Event Horizon: Performance

This set includes works from the Walker Art Center's *Event Horizon* installation that are examples of **performance**.

Each work of art is introduced by discussion questions. Users can find background information about each work by clicking the "More Info" button at the bottom of each slide. For even more information about the works in *Event Horizon*, refer to Event Horizon: A Study Set.

This and four other *Event Horizon* sets explore the installation through the lenses of five elements of contemporary art: appropriation, hybridity, performance, space, and time. Visitors can use these sets to create their own thematic tours of the exhibition or generate a discussion on what performance means in the practices of artists working today.

Feel free to make this Set your own. As a registered user of ArtsConnectEd you can duplicate any published Art Collector Set to your own account. Once a Set is duplicated you can edit the Set and its slides. Click here to learn more about duplicating a published Set.

What is Performance?

Performance as an element in art refers to an artist's actions during the creation of the work. Sometimes the performance is the work itself, or the final work of art serves as documentation or "evidence" of a one-time event or of the process of making the piece. A work of performative art might include the use of dance, ritual, expressive gesture, staged public or private events, spoken word, or music. It may or may not result in a painting, photograph, a video, drawing or archival materials. The activity itself can be more important that an object resulting from the action.

Niki de Saint Phalle, Untitled from Edition Mat 64, 1964

As you look carefully at this work, think of words that describe what you see. Focus on words that describe actions that might have been part of making this work.

If this artwork could speak, what do you think it might say about how it was made?

Inspired by a child's dart game, de Saint Phalle invented a provocative technique for creating her paintings. She embedded bags of colored pigment into a plaster-filled frame and shot them with a .22 caliber rifle. The impact of the bullets released the paint, which splattered and dripped across the surface in unpredictable ways. She used this method to create numerous works during the 1960s, often before an audience of invited guests who were encouraged to take part in the shooting.

Claes Oldenburg, Upside Down City, 1962

The title of this work reveals its subject, but can you tell by looking how it was made? Describe what materials you see and how you think it was made.

In 1962, Oldenburg organized a series of events in New York City's East Village in a rented store he called the Ray Gun Manufacturing Co. Playfully alluding to the upcoming 1964 New York World's Fair in Flushing Meadows, Oldenburg's final event, *World's Fair II,* ended with the performers hanging *Upside Down City* from the ceiling, set to the tune of a slowed-down recording of a Scottish bagpipe march.

Do you think this artwork exists as a sculpture or is it a left-over prop from an event? Could it be both? Why or why not?

Cindy Sherman, Untitled, 1981

What do you notice as you view this photograph?

What does it remind you of? Do you think this scene is happening in real life or is it staged? What do you see that makes you say that?

What do you imagine might have happened before this scene? What do you imagine is going to happen next?

How has the artist worked to give this scene a particular mood?

Trisha Brown, Man Walking Down the Side of a Building, 1970/2008

After viewing this 3-minute video, discuss what images or sounds you recall.

How does this piece make you feel?

Describe this piece from the point of view of the dancer. Describe it from the point of view of a spectator who was present at the performance. Describe it from the point of view of an observer watching the video.

What questions does it raise for you about performance and dance?

Franz West, 3 Pass-stücke (3 Adaptives), 1997

This work includes three white forms pierced with steel rods. They are designed to be carried around in the galleries by visitors.

What do these forms remind you of?

Describe how you might move with these forms in hand. Would you walk or dance? How would you carry them?

How would these forms lead you to "adapt" your behavior?

Who is the performer in this piece?