

Performance Art Is...

by Elliot Reed



1. PERFORMANCE ART IS AN UNSOLVABLE PROBLEM. Image making is arithmetic—media added to substrate equals the graphic. At any point, 2D media can be removed (subtracted), mixed (multiplied), or layered (divided). When an artist practices “photo realism” the distinction is crucial, as the image is a simulation. In contrast, performance art works more like a proof—a proposition systematically unpacked, opening spaces that appear to be self-evident, testing solidity through action.

2. PERFORMANCE ART IS WHAT MOVES THROUGH. This work is relational. This work is experiential and also material. Attention *is* material. Time is earth’s most valuable post-commodity resource. Spinning flax into gold, fate’s metallic tapestry is blinked into existence one fallen eyelash at a time. The blueprint is read, digested, and presented through the skin of an avatar. Performance art begins internally, and is transmuted through the body of its producer.



3. PERFORMANCE ART IS HOW TO LEARN WHAT’S POSSIBLE. I test the boundaries of my art making through movement. I occupy the viewer’s space. The art is what happens (is happening) between the event and your memory of it. The piece is finished as soon as you attempt to explain it to someone else. We trade breath. Breath is a token exchange for the passage of time. This can happen in close proximity, or at a distance. Our experience of time is relative but its constant passage is universal.



4. PERFORMANCE ART IS THE RITUAL STAGE. Desire is set into motion through planning and action. Every performance creates the opportunity to act. Desires become actions in the studio. Sometimes the result drives the making of the work, other times the “result” is when the action stops. Reaching towards that desire is fuel for further reaching. Desire is heavy, invisible, fragrant, and vast. It can only be pulled but never lifted; it can be gripped but never held.



5. PERFORMANCE ART IS THE METHOD. It’s the tool behind its own making. The curtain, the stage; the audience and the theatre. Performance compresses the wall between what’s happening and who it’s happening to. The wall thins into a membrane and then stretches. Pulsing in empathetic exchange like an eardrum, septum, or mucosa. An energetic bending, as close to merging as possible without bursting into the other.



6. PERFORMANCE ART IS A PORTAL and behavior is the window. A series of active modifications chosen at will. Performance is decision-making and swift reaction. I contain a multitude of potential responses. Communication can be directed outwardly or remain internal. Can you hear me/it? Can you see me/it? I am standing before you in the room, both myself and other. Familiar in form but not in affect. The clock starts once the doors open. Boundaries and placeholders become the palette. Working towards a new collective.

7. PERFORMANCE ART IS CALL-AND-RESPONSE. I give, you take. You arrive, I savor. We stand and share. We sit and contemplate. We log in and watch. They told you exactly how it was. You image and ingest. We ruminate, stew, simmer, and settle. We rise and fall. I wait I practice I program I project. Voices amplified through microphones or the quietest patter of feet on a concrete floor. Gloss-less and devoid of sheen. Sweat, only just too far to smell perhaps but close enough to see. Droplets on the wooden floor. Marley flexes, steeldeck locks into place, and the risers do just that. How fast can I hit the floor? If I run fast enough will my moisture make an imprint on the wall? Wetness leads to transparency, a jumble of nipples and feet.



8. PERFORMANCE ART IS A BITE. [nibble chomp taste lick tickle touch tear tease twist pinch prick pull sprinkle stretch teeter tight tattle tap tit gum gather graze get cast cut press preen pry pronged prey puncture peel progress dry dabble dig deepen dip dance dog pass enter egg out elongate extrude extradite explain extract essentialize err endanger preclude production tape link slippage slap spill slept splay sprawl sprung spew split deficit difficult full dump constant violation recourse recursive structural ebb jetty virtuous veritas goddess grunt grovel trench gradient gossamer grand gloop kindle open cozy crank carry carrion crass globule bio technician applied design sit stereo slump signals flippant flagellations foray morass weary wedge wooden weaponized whips purchase pyro perishing predominantly within pith.]



9. PERFORMANCE ART IS THE WORLD. In an attempt to reach towards the authentic and the unsolvable. My challenge is to illustrate the instability of living. Any logic only works until it doesn’t. Any theory only exists until it’s proven correct or incorrect. Bad blood killed before the invention of the microscope. Every leader must die. My practice is an extended syllogism animated in real time. You can’t see me but I’m waving to you and smiling from the other side of the page.



10. PERFORMANCE ART IS TIME BASED. Time is the only thing we all share.

