier models.[7]

Performance studies, drawing on the insights of theater studies, linguistic theory, cultural studies, anthropology, and other disciplines addressing temporality, ritual, and movement, tends to apply notions of performativity broadly. Many performance studies scholars (as well as many art historians who study performance) claim that performance acts are special because they are temporal and seemingly immediate: they seem to present the body directly to viewers, via actions and set-ups that are ephemeral. Within discourses around performance, such mystifying rhetoric is widespread—again, exemplified by the Abramović show and the lack of criticality in the responses to it across popular and art media.

These are equally impossible claims, as the contributors here all suggest in different ways, highlighting the slippage of the belief in the performance existing *ever* in the state (as Benjamin puts it, via Leopold von Ranke) of "the way it really was." As the artists Ron Athey, William Pope.L, and Sharon Hayes articulate from diverse points of view, in practice the now is both always and never graspable—the artist is always already thinking of pasts and futures in moving her or his body through space, gathering and repositioning objects and images, reworking pasts for the present futures. Athey immerses in the moment, making himself continually vulnerable to other performers and to present and future viewers, to point to future possibilities through elaborately choreographed performances that are also photographic or videographic. Pope.L engages media from photography to text to the web to explore the charged significances of his body moving through certain social spaces (including the art world)—his text evinces a sharp awareness of the dangers of institutionalizing performance via reenactments. Hayes intervenes in narratives of past radical histories to reshape them willfully through performative acts, which themselves become archived for the future. Evoking Bertolt Brecht's description of the "demonstration" and his notion of the event as having always already taken place, Hayes points to the enduring reliance of all performance as it comes to be known historically through documentation.

Curators in general, of course, have to take a constrasting position in relation to these dynamics—their mandate being to find sensitive ways to exhibit in material space an art form (performance) that is privileged precisely through its ephemerality and immediacy. It is a difficult and inevitably fraught proposition for any curator to presume to take the risk of exhibiting performance histories. Given that performance is claimed to escape reification, and that exhibitions demand it (something must be shown, after all, even if only, as in Yves Klein's early 1960s "void" or "zone of immaterial sensibility," the empty gallery itself), there is no easy way to address and accommodate via curatorial means the crucial importance of live art in the history of contemporary culture. Visual arts curators such as Helena Reckitt and Sophia Yadong Hao, represented here, have taken on this challenge and thus deserve kudos for putting time (the live) into space (the gallery) in exploratory and innovative ways that show an awareness of these complications.

4. Benjamin, *Theses on the Philosophy of History* (1940), sections V and VI, online at www.sfu.ca/~andrewf/CONCEPT2.html (accessed October 22,2010). Benjamin is citing Leopold von Ranke with the phrase "the way it really was."
5. The Internet was rife with such claims during the exhibition; some are transcribed at www.moma.org/explore/inside_out/category/visitor-viewpoint (accessed April 6, 2011).
6. This is Bergson's key argument in *Matter and Memory*.
7. See my "Live Art in Art History: A Paradox?" as well as the additional sources in n. 1.

Yadong Hao here presents thoughts on her curatorial project *NOTES on a return*, wherein she commissioned younger artists to engage with previous performances at the Laing Art Gallery in Newcastle. Borrowing the French word *recherche* for its double meaning when crossed over into English ("research," and "quest" or "search"), Yadong Hao posits both the "originals" and the "redos" as simultaneously search and re-search (both "new/original" and always already redone). Reckitt's equally thoughtful 2008 show at the Power Plant in Toronto, *Not Quite How I Remember It*, displayed the work of artists, including Hayes, whose work addresses past histories (of art, culture, and politics) and activates, precisely, the hinge between performance and history by engaging with time-based events in an art context. These are performative actions that were initially directed toward the gallery as a site of display. Here Reckitt ruminates on the current trend of reenactments, clearly part of this circuit of action and historical replay.

Finally, academic scholarship on these issues is here represented by this contribution by myself (an art historian), and texts by Sven Lütticken (an indendent scholar working across art criticism and performance studies) and Branislav Jakovljević (a performance studies scholar). On a first glance, we apparently have it easier because we do not have to grapple directly with the dilemma of what to do with materiality (not "the things themselves," because that would be to presume things preexist our apprehension of them, but the materiality that, as Bergson has said, can only be understood through human perception, which is embodied and shaped through processes of memory). We can spin out abstract theories, ideally touching base with specific examples from a "history" of live art known itself through material traces of acts from the past, and call it a day. Written scholarship is limited in its format and cannot activate the material results of past actions as directly as can curatorial practice. But without the insights of writers, we would be at a sorry pass, since scholars, through the very immateriality of the text, can explore the far edges of problems that cannot be directly tackled in museum display.

This is a deliberately polemical division I am making here that, in fact, does not hold, since we scholars also curate, the artists also teach, and so on. But in making this forced separation I am attempting to highlight the way in which the different modes of expression and different practices relating to performance art demand or propose different structures of contemplation in relation to the very problem of history and its material traces. Lütticken's critique can thus address in theoretical terms the tension between the ontological privileging of the live art work and the urge to restage (and thus represent) these supposedly unique and one-off live events; his intervention suggests that it might take a slightly more distant and abstracting point of view (one that of course is still inextricably immersed in the paradoxes, since we scholars, too, write texts that "fix" the live) to explore the contradictions at play in these oppositional structures. And, as Jakovljević notes, reenactments have focused on putative accuracy or authenticity in reconstructing the original event rather than proposing the redo as a reinvention, tending to eradicate the complexities of the labor involved in performing and of the social relations of past and present in the service of efficiency and nationalistic or corporate ideology. Jakovljević discusses a recent work by the art collective Grupa Spomenik, which intervenes in this trend by exploring through a critical series of public debates the reconstitution of massacred bodies after the Srebrenica massacre in the former Yugoslavia as a "politics of reassociation on terms of ethnic identity." Jakovljević notes that the ideological reifications of the postwar reconstruction of this area of the world are critically examined through the "performance forensics" of Grupa Spomenik; through an attention to forensic detail, the group points out that the claims to retrieve the authenticity of this fraught past are a performative reinvention.

These important critical interventions point to the importance of self-reflexivity in addressing the complexities of history-making in relation to live events, whether art or politics. This collection, "Performance: Live or Dead," could of course be viewed as just another form of fixing time into spatial coordinates, reifying the complexities of performance histories into words frozen in print. We art historians in particular (as well as curators and even many artists) do this very well—fixing things, if momentarily, for the perusal of others at future times. We seem to require of art that it be frozen in order to be seen and interpreted. For what is art (as some of the Fluxus artists asked) if it is only a command that can be executed by anyone? Fluxus provides a useful exemplar of the limits of our desire to claim an escape from the reifications of space over time (in art-historical terms, the fixing of objects in a value structure both abstract and, via museums, art history texts, and so on, concrete).

The limits of Fluxus's interrogation of the materialism of art and the correlative commodifying structures of the art world are evident today in the numerous inclusions of Fluxus works in performance festivals (via reenactments), publications (via textual and photographic documentation), and exhibitions (via relics). In this way, the work of the Fluxus artists can now be found in reified form in the halls of even the most conservative and commodifying art spaces, such as MoMA, where, down the corridors from Abramović's "presence" (now past), numerous remnants of Fluxus acts and events were encased in vitrines and displayed in a gallery devoted to the Gilbert and Lila Silverman Fluxus Collection at the same time as Abramović's show in the spring of 2010.

By definition, then, we will attempt to repeat that which we claim to be unique and ephemeral—we can do nothing else, apparently, in the late-capitalist economy of art and culture (including scholarship). In European-based cultures, knowledge formation, since at least the Renaissance, has involved a process (presented as final act) of finding a (fixed) point of view from which to assess the world (through a hidden practice of projecting subjective perceptual experience), then of expressing this experience through terms that claim objectivity and finality—so much Kant already established in his 1790 *Critique of Judgment*. As far as we (in these cultures) can imagine, knowledge-forming practices from examining art to writing histories are fixing operations. We know no other way to "be" in space and time.[8]

Within art history, Deleuzian claims of nomadism, deterritorialization, lines of flight, and the ruin of representation are fabulous and enticing, but frankly, pipe dreams, as far as I can tell; aside from philosophical ruminations (themselves encased in books and journals, possibly downloadable on the Internet), I have yet to see deterritorialized flows anywhere other than, perhaps, in the structures of late capitalism. Deterritorialization and lines of flight are wonderful metaphors, but apparently unachievable in contemporary thought other than as abstractions.[9] The world is permeable, and yet we will try to make sense of it

8. Of course, from Jacques Derrida, to Gilles Deleuze, to Jacques Rancière, many poststructuralist theorists have questioned these attempts to "fix." While many of us in art history draw on these theories, we continue (as did Derrida and Deleuze, and as does Rancière) to write books, to curate shows, and otherwise to establish that which we argue to be unfixable. As noted, in the visual arts the tension is particularly acute given the existence of a global art market demanding works of art, the value of which can be, at least momentarily, established and implied as inherent to the work. It is not a question of cynicism here but of acknowledging the apparent impossibility of escaping some element of fixing and some participation in the marketplace.

9. For two valiant attempts at applying Deleuzian metaphors to the study of the visual and other arts, see Dorothea Olkowski, *Gilles Deleuze and the Ruin of Representation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999); and Simon O'Sullivan, *Art Encounters Deleuze and Guattari: Thought beyond Representation* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006). Both books reify the flows of deterritorialization, as does Deleuze himself when he addresses art directly, as in his rather unfortunate psychobiographical book *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003).

through structures like exhibitions and art history. The best we can do, as the powerful contributions in "Performance: Live or Dead" suggest, is to be aware of the reciprocal interrelations between thinking and knowing, perceiving and expressing—between past performances and present modes of documentation, reenactment, and history writing. To keep the "moment of danger" that, as Benjamin argues, "flashes up" and becomes evident as historically important, active and in play.

I sent the contributors the following email in August 2010 to solicit their thoughts and interventions.

> Dear XX,
>
> I am writing to you with an invitation to participate in what I hope will be a groundbreaking dialogue on the very current phenomenon of documenting, reenacting, and/or exhibiting traces of past performances in art institutions such as galleries, museums, and mainstream art magazines. You have been central in developing a critical relationship to these practices and we hope very much you will be willing to participate in a brief email dialogue on the topic. . . .
>
> The key question in this dialogue will be: *What are the costs and benefits of the current move to institutionalize performance art by documenting it (often on websites or in archives), reenacting performances, and/or exhibiting performance art histories in galleries and art museums?*
>
> . . .
>
> Best,
>
> Amelia Jones

Amelia Jones is Professor and Grierson Chair in Visual Culture at McGill University in Montréal. Her recent publications include major essays on feminist art, contemporary art in general, curating, and performance art histories, as well as the edited volume *Feminism and Visual Culture Reader* (2003; new edition 2010). Her most recent book, *Self Image: Technology, Representation, and the Contemporary Subject* (2006), will be followed in 2012 by *Seeing Differently: A History and Theory of Identification in the Visual Arts* (2012), and her major volume *Perform Repeat Record: Live Art in History*, coedited with Adrian Heathfield, is due out in 2012.

Ron Athey

Getting It Right . . . Zooming Closer

Performance documentation, performance-for-the-camera, restaging the "iconic" performance image for the camera, to get it right—all are editing, reducing, retouching, mediating, specifying, forcing the gaze, and not the full experience, which can essentially lie, enhance, mislead.

Most of the performance work I have done is multiple images, scenes and actions, performed at various speeds from frantic to still, from solo to twenty-five persons involved.

In the 1980s and early 1990s, I only understood how a performance went off by how it felt during, and how it sat with me after. Video and photo documentation showed me that and something more. . . . I had to adjust to the flattening. But something about what the camera person focused on actually made the represen-

Catherine Opie, *Ron Athey/Pearl Necklace (from Trojan Whore)*, 2000, Polaroid, 110 x 41 in. (279.4 x 104.1 cm) (artwork © Catherine Opie; photograph provided by Regen Projects, Los Angeles)

tation more extreme because the context of setting and the sequence in which the image appeared could be removed. Zooming closer than the audience could ever get in most performances sometimes was beautiful and sometimes vulgar.

This introduction of photographic documentation has the same affect on my work as another form of how the work resonates: the retelling of it in words. Always described and reviewed are the shock moments, the violation of the flesh, rarely ever text, humor, flow.

I have a churchy outlook on the role of audience: they serve as witnesses, and this is what is needed to make the experience possible. In order to justify performing for the camera, I have to imagine being a step away from that chemistry. In the ambitious project I made in 2000 with Catherine Opie, for which we shot thirteen large-format Polaroids in two days, I ran through a selection of scenes from my performance history, restaging them in costume (or look), without any form of set pieces except in three of them. None of these is true to the performance it is referencing, except possibly the St. Sebastian image, which was shot last. Working in a more minimalist way to cooperate with the style and vision of Opie, they are portraits, not performances for the camera. But they express the essence of suicide bed, solar anus, Sebastian suspended. This reduction becomes something else as, especially with the images of earlier performances, they are removed from the politics and issues of their time.

Most of the images I have shot with the photographer Manuel Vason, aside from the Sun card for the SPILL Festival tarot deck, were either taken as the performance setup was finished but before the audience was admitted, or restaged in an improvisational way after the performance. So, less stagey setup for him, but the final effect more perfected with his post-production cleanup techniques.

I don't have too much to say about the institutionalization of performance work, as I don't quite understood on what level it is happening. Is it really happening? My opinion of redux perfs, such as LACE's eight Fridays of Yoko Ono's *Cut Piece*, is, "whatever."[10] But are the space and production really going in the direction of old Fluxus directions of performance, when at that time the Fluxus artists hadn't shown much new work in ages? It seems too easy. Marina's *Seven Easy Pieces* was interesting in a bubble, but not interesting as a piece.[11] If performance becomes as self-referential as, say, modern dance, it is too insider. Who gives a fuck about institutional critique as a performance? I find performance work at its strongest when it's crossing over, moving in between movements, politics, traumas, issues, identities. Because it can be dreadful and too specific and is making the slice it occupies even more miniscule. But it has a unique power, and it creeps me out when it resides in a total institutional context.

[Ron— please enter a short bio of 60-80 words here, or e-mail to me at jhannan@collegeart.org.]

10. [Ed.] Ming Ma's *ReCut Project* paid homage to Yoko Ono's 1964–65 performance *Cut Piece* by commissioning a series of diverse individuals to reinterpret Ono's instructions at Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions (LACE) in 2006. See Ming-Yuen S. Ma, "*ReCut Project*," in *Perform Repeat Record: Live Art in History*, ed. Adrian Heathfield and Amelia Jones (New York and London: Routledge, forthcoming).
11. [Ed.] Marina Abramović's *Seven Easy Pieces*, reenactments of famous performance works by various artists, took place at the Guggenheim Museum, New York, in 2005.

Sven Lütticken

Performing Time

Recent years have seen a somewhat paradoxical confluence of two tendencies. On the one hand, there is an increase in scholarly interest in the ways in which documents such as written accounts, photographs, and video shape our current understanding of historical (art or dance) performances. If we compare two books dealing with overlapping subject matter, Sally Banes's *Democracy's Body: Judson Dance Theater, 1962–1964* from 1980 and Carrie Lambert-Beatty's recent *Being Watched: Yvonne Rainer and the 1960s*, the difference is striking.[12] Whereas, on the whole, Banes tries to use various documents (especially, in her case, written ones) to give an impression of the actual performances, Lambert-Beatty foregrounds the fact that her object of study is "a series of traces, shaped and serially reshaped by the interests, desires, and ways of seeing of everyone from the artist to the photographer who documented the events to the historian herself."[13] The performance—dance performance in this case—emerges as scattered across various memories and different media, and these reflections transform the performance, impact out perception and understanding of it.

On the other hand, there is the recent increase in reenactments or restagings of historical performances—sometimes by the original artists themselves, sometimes by others. This development would seem to indicate that, after all, we still long to experience the original event or some approximation thereof. If the most sophisticated performance scholarship has decisively abandoned the ontological privileging of the live performance over media representations that marked both historical performance art and performance studies, does this vogue for restaging performances indicate a relapse of sorts? The answer to this question is ambiguous; there is no denying that many such reenactments hold the promise of getting closer to what the original event was really like, but at the same time the restagings will be based in different degrees on photos, videos, written descriptions, and memories that may in turn have been inflected, imperceptibly, by media representations. My 2005 exhibition project *Life, Once More: Forms of Reenactment in Contemporary Art* did not include a single live performance (if we except lectures). At that point, the tradition that privileged the live performance over any of the performance's other media incarnations still seemed to be strong, and my exclusive focus on video, photography, slides, and language was an implicit polemic against certain theorists and artists. I wanted to emphasize the interdependence of media representation and reenactment by creating a constellation of projects that problematize this interdependence in different ways.

One piece that does this in an exemplary way, but that was not included in *Life, Once More* for the simple reason that I was not yet familiar with it, is Babette Mangolte's 1993 film *Four Pieces by Morris*, which restages four crucial dance/performance pieces from the period of Robert Morris's involvement with the Judson Dance Theater. As Mangolte writes in a statement about this film:

> Film is the medium of duration, but what we call duration is historically determined. Film spectatorship expectations greatly change in different generations. My biggest question was how to represent the sense of time of another generation. I gambled that if I could create a sense of heightened

12. Sally Banes, *Democracy's Body: Judson Dance Theater, 1962–1964* (Ann Arbor: UMI Press, 1980/1983, rep. 1993); Carrie Lambert-Beatty, *Being Watched: Yvonne Rainer and the 1960s* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2008).
13. Lambert-Beatty, 16.

***21.3* film stills from Babette Mangolte, *Four Pieces By Morris*, 1993,** film, 16mm, black and white and color, 94 min. (photographs © 1993 Babette Mangolte, all rights of reproduction reserved)

presence of the performer on screen by restructuring the sound space of the image, I could use the distended time-duration of the Sixties to my advantage and emphasize the importance of the performer's body. The film's premises rest on maintaining the concept of art as displacement/art as a frame which I thought was at the center of the impact of the performances at the time when their making revolutionizes the new dance in the New York art scene of the early Sixties.[14]

One of the performances restaged by Mangolte, *21.3*, had an oddly syncopated temporality to begin with. Morris, dressed conservatively, mimed to a tape recording of a passage from Erwin Panofsky's introduction to his 1939 *Studies in Iconology*, in which Panofsky famously used the now-antiquated gesture of the lifting of one's hat as a greeting to illustrate his three-part model of iconological analysis; the miming, however, was not perfectly in synch with the tape. At an early moment, in 1963, this performance already challenged budding essentialist notions of performance as escaping from the dominance of language; in *21.3*, the specificity of performance lies in infra-thin differences, in minimal but stubborn slips. Mangolte obviously based her restaging in part on the famous black-and white photo of this piece, but she did not attempt to re-create Morris's look in detail. The voice on the tape is Morris's, and the performer, Michael Stella, is dressed and bespectacled in a way that seems to evoke the early 1960s as well as the late 1980s and early 1990s; memories of Morris in the original performance may become mixed with more recent stage images; Michael Stella looks as much like the musician Arto Lindsay in the 1980s as the Morris of *21.3*. The film is in black and white (other segments of *Four Pieces by Morris* are in color), but nowhere does it imitate the filmic documents of the period. It seems suspended between periods, fracturing Morris's already multiple temporalities as if in a colorless kaleidoscope.

Today I would feel less inclined to ban live events from a project, as I think that the essentialism of liveness is decidedly on the retreat; the growing interest in Mangolte's work is a case in point, as exemplified by recent publications such as *Between Zones: On the Representation of the Performative and the Notation of Movement* by the Migros Museum, Zürich.[15] Furthermore, a number of artists are doing interesting

14. Babette Mangolte, statement from 1994, in "How I Made Some of My Films," online at www.babettemangolte.com/maps1.html.
15. *Between Zones: On the Representation of the Performative and the Notation of Movement*, ed. Rachel Gygax and Heike Munder (Zurich: Migros Museum für Gegenwartskunst, 2010).

work precisely by exploring the interrelations between performance and media in the form of performances. However, the increasing importance of performance events in the art world also raises troubling questions for me—and in any new exhibition project dealing with these matters, such questions would have to be addressed. In the 1960s and 1970s, performances were often seen as challenges to an art world based on the production of commodity-objects. However, we are now well aware that the economy does not exclusively rely on such "classic" commodities, and the subsistence of an increasing number of people depends on some kind of performance.

The term performance, of course, is slippery even within relatively well-defined contexts. In today's economy, it not only refers to the results one delivers, but also to one's actual, quasi-theatrical self-presentation, one's self-performance in an economy in which work has become more dependent on immaterial factors. There is the specific domain of performance art, but there is also what I would call an economic regime of generalized performance. How do the two interact, interfere with each other? How do reenactments function within our own temporal economy? The time in which performances are staged now is never some empty, pure present, especially if they take place in the context of festivals such as Performa, or as one-off events such as the all-night series of performances *From Dusk till Dawn*, organized by the curatorial collective If I Can't Dance, I Don't Want to Be Part of Your Revolution, at the Van Abbemuseum (Eindhoven, Netherlands) in 2010, which included several revisitations and free variations on historical pieces. In the case of a much-anticipated reenactment of a legendary historical performance, the performance itself becomes a mini-festival, a must-see and must-be-seen event. We may go to such events not just to inform ourselves, but also to perform ourselves and to network; however, since what Franco Berardi calls contemporary "cybertime" is marked by our feelings of insufficiency about never having enough of the damn thing (time) to accomplish all the things we should, it is marked by stress.[16]

Some of the pieces we encounter may be marked by the loving exploration of the potentialities of time encapsulated by another former Judson participant, Deborah Hay, with her stated aim "to truly admit and celebrate the ephemeral nature of dance by learning to notice, and consciously embody, time passing."[17] Her choreography for the 2010 piece *No Time to Fly*, which occasioned this remark, is indeed marked by an almost bewildering profusion of temporal layers: her own history with the Judson group is no doubt present in the minds of many audience members, a history also evoked by Hay's aged body in the here and now. Her movements sometimes recall moments from the history of dance, but also neurotic repetitions and religious rituals; however, they are evoked through precise negations, disappearing as soon as they start to appear. In her score for the piece, she evokes curious entities such "an untraditional object in a 5,000-year-old marketplace," which informs part of her choreography without being in any way apparent in the dance itself.[18] At one point she sings a silent song, moving her lips without producing sound; more extremely than in Morris's case, the present is a montage of temporalities. There being no clear crescendo or climax, it is almost impossible to stay focused the whole time; one's thoughts wander through personal history and beyond. The absence of music creates an uncomfortable awareness of the compulsions of one's own body, for instance, the urge

16. See Franco Berardi, *Precarious Rhapsody: Semiocapitalism and the Pathologies of the Post-alpha Generation* (London: Minor Compositions, 2009).
17. Deborah Hay, quoted at www.springdance.nl/archive_details.php?pageNum_rs_program=0&totalRows_rs_program=3&programID=629&artistID=607&performanceID=&country=&subID=&page=archive_search.php&search=true.
18. Deborah Hay, *No Time to Fly, 2010: A Solo Dance Score Written by Deborah Hay*, online at www.deborahhay.com/DHDC%20Website%20Pdf/NTTF%20booklet.pdf. The phrase is from page 14.

Deborah Hay, *No Time to Fly*, 2010, dress rehearsal (photograph © Rino Pizzi)

to cough or sneeze, which suddenly erupts on the stage itself as Hay unleashes a furious, sneeze-like blast—a trained and disciplined eruption of symptomatic remainders that dance usually seeks to suppress. This is dance, this is performance at its best; in its manipulation of the audience's sense of time, it articulates, however mutedly, some of the constraints under which both performer and audience members operate, and stages little liberations from them.

At a Dutch performance of *No Time To Fly*, I met one of the curators of If I Can't Dance, who expressed her own amazement that she had essentially absconded from one of the biggest art-world opening weekends to attend this performance in a dance context. Even if the Judson Dance Theater stands for crossovers between dance and visual art, for her (and for me) this performance in a dance context is also blessedly free from the need to self-perform, though this was of course not necessarily the case for audience members who belonged to the dance community. It will be interesting to see if performance art can develop more pointed ways of reflecting on and perhaps to some extent disabling the temporal and economical constraints under which performance works come into being—the constraints of our culture of generalized performance. There is freedom to be found in not being present, in missing the event—an event one can then reconstruct and reconfigure from its media fallout, like historical performances. However, a more difficult but ultimately more rewarding freedom might be gained from working inside the event and turning cybertime against itself.

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Sharon Hayes

The Not-Event

Amelia Jones, question framing this dialogue:
What are the costs and benefits of the current move to institutionalize performance art by documenting it (often on websites or in archives), reenacting performances, and/or exhibiting performance art histories in galleries and art museums?

Sharon Hayes:
On the one hand, I would be naive to disagree with the stated ground on which this question is formed—that performance, past and present, is enjoying a particular currency at the moment and that that currency relies upon the skillful and seductive materialization of performance(s) in and through various documentary materials: photographs, film, video or audio recordings.

On the other hand, I think it's important to challenge the assumptions that come along with this assertion: 1) that performance has not heretofore been a part of the institution(s) of art, and 2) that the diverse and unstable field of performance practices (at least those of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries) has not always had a foundational relationship to documentation and documentary materials: written and spoken description, photographs, film, video, audio, etc.

For me a performance is not, and has never been, separable from what (even if refused or denied) carries on in place of the performance later, whether physi-

Sharon Hayes, *In the Near Future*, 2009, image from a multiple-slide-projection installation, with thirteen 35mm slide projections (artwork © Sharon Hayes; photograph provided by Tanya Leighton Gallery, Berlin)

cal records, residue, or just a remembered anecdote about the event experienced. Which is not to say that the performance and the material records or objects or anecdotes that document it are the same thing. They are, in fact, entirely different, and, as such, they address an audience in radically different ways.

Documents of events are usually horrible representations of the event itself. I would in fact say that they never represent the event. The records may resemble the event or aspects of it in some ways; they may capture some of the elements of the event, but, in doing so, they alter other elements. I've never been disturbed by this but rather have found the tension between what I call the event and what I call the not-event of the document to be productive place to work as an artist.

Lately, I've been most interested in thinking about performance documentation in relation to Bertolt Brecht's description of the *demonstration*. In Brecht's revolutionary epic-theater, the actor is replaced by the demonstrator. Brecht writes:

> The demonstrator need not be an artist. The capacities he needs to achieve his aim are in effect universal. Suppose he cannot carry out some particular movement as quickly as the victim he is imitating; all he need do is to explain that *he* moves three times as fast, and the demonstration neither suffers in essentials nor loses its point. On the contrary it is important that he should not be too perfect. His demonstration would be spoilt if the bystanders' attention were drawn to his powers of transformation. . . . It is most important that one of the main features of the ordinary theatre should be excluded from our street scene: the engendering of illusion. The street demonstrator's performance is essentially repetitive. The event has taken place; what you are seeing now is a repeat.[19]

That this demonstration, this repetition, can circulate within the art institution(s) in a way in which a live act cannot is not a material condition to cause dismay but rather one, I think, that can be a field of deep investigation.

19. Bertolt Brecht, "The Street Scene," in *Brecht on Theatre: The Development of an Aesthetic*, ed. and trans. John Willett (New York: Hill and Wang, 1964), 122.

Sharon Hayes's work moves between multiple mediums—video, performance, installation—in an ongoing investigation into the interrelation among history, politics, and speech. She employs conceptual and methodological approaches borrowed from practices such as performance, theater, dance, anthropology, and journalism. Hayes is an assistant professor at the Cooper Union. www.shaze.info.

Sophia Yadong Hao

Memory Is Not Transparent

Something happens, but by the time we notice, it has begun without us. Thus our access to the beginning is necessarily incomplete, fragmentary.
—Peggy Phelan

The attempt and rejection of the institutionalization of performance artworks is an ongoing dialectic in which I am partially implicated. Between 2008 and 2009 I curated an exhibition program, *NOTES on a return*, which had at its core the desire to reflect upon how performance artworks could occupy the space of the institution, as critical acts and as manifesting an intangible but acknowledged presence.

NOTES on a return took as its primary material five live artworks made by Anne Bean, Rose English, Mona Hatoum, Bruce McLean, and Nigel Rolfe in 1985, 1986, and 1987 at the Laing Art Gallery in Newcastle upon Tyne in the United Kingdom. Through my fortuitous discovery, while working there as curatorial fellow, of a single brochure among a collection of ephemera from the 1980s in the Laing's archive, I realized that the presence of these five works within the institution was, after the passage of decades, largely marked by and reduced to an absence. It was this condition of absence which *NOTES on a return* sought to address: not through the construction (or reconstruction) of an archive suffused with material evidence, photographs, videos, or the like, but through a staging a series of events that opened up a deliberate process of raising questions.

My intention was also not to address or to attempt to reveal the reasons for this void in art history and the history of the Laing, but rather to take this absence as an opportunity to formulate, critically examine, and enact a methodology of documentation or memory which maintains the live act after its demise as a live act, without retreating into the blind alley of insisting on the presentation of material evidence or reenactments. In this context memory operated as a *recherche*: a process of searching, rather than one of recuperation. This concept of memory was elaborated by Walter Benjamin, who translated Proust's À la *Recherche du temps perdu* (*In Search of Lost Time*) into German. For Benjamin, this *recherche* was "a space, of moments and discontinuities" rather than a sifting-through of chronologies of events.[20] The *recherche* is the space of the performance: a space as void or absence.

To demonstrate how this conception of memory interrupts the current moves to institutionalize performance art through material- or image-based documentation, I wish to focus on artists whose approach to *NOTES on a return* developed a line of inquiry that fundamentally critiqued the act of reenactment and its efficacy in the space of the gallery.

NOTES on a return began its *recherche* with a series of "archival" installations and audio installations. Each of the original artists was invited back and asked to use this archival space as an opportunity to initiate a creative dialogue with his or her memory of the performance. Bean, for example, undertook a physical and private restating of the work itself as a mnemonic tool to trigger her "body-cell memories" of the original performance.[21] As noted below, artists from a younger generation were also commissioned to respond to the original performances.

In addition to the artists' own material, each installation consisted of facsimiles of letters between the artists, audience members, and the curators, notes and sketches made by artists and audience members, and past reviews of the artworks. While this material referred to the performances, its origin did not lie in the actual moment of the live event, but in the periods before and after it. The primary elements in the archival installations were audio interviews with the artists themselves, in which they recounted the work. In tandem to this, audio interviews were made with specific audience members who witnessed each work. These interviews all took place in the (physical) space within the gallery where the works had originally been performed, even though that space has since changed beyond all recognition.

It was this material from before and after the original performances that provided the starting point for the new works by the artists from a younger generation. Each of these artists was paired with one of the artists who made the featured 1980s performances and given his or her contact details, in expectation that each younger artist would initiate a dialogue. Viola Yeşiltaç, who was paired with

My title is borrowed from John Dummett, "Notes on *NOTES*: Writers in Residency" (2009), rep. *NOTES on a return*, ed. Sophia Yadong Hao and Matthew Hearn (Sunderland, UK: Art Editions North, 2010). By adapting the title of a preexisting artwork, Mel Bochner's *Language Is Not Transparent* (1970), and rewording it as "memory is not transparent," Dummett highlighted the dichotomy of *NOTES on a return* and raised the question of how to engage in actions of memory and remembering without introducing the reductive dynamic of the archive and its paterfamilias, history.
The epigraph is from Peggy Phelan, "Dwelling," in *Out of Now: The Lifeworks of Tehching Hsieh*, ed. Adrian Heathfield (London and Cambridge, MA: Live Art Development Agency and MIT Press, 2009), 342.

20. In the introduction to Walter Benjamin's *One-way Street*, Susan Sontag discusses how Benjamin considers memory in relation to time and space in his essay "Berlin Chronicle," and she suggests that Proust's work could be called "À la Recherche des espaces perdues" (In Search of Lost Spaces). See Susan Sontag, introduction to *One-way Street and Other Writings*, by Walter Benjamin, trans. Edmund Jephcott and Kingsley Shorter (London: New Left Books, 1979), 12–13.
21. Anne Bean, quoted from a text presented as a part of Bean's installation: *NOTES on a return Archival Exhibition: Anne Bean Pain Tings*, July 11–July 29, 2009.

Viola Yeşiltaç, *Adding Salt to the Sea*, 2009, installation detail, *NOTES on a return*, Laing Art Gallery, 2009 (artwork © Viola Yeşiltaç; photograph by the artist)

***Archival Exhibition: Bruce McLean*, 2009,** installation detail, *NOTES on a return*, Laing Art Gallery, 2009 (artwork © Bruce McLean; photograph by the author)

opposite:

Writer John Dummett (right) with his work *Memory Is Not Transparent*, 2009 (artwork © John Dummett; photograph by Stephen Collins).

Dummett was one of three writers commissioned to make live writings in response to the *NOTES on a return* symposium and performance events.

English, chose to not develop a dialogue with English, however, but instead focused exclusively on the audio recording of the interview with her.[22]

In a statement for the project's final publication, English speaks of being "unprepared for the forceful shock of recognition I experienced in seeing Viola Yeşiltaç's installation, *Adding Salt to the Sea*. . . . This visceral response I myself had was, I remembered, something that I had read in reviews about my own work of the 1980s which 'left behind a dumbstruck audience thrown to the edge of some complex insight.' . . . I found myself in turn dumbstruck, moved to tears and thrown to the edge of some complex insight—but of what?"[23]

From only the recounting of an event, Yeşiltaç reconstructs a tangible and visceral presence for the new version of the work and demonstrates in her approach how this action of recounting grounds the meanings and specifically the insights offered by the live event. Moreover, Yeşiltaç discounts the necessity of attempting to replay or reenact an identified moment in time as the methodology to situate performance work inside the institution and art history.

NOTES on a return operated as a present-tense staging of history. This present tense dispels the apparent certainties often purveyed within the discourses of the institution and art history when past performances are exhibited. *NOTES on a return* worked with the strategic notion of the event (or history itself) as an ongoing

22. Viola Yeşiltaç, a German artist based in New York, was one of the five artists commissioned by *NOTES on a return* to make new works; she responded to the recollections of Rose English's 1985 performance *Plato's Chair*. The merge of photography and performance is the backbone of Yeşiltaç's work. She also reenacted a number of performance pieces by Marina Abramović and Ulay, with Ulay's son and other collaborators. Among these, the most significant piece was the reenactment of Abramović's earlier performance with Ulay, *Rest Energy*, 1980, as a part of the project *The Biography Remix*, curated by Abramović and Michael Laub. The reenactment took place at Teatro Palladium, Rome, September 29–October 2, 2004, and later in Avignon in 2005.

23. Rose English, "Artist's Notes," *NOTES on a return*, 82. The review from which she quotes is Tony Whitfield, "LA/London Lab," review of English's *Adventure or Revenge*, *Fuse* (Toronto), November–December 1981, 265.20.

live process of debate and exchange. The work of this project, whether in the guise of the critical essays, installations, live performances, or scores it generated, is an open-ended foray into a space of memory that is not codified or reduced to the status of an archive or static testament to a moment passed.

Sophia Yadong Hao is a curator and artist. Her curatorial projects include *NOTES on a return*, which critiqued the documentation of performance art by situating history as a set of live questions that query the reasons and conditions for remembering. Her current curatorial research is focused on the function of artists' collaboration as a dematerialized studio. Hao is currently curator of exhibitions at the Visual Research Centre, Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art, in Scotland.

Branislav Jakovljević

On Performance Forensics: The Political Economy of Reenactments

The question concerning documentation, reenactment, and exhibiting of past performances points to the temporality of before and after; of sequentiality, endurance, and survival; of the materiality of traces and their permanence. It also points to the reversed order of writing in performance: the kind of "textual" production intuited by the early modern theater, according to which labor is not ever lost but, paradoxically, remains forever irretrievable. This labor as investment and accumulation points, finally, to the order of actuality: what once may have happened is made actual; that which was a contingency turns into law.[24]

Conventional capitalist economies make use of both efficacy and possibility. They seek to extend (and profit from) the promise of future repetitions of that which was once actualized and regularized. It seems that with performance art this works differently. The history of attempts at restaging one-off experimental performances suggests that the reenactments always stop with the desire to actualize, to turn contingency into law.

In the late 1970s and early 1980s there was a series of stage revivals of the works of the pre–World War II theatrical avant-garde. For example, throughout the 1970s Mel Gordon worked on restaging performances of Russian Constructivists and German Expressionists (e.g., scenes from Vsevolod Meyerhold's 1922 landmark production *The Magnanimous Cuckold* and Lothar Schreyer's *Crucifixion* from 1920). This work on excavation and restoration of past works of the theatrical avant-garde prompted some scholarly interest in performance reconstruction. In his introduction to the 1984 special issue of *The Drama Review* dedicated to this stage practice, its editor Michael Kirby wrote that because reconstruction is "theoretically" "guided by standards other than contemporary taste, it offers us the possibility of something unexpected, surprising, and radically different."[25] Kirby hoped that the actuality of the work would somehow automatically transmit and preserve the properties of its "original" potential. Not only did it fail to do so, it was unsuccessful in forging new reconstructions.

Virtually all experiments in performance reconstruction have ended with the first attempt. For example, avant-garde works such as Oskar Schlemmer's Bauhaus dances, Jean Cocteau's and Pablo Picasso's *Parade*, or Kazimir Malevich and Mikhail Matiushin's *Victory over the Sun* never became standard parts of theater repertoires and museum exhibitions. Nor did they incite significant new works that would follow in their footsteps. The dance scholar and choreographer Mark Franko was much more cautious and sensitive to the trap of attempting to retrieve authenticity when, at the end of the 1980s, he made the important distinction between reconstruction and reinvention of historical performances. According to Franko, "Whereas reconstruction at its weakest tries to recreate a reality without a predetermined effect, reinvention aims at creating precisely that effect."[26] He enlisted performance art of the 1960s and 1970s firmly on the side of reinvention.

In the past few years, the new/old phenomenon of reperformance or reenactment closes the circle. In a sleight-of-hand fashion, while declaring that it is giving the past performances—or performance as such—a second chance, reperformance supplies precisely that which its precursors renounced: permanence. One of the few theoretically interesting questions that reperformance provokes is that of the future of performance documentation. The answer it furnishes at the same time is that it serves to produce more documents, but of a different kind—photographs, video recordings, books—returning us to the good old economy of commodity production.[27]

In another article published at the end of the 1980s, the sound artist Gregory Whitehead took the disaster of the space shuttle *Challenger*, televised live on January 28, 1986, as the starting premise in his consideration of what he calls "forensic theater."[28] Whereas reconstruction's emphasis on repeatability strives to overcome the transience of performance and performers, in his elusive idea of forensic theater Whitehead looks at the residues of performance as what they are: the indexes of mortality and death. His forensic theater is not a past event restored to life, but the way of seeing assisted and enhanced by technology which reveals traces of the past in the present. Both reperformance and forensic theater address that which is not visible. The former revives past events and in doing so brings them back into the field of vision. The latter changes the scope of the field of vision to include that which was deemed invisible.

Over the past two decades, the development of new technologies has created the illusion of total retention and total recall. If performance art of the 1960s and 1970s sought to undo the textuality of theater, to use Franko's concept, what it produced is by now seen as a new kind of text. In their 2001 book *Theatre/Archaeology*, Mike Pearson and Michael Shanks argue for a performance archaeology (and archaeology conceived as performance) that draws "upon disciplines, principles, methods and terminologies other than those of textual analysis."[29] Relying on documents and artifacts, performance archaeology turns from textual analysis to the analysis of textures. Not surprisingly, Shanks and Pearson find the epitome of *textural* analysis in forensic archaeology. The forensic site is plagued by the sense of heightened significance. In it, the smallest detail becomes impregnated with meaning: "everything is potentially important," "every contact leaves a trace," "anything can be relevant at the scene of crime."

It is this sense of the infinite possibility of retrieval that drives some of the most acclaimed recent artworks that employ documentary technique. Consider, for example, Anri Sala's 1998 video piece *Intervista*, in which the author enlists lip readers to interpret his mother's words in silent film footage from the 1977 congress of Albanian Communist youth; or the German theater group Rimini Protokoll's 2007 production *World Premiere: The Visit*, in which, using eyewitness accounts by the audience members present at the original event, they staged a reconstruction of the 1956 opening night of the Swiss dramatist Friedrich

24. I am referring here to Charles Sanders Peirce's notions of firstness, secondness and thirdness. Peirce relegates the category of firstness to pure spontaneity and chance, the category of secondness to actuality, and thirdness to potentiality. Put differently, firstness is that which may be, secondness is the brute here and now, and thirdness is that which would be. Whereas firstness and thirdness are concerned with potentiality and ideas, secondness turns chance occurrence into routine; being actual and belonging to the present, it objectifies that which was random. The secondness is in the business of efficacy, and as such it points to that which comes after it, to thirdness. See Peirce, *Collected Papers*, vol. 1, *Principles of Philosophy*, and vol. 5–6, *Pragmatism and Pragmaticism*, *Scientific Metaphysics* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1965).
25. Michael Kirby, "Reconstruction: An Introduction" *TDR: The Drama Review* 28, no. 3 (Fall 1984): 2.
26. Mark Franko, "Repeatability, Reconstruction and Beyond," *Theatre Journal* 41, no. 1 (March 1989): 58.
27. In the 1980s, the attempts at performance reconstruction in theater and dance took place within the cultural moment that was marked, in the field of theory, by the idea of postmodernism, and in culture in general, by wide proliferation of new technologies of recording and dissemination of images, such as video and satellite and cable television. The new technologies for capturing, manipulation, and dissemination of images were of central importance for artists such as Sherrie Levine and Richard Prince. Indeed, an inventory of "re-" movements of the 1980s would be incomplete without the mention of repainting or rephotography. (Gerald Marzorati's article on Levine, a major protagonist of appropriation art, is entitled, appropriately, "Art in the (Re)Making"; see *Art News* 85, no. 5 (May 1986): 90–99.) The question of appropriation art and its relation to reperformance is vital, but it would take me beyond the scope of the present discussion. Suffice it to say here that the development of new reproductive and communication technologies, which significantly accelerated in the 1990s, had an impact on performance that goes beyond appropriation art, video documentation, and the digital manipulation of images.
28. See Gregory Whitehead, "The Forensic Theatre: Memory Plays for the Post-mortem Condition," *Performing Arts Journal* 12, no. 2–3 (1990), 99–109. For a much more effective use of the same incident in consideration of performance, see Jon McKenzie, *Perform or Else: From Discipline to Performance* (London: Routledge, 2001).
29. Mike Pearson and Michael Shanks, *Theatre/Archaeology* (London: Routledge, 2001), 59. Additional quotes are from pages 59 and 61.

Grupa Spomenik (Damir Arsenijevic, Branimir Stojanovic, and Milica Tomic), *Toward the Matheme of Genocide*, 2009, installation view, Charim Gallery, Vienna (artwork © Grupa Spomenik; photograph by Markus Krottendorfer)

Dürrenmatt's play *The Visit*. What drives the interest in and approval of this kind of documentary work is not only the wonder of technological possibility of the total retrieval (reperformance) of the past, but an underlying ideological imperative of the universal redress and reparation of misdeeds from the past.

Last in this inventory of "re-" artworks that I want to address is the project *Mathemes of Reassociation* by Grupa Spomenik (Monument Group), a collective of artists and theoreticians from Belgrade in Serbia and Tuzla in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Established in 2002 in response to the Belgrade city government's open call for proposals for a public monument dedicated to all victims of the Yugoslav wars of the 1990s, the group proclaimed the monument to be its public meetings in which participants debated this attempt at an ideologically blind take on the recent violent past in the former Yugoslavia. The group started its most significant project to date, *Mathemes of Reassociation*, on the occasion of Belgrade's 49th October Salon in 2008. The work was presented as a series of public lectures that took place over the course of five days. In three of these lectures, the invited speakers were forensic anthropologists, forensic archaeologists, and DNA analysts from the International Commission of Missing Persons (ICMP) located in the Bosnian cities of Sarajevo, Tuzla, and Lukavac. ICMP was established in 1996, soon after the cessation of armed conflict in Bosnia and Herzegovina, in order to assist with the resolution of the large number of citizens who went missing in the armed conflicts in the former Yugoslavia from 1991 to 1995. In Bosnia and Herzegovina alone, the number of missing was over thirty thousand. Over time,

Grupa Spomenik (Damir Arsenijevic, Ana Bezic, Jasmina Husanovic, Pavle Levi, Branimir Stojanovic, and Milica Tomic), *Lecture Room No. 3*, 2009, installation view, Charim Gallery, Vienna (artwork © Grupa Spomenik; photograph by Markus Krottendorfer)

the main project of ICMP became the identification of the remains of the 1995 genocide in the east Bosnian enclave of Srebrenica, in which some eight thousand men and boys had been summarily executed. In order to hide the crime, the perpetrators had dug out the bodies and reburied them in secondary and tertiary graves, which called for the development of new and innovative methods of bone reassociation and DNA analysis.[30]

In a lecture Grupa Spomenik organized as a part of *Mathemes of Reassociation*, the ICMP forensic anthropologist Admir Jugo explained that, as the result of reburials in the aftermath of the Srebrenica massacre, a single primary grave could be related to as many as thirteen known secondary graves, and that parts of the body of one individual were found in four different graves. In another lecture the DNA analyst Šejla Idrizbegović spoke about the process of matching of DNA samples harvested from the surviving relatives and extracted from the bones found in the mass graves. The lectures of scientists engaged by ICMP expounded on the two key phases in the process of identification of victims. The title *Mathemes of Reassociation* refers to these two phases. The first is the allocation of the bar code to each sample so that DNA analysts work with "blind samples." According to ICMP, this temporary suppression of information about the victim's ethic identity guarantees the objectivity of the procedure of identification of the remains. The second phase, reassociation, refers to either physical matching of the crushed bones or grouping of the remains through DNA analysis. As Idrizbegović has pointed out, the ICMP and the families of the victims consider 75 percent of an individu-

30. This method was subsequently used in a number of other disaster sites, such as Indonesia after the 2004 tsunami and New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina in 2005.

al's skeletal remains sufficient to carry out a burial. This reassociation of the pulverized body and its reintegration into its ethnic and religious community stands for the reintegration of the country devastated by war, albeit on ideological and political premises that caused the war in the first place.

It is precisely this politics of reassociation in terms of ethnic identity that the members of Grupa Spomenik want to bring into question. Apart from the scientists from ICMP, they organized a lecture for the young Bosnian writer Šejla Šehabović, who gave a public reading of her story "Ruvejda." In the story, a young Bosnian woman living in the United States comes back to Bosnia to give a blood sample for the identification of the remains of her missing grandfather; at the last moment she grabs the vial with her blood and storms out of the identification center. In his lecture "Gendering the Bone," Damir Arsenijević, a Tuzla-based member of Grupa Spomenik, takes this instance from Šehabović's story as a "moment which cuts through the symbolic" of the law.[31] Her action refuses precisely the ideological coercion of the actuality of the moment implemented as the law that insists on the bringing back, reassembling and "reassociating" the body in what Arsenijević calls the "brute here and now." As Arsenijević points out, the efficacy of this law depends on repressing the actual body, which remains "beyond the limits of law's symbolization, revealing its finiteness, arbitrariness, revealing the limitation of its power, revealing it as incomplete."[32]

In her lecture "Towards an Emancipatory Politics of Witnessing," another Tuzla-based member of Grupa Spomenik, Jasmina Husanović, describes this law as the law of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the state designed and administratively facilitated by international bodies such as the European Union and the United Nations. Husanović recognizes the medicalization (of the past), the mythologization (of the present), and the depoliticization (of the community) as the three main strategies of this state whose citizens are trapped in a state of postwar and postsocialist transition. This is the state in which, as Arsenijević points out, people rummage through dustbins because 25 percent of them live below the poverty line—a state that depends precisely on the production of reassembled bodies, on bringing the dead back into the present, on reperforming the trauma, because it furnishes the ideological operation according to which the "discourse of trauma displaces the discourse of hunger."[33] Yet, the bodies that are brought back and made the centerpiece of elaborate spectacles of reburial stubbornly refuse their full reintegration into this political economy of erasure.

This erasure has material and ideological effects. I end with the words of Arsenijević, which he offered in response to the question from Milica Tomić, one of Grupa Spomenik's founders, about "surplus bones," the skeletal remains that remained unidentified and unburied: "If the unidentified bones are the result of genocide politics, then the politics of the society after the genocide is, in fact, the politics of [making an] ossuary of that remaining surplus of bones, that invisible remainder that you can't integrate any more, and you don't know what to do with it."[34]

31. Damir Arsenijević, "Gendering the Bone" (unpublished manuscript, 2008, my translation), 12.
32. Ibid., 2.
33. Jasmina Husanović, "Towards an Emancipatory Politics of Witnessing" (unpublished manuscript, 2008; my translation), 3.
34. Damir Arsenijević, quoted in unpublished transcript of discussion following Admir Jugo, "The Application of Forensic Techniques at the Mass Graves in Bosnia and Herzegovina" (lecture, House of Legacy, Belgrade, Serbia, October 4, 2008; my translation).

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William Pope.L

Canary in the Coal Mine

0. Institutionalized art performance reenactment is about emptying as much as it is about remembering. Memory is a smoke screen for a set of anxieties possessed by both the packrat and the king. Both hoard to defend some unspoken, unrecognized absence. Both use the myopia of repetition to pleasure their perspective and bestow upon their project an illusion of progress and community.

.01 Warhol's object production was an incredibly narrow, near-perfect bit of institutionalized art performance. If everything is an object then no one gets near, no one gets in, no one gets hurt. His performance created pleasure by reproducing a poor representation of a thing. The thing itself incited pleasure, a sense of safety in the familiar. The poverty of the objects signaled something lost. A poverty of liveness? Maybe the absence of real things and bodies helps us to keep afloat the fantasy that we are above being alive.

1. Karaoke is an example of performance reenactment in which participants derive pleasure by knowingly reperforming that which has been reperformed many times before. A poorly performed example can be a terrific example. Drinking alcohol, loud carousing, singing off-key late into the darkness collaborate in a ritual obliteration, the goal being: community-cohesion via public obliteration. Can you reenact something until it's rendered completely invisible? Until its true color finally shows through? A transparent color suffused in dust, cobwebs, and melancholy?

1.1 Performance reenactment has been an important part of Fluxus art practice for some time now and serves a similar function as it does for karaoke: group cohesion. The ritual repetition of some action or event by a group helps to mark that group off from another. The reenactment as reenacted is the ultimate thing. The concerns and fears of the group are contained in the repetition. The difference between reenactments is negligible. Reenacting empowers the group and disempowers originality, craft, the author, and property.

1.01 However, there is a strong element of self-consciousness in Fluxus; for example, the obsession with documentation. If karaoke is memorialized via the hangover, Fluxus is memorialized via the boxed performance relic. Notwithstanding Fluxus's utopic desire to level the playing field of art, the issue of quality still matters. Unlike karaoke, differences between performers and performances in Fluxus are tracked very carefully.

1.2 Fluxus is part of the avant-garde tradition, and its early rationales were platformed on challenges to property, the author, and originality. Today these rationales remain but rub uncomfortably against the movement's more businesslike attitudes. So—when Fluxus is happening and the status quo isn't burning, what is being obliterated?

2. The recent attempts to institutionalize performance art by major museums and galleries mark a desire to make packaged objects of a form. Performance art as a form is unique because of its live character, its supposed unrepeatability, which has allowed it to slip and slide through the cracks of the market. Indeed, cultural

William Pope.L, photograph documenting *Eating the Wall Street Journal* (early street version), 1991, New York City (artwork © William Pope.L; photograph by James Pruznick)

institutionalization usually involves strategies which maximize profit, use, or value by enabling the multiple consumption of a product. The ideal is to sell a single product as many times as possible. Unlike karaoke or Broadway, art performance typically secures its rep via very few performances; sometimes we only know of certain canonical performances via legend.

2.2 The collecting of performance objects, residues, props, scores, and zines laid the groundwork for the end of the idea of live performance as the final defense against the "sale." The advent of videotape was the penultimate nail in the coffin. Suddenly the vaunted unrepeatability of performance was in question. Even so, a videotape is not the thing itself. However, if an idea or a piece of music or a novel or a sports star can be sold, why not a performance? What is a performance but a bundle of ideas? Theater has been selling bundles of ideas for a few centuries.

2.3 Is resistance to the art market essential for performance art? Did its celebrated slippery resistance ever truly exist? Is resistance an obsolete concept for today's consumers?

3. For my money, resistance to established power is always necessary, even if, especially if, the established power is radical, avant-garde, or subversive.

William Pope.L, photograph documenting *Eating the Wall Street Journal* (New Millennium version), 2010, New Museum, New York (artwork © William Pope.L; photograph by Benoit Pailley)

3.1 Or a gleaming castle on a hill that sells artworks, snacks, and central heating.

4. Yes, let's set aside reenactment, performance art, liveness, and institutionalization for a moment and focus on bigger fish, like social responsibility.

4.1 Let's put our foot down and state something significant: resistance itself is a product. What would real resistance look like? Real resistance always looks like betrayal cause it's extremely difficult if not impossible to defeat an enemy and not become the enemy.

4.01 Let's say live performance art is some kind of canary in the coal mine. What is its death trying to tell us? Or more interestingly, its middle years, what are they trying to tell us about a form that lives and dies on liveness? And what does it mean for artmaking not only as a practice but as a business?

5. After life, we, performance artists, should sell what? Tacos? Medical supplies for diabetes? Real estate in California? No, the real shit, the next shit, is the soul. I don't know if it actually exists, but I know almost everybody wants one.

5.1 And in terms of marketing, if it doesn't exist, that makes it even more special.

5.01 So—the next product for us, performance artists, to sell is the soul. Not our own, of course. Why would we want to do that? But the thing itself.

5.2 And let's say for argument's sake, we've already established our practice. Business is good. We've amputated a foot or a hand or a leg or a sex part here or there, always thinking at the back of our minds that if things get really tough we've still got the organs and the head. Then, of course, the hard times arrive, maybe they stay too long until one day the only thing we have left to sell is whatever is essential that makes us human—

[William—please enter a short bio of 60-80 words here, or e-mail to me at jhannan@collegeart.org.]

Helena Reckitt

To Make Time Appear

Something exciting accompanied the arrival, roughly a decade ago, of reenactments by artists as such as Tania Bruguera, Jeremy Deller, Omer Fast, Felix Gmelin, Pierre Huyghe, Tino Sehgal, and others. A ubiquitous trope, made banal through its use in community theater, historical pageants, and crime TV, suddenly acquired formal and critical punch. Perhaps it was the perversity and obsessiveness of reenactment that gave it this edge. After all, why restage an event or an artwork when, in our digital era, you can easily sample it online? Why do the temporal and manual demands of reenactment make it such a compelling aesthetic device?

Exhibitions and performance series in Europe and North America fueled my curiosity about reenactment's resurgence.[35] Revisiting political, social, and cultural histories, artists participating in these programs turned repetition against itself to make the past anachronistically current. While under no illusion that they could faithfully reproduce bygone eras or revisit a coherent past, they sought to surpass mere citation by staging affective relationships with historical figures and events, seeming to process them through the bodies of the living.

To researchers and scholars, these projects offered fresh ways of experiencing, analyzing, and archiving time-based art. Informed by feminism and other countercultural positions that valued process above product, time-based art had often eluded conventional scholarly approaches and consequently was underrepresented and critically devalued. Perhaps reenactment could make ephemeral works that had previously been studied via photographic documentation or fast-deteriorating video tangibly present. To facilitate that process, through individual performance reenactments or homages, artists had become historians themselves, making a space for other artists within their work.

In these projects artists acknowledge their creative precursors with gestures that profess to give them their belated due. Both the bodies of artists producing reenactments and those of other people that they involve in the realization of their remakes become conduits between now and then. Embodied approaches to animating a preexisting archive such as these present a nonlinear view of time in

35. Key projects included performance programs *A Little Bit of History Repeated*, 2001, curated by Jens Hoffmann at Kunst-Werke, Berlin; *A Brief History of Performance*, a four-part series that took place 2002–6 at the Whitechapel Art Gallery in London; and the exhibitions *Life, Once More*, 2005, curated by Sven Lütticken at Witte de With, Rotterdam, and *Ahistoric Occasion*, 2007, curated by Nato Thompson at MASS MoCA (Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art) in North Adams.

Installation view, *Not Quite How I Remember It*, 2008, The Power Plant, Toronto, with work by Dario Robleto (photograph by Rafael Goldchain, provided by Power Plant)

which past, present, and future coexist. They resonate with the literary critic Elizabeth Freeman's conception of queer temporality as "a non-narrative history written with the body, in which the performer channels another body . . . making this body available to a context unforeseen in its bearer's lived historical moment."[36]

While it takes about twenty-five years for fashion trends to become desirably "vintage"—witness the return of 1980s-style shoulder pads, leggings, and asymmetric haircuts today—we tend to be able to gain perspective on the social and cultural past after approximately two generations have elapsed. As with fashion revivals, at this point our ideas about previous eras coalesce around stereotypes and generalizations. Promoting a speculative view of both current and former times, reenactment offers the possibility of a more complex view of history that acknowledges the effects of historical representation on art's dissemination and reception. This form of "sideshadowing," as the literary scholar Gary Saul Morson terms it, aims to open the past to reveal untold might-have-beens and might-bes, rather than following the preordained paths suggested by foreshadowing.[37]

Intrigued by these fresh ways of revisiting history, in 2008 I organized *Not Quite How I Remember It* at the Power Plant in Toronto.[38] As its title implies, the exhibition explored the space between an event and its recollection and memorialization. Many works built on earlier radical social and artistic projects in order to reflect upon the disparity between their utopian promise and our less idealistic times. Following Candice Breitz's conception of artistic influence as a pattern of "call and response," the physical act of copying another person's work took on overtones of apprenticeship and learning, empathy and homage.[39] Can the present harbor the past as the ground shelters a dormant seed, the exhibition asked? Can a living artist collaborate with a dead one? Or, as the artist Dario Robleto wondered of his piece *I Miss Everyone Who Has Ever Gone Away*, a flimsy mobile made from the shiny wrappers in a Felix Gonzalez-Torres "candy spill" that Robleto made in 1991 and reconstructed in Toronto, "Can a creative gesture begun by one artist be passed like a baton through the years to be continued or completed by another artist in another time so that it never has to end but fulfills Félix Gonzalez-Torres's ambition to become 'endless copies?'"[40]

36. Elizabeth Freeman, "Introduction," *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 13, no. 2–3 (2007): 159–76.
37. See Gary Saul Morson, *Narrative and Freedom: The Shadows of Time* (Yale University Press, New Haven, 1994).
38. The exhibition featured work by Diane Borsato, Gerard Byrne, Nancy Davenport, Felix Gmelin, Sharon Hayes, Mary Kelly, Nestor Krüger, Michael Maranda, Olivia Plender, Walid Raad, Dario Robleto, Michael Stevenson, Kelley Walker, and Lee Walton. An accompanying screening program, *Am I Repeating Yourself?*, presented films by John Baldessari, Magnus Bärtas, Bruce Connor, Iain Forsyth and Jane Pollard, Felix Gmelin, Mike Kelley/Paul McCarthy, Jill Godmillow, Alision S. M. Kobayashi, Anri Sala, Elisabeth Subrin, Zin Taylor, and T. R. Uthco and Ant Farm.
39. See "Candice Breitz Introducing *Call + Response* at Mudam," Musée d'art modern Grand-Duc Jean, Luxemburg, February 2007, available online at http://flash007.lu/medias/44462.
40. Dario Robleto, e-mail correspondence with the author, April 2008.

Marina Abramović reenactment of Valie Export, *Genital Panic* 1969, in Abramović's *Seven Easy Pieces*, Guggenheim Museum, New York, 2005 (artwork © Marina Abramović, photograph provided by Marina Abramovic Archives and Sean Kelly Gallery, New York)

Robleto's appreciation of the remake's ability to generate new work has been amply illustrated by the creators of numerous recent artworks who "collaborate" with other artists—living and dead, with and without their permission—through reenactment. Yet where once I greeted news of such projects with anticipation, now a sense of ambivalence, even skepticism, mutes my response. Reenactment, I fear, is in danger of becoming just another aesthetic trope, a backwards glance that fails to shed light on why and how we remember and represent the past.

For instance, despite its formal power, Marina Abramović's *Seven Easy Pieces* of 2005 reifies already-familiar performance art.[41] By turning time-based works into *tableaux vivants* and drawing on well-known documentary photographs, Abramović failed to account for the differences of time and place, context and body between her source material and its restaging. Far from reigniting the vitality of past works, her project underscored reperformance's limitations. For all the physical demands that they put on her, Abramović's composed, pictorial set pieces seemed museological—even mausoleum-like. They left the uncomfortable impression that, now that performance art's time is passed, it can be codified and canonized as just another genre, devoid of its original meaning and impact.

To take another example, I recently learned of a reprise of Yoko Ono's *Cut Piece*, originally performed in 1964; the reprise was staged in 2009 as part of a North American museum show on the nude.[42] As an artist associated with Fluxus, which fostered the concept of art as a score to be interpreted, and one of the pioneering female artists of the early 1960s, Ono was an understandable choice. But the reenactment departed from her work in problematic ways. In the now-celebrated original, Ono knelt calmly on stage with scissors that audience members used to cut away her clothes. Her emotionless expression and still body became blank screens upon which members of the public projected and acted out their fantasies. However, the remake by Julianna Barabas and Kristen Hutchinson did away with Ono's mute inertia; Barabas, assuming Ono's role, instead conversed with gallery visitors and encouraged their participation. When asked about this change, Barabas explained that the conservative nature of the museum and its public made her wary of alienating the audience.[43] But this substitution of conviviality for aggravation denuded Ono's work of its criticality and its aim. After all, the response of audiences to Ono's provocative passivity was part of its point: while in Tokyo they were tentative, at the 1966 Destruction in Art Symposium in London the crowd's aggression prompted security guards to offer Ono protection.[44]

Such restagings function largely as quotations. They serve to shore up their source's reputation while gaining from their association with it. Reducing radical projects to images and brands, they ignore or accept uncritically the shifts in time, place, and context between the contemporary versions and their precedents. Despite their spirit of homage, these works often reduce rather than reflect the power and complexity of the art that they honor. "The ego wants to incorporate this object into itself," Freud wrote of early object relations, "and, in accordance with the oral or cannibalistic phase of libidinal development at which it is, it wants to do so by devouring it."[45] Similarly, these citational reprises consume their precursors in the process of appropriating them.

To be fair, anachronism and tautology always grounded artistic reenactment, generating its powerful status as aesthetically dubious. Based in historical narrative, figural representation, literary references, and theatricality—those declared enemies of vanguard art that Michael Fried notoriously denounced in his influential 1967 article "Art and Objecthood"—this work is out of step with the mainstream twentieth-century avant-garde.[46] Certainly, reenactment is not inherently radical, critical, or interesting: as we know, even the most audacious and challenging art can coalesce quickly into a new aesthetic status quo. But such dilution is inevitable in reenactments that stay at the level of citation, where the processes of historical representation—what gets remembered, what gets forgotten, by whom and how—remain unexamined.

Several artists who work in a historically reflexive way have addressed some of these problems within their work. In the ongoing performance series begun in 2005, *In the Near Future*, Sharon Hayes stands on the street and holds placards bearing slogans of earlier political protests, such as "Who Approved the WAR in Vietnam?" from the US 1960s antiwar movement, and "I AM A MAN," the Memphis sanitation workers' rallying cry that became famous as both a demand and an image when Martin Luther King, Jr., traveled to Memphis in 1968 to support to their march and was assassinated. Clearly not a typical demonstrator, Hayes is decidedly undemonstrative. Blank, dazed, and affectless, she appears as a living relic of and a witness to an outmoded and endangered form of public dissent. Anachronistic signs create a sense of time that is layered and confused: who is this woman and what does she want? In many cases, however, demands that seem passé actually remain current. "Ratify the E.R.A. Now!" recalls the fact that Equal Rights Amendment Act never became law, while "Votes for Women" reminds us that women throughout the world lack many rights, not just the vote.[47] Though far from nostalgic, Hayes's works evoke a sense of troubled longing for earlier periods of urgency and radicalism.

41. These performances on seven consequent nights at the Guggenheim Museum in New York in which Abramović reenacted performance works by Bruce Nauman, Vito Acconci, Valie Export, Gina Pane, and Joseph Beuys, followed by her own 1975 *Lips of Thomas* and one new work.
42. Julianna Barabas, collaborative performance with Kristen Hutchinson, made in response to the exhibition *Leaving Olympia* at the Art Gallery of Alberta, Edmonton, Alberta, May 14, 2009.
43. Barabas speaking on the panel "Re-presenting Iconic Performance Art," Performance Studies International conference, Toronto, June 12, 2010.
44. See Kevin Concannon, Yoko Ono's "Cut Piece: From Text to Performance and Back Again," online at http://imaginepeace.com/archives/2680.
45. Sigmund Freud, "Mourning and Melancholia" (1917), in *On Metapsychology: The Theory of Psychoanalysis*, Pelican Freud Library, vol. 11, trans. James Strachey (London: Penguin, 1984), 258.
46. See Michael Fried, "Art and Objecthood," *Artforum*, June 1967; rep. in *Minimal Art: A Critical Anthology*, ed. Gregory Battcock (New York: Dutton, 1968), 139–42.
47. Though the suffragist Alice Paul wrote the Equal Rights Amendment in 1923, it is still not United States law, as only thirty-five of the necessary thirty-eight states ratified it.

3. **Sharon Hayes, *In the Near Future*, 2005–ongoing,** installation view, *Not Quite How I Remember It*, 2008, The Power Plant, Toronto (artwork © Sharon Hayes; photograph by Rafael Goldchain)

For the recent project *I March In The Parade Of Liberty, But As Long As I Love You I'm Not Free*, begun in New York in 2008, Hayes once again takes to the streets. Standing on various corners, again alone, she speaks into a megaphone as if to a longed-for lover. Combining chants from earlier political protests with more intimate forms of address (including the prison letter written by Oscar Wilde to Alfred Douglas that was published posthumously as "De Profundis"), Hayes calls out to a "you" who is at once a person and representative of a collective movement. Desperate to contact an elusive loved one, Hayes evokes the stages of erotic and political infatuation—the shared excitement and euphoria followed by disillusionment, resignation, and departure. Speaking of *In the Near Future*, Hayes has described her role as that of a placeholder. "I'm holding the place of a kind of address that had meaning and resonance and impact at a certain moment in time. And I'm thinking about the possibility that that resonance and impact could be present at a future time."[48] Her anachronistic forms of public address *make time appear*, just as Walter Benjamin argued outmoded aesthetic objects could do. Operating in the tense of the future anterior—the time when our collective demands will have been successful and that Drucilla Cornell posits as feminist time—Hayes reveals the past to be full of untapped possibility. Moreover, her art sharpens our awareness of historical place and perhaps prompts questions about how subsequent eras will represent our own.

Hayes's work shares much with the concept of "temporal drag" that

48. Morgan Falconer and Sharon Hayes, "The Placeholder for Love and Politics," *DB Art Mag*, October 16–November 30, 2008, available online at: http://db-artmag.com/en/51/feature/sharon-hayes-the-placeholder-for-love-and-politics/?dbiquery=null:Sharon%20%20Hayes (downloaded November 16, 2010).

Elisabeth Subrin, *Shulie*, 1997, still from 16mm film (artwork © Elisabeth Subrin)

Elizabeth Freeman uses to explain our powerful identifications with earlier activist and cultural projects. Evoking the appeal of movements and moments that are not just past but seemingly passé, Freeman stresses the drag act's immersion in "retrogression, delay, and the pull of the past upon the present."[49] In her discussion of Elisabeth Subrin's 1997 film *Shulie*, Freeman considers the prelife of radical feminism. An almost shot-by-shot remake of a 1967 film about the nascent feminist activist and author Shulamith Firestone, unlike most works that are revisited through reenactment *Shulie* derives from source material that is hardly iconic. In fact this obscure student film was never distributed, partly because Firestone asked its makers not to release it. Far from erecting a feminist heroine, *Shulie*, Freeman argues, "partakes in the love of failure, the rescue of ephemera, that constitutes the most angst-ridden side of queer camp performance."[50] Exploring the awkward immaturity of both Firestone and the women's movement that she would help to lead, Freeman sees in the film an examination of feminism's unrealized potential. *Shulie* "consistently undermines the idea that an intact political program has been handed down from older women to younger ones," suggests Freeman. "The messy, transitional status of [Shulie's] thinking asks us to imagine the future in terms of experiences that discourse has not yet caught up with, rather than as a legacy passed on between generations."[51]

Artists like Hayes and Subrin and writers like Freeman acknowledge our complex affiliations with countercultural projects that exceed our own historical times, and our efforts—however troubled, doomed, or flawed—to access them through reenactment. "Laying political desire and personal desire on top of one another," as Hayes has described her work doing, these artists and thinkers suggest that we harness and breathe life into radical movements and moments whose time, though passed, has yet to arrive.[52]

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49. Elizabeth Freeman, "Packing History, Count(er)ing Generations," *New Literary History* 31, no. 4 (Autumn 2000): 727–44, online at http://www.suescottgallery.com/press/Packing-History-Countering-Geneations.
50. Ibid. *Shulie* is distributed by the Video Data Bank, www.vdb.org, and 16mm prints are available from www.elisabethsubrin.com.
51. Ibid.
52. Hayes, quoted in Falconer and Hayes.