

## SEMINAR

### PERFORMANCE IN INSTITUTIONS AND INSTITUTIONAL PERFORMANCES

Live Art and performance are being invited into art museums in unprecedented ways these days. After decades of operating on the margins of classical art institutions, performance art is increasingly being included in collections, curated into exhibitions, and featured in museums' event programs. However, in spite of the growing popularity of performance art, there are little agreement in the museum world on how best to preserve, collect or exhibit this form of art. The research seminar *Performance in Institutions and Institutional Performances* seeks to address this shift by examining the different challenges that performance art has posed and keep posing to the institutional structures of art museums today.

Definitions of performance art often give priority to notions of presence, liveness, and ephemerality, in line with performance theorist Peggy Phelan's famous description of how performance "becomes itself through disappearance". The fugitive ontology of performance art has thus often positioned it in conflict with temporal and material structures of the art museum. Yet, if the direct experience of the present in performance vanishes, performance art seems to find ever new ways to remain: Props, physical traces, photographs, video documentation, textual descriptions, re-enactments, re-performance, embodied memories, oral histories and gossip of performance art circulate and linger. The challenge that performance art poses for museum collections today is therefore perhaps less that of its presumed "immateriality" than of its promiscuous and unrestrainable material multiplicity. Liveness seems in short to be but one modality in the life of performance. The medium-*unspecifity* of performance raises question of not only *what* museums are supposed to acquire, collect, conserve, and display in relation to performance art and *how* it is supposed to do so, but it also puts pressure on the temporal and historical frameworks that inform the idea of the museum itself.

Parallel to the increasing interest in performance art, the art museum has also undergone a paradigm shift in which "performance" and the "immaterial" have become ever more central features. The association between "museum" and "mausoleum", as Theodor Adorno once pointed out, no longer appear as a particularly fitting description for museum practice today, where museums' role and value is increasingly being measured in relation to their "public" performance. Art museums today are thus not only striving to find ways to activate their collections and make them appear more relevant, available and useful to the audience, they also often do this by means of ambitious events programs that emphasize notions of experience, sociality and commonality. It might thus be important to ask how the introduction of performance art in museums relates to the increasing attention to the museum's own performances today? And what does it mean for our understanding of and interest in "intangible" art forms such as performance art that museums are becoming more performance-oriented and event-based in their practice?

These are some of the questions that we hope to discuss in the seminar *Performance in Institutions and Institutional Performances* at SMK.

#### KEYNOTES INCLUDE

**Adrian Heathfield** University of Roehampton, **Heike Roms** University of Exeter and **Carolyn Bohlmann** Hamburger Bahnhof, Berlin

#### ORGANIZED BY

Birgitte Anderberg (SMK) and Mathias Danbolt (University of Copenhagen)

The seminar is part of the research-project Museums and Art in the Information Age

#### FUNDED BY

# PROGRAM

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## INSTITUTIONAL PERFORMANCES

9.00 – 9.30	Registration and coffee
9.30 – 9.45	Welcome
9.45 – 10.30	<b>Adrian Heathfield</b> , University of Roehampton: <i>Lifeworks</i>
10.30 – 11.15	<b>Heike Roms</b> , University of Exeter: <i>Locating the History of Performance within a National Museum of Art</i>
11.15 – 12.00	<b>Carolin Bohlmann</b> , Hamburger Bahnhof, Berlin: <i>From Action to Object. On the Preservation of Performance Art Relics</i>
12.30 – 13.30	Lunch

## PERFORMANCE IN INSTITUTIONS – PANELS WITH INVITED ARTISTS

13.30 – 15.00 **Panel 1** *Practice, Archive, History*

Responses to the question how the invited artists, based on their practice with performance, reflect upon issues of historization, archives, documentation, conservation and reperformance.

### ARTISTS

**Hannah Heilmann, Hannah Anbert, Henrik Plenge Jakobsen, Yvette Brackman, Jessie Kleemann, and Tobias Kirstein**

Moderated by **Mathias Danbolt**

15.00 – 15.20 Coffee

15.20 – 16.50 **Panel 2** *Performance, Institution, Museum*

Responses to the question how the invited performance-based artists, based on their practice with performance reflect upon either working as an institution, trying to create alternative structures for institutionalizing performance, or seeing that the work becomes an institution in itself.

### ARTISTS

**Kirsten Delholm** Hotel Pro Forma, **Janus Høm** Tove's, **Gry Worre Hallberg** Sister's Academy, **Ellen Friis** Live-Art,

**Jørgen Callesen** Warehouse 9 and **Olof Olsson**

Moderated by **Birgitte Anderberg**

## KEYNOTES' ABSTRACTS

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### **Adrian Heathfield**

#### **Lifeworks**

Writer and curator Adrian Heathfield will talk about his work with Taiwanese-American artist Tehching Hsieh, particularly focused around his recent collaboration with the artist - *Doing Time* - the Taiwan Pavilion at the 57th Venice Biennale. Hsieh is renowned for a series of one year long performances in the late 1970s and early 80s that pushed physical and psychological limits and drew attention to time as an artistic material. Conducted outside of institutional sanction, these epic immaterial works leave rigorous and complex materials in their wake and represent various challenges to the practices of museum curation. Heathfield will discuss his approach to Hsieh's oeuvre and its potential assimilation into museal value. He will also speculate on the prescience of this work in relation to capitalism's regulation and acceleration of life.

### **Heike Roms**

#### **Locating the History of Performance within a National Museum of Art**

When Wales's National Museum in Cardiff opened its 'National Museum of Art' section in 2011, it included within its displays also documentary traces of performance art pieces made by Welsh artists over the last fifty years. This was not the first time, however, that performance art had been shown in the museum – the National Museum has a history of housing hundreds of performance pieces in the late 1960s and early 1970s that remains largely unacknowledged. In this talk I will consider the place of performance art past and present in Amgueddfa Cymru – National Museum Wales. I will touch on the history of institutional support for early performance art in the UK, on changes to our understanding of the materiality of performance art that are challenging museums' cultures of display, and on present curatorial approaches to bringing performance art into a museum with a national remit and where visual art is housed adjacent to collections of archaeology, zoology and geology.

**Carolin Bohlmann**

**From Action to Object. On the Preservation of Performance Art Relics**

Occasionally, in Performance Art there will be material leftovers, so-called 'Performance-Relics'. This raises the question, how to handle such artifacts according to the museums core task of preserving. This paper will focus on the moment within the artistic process, in which the action or Performance, appears completed and the transformation into the relic begins. Performance-Relics, as traces or „leftovers“ of an immaterial action that is both specific to a certain time and site, are taken out of context and therefore must be redefined. Illustrated by two case studies of works by Joseph Beuys, the Performance based installations, *Richtkräfte einer neuen Gesellschaft*, 1974-77, and *Das Kapital Raum* 1970-77, 1980, I will demonstrate how such performance relics are dealt with from the conservators' perspective. I will discuss if the conservator's work allows preserving the original idea of the Performance, even though the action has become an artifact.

## KEYNOTES' BIOS

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**Adrian Heathfield** writes on, curates and creates performance. His books include *Out of Now*, a monograph on the Taiwanese-American artist Tehching Hsieh and the edited collections *Perform, Repeat, Record, Live: Art and Performance*, *Small Acts* and *Shattered Anatomies*. His numerous essays have been translated into eight languages. He was co-director of *Performance Matters*, a four-year AHRC funded research project on the cultural value of performance (2009–2013). From 2014-2016 he conducted the three year European Union funded creative research project *Curating the Ephemeral* on immaterial art and museal practices. He co-curated the *Live Culture* events at Tate Modern, London (2003) and a number of other performance and durational events in European cities over the last sixteen years. He was a curatorial adviser and attaché for the 20th Biennale of Sydney and was an artistic director with the collective *freethought* of the 2016 Bergen Assembly, Norway. He was curator of Taiwan's exhibition at the Biennale Arte 2017, Venice. Heathfield has worked with many artists and thinkers on critical and creative collaborations including film dialogues, performance-lectures, dramaturgy, writing and workshop projects. He was President of Performance Studies international (2004–2007) and is Professor of Performance and Visual Culture at the University of Roehampton, London.

[www.adrianheathfield.net](http://www.adrianheathfield.net)

**Heike Roms** is Professor in Theatre and Performance at the University of Exeter. She is director of *What's Welsh for Performance?*, a project focussing on the historiography of early performance art. The project was funded by a Large Research Grant from the British Arts and Humanities Research Council AHRC (2009-2011) and won the UK's Theatre and Performance Research Association TaPRA David Bradby Award for Outstanding Research in International Theatre and Performance 2011. Heike is currently working on a book arising from the research with the working title *When Yoko Ono did not come to Wales - Locating the early history of Performance Art*. She has collaborated with Amgueddfa Cymru – National Museum Wales on exhibitions of historical performance art from Wales.

[www.performance-wales.org](http://www.performance-wales.org)

**Carolin Bohlmann** is chief conservator of contemporary art at Hamburger Bahnhof - Museum for Contemporary Art, Berlin.

[www.hamburgerbahnhof.de](http://www.hamburgerbahnhof.de)