

策展緣起

葉子啟

有一年，我車上載著以色列藝術家Tamar Raban和湯皇珍，從台南趕著到高雄豆皮在我策展的「行為愛上詩」活動上發表作品，在高速公路上遇到塞車，時間十分緊迫，大家自我解嘲我們的作品應該叫做〈在路上〉，在觀眾等到不耐煩打電話來問時，我們就可以說「是啊，我們是『在路上』呀！」

「在路上」，在地理上標明一種既已出發尚未抵達的游移不定狀態。人的一生從生到死亦常被指涉是一旅程，那麼我們生活於世不也是「在路上」。而現場行為這種強調**過程**，有時亦會與大眾產生互動的藝術，作品常常處於發展中的狀態，難有定本出現，同一個作品在不同時空下實施，甚至會有產生兩極面貌的可能性，所以行為藝術家面對自己的藝術處於「在路上」的感覺恐怕也很強烈吧！

這幾年我的確是一直「在路上」。關注節能減碳環保議題的吳瑪悒老師，曾在一次展覽座談會上說「也許子啟的行為藝術是比較不消耗能源的，因為不需要什麼物件」，我立刻回以「但我要開車，搭火車，搭飛機去做作品啊！」行為生涯至今的九年間，除了台灣本土，我到過日本，韓國，中國大陸，泰國，菲律賓，緬甸，印尼，美國，以色列，匈牙利，斯洛伐克，波蘭，芬蘭發表作品，與為數眾多的各國行為藝術家進行廣泛的交流。現場行為非得親身到現場不可，不是嗎？所以我和其他行為藝術家一樣，常常都是「在路上」。，雖然不見得是在同一條路

上，但總有縱橫交錯的時刻，在某個十字路口，好比說那個行為藝術節，大家就這麼碰上了。然後在每個人的作品裡窺探出他如今是走在美學/人生路上的哪一點，仍在原地踏步，大躍進，退了幾步，還是左拐右轉了好幾個彎！幾年過去，大家且聚且散，在個別的路上尋求藝術大夢，同時也在共同的一個大方向上，慢慢往前推行。

於是發現，雖說現場行為藝術是前衛且邊緣，且極少學者批評家垂青論述，但浸淫久了，卻也嗅得出其中仍有不同流派走向，發展各異其趣。

此次策展主軸，在於引進近一兩年，愈來愈多藝術家走出戶外進行的 *durational performance*，一種介入/隱身日常公共空間裡的長時行為。另外，未經事先規範排練同時同地發生的集體行為展演也是此次活動的實驗重點。期待藉由新形式行為的演練與國內外藝術家面對面的交流對談，讓國外藝術家一窺當前台灣行為藝術家所思所做，並激發國內藝術家更多元廣泛的創作能量，與提昇作品的境界。

Curator's Words

Yeh Tzu-chi

Geographically, "on the way" refers to a moving/unsettled state before one reaches some destination. One's life is also often looked as a journey. It's also "on the way", isn't it? As an artist who practices an art form that emphasizes the process and interaction with the audience/public, a performance artist is hard to reach a fixed/final version of his performance because sometimes even the same piece might develop to something different when practiced under different times and spaces. It is therefore that he might have a very strong sense of "on the way," too.

In about recent 10 years, many performance artists are always on their ways to perform in different festivals around the world, as well as to communicate with other international artists and the local audiences. They are often on the ways, though not necessarily on the same way. However, they do come across one another sometimes and somewhere. When they see one another's performance, they learn that this artist is doing this and that artist, that; this artist is going to this direction and that artist, another. That's how they come to know that every one of them is pursuing his/her dream of art in this or that way. And thus did they move, if slowly, toward some vague common direction.

As an avant-garde and marginal art form, live performance is comparatively hard to attract critics' or scholars' attention. Consequently, there are not enough articles, research, or reports on it. Perhaps that accounts why people fail to have a clear map of it in their head. However, being a member of international performance art circle,

I've found somehow there are still some different "schools" in this circle, and the fact that artists can develop in very various multiple ways.

In this event, we want to try more outdoor durational performance, to experience the durational that involves and hides itself in the daily public space. For the past few years, we have quite a few indoor performances in Taiwan, but we hardly have outdoor durational. Besides, a **group performance** that many individual performances happen at the same venue in the same time is also what we want to experiment this year. I hope that the practice of these new forms of performance may bring a new perspective to our local artists and audience, in the mean time, the overseas artists may know more about Taiwan, especially Taiwanese performance and artists.

如果不再

葉子啟

I 獵奇之眼

如果不再在街上拉屎，不再把自己關在籠子或房子外長達一年，如果不再以鉤穿刺自己皮膚懸吊半空中，如果不再吃自己孩子的胚胎，如果不再…不再，噫，驚世駭俗，不再搞怪，不再令人作嘔，瞠目結舌，那麼行為還能何以為是？

行為當驚世駭俗？當搞怪？當抗爭？當令人瞠目結舌？這些是行為裡的「政治正確性」嗎？若然，那麼行為領域裡是不是也存有某種霸權了呢？

如果這世上沒了火山爆發，洪氾，地震，土石流…難道就沒有其他可觀之處嗎？

會不會其實再怎麼「溫和」的行為，可能都存有某種洶湧，某種對抗，在某個角落裡。當畢卡索不驚不奇安靜地在畫室裡作畫時，他帶來的是不是繪畫史上的巨大革命，而我的包裹全身，是不是得付出代價：獨自面對自己的密室空間恐懼症…

會不會除了驚駭怪異抗爭洶湧…，行為也可以表現千千百百個別的東西…也許雋永如詩，也許讓人發噱，也許如禪家般苦行修身…就像所有其他藝術類別一樣，行為也可以有無限發展空間與方向，並且有其自身歷史脈絡流變。

之所以，不能只以獵奇之眼來看行為。

II 是藝術不是技術？！

「我是做藝術的。」

「哦，是哪一種藝術？」

「行為藝術，」

????????????????對方臉上佈滿這個符號。

「也可以說是表演藝術。」

「表演…嗯，是戲劇？舞蹈？音樂？…」

這是我常遇到的情況，此外我也常要面對劇場人士的質疑與「失望」：如此之粗糙，不精準，不專業，沒技術…何藝術之有？2008年我到以色列參展時，有30年現場行為經驗的Tamar Raban也提到這一點，原來這是全世界做行為的都要面對的一個似是而非的極端詰問！有趣的是，在同一個活動中，我聽到一位來自中國大陸的行為藝術家的另一極端說法，那是在耶路撒冷，他巧遇一位中國人，在市集裡演奏古箏，觀眾在他面前碗裡投了一些錢，他在我面前酸說：「唉，行為是賺不了錢的，誰叫我們愛的是藝術，而不是技術！」

這表演光譜上的兩極看法說明行為與其他類別的表演藝術（包含劇場）甚或視覺藝術之間的距離有多大！雖然行到光譜中間，行為與其他表演或視覺藝術其實多有交疊演譯。無論如何，行為既前衛又邊緣，論述極少，報章上更常以有色偏頗眼光來報導，所以世人多半不得其門而入，常會以既有的觀看表演/作品慣習來看待評斷行為，自然是緣木求魚，對行為以及行為藝術家不免有失公允。

基於此，特別收錄Marilyn Arsem在台東大學的精采演說《劇場與行為》一篇，以期釐清行為與劇場之同異處。

III 請到現場來

這是一本記錄2009年發生在台灣台北，台東，台南的四場戶外長時現場行為活動，以及高雄一場室內集體現場行為實驗的書，活動名為「在路上：2009阿川國際行為藝術交流展」。

請記住，這是一本記錄，而非活動或是作品本身。

現場行為表演的生命在行為發生的過程當中，當行為結束時，整個作品的生命也跟著告終。在行為現場，藝術家與觀者共同經歷了作品的生與死！所有事後的紀錄：照片，錄像，文章，文件展…都無法百分之百的重現行為發生時的「現場」…也許百分之三十都不到…所以根據事後的紀錄來評斷一個現場行為好不好是十分危險的事。因為好的現場行為作品，拍（照）起來不一定好看，描述起來不一定生動有趣；相對地，拍起來好看，或描述起來奕奕如生的作品，也不一定是一個好的現場行為。推到極點，現場行為表演與事後記錄/口述/展覽甚至可以是完全不同的專業。最可靠的方法還是：請到現場來！

這是一本活動紀錄，但它不只記錄過去，它同時也看向未來，一個新生命：我們可以在藝術家爬梳說明自己作品的文字當中，看到每一位藝術家的創作路徑是如此迴異多彩…可不可能為台灣藝術論述帶來一種清新的視野與語彙，甚至新美學？我們深深期待。

If No More

Yeh Tzu-chi

1. Eyes Looking for the Strange

If you don't shit on the street, cage yourself or stay out of any building as long as one year, kneel and hang yourself in the air, eat your own fetis.... If you don't...well, don't do anything horrible, strange, astonishing, or disgusting, what else can you do with performance art?

Should performance art be horrible, strange, astonishing, or disgusting? Should it fight against somebody or something? Are these the "political correctness" in performance art? If they are, then isn't it referring to an existence of hegemony in this field?

If there were not volcano explosion, flood, earthquake, or mood flood any more, would there be nothing left to see on this planet?

Could it be possible that there is always some sort of turbulence and revolt in some small unnoticed corners? Isn't that Picasso brought a giant revolution in the history of paintings when he painted quietly and unsurprisingly in his studio? And haven't I faced my own claustrophobia when I enveloped my whole body with that giant heavy god-damned black cloth?

Could it be possible that performance art can show hundreds of thousands of other factors than just frightening, astonishment, revolt, anger or turbulence? Could it be otherwise poetic, funny, or full of the spirit of zen, etc..... Just like all the other art categories, performance art can have boundless space and orientation to develop and form its own specific traits of history.

That's why one can't see performance art only with the eyes looking for the strange.

II. It's art, not skill ?!

"I do art."

"Oh... What kind of art?"

"Performance art."

???????????????????? That's the mark full in the face of the inquirer.

"Well, it's a kind of performance."

"Performance? Mmmm. Theatre? Dancing? Or Music?"

That's usually the case I met. I also have to face from time to time the doubt and "disappointments" from the theatre people: so rough, so un-precise, and unskilled.... How can you call this art? Surprisingly, when I joined a performance art event in Israel in 2008, Tamar Raban, who has been doing performance for 30 years, also mentioned this. So this seems to be one of the utmost questions for the performance artists of the whole world to answer! Interestingly enough, in the same event, I heard another extreme statement from a Chinese artist. He came across another Chinese man playing zheng, an old Chinese instrument, in one of the busy streets of Jerusalem. Before the man, there was a bowl with coins inside. In other words, that street musician made money with his art, which never happens to us. I remembered how cynical he was when he said "That's our reward, for we love art, not skills!"

These two opposite perspectives on the spectrum of performance explain how far the distance is between performance art and other categories of performance/art, among which theatre included! It doesn't blur the fact, though, that performance art indeed overlaps with other types of performances and visual arts when coming to the middle of the spectrum. However, perhaps because performance art is always both avant-garde and marginal, there are so little discourses about it and even worse the reports on the newspapers are often sensational slanted. It's no wonder that most people don't know how to see/appreciate the so-called live performance. They often see and judge it with the habit of watching a theatre or a visual art piece. The result is just like what Chinese people would say to catch fish by climbing a tree. It seems quite unfair

to this art form and the artists who devote their life and passion to it.

The Lecture on Theatre and Performance Art by Marilyn Arsem in Taidung University is thus included here to clarify the similarities and differences between theatre and performance art.

III. Please Come to the Scene

This is a documentary of ON THE WAY: 2009 artrend international performance art meeting. It documents durational performances in Taipei, Taidung, and Tainan, together with an indoor group performance in Kaohsiung.

Please remember that this is a documentary, not the event itself or the original works that happened in the event.

Live performance lives in the process of performing/happening. It dies at the very moment that it comes to the end. The artists and the spectators co-experience the life and death of the works on the very scene/spot of the live performance. All the documentaries: photos, videos, writings, exhibitions afterwards, etc. can never fully restore the scene itself, not even to the 30% of it, perhaps. It's therefore very dangerous to judge if a performance is good or bad according to the documentation afterwards, because a good performance does not necessarily look "good" on a photo or sound "good" by a description/narration; and vice versa. We can even say that live performance and documentation/exhibition afterwards may be two different disciplines. The most reliable way would be: please come to the scene!

Yes, this is a catalogue documenting an event of the past, but we hope it also looks toward the future, a new life. By reading what the artists wrote about their own works, one can see how various the routes of creating performance can be. Could it be possible to bring a new perspective and vocabulary, or even a new aesthetic, to Taiwan's art practice, discourse and research? Heartily we hope so.

Lecture on Theater and Performance Art

Marilyn Arsem

Taidung University November 17, 2009

INTRODUCTION

Ni Hao. Thank you for coming. It is a pleasure to be here in Taiwan, and participate in the On the Way Festival, and to have this opportunity to visit Taidung University.

Yeh Tzu -Chi asked me to speak to you today about theater and performance art. I am a performance artist, making work in response to specific sites in different locations around the world. I also teach the theory and practice of performance art to both undergraduate and graduate students at the School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, in a joint program with Tufts University.

I will begin by talking about some of the differences between theater and performance art. Then I will speak about ways in which an audience might look at and think about art action when they watch it. And finally, as an example, I will show a short video of a work by one of the best known performance artists, Hsieh Tehching, of Taiwan.

I think of live performance as a kind of continuum, with traditional theater at one end and performance art or action art at the other. In reality, it is not so pure. Categories are constructed theoretically, but actual work often straddles multiple practices and combines media. Artists don't follow formulas or categories defined by historians, but instead borrow from different art practices when their work warrants it. Nevertheless, it is useful to identify some simple distinctions, in order to consider the differences in the practices.

TRADITIONAL THEATER

I will begin at one end of the spectrum, with the form that is more familiar - traditional theater.

A theater production is most often an interpretation of a script. The script might be a year old, or 100 years old, or a 1000 years old.

Traditional theater generally tells a story. A narrative is played out, often taking place in a different time and location.

Even if many years are covered in the play, the time is condensed so that the play lasts only a few hours at most.

The work is often larger than life, monumental, heroic.

A group of actors and designers work for a director, who is in charge of the *conception of the production*. It is a vertical hierarchical power structure, and the director has the final authority on all decisions.

The theater company's task is to prepare a production for the public, interpreting the text. The challenge is to do it skillfully.

They rehearse the play, developing their interpretation, seeking to be able to duplicate and continue to repeat their best rehearsal.

The actors are performing characters, using language and gesture to tell the story. A set is designed and constructed, and materials are often made to resemble the real world.

Tea stands in for whiskey, and the actors pretend to be drunk. Mashed potatoes stand in for ice cream, and the actors behave as if it were cold. Forms made with paper maché stand in for rocks, and the performers act as if they were very heavy, being careful not to lean on them too hard.

The performance is created for an audience, who experience the play sitting in the dark, looking up at the stage that is elevated and in the light.

The play appears to be taking place in a different time and location, and the viewers are not acknowledged. The 'fourth wall' is maintained.

Generally the time is structured in scenes, with breaks in between, so that the story

can move through more time than the 2 or 3 hours of the event.

The beginning and end of the play is clearly delineated. The area where the audience sits becomes dark when the play begins. Often there is a curtain covering the stage that opens at the beginning of the play, and closes at the end. And when it is over, the lights are turned on again in the auditorium where the audience is seated.

Audiences often know the text, and are watching to see how the company performs the work. They come to see actors who are skilled at taking on a character, accent, language, emotion of a fictional person and do it convincingly.

They come to hear and see the story, to be moved, and to be entertained.

ACTION ART

The kind of work that you will see in On the Way Festival is at the other end of the spectrum. It has different names in different languages, such as Performance Art or Behavior Art, or Action Art.

Action art is generally created and performed by an individual person, and can be thought of as a practice of visual art.

There is no director, and no production crew.

The audience is often integrated into the work in some way.

The artist creates an action, working with materials, with time and with space, using her or his own body, in order to examine a question, to learn something, or to experiment with a process. There is no narrative or story, though there might be an unfolding sequence of actions.

The action can be thought of as an image, and viewed as one would view sculpture or painting. Viewers bring to their interpretation their own agendas and experiences, and there is no single meaning.

An action might be invented only a month, a week or a few minutes before it is performed. Or it could be part of an ongoing inquiry on the part of the artist.

It might be made in response to a physical location, a political situation or a personal concern of the artist.

Rather than creating an object in the privacy of the studio, the artist instead reveals the process of creation as the work itself.

Performance art occurs in the actual time and place that it is happening. It is here, and now.

The artist is only her or himself in the work.

It operates on the same scale as real life. It is intimate. It is another human being doing something. It is a moment in real life that is framed.

The space for performance is not always clearly defined in terms of where the action will be and where an audience should be. There is generally no separation between the viewers and the performer. Everyone is on the same level.

The artist uses real materials, spends real time, and there is a real physical impact made by the action. Materials are transformed, the place might be transformed, and the artist is often changed by the act of doing the action.

If there is a knife in a performance, you can assume it is sharp and will be used. And if the artist cuts him or herself, it is real blood and real pain is felt. If the artist is drinking whiskey, it is real, and the artist is becoming increasingly inebriated the more that is consumed. If the artist vomits, it is real. If the artist is using ice, it is already melting, and the temperature of the room can affect the length of the performance.

The work is not rehearsed, though an artist might test the materials in advance in order to understand how they operate. There is no 'correct' way to execute the action. How it is done, and the state of mind of the artist while doing it, is a result of the conditions of the present moment.

In that respect, random events in the immediate surroundings can impact the execution of the work. The artist is free to make changes and adjust the work in response to the immediate situation. Anything can happen.

Action Art can last one minute, one hour, one day, a week, a year, a lifetime, or longer. The artist determines the physical parameters and the timeframe of the work.

THE AUDIENCE'S ROLE

What is the role of the viewer or audience in this kind of work?

An audience is not coming to see the interpretation of a text, or to hear a story. They are coming to see another person - an artist - do something. They are curious to see what will happen. It is an opportunity to see the world through someone else's eyes and actions.

Often, as audience, you are being asked to be a witness. This is especially the case if an artist is doing something that is challenging to him or herself. Having someone there as a witness is a kind of safety net, and serves to verify that it really happened.

Sometime an artist asks the audience to help with the action. And sometimes the artist expects the audience to look at the work as if it were sculpture, or an installation.

How do you know what is expected of you as the audience? Generally there is no physical separation between you and the artist. How do you determine what your role is in the work? It is not always clear where or how you should watch the action. Can you come close to it? Is it safer to stay at a distance? What does the artist expect of you? Sometimes an artist will make it clear what is expected of you, but not always.

What do you expect of the artist?

What do you want from art?

These are some of the questions that can arise when seeing performance art.

HSIEH TEHCHING

I want to show you the work of an artist who expanded my understanding of what an art action might be.

Hsieh Tehching came to New York City in the 1970s, and made a series of year-long performances. From 1980 to 1981 he made the Time Clock Piece.

During that year, for 366 days, he punched a time clock and took a photo of himself every hour on the hour. He did that action 8784 times. This film is made of each of the photos that he took every hour.

He couldn't travel further than 29 minutes away, because he had to be back in time to punch the clock and take the picture. And he could never sleep more than 59 minutes at one time.

This is a work that profoundly reminds me that time is always passing, whether we pay attention to it or not. How we use that time is our choice, but always there is less and less of it.

This piece also operates conceptually. Even though I did not actually see him do it, I can imagine the task of taking my picture in my studio every hour, every day and every night for a year.

WHY MAKE PERFORMANCE ART

Why do artists make performances?

It is an opportunity to step outside of daily routine, to experience living in the world in new ways.

It is a chance to demonstrate something that one understands, to make an observation or to share a feeling.

It is also an opportunity to allow oneself to experience something that is physically or psychologically challenging.

It demands that one fully engage in the moment and experience a period of time with heightened awareness and heightened senses.

It is also an art form that keeps one humble.

It is a reminder that we are limited finally by our own bodies and our short time on earth.

We are not making these works for the future, but for the people who are with us now. It is about a moment of communication, a sharing of the world as we know it and as we imagine it.