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## PERFORMANCE

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It. *Performance*; Fr. *Performance*; Germ. *Performance*; Span. *Performance*. Performance can be described as an aesthetic practice primarily characterized by being done and perceived in the here and now. Despite indicating an extraordinarily wide range of activities and events – from the Latin *performare*, to fully form, and from the Old French *parfornir*, to do, finish, accomplish –, it refers to situations in which objects, bodies and actions function in a perspective of actual making – making art, making community, making sense. Performance is the crossroad of an interdisciplinary approach in which anthropological, political, scientific, artistic, business-related discourses point out the material and symbolic effects that emerge in the processes of constitution of genre, gender, history, language, art, ethnography and social communities.

## GENEALOGIES

Performance emerged in the twentieth century as a topic of performance studies, especially in relation to theatrical practice (Carlson 1996; Auslander 2003). Shaped on a dramaturgical metaphor, the notion was then expanded to communicative actions (Burke 1945), cultural expressions in rituals (Turner 1987) and roles in social life (Goffman 1959), diminishing the divide between theater and other human behaviors. On the one hand, performance was applied as a pragmatic and alternative interpretive frame (Schechner 1988), in the field of anthropology and cultural studies, for staging or displaying actions and functions in specific rituals or ludic contexts and in daily life scenarios and aesthetics (Saito 2017). On the other hand, the concept was theorized as a model of communication in linguistics and the philosophy of language. Moreover, the *performative utterance* of speech acts was described as the accomplishment of a subject and an intersubjectivity (Austin 1955; Searle 1969; Butler 1997).

The increasing relevance of performance in contemporary culture and society epitomizes a *performative turn*, a paradigm shift in which the notion, used as a deconstructive key, is focused on the process itself. In

this framework, *gender performance*, intended as historical and ideological construction of identity through stylized repetition of acts (Butler 2015), relies on on the transformation of the context where performance intervenes. In the same way, the *challenge of efficacy* is based on the creative potential to change rules and roles of people and societies (McKenzie 2001).

## ÄSTHETIK DES PERFORMATIVEN

Following the *Performative Wende* (Mersch 2002), Fischer-Lichte (2008) discusses *Performativierungsschub* in the arts pointing at the tension between *Leib* and *Körper*. The specific feature of performance as an event – either artistic or considered as such in certain simultaneously symbolic, material and contextual, circumstances –, is that it only exists in the relationship with a public. Within the framework of a phenomenological approach, the performative turn is primarily focused on the embodied artistic production and aesthetic experience. In *action painting*, *body art* and *performance art* (Goldberg 1988), the body of the artist – or its traces – becomes the essential medium in order to mark the physical presence of the performance itself.

According to *neuroaesthetics* (Calvo-Merino et al. 2008; Gallese 2020) performance is reenacted by spectators through the mirroring mechanism and embodied simulation; conversely, according to the *esthétique relationelle* (Bourriaud 2002) it comes to life through the critical reflections on cultural practices activated by experiencing performative artworks.

Performance can therefore be defined as a unique and unrepeatable event, mainly existing in its happening through bodily presence and making. By engaging artists and audiences, both physically and/or as active agents, performance actualizes the transformative potential of the aesthetic experience and dissolves the dichotomies between artworld and lifeworld.

## MEDIALITY OF PERFORMANCE

In more recent years the digital performative cultures have embraced their own technological turn in the forms of human or machinic agency (Phelam 1993; Conquergood 2002). Posthumanist performativity (Barad 2003) has therefore challenged the concept of liveness in relation to the contemporary hyper-mediatized culture (Auslander 1999; Leeker et al. 2017). Evolving into a higher degree of reflexivity and participation, the idea of performance reckons with an increasing audiences' awareness of materiality of media and technology, eventually turning spectators into prosumers and performers (Casetti 2015).

By relating to the aforementioned questions and issues, performance has been gradually encapsulated in a broader empirical field of techno-social reflections that focus on bodily and technological prosthesis processes (Bay-Cheng et al. 2010; Fischer-Lichte, Wihstutz 2018) and their performative impact on artistic and everyday aesthetic experiences.

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