

Are You Not Entertained? Performance Art

The advent of Performance Art and the cult of artistic 'Happenings' took the New York Scene by storm in the 1960s, as a new mode of artistic expression took libertarianism to the level of body motion, recorded sounds, written and spoken texts, and even smells. Intended largely to entertain and subvert, the interdisciplinary approach encouraged greater interactivity and audience participation.

The origin of Performance Art lies in 'Dada' and the unorthodox poetry recitals at the Cabaret Voltaire in Zurich. Man Ray's 'Object to be Destroyed' encouraged the gallery-goer, armed with a hammer, to "destroy the whole at a single blow", thus empowering the viewer with the means to 'contribute' to the artwork. Abstract Expressionism and Action Painting synonymous with Jackson Pollock, provided the freedom to perform with the canvas serving as "an arena in which to act". Yves Klein's infamous *Anthropométries* or live Body Art performances, employed nude female models as 'living paintbrushes' to make imprints of their bodies onto canvas. This paved the way for the Fluxus Movement of the 1960s involving Yoko Ono and thus allying Art and Music as 'Intermedia'. The Stravinsky Fountain in Paris is a working example, featuring sixteen works of sculpture, moving and spraying water, representing the works of experimental composer Igor Stravinsky. Furthermore, Andy Warhol sponsored the Velvet Underground and staged the event 'Exploding Plastic Inevitable' featuring live Rock music, exploding lights, and film, thus pre-empting the elaborate visual stage shows of Pink Floyd and The Gorillas of the future.

The Earth or Land Artists Richard Long and Andy Goldsworthy make an art of natural resources in real time, just as Gilbert & George created their 'Living Sculpture' performance, being painted in gold and singing 'Underneath The Arches' for extended periods. One decadent and protracted performance even saw controversial artist Christo wrap the Reichstag building in Berlin in a polypropylene fabric! Meanwhile in the UK, Martin Creed's *Work No. 850* centred on a simple idea: that a person will run as fast as they can every thirty seconds through the Tate Gallery in London.

What do you make of Banksy's geocaching series 'Better Out Than In' in New York? Why was contemporary artist Ai Weiwei secretly detained for 81 days? Who staged a pillow fight on Tracey Emin's Bed and which artist created a chocolate bust of themselves only to be licked to generate an artistic metamorphosis? Come along and endeavour to find out!