

Book review

RoseLee Goldberg, *Performance Now: Live Art for the 21st Century*, London: Thames & Hudson, 2018, 272 pp. with over 260 illustrations, £32.00 Hbk, ISBN: 9780500021255.

RoseLee Goldberg is an art historian, critic and curator whose pioneering work, both written and curatorial, has informed the recognition and presentation of live performance within visual art's critical and institutional frameworks. Her publications (especially *Performance Art: From Futurism to the Present*, 1979, and *Performance: Live Art Since the 1960s*, 1998) have defined the genre of performance art, establishing it as the ground-breaking artform of the twentieth century. *Performance Now: Live Art for the 21st Century* develops Goldberg's earlier studies of performance art, offering a survey of the development of the form since the beginning of the new millennium. The book both updates her earlier accounts and offers a critical reflection on the place that live art has come to occupy within art historical narratives over the last two decades.

Goldberg's examination of the work of performance assumes the visual as its point of reference, both in terms of the mode of address of the live events and in terms of their presentation and reception in visual art contexts. The focus is therefore on how the introduction of these practices in museums and galleries has shifted perceptions surrounding artworks, diversified the function of art institutions and broadened the composition of art viewers. Yet, the book is also concerned with the interdisciplinarity of performance in its intersections with other artforms, such as theatre, dance and architecture, and with its engagement with politics and with emerging notions of citizenship. The volume is organised around six thematic chapters, each offering an introductory outline of key issues and considerations, followed by a range of examples (between twenty-five and fifty per chapter) illustrated through pictures of the works and short captions that describe and contextualise them.

The chapter 'Performance as Visual Art' discusses and depicts the ways in which performance works – from Marina Abramović's stagings of domestic life to Carsten Höller's interactive installations – have been inhabiting visual art spaces, transforming the role of the museum and the experience of viewing. The relationship with space is further explored in the chapter 'Performing Architecture', which surveys examples of performative interventions in or through architectural spaces, including public, which reimagine architectural processes and the function of buildings or foreground social and political issues surrounding urban planning and development. The chapters 'World Citizenship: Performance as a Global Language' and 'Radical Action: On Performance and Politics' illustrate, respectively, the ways in which performance navigates languages and contexts that are at the same time culturally-specific and capable of addressing global concerns, and the overtly political engagement of international examples of live art that respond to oppression, crisis and conflict through artistic activism.

Two chapters specifically consider the intersections between live art and the theatrical contexts of performance. In 'Off Stage: New Theatre', examples of performance – by Elevator Repair Service, Taylor Mac, Gisèle Vienne, Gob Squad, Robert Wilson, Richard Maxwell, Philippe Quesne, Nature Theater of Oklahoma, Ant Hampton and Tim Etchells, to

name a few – are compared with theatre, which Goldberg considers in its most conventional sense, as a form that “more often than not begins with a script” (p. 198). Similarly, the chapter ‘Dance After Choreography’ pits avant-garde dance against traditional choreography and highlights the benefits, in terms of visibility and innovation, that presenting dance in gallery and museum settings, or in unconventional performance spaces, has brought to the dance community and to choreographers as diverse as Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker, Trajal Harrell, Michael Clark, Mårten Spånberg, Jérôme Bel, Christian Rizzo, William Forsythe, Boris Charmatz, Jonathan Burrows and Matteo Fargion, Ivana Müller, among others.

One of the challenges of mapping such a multifaceted and interdisciplinary field lies in how to acknowledge that any collection of examples, any history of a set of practices will always inevitably be a partial account. Goldberg draws attention to the need for multivocality by reflecting on the photographic dimension of the book as a form of visual mediation which, through the eyes of the many photographers, engages with the artworks from several viewpoints, thus complicating the process of documentation. Yet the vivid illustrations and informative texts capture only fragments of the specific works and artists depicted in the book, framing them from the specific viewpoint of visual art’s critical and curatorial concerns. Furthermore, organising the material according to categories involves drawing visible lines between practices that often operate across boundaries, in a fluid, productively ambiguous and inventively unstable manner. Such categorisations necessarily simplify a complex landscape, in order to make it readable. These limitations aside, *Performance Now* is an extensive and attentive survey of recent performance art works, which will undoubtedly benefit readers interested in the ways in which performance has been intervening in the visual art world in the first two decades of the new millennium. The book’s lucid framework will serve as a valuable instrument to guide further interdisciplinary research into the field of performance, offering a basis from which to contextualise examples of practice, including beyond the selection presented in this survey.

Daniela Perazzo Domm
Kingston University London