

## On the Afterlife of Performance | Part 2

Hanna Hölling | January 2011

A witness report written on the occasion of the two-day conference *The manifold (after) lives of Performance*, 12 - 13 November 2010, Co-Production of de Appel arts centre in Amsterdam and STUK Kunstcentrum in Leuven.

In the history of performance art, de Appel and Amsterdam have become significant in international, interdisciplinary reflection on perhaps one of the most manifold genre of art, which is the art of performance. Almost exactly a year ago, de Appel in Amsterdam in cooperation with STUK Kunstzentrum in Leuven organized a two-day conference touching upon the subject of the various afterlives of performance and action from a very different perspective of artists, curators, researchers and audience.

Discussions and opinions, memories and histories took a central place at this fairly frequented event. In the form of notes, recordings, booklets and flyers, the conference started to live its afterlife almost directly after it had been experienced. All impressions and memories were taken home by the participants and began to be evaluated and implemented in a different context. A number of participants browsed through some websites in the attempt to find out more about the speakers, some discussants put down notes, some created a text, a lecturer filled his blog on this topic, and I sat down to write an essay.<sup>1</sup> The events merged into the history and became a memory, a personal recording shaped through people's mind, dependent on their educational background and professional commitments. It was structured subjectively in an unrecoverable way by the most intimate parts of human brain.

I would claim that so did the performance.

This year's conference venue in Leuven and Amsterdam has shown again that performance art is one of the most discursive issues in contemporary art, not solely for institutions facing the challenge of its acquisition, maintenance, and preservation, but also for scholars who are engaged with the exploration of this art form on an academically sophisticated level.

Indeed, it is difficult to define what performance truly is. It may become a theatre play,

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<sup>1</sup> Hanna Hölling *On the Afterlife of Performance*, Witness Report, Conference and Exhibition *The Manifold (after) Lives of Performance*, 13–15 November 2009, STUK Kunstcentrum, Leuven (Belgium) and Frascati (Nes 63, Amsterdam); a co-production of de Appel and STUK Kunstcentrum. <http://www.deappel.nl/pdf/exhibitions/63/ontheafterlifeofperformancehannaholling.pdf> accessed 20 January 2011.

an action conducted by the artist outside the museum's walls, an event that involves numerous actors and/or supernumeraries, or just an intervention in the public space. It can be performed spontaneously depending on the emotional and physical circumstances of the given moment or become a strictly planned and screen-played action, performed timely after intensive rehearsals and training. In addition to the attempt of finding a definition of the true nature of performance, the question remains, however, what is left after the performance is completed. There are scripts, documents, relict, process-derived objects, changing installations, archive and living memory, to name only a few of the derivatives of performance art that are left behind. All of them are interesting subjects for our studies of a culture that has its origins in the tradition of making art.

In comparison to last year, this year's conference was focused on the same subject, although from an entirely different angle. It was the institutional approach to performance art that was called into attention. The discussions during the first day of the conference were devoted to alternative ways of presenting and collecting live performance. As Eva Wittcox pointed out in the introductory part of the first day of the conference in Leuven, there is a remarkable distinction that might easily be noticed in the approach of artist decades ago and the contemporary performers. The main difference may lie the fact that early performances of *Dada* and *Futurist* movements were often presented spontaneously and unannounced. The artists were interested in experiencing the *live moment* with the spectators, in the *here and now* of the action. 'This temporality of the performance conflicts with the desire to keep performances *alive* afterwards, to present them, collect them and re-stage them.'<sup>2</sup> Today, artists deal with this art genre in divergent ways. Re-staging has become a common practice in contemporary performance art, to mention only the re-staging of performances by Marina Abramovic, which took place at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum (New York, November 2005) or, five years later, at the Museum of Modern Art during her retrospective (New York, March-May 2010). For the Guggenheim Abramovic selected a series of performances by her peers such as Vito Acconci, Joseph Beuys, Valie Export, Bruce Nauman and Gina Pane, dating from the 1960s and 1970s.<sup>3</sup> Whereas her retrospective at the MoMA included for the most part live re-performances of her works by actors.<sup>4</sup> This has challenged the understanding of the performance practice as one, unrepeatable moment in time. Abramovic awards a high value to the documentation of the events in order to make it

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<sup>2</sup> Eva Wittcox, introduction to the conference, day 1, Leuven, 12 November 2010.

<sup>3</sup> For *Seven Easy Pieces*, Marina Abramović re-enacted five ostensibly seminal performance works by her peers and two of her own. The interpretation was based on the principle of interpreting a musical score. 9-15 November 2005, the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum New York.

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.moma.org/visit/calendar/exhibitions/965> accessed 21.01.2011.

repeatable and, in this way, to pass it over to posterity. This, in turn, however, might raise a question whether and to what degree the subjectivity of an artist's documentation may influence the face of the work in its future re-enactments.<sup>5</sup> It might only be seen from the perspective of someone perceiving the behaviour of the artist as well as the audience in their own subjective way.

In contrary to the previously mentioned proposition, Tino Sehgal's work represents a concept where any kind of recording and documentation that could be helpful in institutional preservation is strictly denied. This contradicts and, at the same time, ironically plays with the museum's mandate to capture and preserve the artwork by means of its precise documentation. The acquisition process of those works has already become wildly popular among the museum professionals: 'Tino Sehgal sale consists of his talking to the buyer (usually a representative from a museum) about five legal stipulations of the purchase: that the work be installed only by someone whom Sehgal himself has authorized via training and prior collaboration; that the people enacting the piece be paid an agreed-upon minimum; that the work be shown over a minimum period of six weeks (in order to avoid seeming more like a theatrical event than an art exhibition); that the piece not be photographed; and that if the buyer resells the work, he does so with this same oral contract.'<sup>6</sup>

'Sehgal's work seems to revel in its own contradictions. It is ephemeral yet fixed; intangible yet expensive, because part of his concept is that his interpreters be fairly paid. It is created with extreme, even obsessive rigor, yet it is subject to change, as the only record exists in the minds of those who see it.'<sup>7</sup> In his insistence on immateriality and ephemerality, Sehgal seems to challenge the museum practices of collecting and preserving art to the extreme. Catherine Wood, the curator of contemporary art and performance at the Tate Modern in London and one of the speakers of this conference states: 'There are a few artists who are making live action that is based in sculpture, but what sets him apart is his purist insistence on the immateriality — or ephemeral materiality — of the work, so it crystallizes and disperses again, so there is no trace left at all.'<sup>8</sup>

Sehgal's ephemeral performances along with a number of further influential works by a selection of international artist were subject to a vivid discussion during the presented conference. Researchers and curators, artist and archivists exchanged theoretical and practical

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<sup>5</sup> Jenny Schlenzka, 'Performance wird zum Mainstream gehören', *Monopol*, November 2009, pp. 42–47. Article written on the occasion of Performa 09, New York (<http://www.performa-arts.org>).

<sup>6</sup> Daniel Stein, *Tino Sehgal*, W Magazine, November 2009. [http://www.wmagazine.com/artdesign/2009/11/tino\\_sehgal#ixzz15Gh0Xptg](http://www.wmagazine.com/artdesign/2009/11/tino_sehgal#ixzz15Gh0Xptg) accessed 12 December 2010.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/01/17/magazine/17sehgal-t.html?pagewanted=all> accessed 10 December 2010.

knowledge. In the present paper I will give a summarized overview of the topics discussed.

The keynote lecture was held by **Sven Lütticken**, an art critic and historian, who holds a position of a lecturer at the Vrije Universiteit in Amsterdam. Lütticken has been engaged with the topic of performance art in many ways, to mention only the exhibition curated at the Witte de With museum in Rotterdam in 2005, entitled *Life, Once More: Forms of reenactment in contemporary art*, or his comments on *the culture of performance* in *Texte zur Kunst* no. 79.<sup>9</sup> Lütticken observed that in the performance there was no division between object and subject, between historical materials on the one hand and contemporary observer or researcher on the other. If the performance is successful, its time is unfinished; it is open-ended. For this reason there is no distinction between performance's *live* and its *afterlife*.

In recent years, there has been an increase in scholarly interest in the ways materials such as written accounts, documents, photographs, and video recordings shape our current understanding of historical dance and art performances. To underline different tendencies in how performances are approached, he quoted two publications: by Sally Banes *Democracy's Body: Judson Dance Theater, 1962-1964* and by Carrie Lambert-Beatty *Being Watched: Yvonne Rainer and the 1960s*. The former author attempts to give an impression of the performance by means of implementing various documents. The later defines the performance as 'a series of traces, shaped and serially re-shaped by the interests, desires, and ways of seeing of everyone from the artist to the photographer who documented the events to the historian herself.'<sup>10</sup>

Lütticken observed that there was another tendency of re-enactment or re-staging of historical performances be it by artists themselves or by other actors, which indicated that there had been a need to experience the original event or its approximation. When curating the exhibition at Witte de With, he deliberately excluded live performance. This became a subject to polemics by theorists and artists that privileged live performance over its various media incarnations such as film, photography, slides, and language. Performance might be understood as a kind of event, which, by its definition, is necessarily an incomplete occurrence. It cannot be realized at a given moment because it happens at that very moment, and it is contained by that moment. Lütticken reminded the *Fluxus* events that were contained in scores and were realized by activating them in various ways, admittedly, not always

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<sup>9</sup> *Life, Once More: Forms of reenactment in contemporary art* by Sven Lütticken, Witte de With, Rotterdam, 27 January 2005 – 27 March 2005.

<http://www.wdw.nl/project.php?id=36>, accessed on 18 January 2011.

<sup>10</sup> Carrie Lambert-Beatty's, *Being Watched: Yvonne Rainer and the 1960s*, October Books, 2008 quoted by Sven Lütticken during his lecture.

successful. In this light, some of the realizations might have been seen as a betrayal of the original act.<sup>11</sup>

According to Lütticken, an example of a re-enactment that became a very far instance of the original work might be the performance by Alison Knowles *Make a salad* (1962).<sup>12</sup> In its original form, it was conceived as an intimate and a small-scale piece showing the process of making salad accompanied by Mozart's music. In 2008 the action turned into a massive, collective event in a turbine hall of Tate Modern in London.<sup>13</sup> According to Lütticken, the division between the original act and the staged happening is tricky, and, in this concrete case, a (curatorial) failure. In order to enable its evaluation by the viewer, he suggested presenting the documentation of the historical event side by side with its contemporary representation. As opposed to Knowles' re-enactments, Lütticken presented in his view successful re-staging of Robert Morris' piece entitled *Four Pieces by Morris* by Babette Mangolte's (1993). In this case 'the film omitted to imitate the filmic documentation of the past time; it seemed to be suspended between the history and presence.'<sup>14</sup>

Lütticken suggested that for this kind of art form there is a need for hybrid spaces such as van Abbemuseum in Eindhoven – on the one side a traditional museum, and on the other an archive and a cinema/screening room. Hybrid use of museum spaces seems to have a potential enabling participation in artistic events, and, in this way, the possibility of profound understanding of the artistic production.

Concluding, Lütticken stated: 'The term performance 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, which work has become more dependent on immaterial factors.' And further: 'Performance has a layered temporality and cannot be classified as being the performance from a certain period of time. It still functions in our presence, our life, and our time.'

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<sup>11</sup> The *Fluxus* performances and its re-enactments are discussed in my previous paper *On the Afterlife of Performance*, *ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> Alison Knowles' Fluxus event score "Make a Salad" from 1962 has been performed many times, e.g. the Baltimore Museum of Art as a feature performance at the opening of the "Work Ethics" exhibition curated by Helen Molesworth. The salad was made again for several hundred spectators at the Wexner Museum in October 2004. Beginning the event, a Mozart duo for violin and cello is followed by production of the salad by the artist and eating of the salad by the audience. The salad is always different as Mozart remains the same. At the Wexner, all red vegetables and flowers were placed in a huge vat with a canoe paddle. The Piece is concluded as the salad is eaten by the audience accompanied by the Mozart.

<http://www.aknowles.com/salad.html> accessed 19 January 2011.

<sup>13</sup> <http://channel.tate.org.uk/media/33797599001> accessed 21 January 2011.

<sup>14</sup> Quotation from the conference lecture by Sven Lüttichen.

**Jenny Schlenzka** (D), an assistant curator at the Department of Media and Performance at the Museum of Modern Art in New York and the next speaker of the conference, presented a number of interesting case studies from the history of performance art from the collection. She stressed that performances had always taken place on the margin and seldom in the central focus of the museum. Bearing that in mind might be a significant key to understand this art form. Schlenzka joined the newly established Department of Media and Performance at MoMA in 2006, shortly after the new building had been reopened in Manhattan (2004). Together with her colleague and curator Klaus Biesenbach, she commenced to place the performance in the focus of the museum program. The exceptional interest that performance art experiences nowadays Schlenzka ascribes to the fact that young artists are greatly involved in performance practices and, additionally, the 1960s and 1970s generation of the performers is still there, available for discussions.

To acknowledge performance art is, according to Schlenzka, equivalent with its proper presentation at the museum. She stressed that temporary exhibitions had a very distinct impact on the works presented. The significance of a performance piece is dependent on whether it finds its way into the museum collection. Further, one of the important factors in the collecting of those artworks is the involvement of the artist in their presentation and preservation process. Interviews with artists including questions as to the ideal presentation form and as to the most significant characteristics for the future re-enactments became one of the main activities of the Department of Media and Performance at MoMA. Furthermore, in order to explore the character of the performance and the possible ways of presenting and preserving it, the department commenced to regularly organize *performance workshops*. The workshops are frequented by artists, professionals, and interested audience, and aim at discussing questions about an appropriate definition of performance, the form of its documentation, and the possibilities of its preservation. On this occasion, Mathew Barney, Marina Abramovic, Roman Ondak, and Babette Mangold were actively involved in the exploration of issues related to the re-enactment, documentation, and preservation of their works.

Giving different examples of the presentation of performance art at MoMA, Schlenzka reminded Tehching Hsieh *One Year Performance* (1978 – 86) that was exhibited in form of the (formally inhabited) cage of the artist and his daily photographic documentation.<sup>15</sup> Further, she presented Simone Forti's re-enactments involving students in the role of

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<sup>15</sup> Tehching Hsieh, Performance Works, <http://www.theartnewspaper.tv/content.php?vid=554>, accessed on 20 November 2009 and Hölling, *On the Afterlife of Performance*, ibid, pp.6.

performers. The practical examples were concluded by the discussion of the problematic matter of the acquisition of performance art by the museum, which, as she maintained, remained still a novelty. One of the most prominent examples is the *constructed situation* by Tino Sehgal entitled *Kiss* (2003).<sup>16</sup> According to Schlenzka, *Kiss* entered the collection as if it was a material object. Also, shortly thereafter, it was loaned to the Guggenheim museum in a similar manner.

**Marie De Brugerolles**, French free-lance curator, discussed her research and documentation of the work by Guy de Cointet (1934-1983), a French-born artist based in California. De Cointet created written and sculptural works, combining props and stage sets in the form of a theatrical performance. De Brugerolles reported about her archival research and the difficulties in uncovering the oeuvre of this relatively unknown artist. In the course of her research, she interviewed several artists and actors who worked with de Cointet in the 1970s and 1980s, including such artists as Mike Kelley, Larry Bell and Paul McCarthy. Together with the latter, she organized the first exhibition on de Cointet's work entitled *And Gravity* that took place at CNAC - Le Magasin in Grenoble in 1996.

So as to deepen the knowledge about de Cointet, she undertook an advanced field research in Los Angeles and New York, seeking props and documents. Surprisingly, the findings at people's places, garages, and basements enriched her research immensely. As a consequence, the first European survey on Guy de Cointet entitled *Who's that Guy?* was presented at MAMCO in Geneva in 2004. The presentation raised questions as to the significance of the traditional display of performance sets and props in a gallery space. The curators had to face the fact that certain museum professionals neglected the status of the props as art objects. De Brugerolles was forced to reflect on the adequate presentation of uncompleted sets and, simultaneously, on the form in which the given incompleteness might have been explained to the viewer. As a result, a decision was made to remake a number of elements for the exhibition purpose and present the objects on pedestals. Additionally, a photographic documentation completed the exhibition.

Concluding, De Brugerolles explained that the main goal of the research project finalized in the comprehensive exhibition was the transmission of the collected knowledge and memories about the artist and his/her production.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> *Kiss* is a performative piece during which two dancers move slowly through a prescribed choreography resembling embracing couples from historical paintings. In contrary to his peers, Sehgal uses the term of constructed situation to describe a performative event.

<sup>17</sup> De Brugerolles also authored a documentary film "Who's that Guy? ... tell me more about Guy de Cointet"

During the conference, an interesting position of an artist and a researcher was represented by **Barbora Klimova (CZ)**.<sup>18</sup> For her project *REPLACED-BRNO-2006* at the Manifesta in 2009, Klímová selected five performances by five artists that took place in Czechoslovakia in the 1970s and 1980s. The main prerequisite for the selection was the fact that the performances were conducted (or could have been conducted) in the public space. Instead of composed, clearly identifiable performances, she concentrated on gestures or acts that bordered on normal behaviour. In the focus of her attention came the public space and issues such as politics, urbanism, architecture, social conventions and the way in which they might be transformed. Klímová encountered the selected artists and discussed with them their experience, focusing on the reasons for creating and performing their works.

The project's goal was to reflect and alter the way in which the contemporary audience perceived performance art.<sup>19</sup> Klimova stated: '*REPLACED-BRNO-2006* relates to a rather idealistic understanding of public space as a place where the individual and the collective meet. In this interpretation, public space is open to everyone and encourages a confrontation of divergent social groups. Its primary content is confrontation, interaction, and transition. It is defined by rules that are accepted within a particular society, such as, for example, morality and security. Apart from investigating the notion of space in various times and different political circumstances, the project explores the current (non-) existence of public space in the Czech Republic. From archival materials documenting performance art during the past four decades in the Czech Republic, I selected those pieces in which the artist was confronted by random passers-by. I tried to avoid any theatricality in my selection of performances. My selection included borderline gestures, acts or behaviours that could be considered less than "normal." By re-enacting the same performances I had found in the archives in different locations, I attempted to test the way, in which certain conventions and rules relate to certain locations and are projected on the behaviour and actions of its inhabitants.'<sup>20</sup>

In relation to the recorded material, Klimova paid particular attention to the distinction between the reading of the recorded and the recorded as well as between the individual approach and the differences of the individual experience.

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<http://www.ificantdance.org/#guy> accessed 20 January 2011.

<sup>18</sup> Barbora Klimova is an artist who lives and works in Brno, Czech Republic.

<sup>19</sup> For more information on this project, see the interview by Adam Budak:

[http://www.artmargins.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=356:barbora-klimova-about-her-recent-manifesta-project&catid=115:interviews&Itemid=94](http://www.artmargins.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=356:barbora-klimova-about-her-recent-manifesta-project&catid=115:interviews&Itemid=94) accessed 20 January 2011.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

The last speaker of the first conference day in Leuven was **Virginie Robin** (Fr), an independent curator and researcher. Robin presented the platform *bo-ring* and the project *Performing Memory*. The project seeks to critically examine the performance as an art form and reflect on its history. The seminars involving artist, curators, and choreographers focus on furthering the discussion on performance art by examining the selected artworks. *Performing Memory* is expected to result in a collection of interviews published online. Additionally, a number of lectures providing the audience with knowledge about performance art has been planned. The project reflects problematic relationship between performance and its document(ation) that has been the subject of discourse in recent initiatives such as *Performa 07*'s conference in New York (2007) with Babette Mangolte, Vanessa Beecroft, Marina Abramovic and curator Roselee Goldberg, and *After the Act*, a symposium, exhibition, and publication by Barbara Clausen at the Museum of Modern Art in Vienna (2005). The *bo-ring* collective intends to further the discussion by bringing together artists, choreographers, and directors who incorporate existing documents or reflect on the problem of documentation in their practice. This proposition takes into consideration an operational distinction between two terms that are often considered to be interchangeable, namely *archives* and *documents*.

The second day of the symposium took place at the Frascati Theatre in Amsterdam and was moderated by Robert Jan Muller. The first speaker was **Cathrine Wood** with her presentation entitled *Performance and the Tate Collection*. Wood acts as a curator of contemporary art/performance at the Tate London. She explained that performance at the Tate was not 'institutionalized and segregated' and that collecting performances had never become a strategy there. This might offer numerous benefits, but also disadvantages, as she noticed. Her lecture was mainly devoted to the different forms of performance existing in the Tate's collection, including actions, scripts, documents, relics, process-derived-objects, changing installations, archive and the so called *living memory*<sup>21</sup>. Wood presented a number of examples of performance art, including works by Tino Sehgal *This is Propaganda* 2002, Tania Bruguera's *Tatlin's Whisper #5* 2008, Igor Grubić's *East Side Story* 2006-08, and Roman Ondak's *Good Feelings and Good Times*, 2003.

According to Wood, the greatest dilemma of collecting performance art is related to the clash between the idea of a collection itself as a foundation of a museum, and the ephemerality of performance and action. The idea of collecting has been a backbone of a

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<sup>21</sup> *Living memory* denominates all memories of persons being involved in the moment when instructions of a piece were articulated. Living memories of performances and events articulate artistic thoughts and historical moments and may inform reading objects within a museum significantly.

museum narrative and the canon of our history. Collecting is a fundamental part defining the nature of the museum. Tate, as Wood explained, was founded on the rationalizing principle of gathering objects from different times and places and, consequently, giving an overview, which was out of time, and isolated from the temporality of daily life. It is a ritualized atmosphere. Within that traditional museum model the performance acts against of what it is in many ways. 'It goes against everything that have been done; it goes against the grain of the institution'.<sup>22</sup> Interestingly, as she observed, as opposed to organizing painting exhibition, when it came to performance, museum professionals were less keen to support those projects. The question of archive versus collection may become problematic as far as performance art is concerned. This is especially the case when artists consider the documentation as an equivalent of performance or archival documentation elevated to the status of an artwork.

Concluding, Wood presented a newly initiated research project entitled *Non-Object History of Art*. The project touches on issues related to a better articulation of the 'other trajectory' of ephemeral, action or time-based media, and pose questions as to possibilities of presenting them by incorporating liveness into a static display.

At Tate, as reported Wood, performance art has a 'parasitic, nomadic kind of live, using all kind of different spaces and reinventing spaces every time.' Based on the discussion initiated by the anthropologist David Graber, one of the targets is to obtain a proper approach to the relics of art objects in the museum.

**Bettina Masuch** represented the Spring Dance Festival, which focuses on the current developments in international contemporary dance.<sup>23</sup> Discussing the interrelation between dance and artistic performance, Masuch stressed that the borders between those genres had become very blurry, especially when it came to performances presented at festivals or events.

It is only recently that choreographers have become interested in history and tradition and commenced to incorporate those topics into their performances. Exploring the possibilities in this field and using them as a toolbox for new production has become a common practice. According to Masuch, once a dramatic text has been used, it will always remain an interpretation, a reading. She calls the iconic piece of *Swan Lake* into attention, which represent an interpretation of the already existing score. In contemporary dance, as she claimed, the tradition was lacking; the practice of passing one's own piece to another performer was very rare. The situation changes when it comes to the re-staging in

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<sup>22</sup> Quotation from the conference lecture by Cathrine Wood.

<sup>23</sup> Bettina Masuch is an artist director of The Spring Dance Festival. More information: <http://www.springdance.nl/about.php> accessed 19 January 2011.

contemporary dance. It is often a re-enactment by the same artist, involving a portion of interpretation.

Furthermore, Masuch observed that, contrary to what had often been said, the initiative to document the pieces frequently came from the artists themselves. The reason for this might lie in the fact that for many years theatre has been dedicated to be an ongoing *archive* or a *living memory* in itself; the knowledge how to perform was transmitted during the rehearsals and in the form of written scripts. In this way, the pieces have travelled from generation to generation. The *ongoing performance of the memory* had changed the moment theatres changed their system and became festivals with a number of running events. The audience changed from local to international, the works had to be contextualized in response to the touring character of the theatre.

Further on, Masuch discussed William Forsythe's *Motion Bank*, a website conceived to become a prototype for archiving artistic works.<sup>24</sup> There, on the pilot example of *One Flat Thing*, reproduced by William Forsythe and his dance ensemble, the performance exist on the website in the form of digital choreographic notations. Following this, choreographers are encouraged to document their existing pieces in a similar way or create works especially for this particular purpose. The publicly accessible website is planned to act as a platform to visualize choreographic information and compare and analyse choreographic works.<sup>25</sup>

The conference also involved a discussion on performance art from the artistic point of view, namely the one by **Igor Grubic**, a Croatian born artist and acionist. In 1998 he undertook an action entitled *Black Peristil* in Split, which resulted in painting the square *Peristil* in black. His action was conceived to be a response to an event entitled *Red Peristil*, which had taken place thirty years earlier in the same place, and which had a great impact on the collective memory of the nation. During the action the entire square *Peristil* in the emperor's Palace was painted red. In the course of his re-enactment, Grubic's left the following message: 'In the honour of the group Red Peristil, 30 years after, Peristil, as a magic mirror, reflects the state of society's conscience.' The action was awarded a prize, which Grubic accepted hiding his real identity. His work continued to develop by the implementation of media provocations. Finally, uncovered, and despite the fact that the applied paint was easy removable, he was charged with 'devastation of public property'. As a consequence, intellectuals and artists in Croatia protested to defend the right to provoke, criticize, and protest as a significant

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<sup>24</sup> <http://motionbank.org/> accessed 19 January 2011.

<sup>25</sup> <http://www.kulturstiftung-des-bundes.de/cms/en/> accessed 18 January 2011.

component in art practice. Numerous different actions and public interventions included *Book and Society - 22%* (1998), a one-day-multimedia- manifestation with forty participating artists protesting against the national tax on books. His performative activities and interventions took place in the streets, on squares, in bookshops and libraries. His most recent work with the hospital, *Ideas of the Clinic* became part of an ongoing project to break the institutional art system through interventions in public spaces.<sup>26</sup> Interestingly, in the case of Igor Grubic's works, an ideogram, a set of thoughts, takes over the role of scripts. Further, he considers a photographic documentary as a sufficient and adequate documentation of his actions.

The project *Archiv Performativ* (April 2010 – March 2012) was discussed by **Irene Müller**, a Zurich based researcher and curator.<sup>27</sup> The project was founded by the Swiss National Science Foundation and hosted by the Institute of Cultural Studies at the University of the Arts in Zurich. The two-year project with the subtitle *A model concept for the documentation and reenactment of performance art* aims at conducting surveys on different collections and archives followed by interviews with various user groups of those archives. The network of partners established within the project allows exchanging the practical and theoretical knowledge. *Archiv Performativ* is a research project theoretically underpinned by scholars such as Barbara Clausen, Rebecca Schneider and Barbara Büscher.

Müller proposed a categorization of performance and performance artefacts into an artist's items and documents (both written and audiovisual material), media traces (photographs, video and audio recordings), material traces (objects, relics), third party statements (eyewitness statements, press articles, descriptions), and compiled documents (flyers, invitation cards, information material, websites). *Archiv Performativ* attempts to delineate new strategies of sharing and transferring knowledge about performance art by evaluating the requirements formulated by the different users and creators of performance artefacts. Further, the project seeks to explore archival concepts, providing access to performance artefacts. Also, it attempts to develop criteria for cataloguing performance artefacts, various documents, media, and materials. The goal of the project is to establish guidelines for collectors and archives, as well as for users and creators of performance documents and artefacts. Questions as to the location of performance artefacts, the motivation behind the archiving process, and the accessibility of the archives are posed. Besides the archivists and the collectors, a particular attention will be directed to users and creators of

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<sup>26</sup> [http://subsol.c3.hu/subsol\\_2/contributors/grubicbio.html](http://subsol.c3.hu/subsol_2/contributors/grubicbio.html).

<sup>27</sup> *Archiv Performativ* by Pascale Grau, Irene Müller, Margarit von Büren  
<http://ics.zhdk.ch/ics/deutsch/forschungsprojekte/archiv-performativ/> accessed 20 January 2011.

performance. The project's objective is also to interview those different groups. Four public meetings with invited guests are planned in Basel to exchange the expertise and receive new inputs.

To sum up, the conference raised many significant questions related to the presentation and preservation of performance art. The vivid discussions between creators, researchers, and thinkers from the visual and dramatic arts showed how institutions deal with the immaterial and ephemeral character of live events, how they attempt to collect and present these types of art works, and how artists participate in that process. It was demonstrated that a deeper examination of left-overs, props, relics and documentation may result in unexpected strategies and solutions for museum practice. In dealing with performances and their preservation, a case-by-case approach has proven again to be an adequate solution.

Although during the conference the institutional involvement with performance art was discussed from a various perspectives and many distinct points of view, the common ground might be seen in the fact that all institutions seem to struggle and are challenged by the novelty of this genre entering the institutional regime. Obviously, there is an urgent necessity to understand this art form by means of intensive research and drawing strategies for its acquisition, (re-) presentation, and preservation.

Amsterdam, January 2011.