

The history of performance art in the 20th century is the history of a permissive, open-ended medium with endless variables, executed by artists impatient with the limitations of more established forms, and determined to take their art directly to the public. For this reason its base has always been anarchic. By its very nature, performance defies precise or easy definition beyond the simple declaration that it is live art by artists. Any stricter definition would immediately negate the possibility of performance itself. For it draws freely on any number of disciplines and media for material – literature, poetry, theatre, music, dance, architecture and painting, as well as video, film, slides and narrative - deploying them in any combination. Indeed, no other artistic form of expression has such a boundless manifesto, since each performer makes his or her own definition in the very process and manner of execution.

RoseLee Goldberg, Performance Art from Futurism to the Present

Although performance art traces its roots back to Futurism, through Dada and Surrealism right up to the present, it was in the 1960's and 70's that performance art established itself as a medium, changing the canon of art history.

With the Fluxus movement and the birth of "happenings," many artists moved toward an "art of action" confronting the audience with "live-ness" and the physical presence of the artist. This radical form of live art making challenged the course of traditional mediums such as painting and sculpture, putting the artist at the center of the action. With performance art, anti-formalist methods of art making became wide spread and exemplified not only the sea change in the art world, but mirrored the greater social revolution of "the sixties."

Coinciding with the rise of second-wave feminism, no one embraced this new medium of performance more than women. The open-ended nature of the form allowed women to express themselves as never before. With performance, women broke away from more traditional male-dominated mediums and claimed one for themselves. It was through performance that they could give life to their views on topics such as social injustice, sexuality, the body, motherhood, and through a medium that was personal, political, open-ended, and free - of both constraints and a male-dominated history.

Performance is more alive than ever and women still play a dominant role in the medium. We see major museums mounting extensive exhibitions of performance such as Marina Abramović's, *The Artist is Present* at MOMA in 2010. Performance is routinely being included in exhibitions of mixed mediums and performance art programs are being mounted in colleges and universities around the globe. At this moment in history, performance art is no longer on the periphery. It has joined the canon of more traditional forms and is certainly here to stay.

This event presents a survey of contemporary performance art right now. It is meant to represent the history, celebrate the present, and look to the future of this open-ended, anarchic, unpredictable, ever-changing medium.

Written by Tara Gladden

Salisbury
UNIVERSITY



BEING HER NOW

Feminine Identity in the 21ST Century

Performances & Party!

Featuring:

Ayana Evans α Liss LaFleur α Lara Nguyen
Ursula Scherrer α Vita and the Woolf

Thursday, March 3, 2016
University Gallery, 5-8pm

Ayana Evans: *I Carry You and You Carry Me*
<http://www.ayanaevans.com>

Come carry me or let me carry you. Piggy back rides in heels & #OperationCatsuit. This was a continuation exercise of Panopoly Performance Lab's *CANI LIFT YOU UP?* done in spring 2014. This project performs friendship. Sometimes your friends carry you and other times you carry your friends. In the best friendships this exchange is reciprocated. High heels make the task hard to do and just as in real life, sometimes your friends drop you or friends refuse to participate in your life, which in this case translates into refusal to participate in the project and thereby hindering the piece. Visually, "I Carry You..." exemplifies problematic race and gender dynamics, due to the fact that judgments and learned associations are layered onto the bodies who are carrying/being carried as each action is performed. The unexpected and undocumentable effect of this piece is a heightened connection between participants. The intimacy of touch, vulnerability of trust, and the physical struggle required to complete the task forces participants to quickly move past small talk to a deeper connection.



Lara Nguyen: *Grapefruit*
<http://stonecloudstudio.com/lara-nguyen/>

Growing up my mother told me that one day my most important task in life would be to keep my family healthy with the food I chose to prepare and present on a daily basis. I spent a lot of time with my mother in the kitchen, but could silently resent what I misunderstood to be a dated and gendered role. Now in my immediate family of four I embrace the privilege of providing nutrition for us. Her lesson about sustenance is timeless and true.



Ursula Scherrer: *un-wrapped*
ursulascherrer.com

un-wrapped is a continuation of *wrapped*, a performance first presented in 2014 in Guangzhou, China. Once completely still the smallest movement becomes a big act, time disappears, there is only now – every unfolding starts within.



Liss LaFleur: *HEROINES*
<http://www.lisslafleur.com/#!heroines/j6mrw>

HEROINES is a participatory re-envisioning of surrealist artist Claude Cahun's 1925 text: *Héroïnes: Regarding the Psychology of Certain Female Figures from Classic Literature*. Written in sections from 1920-1925, and never performed, this series of 15 monologues from Eve to the Virgin Mary and Cinderella represents a polyvocal multiplicity of self. This project explores this multiplicity, linking the writing and imagery of Cahun to create a multilayered experience through performance, digital fabrication, and sound.



Live music by Vita and the Woolf!
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ju4DaSSUmGQ>

Vita And The Woolf has one mission- to create electronic soul pop that makes you move and moves you. As the brainchild of Jennifer Pague, the band's name was so affectionately inspired by the love relationship between novelists Vita Sackville West and Virginia Woolf.

