

## **Performance Art**

Clifford Owens

Heimbold 107

Office: Heimbold 104 (Monday and Thursday 4:35pm – 7pm)

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### **Course Description/Objectives**

Since the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, artists have explored performance art as a radical means of expression. In both form and function, performance pushes the boundaries of contemporary art. Artists use the medium for institutional critique, social activism, and to address the personal politics of gender, sexuality, and race.

This course approaches performance art as a porous, trans-disciplinary medium open to students from all disciplines, including painting, drawing, printmaking, photography, sculpture, video, filmmaking, theater, dance, music, creative writing, and digital art. Students learn about the legacy of performance art from the 1970s to the present and explore some of the concepts and aesthetic strategies used to create works of performance. Through texts, artists' writings, video screenings, and slide lectures, students are introduced to a range of performance-based artist and art movements.

### **Course Requirement**

The primary focus of this course, however, is for each student to create and develop a solo, interdisciplinary performance art project for an on-campus public program at the end of the semester. Throughout the semester, students are assigned simple lens-based projects, and a series of simple prompts (thirty-seconds to 3-minutes in duration) to perform in class. Mid-semester, students expected to present creative research (not a paper) on the development of their final projects.

### **Guidelines for Projects**

All student assignments must fully comply with the codes of conduct as outlined under “General College Policies and Procedures” in the Sarah Lawrence College [Student Handbook](#).

If you have a disability that may interfere with your ability to participate in the activities coursework, or assessment of the objectives of this course, you may be entitled to accommodations. Please contact Polly Waldman, Associate Dean of Studies and Disability Service. Located in Westlands 116. You may also call Disability Services at 914-395.2235 or email [pwaldman@sarahlawrence.edu](mailto:pwaldman@sarahlawrence.edu). Under the Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504 of the Vocational Rehabilitation Act of 1973, all students with or without disabilities, are entitled to equal access to the programs and services of Sarah Lawrence College.

## **Requirements**

Attendance, promptness, and preparedness for class and conferences are mandatory (no more than two unexcused absences and no more than three days late). Assignments are required and students must be prepared to present a project assignment (and final project) on the due date.

### **Course Materials**

Essays, interviews, and articles (and links) for lectures/discussions can be found in PDF form under the MySLC listing for this course.

### **Conferences**

Conferences are mandatory and should be scheduled for Monday (10am – 2pm)

This syllabus may change to adjust to the needs of the instructor/students.

### **Course Outline**

#### **Week 1**

#### **By Way of Happenings and Fluxus**

Texts:

John Dewey, “Art as Experience”; Allan Kaprow, “The Legacy of Jackson Pollock” (1950) and “Notes on the Creation of a Total Art” (1958); Critical Art Ensemble, “The Recombinant Theater and the Performative Matrix” (1994)

Slide Introduction

Prompt Assignment for next week:

(TBA)

#### **Week 2**

#### **1968 – 1978**

Texts:

Sol LeWitt, “Paragraphs on Conceptual Art” (1967); Lucy Lippard and John Chandler, “The Dematerialization of Art” (1968)

Screening:

Bruce Nauman, “Dance or Walk on the Perimeter of a Square” (1967) John Baldessari, “Baldessari Sings LeWitt” (1972); Marth Rosler “Vital Statistics of a Citizen, Simply Obtained” (1977)

Slides:

Bas Jan Ader, Stanley Brouwn, Mierle Laderman Ukeles, Eleanor Antin, Joseph Beuys, others

In-Class: Performance Scores

Prompt Assignment for next week:

(TBA)

Assignment Due Today

#### **Week 3**

#### **The 1980s**

Readings:

Linda Montana, Performance Artists Talking in the Eighties: “Sex: Paul McCarthy, Hannah Wilke,” “Food: Allison Knowles, Faith Ringgold,” “Money/Fame: Papo Colo, Martha Wilson,” and “Ritual/Death: Herman Nitsch, Ana Mendieta”

Screening:

Joseph Beuys, “Sonne Statt Regan” (1982)

Slides:

David Hammons, Tching Hsieh, Pope.L, Martha Wilson, Suzanne Lacy, others

Prompt Assignment for next week:

(TBA)

Assignment Due Today

#### **Week 4**

##### **The Culture Wars**

Readings:

Martha Rosler, “Theses on Defunding” (1982)

Adrian Piper, “Ideology, Confrontation, and Political Self-Awareness” (1981)

Slides:

(TBA)

#### **Week 5**

##### **Electronic Disturbances**

Reading:

Critical Art Ensemble, “The Recombinant Theater and the Performative Matrix” (1994)

Internet:

Hennessy Youngman, Wanda Raimundi-Ortiz: Ask Chuleta, others

#### **Week 6**

##### **Observations of the Self**

Reading:

Rosalind Krauss, “Video: The Aesthetics of Narcissism” (1976)

Screening:

Lisa Steele, “Birthday Suit with Scars and Defects” (1974); Marina Abramovic, “Four Performances” (1975-76), Paul McCarthy, “Black and White Tapes” (1974), Vito Acconci, “Theme Song” (1973); Sadie Benning, “Jollies” (1990); Howardena Pindell, “Free, White, and 21” (1980); Alex Bag, “Untitled Fall ‘95” (1995); Patty Chang, “Melons” (1998); Adrian Piper, “Mythic Being” (1973)

Assignment for next class:

Create a three-minute (continuous edit) video observation of yourself.

#### **Week 7**

##### **Lens-based Performance: Photography**

Slides: Jo Spence, Claude Cahun, David Wojnarowicz, Nikki S. Lee, Carrie Mae Weems, Francesca Woodman, others  
Assignment Due Today

## **Week 8**

### **Performance Art and the Expanded Field**

Screening:

Richard Serra, “Hand Catching Lead” (1968); Francis Alys, “When Faith Moves Mountains” (2002); Paul McCarthy, “Painter” (1995); David Hammons “Phat Free” (1995/1999)

Slides:

Ana Mendieta, Janine Antoni, Helio Oiticica, Charles Ray, others

Assignment for next class:

Create a 5-minute performance using only 3 materials (liquids or solids).

## **Week 9**

### **Audio**

Listening:

Jaap Blonk, Meredith Monk, Christian Marclay, Dick Higgins, Yoko Ono, Terry Adkins, others

Assignment Due Today

## **Week 10**

### **Creative Research: Final Project Work in Progress**

## **Week 11**

### **Creative Research: Final Project Work in Progress**

## **Week 12**

### **No Class: Studio Day**

## **Week 13**

### **Final Projects**

## **Week 14**

### **Run of Performance Program**

## **Week 15**

### **Public Performances**

Time and location (TBD)