The question of authenticity in 1960s – 1970s Californian body art: posing a challenge to a concept of presence

Anja Kanngieser

This article investigates the claim of body artists who produced work in California in the 1960s and 1970s that their specific mode of performance overcame the mimetic characteristics conventionally associated with the arts. According to these artists (and associated theorists), this was achieved through immediacy and corporeal presence – components considered integral to body art in general. By sharing a common focus on the flesh and the corporeal frame as the potential site of the merging between art and life, Californian body artists from this period examined the traditional binary divisions of life/art and presence/absence via the idea of the body as both subject and object of their art. Through an examination of work of key artists such as Chris Burden (*Shoot* and *Bed Piece*), Linda Montano (*Living with Pauline Oliveros in the Desert for Ten Days*), Lynn Hershman (*Roberta Breitmore*), Dennis Oppenheim (*Reading Position for Second Degree Burn*), and Tom Marioni (*The Act of Drinking Beer with Friends is the Highest Form of Art*), I aim to assert that although Californian body artists claimed they overcame these traditional divisions, their approach did nothing more than reinstate the very binaries they sought to negate.

Body art and the binary

The definition of art and performance, and of artistic and performance practice and theory, has primarily been enmeshed in a discourse of the binary. This notion of the binary can be considered to stem from Western aesthetic philosophy which, from as early as the emergence of Platonic theory (427-347BC), deemed art as a mere copy of the 'real'. This binary – which effectively acts to divide and oppose real from representation, presence from absence, and life from art – continues to impress upon and speak to our contemporary perceptions and experiences. The concept of the binary impacts upon art/performance by defining art/performance as that which is opposed to life, hence art/performance is seen as a mere representation, or mimesis, of the 'real'.

The first set of terms in the binary, such as 'real', 'presence', 'life', is thus associated with an authenticity and immediacy that the second and negative set of terms, 'representation', 'absence', 'art', lacks. Indeed the

second set of terms may be considered a shadow of the first: that which is intimately connected to the first but can never attain the purity or resonance the first contains. This purity of the first term is thought then to be in some way 'transcendental' – self-contained, enclosed and inherently meaningful.

Throughout the twentieth century, philosophers (such as French theorists Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Jacques Derrida) and arts theorists and practitioners challenged these traditional binaries, grounded in the assumption of a transcendental 'other', through radical new discourses of deconstruction and analysis. Their viewpoints problematised a notion of complete differentiation of the binaries by claiming that the oppositions, such as life/art, actor/spectator, could not be firmly divided. This was due to the fact that a pure transcendental 'origin/other' could never be determinably located.

Within the art world these themes were manifest in the aims of the minimalist (late 1950s-1960s) and conceptualist (mid 1960s-1970s) movements, both of which sought to explicitly implicate the spectator within the meaning-making process of the artwork.[1] Unlike earlier models of art history and criticism that were structured around a Kantian aspiration to view the work of art objectively (idealistically removed from subjective desires and interpretation), minimalism aimed to re-examine the constitutive factors of the work of art, undermining the authority of the artist as the originator of meaning.[2] In this way, the involvement of the spectator in the artwork was the possibility of the manifestation of meaning. As body artist Vito Acconci observed, minimalism reconceptualised notions of framing and redefined the gaze of the viewer as active, forcing the viewer into an awareness of his/her own corporeality. As Acconci states, minimalism

> was the art that made it necessary to recognise the space you were in. Up until that time I had probably assumed the notion of the frame. I would look at what was inside the frame, I would ignore the wall around it. Finally, then, with minimal art, I had to recognise I was in a certain floor ... I was in a certain condition, I had a headache, for example. I had a certain history, I had a certain bias ... what minimal art did for me was to confirm for myself the fact that art obviously had to be this relation between whatever it was that started off the art and the viewer.[3]

For critic Michael Fried, 'literalist' art such as minimalism sullies the traditional status of art by embracing what he defines as 'theatricality' – the dependence of such art upon framing, context and the spectator.[4] This dematerialisation of the art object and the subsequent problematisation of a definition of the object as discrete and self-contained was furthered in the works of the conceptualists who placed utmost emphasis on process over product. Conceptualism challenged ideals of art as inherently delimited from life. Focusing on questions of context and intent, conceptual art posed

queries not only of the artwork ('Why is this art?' 'Who is the artist?') but also of the person who looks at it or reads about it ('Who are you?' 'What do you represent?').[5]

These concerns were taken up by the performance and body art movement in the late 1960s/mid-70s and were made manifest upon the artists' flesh.[6] The visual arts opened up to the dimension of theatricality so that the subjective foundation of meaning-making was constantly acknowledged. Performance was seen as the beacon of the postmodern aesthetic in its solicitation of the spectator and its denial of a possibly closed and finite meaning.[7]

This was evident in much of the Californian body art of this time, which proposed to reconcile the breach between performer and spectator, often choosing corporeal communication over traditional linguistic narrative. As Peter Weiermair states, the aim of Californian body art was to extend 'the realm of aesthetic experience, at direct sensory communication'.[8] Posing the body as the primary site and material object of the work, these body artists frequently (and often masochistically) explored and transgressed the conventional limits of art.

Hence, unlike other art forms – such as painting, sculpture and drawing – where the body of the artist was but implicated in the presentation and experience of viewing the artwork, body and performance artists argued that their artform overcame that division between art and life by overriding the absence associated with art through their corporeal presence.

This attempt to visually mark the body as artistic site is overwhelmingly apparent in such performances as Dennis Oppenheim's 1970 work wherein he lay on a beach exposing his whole body to the sun, except for his chest over which a large book was placed. The documentation consists of two photographs: the first shows him lying on his back at the beach, flesh white, with the book over his chest. The second shows him in the same pose but with his body burnt red by the sun, the book removed; leaving white skin where the book had formerly been – flesh as the artist's canvas.[9] This work – a living, breathing, visceral moment of art – communicates to the spectator through the body of the performer.

In 1974, body artist Chris Burden announced: 'My art is an examination of reality. By setting up aberrant situations, my art functions on a higher reality, in a different state'.[10] What this statement demonstrates is the belief of such body artists that it is necessary to overthrow representation, to finally claim for art a direct access to the 'real', to 'real' life; explicitly, that it is body art and performance that can offer the solution. As Burden claimed, his art breaks through the representationality of – to use a Nietzschean analogy – an Apollonian reality in order to reach a Dionysian realm.[11] His art transcends illusion and conditioned enculturation to attain the pure, sensual, aesthetic and primal 'real' – rather than merely representing a situation or

event, like most performance and artworks, his work is the actual situation or event. This is seen in Burden's 1971 work *Shoot* in which he was shot in the arm by a friend with a copper jacket .22 long rifle bullet. It was a real bullet that, through the action, physically maimed Burden in the manner of any bullet wound. His blood was not fake blood. As Burden said, 'getting shot is for real ... there's no element of pretense or make-believe in it'.[12]

Lynn Hershman's *Roberta Breitmore* (1975-) performances, which consist of the documentation of experiences had by her created character Roberta, additionally signals this movement between art and life. Hershman defines Roberta as a 'meta-portrait', a character in possession of her own driver's license, bank account, room, and therapist. Roberta is a 'real' person; Hershman's consciously created alter ego, a character living outside the confines of the theatrical frame.[13]

Akin to Burden's and Hershman's performances, Linda Montano's art-as-life projects also demonstrate this objective of body art. Her 1975 work with Pauline Oliveros, entitled *Living with Pauline Oliveros in the Desert for Ten Days*, consisted of Montano and Oliveros living in the desert for ten days under the agreement that everything they did would be considered as art. Montano stated of their performance: 'Living art was incredibly exhilarating. I thought that the life/art transference was finally made because I began interacting more truthfully and spontaneously. I called each day art and not life'.[14] Montano, like Burden and Hershman, explicitly alluded to the representational nature of traditional art that must, and supposedly can, be overcome through body art.

As Sally Banes observes of the art of the 1960s-1970s:

> there is a distinct ambivalence towards the absolute – that is, toward some unitary higher truth or consciousness or some ideal of prelapsarian wholeness ... this ambivalence was expressed in the conflict between unity – the desire for authenticity, spontaneity, and the collective expanded consciousness of the community – and difference – the appreciation of heterogeneity, pluralism, and enhanced individuality.[15]

This comment, made by Banes, exemplifies the manner in which body art fundamentally negates its objective to dissolve the binary. For, by positing a 'real' which may be attained by overcoming representation, body art perpetuates the very categorical binarism it seeks to destroy. As Martin Jay remarks, from a Derridean standpoint, 'the yearning to do away entirely with representation – politically, theatrically, or imagistically – turns out to be another form of the metaphysics of presence'.[16]

This is additionally evident in the way that body artists refer to art as something removed from, or different to, 'real' life and everyday experience. Linda Montano's claim to having resolved the art/life division insinuates that, even when art is lived as life and vice versa, there is still some form of

delimitation between the two. If there were not, any statement proclaiming the dissolution of the binary would not be necessary. For example, Acconci stated that it was 'getting more and more difficult to separate the two, the art activity and the daily life, and that's what we're working toward, no separation'.[17] Such a claim supports my argument that it is in the very act of making such a statement that negates the meaning of the statement made. It is thus the *presentation* of art, even in the context whereby art is presented as 'life', that perpetuates the category of art as historically-invested and haunted by the accusation of mimesis.[18]

But interestingly, as Jindrich Chalupecky notes, it is actually this division that allows art to function as such within the social realm.[19] It is this desire of body artists – to disintegrate the binary and merge art with life, and yet still be defined as 'artists' – that presents itself as inherently tautological. If art and life were fully dissolved into one another then there would be no place for the artist.

Despite the intentions of the Californian body artists such as Burden, Fox and Montano to break down or challenge this binary, they paradoxically continued to refer to themselves as 'artists' and to their work as 'art'. Burden's 1972 *Bed Piece*, for example, consisted of the artist lying in bed in a gallery non-stop for twenty-two days. This was an action that could only be considered as 'art' if placed within the specific gallery context.[20] By presenting everyday activities as art, the possibility of thoroughly deconstructing the binary was almost realised. Yet these artists nonetheless moved within the art world, implicitly regarding it as something removed, if only tenuously, from the greater social spectrum. Indeed, it was this world, the artistic context, which provided the potential for many of the actions to take place. It was the very possibility of such a difference between the art world and the social that allowed the artists to emphasise the similarity of the two. As Barbara Smith explains:

> The art context provides areas and ways for the artist to be and do things which could never be believed or permitted in ordinary life. It is precisely this dilemma which often makes for the viewer's discomfort with some performance art, and created a persistent desire to continue doing performance on the part of the artist.[21]

Smith highlights the paradox that is a central characteristic of body art: that performance and body art that aims to blur the boundary between art and life is only defined as 'art' through context and artist intentionality, through its framing. Burden's *Shoot*, for example, illuminates this notion of trans-contextualisation – the outcome of the work cannot be simply devalued as 'representational'. It is only by being defined as art, exhibited and performed in a gallery with the artist's claim of agency for the action, that the event is distinguished from a shooting that occurs in a war zone or criminally on the street.

This uncertain categorisation and delimitation of art from life through contextualisation and framing is also manifest in Tom Marioni's1970 work *The Act of Drinking Beer With Friends is the Highest Form of Art*. In this work Marioni drank beer with twenty or so other artists in the gallery leaving the beer cans and cigarette butts as residual documentation.[22] The point at which the work was considered art sprung from its location and interpretation as such. As Thomas McEvilley puts it:

> Art is not a set of objects but an attitude towards objects, a cognitive stance ... To be art is to be called art, by the people who supposedly are in charge of the word – artists, critics, curators, art historians and so on ... If something (anything) is presented as art by an artist and contextualised as art within the system then it is art.[23]

Authenticity = immediacy + corporeal presence (?)

The claim made by body artists (that performance offers a more authentic 'reality' than other modes of art) rests upon the immediate corporeal presence of the performer. This corporeal presence is considered to be the condition of the possibility of an 'unmediated' direct communication. Supposedly, meaning and truth may be conveyed directly from the body of the performer to the body of the spectator (surpassing linguistic ambiguity) because the performer is not engaged in explicitly reflective and traditional theatrical modes such as narrative, dialogue, rigid scripting, and character representation.[24] As Rosemary Meyer claims, such art is a direct reflection of the artist's experiences and not a theatrical representation of an event as is seen in conventional theatrical performance.[25] These modes of presentation are the ground upon which many theorists define performance and body art as different from the more traditional forms of art and theatre generally.

Modernist art, according to Michael Fried, aimed for the object to be self-contained in its meaning and value, to be wholly manifest and 'present' to the spectator at all times. In this case, the art object could almost be said to have attained an 'in-itself' status, whereby the art-ness of the object was inherent and not, like postmodern art, reliant upon context, intentionality and the spectator. This notion of presentness insinuated that the meaning and truth of the artwork must exist outside a temporal framework. Fried's scathing appraisal of minimal and conceptual art (the inspirational forerunners of performance and body art) focused upon what he deemed such arts' integral 'theatricality'. By theatricality, he meant that the work's claim to the status of art was reliant upon the context in which it was exhibited and in the interpretation and engagement of the spectator. Fried saw theatricality as being the downfall of art. Art could no longer be firmly pedestaled outside of the general life sphere, but rather freely admitted its contingency upon the cultural world from which it sprang.[26]

Henry Sayre also argues that this was what defined postmodern art (especially performance) from modernist art and theatre. Sayre terms such performance as asserting an aesthetics of absence, stating that:

> An aesthetics of presence seeks to transcend history, to escape temporality. An aesthetics of absence subjects art to the wiles of history, embraces time. ... An aesthetics of presence defines art as that which transcends the quotidian; an aesthetics of absence accepts the quotidian's impingement on art. For the one, art is absolute; for the other, it is contingent.[27]

Postmodern theorists like Sayre attempt (almost successfully) to deconstruct the legacy of a metaphysics of presence. By illuminating the perspectival and subjective nature of interpretation and meaning-making processes, such theory overcomes the utopian objectivism aspired to by modernist art and theatre. This theory also supports a movement away from the traditionally hierarchised theatrical structure, wherein the voice of the director or author often overwhelm the role and input of each of the other constituting elements (actors, *mise-en-scène*, spectators et cetera).

Where such theory was inevitably distorted – in terms of fully dispelling the modernist myth of presence – was through the championing of performance and body art as being the solution to the modernist problem. Many performance theorists inadvertently ended up perpetuating the divisions of past art discourse by arguing that performance and body art rejected the illusionistic nature of mimetic aesthetics. It *presented* reality as opposed to *re-presenting* it.[28]

Chantal Pontbriand, in her essay, 'The Eye Finds No Fixed Point on Which to Rest...', argues that traditional theatre is representational in the way that 'presence' is a constant allusion to, and shadowing of, an ideal reality that can not be fully attained.[29] It is the embracing of spatio-temporality and contingency, of 'absence,' that marks postmodern performance as pure, as presentational rather than re-presentational. Founding her analysis on a reading of Walter Benjamin's 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction', Pontbriand inadvertently reinstates the same notion of presence that she is apparently critical of. By reconfiguring performance 'immediacy' as a new postmodern 'presence', by stating that the aim of performance is to show 'the real without mystification', Pontbriand elevates performance beyond the representationality of the theatre. This opinion is shared by Robert W. Corrigan who claims that in postmodern performance 'presentation replaces re-presentation and performance is increasingly about performance itself'.[30]

This assumption that truthfulness and authenticity as specifically contingent upon the immediacy of the performer's physical body is also echoed by Josette Feral who argues, in her essay 'Performance and Theatricality: The Subject Demystified', that postmodern performance

destroyed the 'theatrical illusion originating in the repression of the body's 'baser' elements'.[31] Feral also claims that it is the rejection of the primary narrative form and the 'symbolic organisation dominating theatre' that distinguishes performance from the conventional theatre. In her seminal essay 'Subject-Object: Body Art', Cindy Nemser also focuses upon the artist's body as presentation in opposition to representation. She alleges that body art is more corporeally self-reflexive in allowing artists to explore their body as the primary source material. For Nemser, this artform rejects the space between the subject and object of the artwork by collapsing the two into one.[32]

These arguments all expose the persistent definition of performance as implicitly reflecting characteristics similar to that which it is claiming to oppose. By reproducing notions of immediacy and hyper-presentness, these claims analogise performance to the realm of modernist art. Indeed, as Feral states: 'since it tells of nothing and imitates no one, performance escapes all illusion and representation. With neither past nor future, performance takes place'.[33] Feral's statement here explicitly illuminates the criticism that I have directed at such performance theorists. For many of these arguments are inherently contradictory. They propose body art as that which, following the innovations inspired by minimalism and conceptualism, finally shook off the shadow of the modernist transcendental through the disruption of the potential for objective meaning. At the same time, performance is bestowed with the very characteristics that Fried claims for modernist art – specifically the allegation of a trans-spatio-temporal existence. But arguments like these are not necessarily as categorically pro-transcendental as I have presented them here. They are veiled within assertions of fragmentation, interpretation, and fluidity of identity and meaning.

While performance theorists such as Pontbriand and Feral rightfully admitted the contingency of body art and its meanings upon spatio-temporal context, subjective perception and interpretation, I believe that the flaw lies in the persistent supposition that body art rejects illusion through the corporeal presence of the artist. The assumption that corporeal communication is in some way more primal and direct than linguistic speech/static arts/the written word, privileges the body as a site of a communication that effectively enmeshes the binary. As Amelia Jones argues:

> For those who wish to privilege performance or body art for its merging of art and life, its delivery of the body/subject of the artist directly to the viewer, the body must be seen as an unmediated reflection of the self whose presence guarantees the redemptive quality of art as activism.[34]

I see this type of assumption, which Jones is critical of, as indicative of a metaphysics of presence. Thus I will offer a brief examination of Derrida's

notion of writing, or arche-writing in order to clarify my argument at this point. I will employ Derrida's discussion of speech/writing as an analogy for the corporeal presence/absence that body art bases its fundamental premises upon. For, while speech has always been traditionally associated with presence/truth (and writing with absence/non-truth), *différance* fundamentally compromises this convention.

By assuming truth within speech, based upon the 'unmediated' corporeal presence of the speaker (whether visually perceived or non-visually assumed), phonocentric philosophy acted to perpetuate the notion that writing is inferior to speech – on the premise that speech has always been thought of as indicative of a presence while writing of an absence. Derrida critically contests this by arguing that the foundation upon which both speech and writing lie is the nebulous flux of *différance*. Speech cannot exist outside of a spatio-temporal realm. It is never unmediated. As Derrida states:

> the primordial structure of repetition must govern all acts of signification. The subject cannot speak without giving himself representation of his speaking. We can no more imagine effective speech without there being self-representation than we can imagine a representation of speech without there being effective speech. Speech represents itself; it *is* its representation.[35]

This infers that all criticism attached to the nature of writing can also be applied to speech. If there is no referent, no immediate and present truth, then speech is as much a deferred 'representation' of identity as writing. How can claims of fixed meaning and truth be allocated to speech on the assumption of immediacy if such presence is never possible, if there is no present, no 'now,' that can be located?[36]

Through such an analysis it is apparent that the 'danger' posed by writing – repeatability, cross-contextual usage, loss of definition and truth due to the loss of the physically present author – is just as prevalent within speech. It is, in fact, these 'deviant' elements that constitute the possibility of a language. A sign, spoken or written, can never signal without signaling the trace of infinite contexts, infinite reiterations, infinite multiplicities.

This notion is fundamental to performance communication and problematises claims of authenticity and mediation. For if speech cannot secure truth in performance then all performance is necessarily mediated regardless of its corporeal 'immediacy'. It is mediated by every element and experience that contributes to the formation of every perspective and interpretation offered by every spectator and performer. As Elin Diamond explains:

> In its signifying operations language splits the speaker from the presence of her own words; at the moment of utterance the signifier is ... always travelling to another context, arriving from still another. Presence, then, is never simply present. The

> 'auratic' uniqueness of the performer's body, its apparent 'unity' as logical and experiential home of the subject, is dispersed by its 'own' discourse.[37]

The body, like any text, is constituted by difference. Therefore the claim by body art to a more authentic, present or self-contained experience ignores this assertion. Indeed as most performance theorists have acknowledged, performance and body art illustrate the fragmentary and fluid nature of the body and identity as such.[38] The visuality of the body, its physical, immediate, seen presence, does not anchor meaning any more than speech can be said to anchor meaning based on the implied or actual presence of the speaker.[39] Body art, regardless of the use of the body as the site of communication, does not, like speech, overcome the mediation inherent to any process entangled in *différance*. The sheer immediate corporeality of the body does not provide access to a more truthful or closed system of meaning and interpretation, simply because such a system cannot exist. The boundaries of the body are as fragmented and fluid as that of any other text. This is not to allude to a possible horizon of meaning. Rather, meaning in and of the body is as contingent and differential as that of any other element of a language whether spoken, written, illustrated, or performed. The body writes language as it is written through it.[40]

It is this consubstantiality, this intertwining, that supports the possibility of communicative exchange through the body of the performer to the body of the spectator. But this does not necessarily imply that such communication is any more authentic than any other mode of communication. What I am trying to expose here is the slipperiness and endlessly moving nature of the binary differentiation. For each element is in constant flux and can never be determinably stabilised. As Derrida argues, signs (like the body) are always engaged in movement and *différance*, affected by and affecting traces of traces.

Conclusion: the paradox of 'authenticity'

The analyses discussed within this argument are highly pertinent to performance theory in that they problematise the relationship between presentation and representation by questioning where the line is drawn and, more importantly, if a line can be drawn at all. If identity can never be purely known, because of this endless sliding movement, then authorial intent and physical presence cannot constitute either the claim to truth or representationality of the performance. If we cannot locate a fixed and static truth of the work (as such a nexus is problematised throughout on all levels – from the idea of creation to the process of reception) then we must conclude that there is no possibility of an unmediated performance. At the same time, there is never an enclosed and definite mediation.

And therein lies the paradoxical nature of Californian body art of the 1960s-1970s. For such body art seeks to merge the division between art and

life, between authenticity and mediation, and at the same time it must perpetuate these distinctions in order to remain defined as Art. It both explicitly invokes and problematises the appearance of staticity offered by context and framing. As I have stated, the very objective of body art to attain the 'real' denotes a belief in 'representationality'. Body art aspires to use the body as an unmediated site of exchange, but both embraces and denies the impossibility of a fixed meaning which can be purely communicated. It combines the art subject and object, and yet harkens back to a metaphysical. For the act of claiming to bring together the binary insists upon the presence of the binary. It claims an exteriority beyond representation, and yet refutes the existence of such an exteriority. It situates itself both within and outside of historicity and contingency. And it is precisely in this way that an uneasy, yet ever present, ambivalence is maintained towards a transcendental origin that it would rather deny.

NOTES

1 Barbara Haskell, *Blam! The Explosion of Pop, Minimalism, and Performance, 1958-1964* (New York: Whitney Museum, 1984) 12-13.

2 Wayne Enstice, 'Performance Art's Coming of Age', Gregory Battcock and Robert Nickas, ed., *The Art of Performance: A Critical Anthology* (New York: Dutton, 1984) 143-144.

3 Nick Kaye, *Postmodernism and Performance* (London: Macmillan, 1994) 27.

4 Michael Fried, 'Art and Objecthood', Gregory Battcock, ed., *Minimal Art: A Critical Anthology* (New York: Dutton, 1968) 117-125.

5 Tony Godfrey, *Conceptual Art* (London: Phaidon, 1998) 5.

6 Marvin Carlson, *Performance: A Critical Introduction* (London: Routledge, 1996) 100, 104; Lea Vergine, *Art on the Cutting Edge: A Guide to Contemporary Movements* (Skira: Milan, 2001) 199.

7 Jed Perl, 'The Art Scene: Vile Bodies', *Salmagundi* 101/ 102 (1994): 21.

8 Peter Weiermair, 'New Tendencies in Austrian Art', *Studio International* 183.944 (May, 1972): 208.

9 Dennis Oppenheim, *Dennis Oppenheim: Explorations*, Germano Celant, ed. (Edizoni Charta: Milan, 2001) 148; Willoughby Sharp, 'Body Works', Lucy Lippard, ed., *Six Years: The Dematerialisation of the Art Object from 1966-1972* (New York: Praeger, 1973) 185.

10 Chris Burden and Jan Butterfield, 'Through the Night Softly', Gregory Battcock and Robert Nickas, ed., *The Art of Performance: A Critical Anthology* (New York: Dutton, 1984) 223.

11 Very briefly, for Nietzsche, primarily in his earlier work 'The Birth of Tragedy', the Greek gods Apollo and Dionysus are used to describe two parallel modes of art, sculpture (the plastic arts) and music. These also signify modes of being. Apollonian stands for the detachment from the primal, the illusionistic veil of language and society, rationality and the rise of the individual. Alternatively the

Dionysian is the ground of being, the primal realm of chaos that unites all men with the world in an orgiastic frenzy. Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, Walter Kaufman, trans., *Basic Writings of Nietzsche* (New York: Modern Library, 1992) 33-144.

12 Burden quoted in Carlson 103.

13 Carl E. Loeffler, 'From the Body into Space: Post-Notes on Performance Art in Northern California', *Performance Anthology: Source Book for a Decade of California Body Art* (San Francisco: Contemporary Arts P, 1980) 380-382.

14 Linda Montano, *Art in Everyday Life* (Los Angeles: Astro Atrz, 1981) n.p.

15 Sally Banes, *Greenwich Village 1963: Avant-Garde Performance and the Effervescent Body* (Durham: Duke UP, 1993) 244.

16 Martin Jay, *Downcast Eyes: The Denigration of Vision in Twentieth-Century French Thought* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1993) 507.

17 Vito Acconci in Lucy Lippard, *Six Years: The Dematerialisation of the Art Object from 1966-1972* (New York: Praeger, 1973) 243-45.

18 Jacques Derrida in G. Bennington and I. McLeod, trans., *The Truth in Painting* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1987) 21-22.

19 'The object is not a prison from which artists should escape. On the contrary, it guarantees his work in an autonomous structure, and by this offers him space for freedom he cannot otherwise find in the real world. The attempts to cancel out the borders between art and the world are causing disintegration of art itself and its role in society'. Jindrich Chalupecky in Jan Mladejovsky, trans., 'Art and Sacrifice', *Flash Art* 80/81 (1978): 34. As Thomas McEvilley additionally points out of this paradoxical situation: 'The semantical coextensiveness of art and life means either that art has disappeared into life, melting into it everywhere like a new spark of indwelling meaning, or ... that life has dissolved into art. In short it means ultimately that the terms have become meaningless in relation to one another, since language operates not by sameness but by difference'. Thomas McEvilley, 'Art in the Dark', *Artforum* (Summer 1983): 64.

20 Loeffler 400.

21 Barbara Smith quoted in Linda Frye Burnham, 'Performance Art in Southern California: An Overview', Carl E. Loeffler, ed., *Performance Anthology: Source Book for a Decade of California Performance Art* (San Francisco: Contemporary Arts P, 1980) 422.

22 Cecil N. McCann, 'Fish's Beer-Based Concept', *Artweek* 1 (1970): 3.

23 McEvilley 63.

24 Carlson 126.

25 Rosemary Meyer in Amelia Jones, *Body Art/Performing the Subject* (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1998) 33.

26 Fried 125. This conception of the impact and role of 'theatricality' was championed by many theorists, although perhaps not all as negatively as Fried initially suggested. Many performance theorists saw this characteristic as that which allowed for a revolution in the art scene as a whole through the shattering

of modernist essentialism. As Howard Fox stated: 'Theatricality may be considered that propensity in the visual arts for a work to reveal itself within the mind of the beholder as something other than what it is known empirically to be. This is precisely antithetical to the modern ideal of the wholly manifest, self sufficient object; and theatricality may be the single most pervasive property of postmodern art'. Henry. M. Sayre, *The Object of Performance: The American Avant-Garde since 1970* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1989) 9.

27 Henry Sayre in Steven Connor, *Postmodernist Culture: An Introduction to Theories of the Contemporary* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989) 141.

28 Philip Auslander, *Liveness: Performance in a Mediatized Culture* (London: Routledge, 1999) 18-20.

29 Chantal Pontbriand, 'The Eye Finds No Fixed Point on Which to Rest...', *Modern Drama* 25.1 (1982): 154-163.

30 Connor 138.

31 Josette Feral, 'Performance and Theatricality: The Subject Demystified', Timothy Murray, ed., *Mimesis, Masochism and Mime: The Politics of Theatricality in Contemporary French Thought* (Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P, 1997) 290.

32 Cindy Nemser, 'Subject-Object Body Art', *Arts Magazine* (September/October 1971): 38-42.

33 Feral 296.

34 Jones 35.

35 Jacques Derrida, *Speech and Phenomena and Other Essays on Husserl's Theory of Signs*, David Allison, trans. (Evanston: Northwestern UP, 1976) 57.

36 Jacques Derrida, 'Signature, Event, Context', S. Weber and J. Mehlman, trans., *Limited Inc.* (Evanston: Northwestern UP, 1988) 12.

37 Elin Diamond, *Unmaking Mimesis: Essays on Feminism and Theatre* (London: Routledge, 1997) 151.

38 Refer to Feral, Nemser, and Pontbriand.

39 Philip Auslander, *From Acting to Performance: Essays in Modernism and Postmodernism* (London: Routledge, 1997) 35.

40 Vicki Kirby, *Telling Flesh: The Substance of the Corporeal* (London: Routledge) 61.