



Exploring Performance Art

In the center of my interest in Performance Art is the person of the artist. By him / her and through him / her the performative image develops. From this several questions can be deduced: What is a performative image? How is the performative image developed? What is presence? With what tools can performance artists work on „presence“?

When teaching the praxis of Performance Art I mostly begin with concrete, sometimes very intensive physical exercises. These exercises do not serve to teach performance art, the preoccupation with these tasks throw the participants back on themselves and so enhance the confrontation with their own aesthetic experience. Existing insights, images or experiences should be activated and brought in to the actions.

In the sense of a negotiation of the topic „presence“ the participant shall recognize him/herself regarding the given situation and the others participants. Here questions about impression as physical perception are the subject of the argument. Presence in this sense is „successfully“ setting oneself in relation to the situation of the performance - as an action in the here and now.

Altogether this practical work is arranged into two parts: The first part is dedicated to the group performance. It deals with issues of common rhythm, impulse and perception. The accompanying exercises set the foundations for a common approach to performance art. The second part deals with the personal approach - to the topic, the material and the strategy of solo performance. In concluding public presentations these two fields of work are united. For this approx. 2 - hour performance a solo performance is developed, which is shown in a public group performance with the other participants

About the definition of Performance Art:

Generally, for the practice I do not consider the discussion about the correct definition of Performance Art as very helpful. I agree with Hans-Thies Lehmann, who in his book "Post-Dramatic Theater" has the following definition: "Performance is, what those who are showing it, announce as such."¹For the situation of a workshop, however, it is necessary, to limit the resulting spectrum of what constitutes Performance Art, since only a common language level, makes it possible to

¹ Hans-Thies Lehmann, Postdramatisches Theater, Verlag der Autoren, Frankfurt am Main 1999, S. 245

concentrate on the work. The workshop Exploring Performance Art is therefore based on the following understanding of performance art:

1. Performance Art is a genre of Fine Arts. This setting has an influence mainly on the sculptural self-understanding of the artist, and thus on the expected reception attitude of the audience.
2. Performance Art is processual art. The performative picture develops during the action, in consequence of the confrontation with the material and the performance situation.
3. Performance Art is not expressive or narrative - ie in the foreground stand no stories or messages. In this sense, Performance Art refers to itself, Performance Art is self-referential. The person of the artist is the first and most important material of the artistic discourse.
4. The quality of the submitted objects or the material of the artistic concentration is measured by its potential of changing and developing the person. Therefore it is not the question what the artist does with the material but how the material reflects back on the artist!
5. Hopefully, performance produces an event as a result of a real experience in the situation of the performance.

Comments by participants:

Excerpt of a comment by the participant Richard Spartos on the workshop by Jürgen Fritz at the International IPAH Summercamp in Berlin 2007:

„I just have to say, Jürgen Fritz is a mother fucking slave driver!“ (...) "We worked so fucking hard for that first hour. Then we did this back to back with a partner. We faced off to a partner, made eye contact and rhythmically clasped hands. Our bodies, pouring in sweat, we went neck to neck, then face to face, experiencing tension, intimacy, and the exchange of bodily fluid." (Richard Spartos in seiner Beschreibung des Workshops aus: http://polskareport.blogspot.com/2007_07_01_archive.html)

Excerpt of a comment by the participant Xan Coleman on the workshop by Jürgen Fritz at the Winterschool of the National Review of Live Art 2010 in Glasgow:

„What's the next step? Jürgen Fritz's course group (...) was pervaded by this question even before it was posed; debate on the realms of performance craft holding equal measure to the performance itself. Together we rose, sank, quarreled; were held, dropped and recovered. It's hard now to reflect on Jürgen's workshop without the image of his bell-ringing, bagpipe-backed euphoria piercing my mind. The reverie, even ecstasy, of his performance (...) clasped the essence of our week in one simple frame: the joy of the act." (<http://www.newmoves.co.uk/nrla-blog/64-nrla-blog/919-nrla30-a-glasgow-adventure-xan-colman>)

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Web gallery of the last workshops:

<http://www.fritz-performance.de/Seiten/Workshop.html>