

A Performance Affair

Vanderborght
Building, Brussels

During
Brussels
Gallery Weekend

The Second Edition: *re:production*

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It's the Art Form of the Moment (but It's a Hard Sell)

Performance art has never been so popular. But at a fair devoted to it in Brussels, some collectors wondered exactly what they were buying.



David Rickard performing "Exhaust" in the window of the Vanderborcht Building in Brussels as part of A Performance Affair. Colin DeRosier for The New York Times

By Scott Reyburn

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BRUSSELS — The man in the respirator mask sits in the window, impassive on his chair, breathing as evenly as he can into the aluminum foil balloon he cradles on his knees. After six hours he has filled more than 20 of them, piling them up behind him like a cloud.

"In the end they'll be about 100," said Will Lunn, the director of the London-based Copperfield gallery, explaining "Exhaust," a marathon performance piece by the British conceptual artist David Rickard, whom he represents. Over 24 hours, Mr. Rickard turns the air a human being requires for one day into an enormous shimmering sculpture.

First seen at the Goethe-Institut in London in 2008, this demanding work (the artist isn't allowed to eat or drink, and the carbon dioxide levels in his blood must be regularly checked) was the

storefront display at the second annual edition of [A Performance Affair](#), a fair exclusively devoted to the sale of performance art.

The four-day fair, which finished Sunday, occupied two floors of the Vanderborgh Building, an Art Deco former department store, and brought together more than 30 artists hoping to attract the attention of Belgium's famously discerning and risk-taking [contemporary art collectors](#).

"Eight years ago, we'd just sell limited-edition photographs of the performance," Mr. Lunn said. "At this fair you can acquire the performance."

A one-off enactment of "Exhaust," complete with documentation and the performance's residue of balloons and breathing equipment, is priced at 10,000 euros, about \$11,000, he said.



The Canadian artist Evann Siebens at the fair. Her performances draw on the language of classical dance. Colin Delfosse for The New York Times

Performance is the medium of the moment in the art world. In May, Lithuania's ecologically aware indoor beach opera, "Sun & Sea (Marina)," [won the Golden Lion award at the Venice Biennale](#), making it the second performance in a row to win the top prize for a national pavilion.

The previous edition's winner, Anne Imhof, who represented Germany, staged a performance at [Tate Modern](#) in London in March. Tate has 17 performances in its collection, with "several more currently in the process of being acquired," said Duncan Holden, the head of the galleries' press and communications department.

But while museums have been embracing performance art, the investment-minded commercial art world has been slower to get on board. There is one obvious reason.

“It’s ephemeral,” said Will Kerr, a co-founder of the nonprofit A Performance Affair. “You see performance all over the place,” he said, but in the market it is the “weakest link.”

“Dealers just use performance as a hook to sell the work of other artists,” Mr. Kerr said. “It’s seen as entertainment. Take an Instagram pic, then walk away. The model is not mature.”

Sotheby’s, Christie’s and Phillips have yet to sell a single live performance artwork, according to the auction houses’ press offices. They, and potential buyers of such pieces, understandably ask themselves: What, exactly, is being sold?

In an effort to standardize the answer to that question, the A.P.A. fair, in collaboration with Chantal Pontbriand, a Montreal-based curator and writer, has drafted a protocol that addresses issues such as a performance’s duration, how it can be recreated and what materials are left with the owner once it is over.

The organizers hope to devise a protocol that will be widely adopted by artists and galleries. Without a certificate clarifying such practical details and their legal ramifications, performance art will remain a hard sell — and re-sell.

“The acquisition of a real performance is something new,” said Frédéric de Goldschmidt, a Brussels-based collector who is a member of the A.P.A. selection committee. “You buy something immaterial.”



“Communication Captures,” a work by Stella Geppert, being performed at A Performance Affair. Colin Dillies for The New York Times



Ariane Loze presenting "The Banquet" during the fair. Collis Delfosse for The New York Times



A set of limited-edition scripts used in the performance cost €495. Collis Delfosse for The New York Times

In an interview, Mr. de Goldschmidt recalled that in 2012 he paid about €2,500 for a performance by the French artist Philippe Parreno. Mr. Parreno's piece, titled "Transubstantiation" and involving the artist preparing some of his deceased mother's secret recipes, was never activated.

Mr. de Goldschmidt asked Phillips if it might auction the performance, but the piece lacked any documents.

"There was no duration, no practical details. There were a lot of ambiguities," said Mr. de Goldschmidt, who in the end kept the piece.

In the case of "The Banquet," a new performance by Ariane Loze, a young Brussels-based artist, a buyer does at least acquire a set of 12 printed scripts. Available in four European languages, each contains the lines from a 2016 video of an uptight middle-class dinner party in which Ms. Loze plays a dozen characters.

Bon mots such as "We all have to find a way of defining ourselves" and "Take time to be lonely and enjoy it" can then be woven into a collector's dinner party. The limited-edition scripts cost €495 per set.

Evann Siebens, a Vancouver-based former ballet dancer, on the other hand, has created an archive of gestures that references the history of performance art from Allan Kaprow through Gilbert & George to Marina Abramovic.

For €1,000, Ms. Siebens will recreate a gesture photographically and as a performance, which will then be documented on video and preserved on a memory stick in a presentation box. In this case, the buyer gets plenty of material for the money.

Without established performance stars like Ms. Abramovic or Tino Sehgal, or an established market, sales were always going to be a rarity. But the Brussels-based collector Tobias Arndt said he was interested in buying a version of Ms. Loze's "The Banquet."

For Mr. Arndt, the market for performance art will continue to be limited. But it will, in his view, appeal to collectors as a relatively inexpensive way to be part of today's "experience" art economy.



In Ofri Cnaani's work at A Performance Affair, she made sounds with props into a microphone.
Colin DeFosse for The New York Times

For collectors, performance is "the next step," Mr. Arndt said.

"It has the potential to be an event," he added. "Performance is a direct aesthetic experience, and then you can share it on social media. It's not just about decorating your house with good art. It's also about doing crazy things on Instagram."

In the street outside the Vanderborcht Building, John Yee, a passing business operations manager from San Francisco, was mesmerized by the sight of Mr. Rickard breathing into his latest foil balloon. It was 9.30 p.m. by that time, and the artist had inflated more than 40 of them.

"I don't know if I understand it, but it's cool," Mr. Yee said, adding, "It feels very European."

Interest piqued, he then walked into the fair.

A version of this article appears in print on Sept. 18, 2019, Section C, Page 7 of the New York edition with the headline: One Work Here Really Is Full of Hot Air. Order Reprints | Today's Paper | Subscribe

Market

Would You Buy a Performance? A New Brussels Fair Tries to Make Art's Most Elusive Medium Appealing to Collectors

A Performance Affair is on view in Brussels this weekend.

Kate Brown, September 6, 2019



Alexandra Davenport, *Circuit Training*. © Ellie Smith.

Would you like to own an artwork in which a woman plays with assorted objects laid out on a table? Or perhaps you might be interested in acquiring an industrial fan that delicately balances a balloon in mid-air?

These are among the wares on offer at A Performance Affair, a young art fair in Brussels dedicated to performance art. The medium has long been a tough sell—and to the uninitiated, it can sometimes seem like an art-world parody. But the fair's founders, Liv Vaisberg and Will Kerr, are hoping to help build a sustainable market around the genre.

The small event opened its second edition in Brussels on Thursday (it runs through Sunday, September 8), coinciding with Brussels Gallery Weekend. In its sophomore year, the fair has expanded and tweaked its structure in an effort to better define what, exactly, is for sale; how you can buy it; and under what terms you can show it.

The 30 participants (up from 23 last year) are exhibiting by way of a timed schedule, as opposed to in more traditional booths. In the lobby area, a faux-analog panel referencing an airport departures screen tells visitors where and when performances are happening, and whether each on is "on time." (Ongoing performances are "en route.")

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“It is the only way for collectors to feel that they actually acquire more than an idea or a gesture that disappears as it is created—something that they can keep and transmit to others,” says founding committee member and prominent Belgian collector Frédéric de Goldschmidt.

Performance Grows

Performance has never had much of a market. But it has been slowly gaining traction and visibility in recent years. At this year’s Venice Biennale, curator Ralph Rugoff established a new performance program that invited artists to take up temporary residence on a small stage or meandering the graveled path of the Giardini grounds.



Evann Siebens. Platforms Project performance, Athens, Greece, May 2019 © Alexandra Masmanidi.

On the commercial side, Pace recently announced the hiring of Mark Beasley, a performance art curator formerly at the Hirshhorn Museum, leading to speculation that the gallery will enhance its live art programming. (There is a rising need, Beasley said recently, for “an unmediated encounter that isn’t experienced through a filter or a screen.”)

By now, several prominent fairs already include some performance component, though it tends to be a supplemental program rather than the main event. While waiting in line for coffee in Frieze’s big white tent in London last year, for example, you might have witnessed an opera singer suddenly begin belting out words as a part of a work by Laure Prouvost from the fair’s Live program.

At Independent’s Brussels edition last year, meanwhile, curator Vincent Honoré made live art a much more central part of the event with a program of live events, performances, and talks held in the atrium of the Vanderborgh building, as sales orbited them. But it remains to be seen whether a market event that puts performance at the forefront can be sustainable. Independent Brussels announced that it would not continue after this most recent edition.

Will People Buy It?

There is an important distinction between wildly popular art *experiences*—like Random International's Rain Room, or Yayoi Kusama's Infinity Room (which could conceivably make money from ticket sales rather than a more transitional purchase)—and quieter art performances like those in Venice and at Independent and A Performance Affair, which don't translate particularly well to Instagram and still hold relatively niche appeal. For these live artworks, sales remain the most viable avenue for support. And until a new method is found, an art fair feels like the most realistic way to build the market.



Elena Bajo (Galeria García/Annex 14). Photo: Jeroen Verrecht.

"It's essential to have initiatives to signal that this is an important format," says Amsterdam-based art dealer and fair committee member Ellen de Bruijne, who has dealt performance art for the past two decades. "I have worked hard to bring the performance artist into the gallery situation. I became an expert in making a performance salable without minimizing it, by trying to find the 'spine' of the performance and translating that into a certificate or script, different kinds of things that you can hand over."

This year, de Bruijne is showing a performance by Amsterdam-based artist Maria Pask: an instructive dance performance called *I can't bend that far* that features three performers mirroring accelerating dance moves over a '90s club track. It's available for €6,500.

The new protocol put in place by the fair ensures that dealers can answer any questions that might arise about the transaction. (Such questions might include: Will the collector or the artist be tasked with hiring performers for future activations? Are the costumes included?) Guidance like this makes acquiring performance feel less like a blind act of patronage and more like a transaction.

"I have only acquired two immaterial works so far, and I have not managed yet to get them performed," Frédéric de Goldschmidt said. "This could have been different indeed with better defined protocols."

What Are You Buying?

Walking around the fair's two-floor space, which has been cordoned off into sections to host individual works, unactivated performances read as a bit confusing—their props cannot stand alone. Portuguese artist Diogo Pimentão's promising performative drawing with graphite, scheduled for today, consisted on Thursday of some paper on the ground and chairs, waiting to be used.

Similarly, Ofri Cnaani's ASMR performance—in which the artist makes sound with props into a microphone—is only intended for one person at a time, leaving the rest of us awkwardly watching, but not experiencing the work fully. When the performance is over, a large table of stuff, including a handheld vacuum cleaner, a ball of twine, and a crucifix, might leave a latecomer guessing as to what is supposed to be going on.

The props associated with unactivated performances, however confusing they might look, may be the essential objects for sale. While the performance matter lying around may fall flat to the average fairgoer, de Bruijne says that the fair has still managed to attract a strong contingent of Belgian curators and collectors. Last year, she placed a work by Jeremiah Day into an institutional show at Museum M in Leuven. Although no dealers immediately reported sales on the first day of this year's edition, many note that performance purchases are often the result of a longer conversation that begins at the fair.

To be sure, there is no strong signal here that a format like this could become a big, flashy new mainstream. But that may be okay for its purposes. "Financial success always starts with spreading a rumor," de Bruijne says.

To be sure, there is no strong signal here that a format like this could become a big, flashy new mainstream. But that may be okay for its purposes. "Financial success always starts with spreading a rumor," de Bruijne says.

As part of Brussels Gallery Weekend, A Performance Affair is on view at the Vanderborcht Building until September 8, 2019. Access is free to the public.

Artlaw

Ways of Working

Collecting Performance Art

A unique art fair exclusively showcasing performance art was held for 72 hours in September 2019 during the Brussels Gallery Weekend. Organised and curated by A Performance Affair (APA), a recently established not-for-profit-share entity, the event was called 're:production'. Performance works by over 30 artists, both emerging and established, took place over 2,000sqm of space on two of five floors of the prestigious Vanderborcht Building in the centre of Brussels.

The uniqueness of APA lies not only in its harvesting and curating of new and historical performance works in one venue, but also in its ground-breaking decision to do so as an art fair marketing works for acquisition by collectors. APA's professed key purpose is decidedly not to be 'another art fair, but [to be] a flexible stage geared towards stimulating the acquisition of performance art while finding solutions for its development and sustainability'.

APA's 're:production' event also included many open discussions of 'key elements necessary to perform, transcribe, document, transfer ownership and restage a performance'. Key issues included what is collectable matter of a performance; how do the protocols, scenarios, recordings or artefacts relate; how can video or other means of representation benefit it; whether any residue (objects, video documentation and so on) resulting from the performance forms part of a sale; whether an acquired work can be re-sold in the secondary market, or be inherited by heirs or be donated; whether a work dies when the artist-performer dies or whether the work can be re-staged post-mortem.

Private collectors and public-facing institutions have traditionally acquired material objects, and physical artwork has always been and remains the *sine qua non* of the secondary art market, but the dematerialisation of contemporary art activity has increased significantly in recent times, and has produced a unique range of performance-related artistic practices. It is therefore of paramount importance for everyone involved in dealing with performance-related works to understand and accept that each work will ideally have its own unique internal characteristics and external manifestations, and will ideally require its own unique legal and business arrangements constructed and implemented for its acquisition.

Moreover, key challenges arise on an increasingly international scale for artists seeking legal and business frameworks to support their performance-related work: its creation, performance, dissemination, communication, recognition, acquisition and/or sale and resale. Similar challenges arise for collectors/purchasers, curators and facilitators/producers, art-market traders, and professional advisers and consultants. A complicating factor for all concerned is that virtually any action performed by an artist or by others instructed by an artist can be termed an artistic performance - including creating and delegating 'performative' instructions to others to perform in the absence of the artist (such as Tino Sehgal's 'constructed situations').

There are two key legal and business disciplines that can offer possible ways forward for performance artists and others dealing with performance-related work - if used creatively to serve and meet their needs: contract



Emily Perry, *Woman with Salad*, 2016-,
Performance Affairs, Brussels

and intellectual property. Contracts of acquisition can suit works manifest as, say, instructions for performance to ensure that the artist's instructions and conditions for a work's performance are respected and adhered to, and that only those contractually authorised to perform the work may do so. Ideally, such contracts work best when they are in a written agreement signed by all concerned parties. However, some artists rely on verbal agreements or so-called 'handshakes' to initially perform and agree - for a fee - to re-perform their work periodically (while alive and well enough to do so). Additional contractual terms and conditions of sale might include that ownership is transferred uniquely to that collector, meaning that the artist undertakes not to sell the work to other collectors, or is tied to a specific one-off exhibition.

Intellectual property laws are many and various, and for performance-related works two are especially important. Performer's rights are akin to copyright, and are automatically given by most countries to their citizen-performers. The aim of these laws is to protect performers of all kinds, including performance artists, against audiovisual recordings being made of their activities without their prior written permission. In many countries the unauthorised making of AV recordings may be criminal offences punishable with fines/imprisonment. In other words, performers of works (who might not be, but usually are, also the creators/authors/artists) automatically acquire 'performers rights' via international IP laws to authorise live recording of their performance (so-called non-property rights), and to make and distribute, rent and loan copies of such recordings (so-called property rights).

Performers' rights generally last for at least 50 years from public release of the audiovisual recording. It is normal practice for professional performers in conventional art forms (music, dance, film, theatre) to give

The second edition: re:production



Diogo Pimentã, *Inter/Section*, 2019, Performance Affairs, Brussels

prior authorisation for live recordings of their performances through written contracts with would-be producers and/or merchandisers of AV recordings. In this way performers and industry professionals negotiate and agree the nature and content of: the recording itself, any performer's fee and the performer's share of economic rewards (royalties) that may be earned by future commercial showings or broadcasts or other commercial communication of those recordings. Performance-related artists could and ideally should do likewise, but, as APA has justifiably said, 'few artists are able to draw any sustainable revenues from this practice'.

Copyright laws operate to protect authors of works against unauthorised exploitation of their original

work: most countries automatically give their citizen-creators/authors of performance works (who might not be, but usually are, also the performers) rights to prevent: unauthorised re-enactment by others of all or a substantial part of their work; and likewise unauthorised recording, distribution, public performance and public communication. Such rights endure for the artist's life plus at least 50 years post-mortem (70 in EEA and the US). Given the often open-ended and challenging nature of performance-related art, art lawyers dealing with such work should ideally have a sound understanding of its nature and intent in order to enable them to make creative legal analysis of it, then to determine how international copyright laws would classify performance-related work into one or more recognised legal cultural forms giving such forms copyright protection. In this way the whole of a performance may be copyright-protected via its constituent elements as music, literature, film, choreography, dramatic work or, even still, art and design.

Although many artists are against allowing any recording of their performances, it is often beneficial for the artist to arrange for audiovisual recording to be made under their own arrangements and control so that the whole work is copyright-recorded as a film, which is copyright-owned by the one person who is the artist/producer/director/performer. And increasingly collectors are interested in acquiring such recordings - especially if they are in a unique or limited edition.

Henry Lydiate is an art lawyer and adviser to www.artquest.org.uk.

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1 Oct 2019

REPORT

How the Hell Do You Collect Performance Art?

“How do you value a performance-based work?” asks Alice Bucknell, as she examines the rising trend for live programmes at fairs, biennales and beyond, and speaks with this year’s curator of DRAF’s renowned Evening of Performances.



Hannah Perry, Gush, Towner Art Gallery, Eastbourne, 2018. Courtesy of the artist

Earlier this month, a converted art deco department store in Brussels opened its doors to the same cohort of well-heeled collectors and eagle-eyed curators found prowling the booths at Art Basel and Frieze. While a man in the window blew up an aluminium balloon and two women in white jumpsuits enacted a cultish mirrored dance, an airport departure board in the lobby informed visitors which performances were happening where throughout the two-storey building. Easily mistaken for an art world parody, A Performance Affair is the worlds first fair dedicated exclusively to performance—and it signposts a growing demand to put contemporary art’s most elusive medium to the market.

But the road to a sustainable market model is peppered with tricky technical questions and potential lawsuits. How do you value a performance-based work? What, exactly, are collectors buying? Must a work come with props, documentation or (in the Tino Seghal method) as a set of instructions, bought and sold as a concept alone? How many times can it be performed upon acquisition, and in what context? What happens when the collector or artist dies? Is re-selling allowed?



Haroon Mirza and Jack Jelfs performing, *Last Dance: The Wave Epoch*, by Haroon Mirza, Jack Jelfs with Elijah and GAIKA. Commissioned by Lighthouse for Brighton Festival 2018. Photo by Xav Clarke

It's something of a paradox for the art world's hottest medium. Even as performance becomes an increasingly popular feature in institutional exhibitions and fairs—the Venice Biennale debuted a dedicated programme this year—the fine print of its sale, and its place in such a ruthlessly commercial ecosystem as the art fair, remains uncertain.

“To programme performance for an art fair is to navigate the event economy,” says Louise O’Kelly, founder of the London-based annual performance art festival Block Universe, and guest curator for this year’s DRAF Evening of Performances. “It’s a great way to gather people, to create excitement and hype. But for collectors at a fair like Frieze, these disruptive performances are an inconsequential annoyance—a distraction—which provokes the interesting question, for whom it’s intended.”



Marijke de Roover, FEEL ESTATE (properties of time/house your day going?), 2018. Performance HISK, Ghent, Belgium. Courtesy the artist. Photo by Mark Pozlep

Over the past four iterations of Block Universe, O’Kelly has done much to raise the profile of emerging performance artists without entering into the restrictive profit-driven format of commercial art fairs. As the inaugural guest curator of DRAF’s eleventh annual one-night-only performance event, which coincides with Frieze week, she’s selected a diverse cohort of six artists and collectives born from the seventies to the mid-nineties. The connecting thread amongst the work on show is a shared interest in the transgressive history of this year’s venue, Ministry of Sound—a nightclub that has stringently fought off the redevelopment epidemic tearing down much of the built history of Elephant & Castle.

“O’Kelly welcomes in the new performance vanguard with new commissions by artists whose work largely explores identity politics and issues of race, gender and sexuality”

“One cannot talk about performance art without discussing its spatial context,” explains O’Kelly. Citing the subversive history of the music venue in nineties England, she notes club culture’s enduring legacy and social significance in a city as expensive and crowded as London—not least with the Brexit date looming on the horizon. “Within the current political context in the UK it seemed fitting to pay tribute to this venue and all it has done to serve as a safe space for marginalized voices.”

Tracing back the interconnection of subversive politics and party culture to late seventies and eighties music movements including punk and the new romantics, O’Kelly’s curation of this year’s Evening of Performances reveals a deep understanding of the link between then and now—and what has changed. Harnessing the historical role of the nightclub as a transgressive space offering both freedom of expression and collective experience, O’Kelly welcomes in the new performance vanguard with new commissions by artists whose work largely explores identity politics and issues of race, gender and sexuality.



FlucT at Zabłudowicz Collection. Photo by Tim Bowditch

From the spoken word poetry of artist and activist Kai-Isaiah Jamal, which intimately navigates the precarity of the trans black experience, to the gripping performances of US-based FlucT duo, which viscerally examine power relationships played out through the body, the cohort lining up DRAF’s eleventh edition are emblematic of a new era of performance art wherein queering experience and self-reflexivity conjure powerful shared experience.

O’Kelly has anchored the event with a few artists who “have a proven track record”—including Haroon Mirza, the British sound and light artist who will also be playing Elephant’s ten-year anniversary party this week; Hannah Perry, who previously DJed sets at Block Universe; and Jimmy Robert, a Guadeloupean artist whose sociopolitical work has not yet seen much attention in the UK. “For the younger voices, being represented at an event like this makes a huge difference in their career,” explains O’Kelly.

“Many galleries continue to shy away from bringing performance to the booth”

Unbound by cumbersome installations or static materiality inherent to traditional media, performance is a sticky shapeshifter. It readily adapts to and moulds itself around the present; it is responsive and also generative. But in holding a mirror up to today, contemporary performance pushes past the critical issues it raises to create an alternative future for the present.



Jimmy Robert, *Metallica*, 2018. Garage Rotterdam, “Brandstof on location” performance, Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen. Photo: Florian Braakman. Courtesy of the artist, Tanya Leighton, Berlin and Stigter van Doesburg, Amsterdam.

“The new face of performance can be tracked to a few things,” argues O’Kelly. “Artists are increasingly working across mediums in a less closed off way; moreover, the emergent generation of performance artists are representative of a broader social scale, whose work is concerned with gender fluidity and self-representation—the question of how you present yourself to the world.”

The teleportational and self-reflective capacities of contemporary performance make it seem like a well poised saviour from the capitalist feeding frenzy of the art fair. Surely a feather-ruffling “art experience” that spooks heavy-pocketed collectors out of their Balenciaga suits would sit well in the era of the museum that’s desperate to appear woke, and appease an art fair keen on its geotags. And the cash cow of the art fair does seem, however sluggishly, to be making space for such interventions.



Alex Baczynski-Jenkins, Frieze Artist Award, Frieze London 2018. Photo by Linda Ny Lind. Courtesy of Linda Ny Lind/Frieze.

Last year, in addition to awarding the Frieze Artist Award to a performance work for the first time, the fair also hosted a provocative piece by Liz Glinn that attempted to track the live-time pace of sales at the fair via dancers' choreography. But a trojan horse-like critique of the art world can only go so far—often, it is the fair or institution that benefits from the atmospheric excitement and rakes in points for the work on show. Other times, poor sound checks and bad scheduling all too brutally reveal the fair's organizers couldn't give a shit. In 2017, Frieze's Projects section gave the floor to SPIT!—a radical queer art collective working in spoken word—to debut five new manifestos.

But concerns over disrupting the ambience of the fair meant the performers weren't given microphones; the cries for social revolution dispersed amid the clatter of stilettos and sale-happy pops of champagne. "There's something incredibly ironic about giving a platform to these groups at the fair, but literally preventing them from actually being heard," reflects O'Kelly.

Unsure how to market a performance-based work and doubtful on its return value amid riotously expensive fair fees, many galleries continue to shy away from bringing performance to the booth. Others cite the conceptual density inherent to much performance work as a hard sell—it's missing the (not so) cheap thrill of a satisfyingly splodgy maximalist painting. As a hard-hitting spoken word poem doesn't (yet) trigger the same share counts as the shouty joy of pseudo-poetic neon text art—at least among the current clientele—it's enough to think that a satellite performance festival in a different venue is a mutually beneficial separation.



Liz Glynn, Paula Cooper, Live, Frieze London 2018. Photo by Linda Nylind. Courtesy of Linda Nylind/Frieze.

Performance-exclusive art fairs like A Performance Affair demonstrate a keen interest in reconfiguring the ways in which the form is exhibited to collectors, which comes at the weighty risk of standardizing its affect and bleeding it dry of the raw impact that makes performance so priceless. It's also up to us to lane check our expectations for fairs, as commercial spectacles that will ultimately always follow the money over punchy new work, and to support the alternative events that are representing this new wave of performance well. "Showcasing performance at fairs is a great way to raise the artists' profile, or for some galleries to show love to a performance artist they represent," says O'Kelly, "But at the end of the day, everyone's there to turn a profit."



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What am I actually buying? Performance art-only fair in Brussels faces challenge of materiality

A Performance Affair introduces new protocol to specify what is on offer and its secondary market development

[GARETH HARRIS](#)

29th August 2019 12:19 BST



Maria Pask's Routine #2 - La Bouche, Be my Lover from the performance I can't bend that far (2017-ongoing)

Courtesy of the artist and Ellen de Bruijne Projects

The second edition: re:production

The organisers of A Performance Affair, a fair dedicated exclusively to performance art due to take place in Brussels next month (5-8 September), say that the “discipline is still struggling to find its place in the market” despite its growing popularity at both fairs and cultural institutions. The second edition of the fair, entitled *re:production*, will take place over two floors of the Vanderborcht Building in the centre of the city during Brussels Gallery Weekend. More than 30 participants will feature including Christian Jankowski (Lisson Gallery), Claudia Comte (Gladstone Gallery) and Maria Pask (Ellen de Bruijne Projects).

In a bid to introduce more rigour, both she and co-founder Will Kerr have asked all participating galleries to fill in a “protocol” form, which includes questions such as “Can the performance be reactivated by the institution or collector who acquires it? If so, how?” and “Is there any residue (objects, video documentation, etc.) resulting from the performance that are part of the sale?”

A selection committee made up of eight members including the French artist Orlan and Aaron Cezar, the founding director of London’s Delfina Foundation, helped select the works. “Some galleries approached us, some dealers were approached by people on the committee,” Vaisberg says. There is no charge per square foot for stands—the traditional costing system used by most other fairs—but a set fee for so-called “platforms” (floor space).



Lieven Segers's *We Document Art* in the exhibition *Hoera we leven nog, Hoera wel even nog* (2018) at Base-Alpha Gallery in Antwerp
 Courtesy of Base-Alpha Gallery

The Belgian artist Lieven Segers will show a “performative installation”, says Bart Vanderbiesen of Base-Alpha Gallery in Antwerp. “The performance *Help* is a rather simple action of a manual inflation of a big white balloon (60cm wide). The letters H-E-L-P are written on the balloon, which is placed above a large rotating fan, after it’s inflated.”

He adds: “When someone purchases it, it comes with a lifetime engagement that the artist is willing to re-install the work once a year on a chosen moment. It can be intimate—for the collector himself—or for instance at a birthday party or a dinner.” The price is €3,500 though there may be extra transport costs.

Asked if the work could be sold on the secondary market, Vanderbiesen says: “The re-installment ends when Lieven or the buyer dies. But I guess they can resell it if they want to.”

The Welsh artist Maria Pask, represented by Amsterdam-based Ellen de Bruijne Projects, will show *I can't bend that far* (2017-ongoing), a piece executed by three performers who gyrate to 1990s dance tracks, following instructions on a video. The price is €6,500, and includes the video, certificate, contract and manual, but excludes the equipment for video, sound and the performers.

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Kengo Kuma signe un nouveau musée

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The second edition: re:production

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FOIRES

Peut-on acheter et vendre une performance ?



Photo: Alejandra Marmant.

Evann Siebens,
Platforms Project,

performance à Athènes, Grèce,
en mai 2019. Présentée
sur la foire par Wil Aballe
Art Projects.

« Une forte présence de performances qui intègrent des gestes chorégraphiés, se rapprochant de la danse, avec une dimension très physique. »

Frédéric de Goldschmidt,
collectionneur

La foire A Performance Affair, qui s'est tenue pour la deuxième fois à Bruxelles du 5 au 8 septembre, organisée par Liv Vaisberg et Will Kerr, serait-elle en train de définir un modèle pour le secteur marchand ?

Par Pedro Morais

Il ne s'agit pas seulement de l'audace du projet – proposer des performances à l'acquisition –, mais aussi de la manière d'envisager le rôle des foires dans un débat plus large sur la rémunération des artistes, la durabilité des carrières professionnelles, la sustentabilité de l'écosystème de l'art et des nouvelles économies de production des œuvres. La foire établit le constat que « rares sont les artistes qui peuvent tirer un revenu » de ces œuvres, et cherche à « faire évoluer les perspectives, les consciences, engager une réflexion et stimuler l'acquisition d'œuvres performatives ». En intégrant un département juridique, elle cherche à définir des protocoles réunissant les conditions pour la vente et la réactivation des performances, résonnant avec le titre de cette édition, « Re:production ».

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« Quels sont les statuts des accessoires et artefacts utilisés ? De quelle manière peut-on employer la vidéo ? », interrogent les organisateurs. Ayant lieu pendant le Brussels Gallery Weekend, la foire compte sur un soutien actif du comité de sélection – Orlan, Adam Budak (National Gallery, Prague), la galeriste Ellen de Bruijne (Amsterdam), Aaron Cezar (Fondation Delfina, Londres), la critique Chantal Pontbriand (Montréal) ou Frédéric de Goldschmidt. Ce dernier, qui compte parmi les collectionneurs les plus engagés sur les formes innovantes, évoque une forte présence de performances « qui intègrent des gestes chorégraphiés, se rapprochant de la danse, avec une dimension très physique : que ce soit l'épreuve d'endurance de l'artiste néo-zélandais David Rickard (*Copper eld*), autour du souffle pendant 24 heures, ou Anna Mancuso qui fait implorer un bloc de béton ».

The second edition: re:production

Le Quotidien de l'Art

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Ariane Loze, *The Banquet S.M.A.K.*, performance, 2016. Galerie Michel Rein.

Un autre rôle pour la foire

Une tension est apparue entre deux conceptions de la performance : celle plus axée sur l'épreuve physique, non dénuée d'un certain pathos (Nazia Andaleeb Preema, Kelvin Atmadibrata) et des œuvres plus axées sur des protocoles avec une mise à distance ou la mise en espace du dessin (Meta Drcar, Stella Geppert ou Diogo Pimentão). La critique Chantal Pontbriand évoque la nécessité d'élargir le périmètre de la foire non seulement à l'acquisition, mais aussi à la recherche de fonds pour le soutien à la production d'œuvres à venir : une évolution emblématique du rôle des foires et de l'engagement des collectionneurs dans le processus créatif. La ville de Bruxelles, considérée comme le centre européen pour la danse contemporaine, avec le festival le plus innovant en la matière (Kunstenfestivaldesarts), est en bonne position pour engager cette transformation.



Nazia Preema, *Performance Krakow Academy of Fine arts*, 2018. Présentée par Performance Art Bangladesh.

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Stav Yeini présenté par ZSenne art lab.

Dédoulement de personnalité

De nombreux artistes cherchaient à inclure le visiteur au sein d'un dialogue, en réinventant le principe de l'échange (Dawn Nilo ou Tobias Sternberg) ou la réinvention de nouvelles communautés autour du soin collectif (Stav Yeini), de l'orchestre (Warren Neidich), de la parole (Maeve Rendle et sa chorale autour de la phrase « *Je sens exactement la même chose que toi* ») ou de la chorégraphie pop (Maria Pask). Ariane Loze, présentée par la galerie Michel Rein, propose à l'inverse le dédoublement de personnalité, en incarnant des rôles qui pourraient paraître incompatibles. Dans le même Vanderborcht Building où se tenait la foire, le Brussels Gallery Weekend proposait une exposition remarquable réunissant la jeune scène bruxelloise, « Fried Patterns », selon la vision du curateur Tenzing Barshee (responsable du lieu indépendant parisien Sundogs). Il s'en dégageait de fortes personnalités en peinture (Anastasia Bay, Peter Simpson, Laurent Dupont) ou dans une veine conceptuelle plutôt caustique (George Rippon, Dana Munro, Sofia Caeser, Éléonore Saintagan, Charlotte vander Borcht), qui permettaient d'avoir un aperçu très stimulant d'une scène artistique en train de se renouveler.



Stella Geppert, Performance à St. Geppert, 2019.

Artribune

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arti performative

Torna "A Performance Affair" di Bruxelles. La fiera dedicata esclusivamente alla performance

By **Giulia Ronchi** - 2 settembre 2019

TORNA LA FIERA BELGA INCENTRATA SULLA PERFORMANCE, CON IL TITOLO RE:PRODUCTION. SI SVOLGERÀ DAL 6 ALL'8 SETTEMBRE 2019 PRESSO IL VANDERBORGH T BUILDING, IN CONCOMITANZA CON IL BRUSSELS GALLERY WEEKEND.



Evann Siebens. *Platforms Project performance*, Athens, Greece, May 2019 © Alexandra Masmanidi

Dopo il successo della prima edizione, torna dal 5 all'8 settembre **A Performance Affair**, in collaborazione con il Brussels Gallery Weekend. La fiera trasformerà due piani del Palazzo Vanderborcht – nel centro storico della città – in una fitta programmazione di tre giorni, con le esibizioni di 30 artisti presentati da gallerie internazionali. Mentre esistono numerosi festival dedicati alle arti performative, la manifestazione belga propone per la prima volta un format fieristico, ponendosi allo stesso momento degli interrogativi sul rapporto tra questa disciplina e la sua vendibilità. Una sfida ambiziosa che pone al centro le necessità degli artisti e la loro capacità di affrontare il sistema.

A PERFORMANCE AFFAIR, GLI ARTISTI

Divisi in diversi spazi e diverse fasce orarie, gli artisti invitati al Performance Affair inizieranno a esibirsi a partire 11 del mattino fino a tardo pomeriggio. Tra i più attesi ci sono **Nazia Andaleeb Preema**, che rappresenta il Bangladesh alla Biennale di Venezia di quest'anno, e **János Szirtes**, tra i più acclamati performer ungheresi; tra i nomi internazionali (**Jelili Atiku**, **Kelvin Atmadibrata**, **Mira Calix**, **Andjeas Ejiksson**, **Olaf Nicolai**, **Gluklya Pershina**, **Asad Raza**, **Sislej Xhafa** e **Christian Jankowski**), sono presenti anche alcuni artisti italiani, come **Marinella Senatore** (con un progetto speciale), **Salvatore Viviano** e **Anna Mancuso**. *“La performance, che era molto criticata quando ho iniziato, è ora uno strumento riconosciuto per mettere in discussione le nostre relazioni on il pubblico e con i nostri corpi”*, spiega **Orlan**, l'artista francese diventata celebre per le sue declamazioni poetiche eseguite durante interventi di chirurgia plastica. *“Non è un atto o uno stile effimero, ma una pratica artistica a sé stante. Prevarrà nel tempo ed è lì per mettere in prospettiva, per mettere in discussione ed erotizzare le altre pratiche. Non dimentichiamo che il corpo è politico e l'arte serve per non morire di verità, come affermava Nietzsche”*.

QUALE COMMERCIO PER LA PERFORMANCE ART?

Nonostante sia ampia la presenza della performance nel panorama contemporaneo, è difficile per un artista sostenersi con questa pratica, dovendo ricorrere a espedienti come produzione di filmati o oggetti commerciabili ad essa legati. Oltre a creare una fiera (con una concreta attività di compravendita), *A Performance Affair* nasce con l'intento di indagare alcune questioni: come si diventa collezionisti di performance? In che modo sono collegati scenari, registrazioni o artefatti? Il video e altri mezzi di rappresentazione possono giovare o nuocere alla performance? Saranno anche gli stessi artisti a mettere in campo soluzioni originali per creare delle alternative a strade già percorse: **Ariane Loze** propone il suo lavoro sotto forma di una scatola contenente le istruzioni affinché tutti possano replicare la sua esibizione; mentre il collezionista che acquisisce *Help*, di **Lieven Segers**, riceve non solo un set di oggetti ma anche la possibilità di un'esibizione annuale dell'artista.

– *Giulia Ronchi*

A Performance Affair

Dal 5 all'8 settembre 2019

Inaugurazione 5 settembre

Vanderborcht Building

50 Rue de l'Ecuyer / Schildknaapstraat 50,

1000 Brussels

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Le magazine

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⊕ Liv Vaisberg, l'entremetteuse

📖 Du Focus Vif du 05/09/2019 06/09/19 à 14:16 Mise à jour à 14:17



Michel Verlinden

Journaliste

À l'heure où A Performance Affair, cette foire atypique consacrée à la performance, ouvre ses portes à Bruxelles, il était plus que temps de broser



Liv Vaisberg: "Il y a tant de lieux qui sont bourrés de bonnes idées mais souffrent cruellement de visibilité."

C'est un même principe qui se trouve derrière chacun des événements sur lesquels Liv Vaisberg appose sa griffe. Il n'est d'ailleurs pas interdit de penser qu'il y a du saint-bernard en elle. L'intéressée explique: "Ce sont les idées ou les personnes à visibilité faible qui me donnent envie de me mobiliser. Les artistes, par exemple, en particulier ceux qui tombent dans un gouffre au sortir de leurs études. Ce phénomène de chute dans les "limbes" est bien connu, il guette toutes et tous les diplômé(e)s issu(e)s des écoles d'art. Il en va de même pour les galeries. Il y a tant de lieux qui sont bourrés de bonnes idées mais souffrent cruellement de visibilité." À 38 ans, Liv Vaisberg a déjà une carrière professionnelle bien remplie. On doit à

l'intéressée des messes alternatives, dont les modèles se posent en exemple, qu'il s'agisse de *Poppositions*, imaginé avec Pieter Vermeulen et Edouard Meier; de *Collectible*, conçu en compagnie de Clélie Debehault; ou encore, plus récemment, de *A Performance Affair*, forgé main dans la main avec l'artiste Will Kerr. Autoproclamée "très directe" et "extrêmement bavarde", Vaisberg a grandi dans le sud de la France. "Ma mère est néerlandaise", confie-t-elle en précisant bien que cette double origine ne fait pas d'elle une Belge, territoire coincé entre les deux nations voisines évoquées. La trentenaire n'est pas du genre à se contenter d'un entre-deux, elle dont on devine la personnalité affirmée. N'empêche, c'est bien à Anvers qu'elle s'est fixée après un parcours marqué par une bifurcation pas entre-deux, elle dont on devine la personnalité affirmée. N'empêche, c'est bien à Anvers qu'elle s'est fixée après un parcours marqué par une bifurcation pas banale. Elle raconte: "Depuis mon plus jeune âge, j'ai baigné dans l'art par le biais de ma mère qui était elle-même plasticienne. Au moment de me lancer dans des études, elle m'a déconseillé une carrière artistique, arguant qu'il n'y avait rien de tel que l'indépendance financière. Pour cette raison, je me suis lancée dans un cursus de droit, me spécialisant sur les questions des droits d'auteur. J'ai étudié à Londres, Paris et Bruges."

Une économie du geste

Il reste que sa passion pour la création artistique ne se résorbe pas pour autant. Voyageant pas mal, elle reste attentive aux soubresauts de ce domaine qui la passionne. En 2008, la foire alternative ABC - Art Berlin Contemporary lui fait ouvrir de grands yeux. "D'emblée, je me suis dit que ça manquait à Bruxelles où en dehors d'Art Brussels, il n'y avait rien", se rappelle-t-elle. Quatre ans plus tard, elle lance *Poppositions*, une foire alternative à prix accessible. Dès la première édition, cette formule attendue trouve son public. Après trois éditions en tant que directrice, Vaisberg est sollicitée par les organisateurs de *Independent*, la foire new-yorkaise en vue, pour monter un pendant bruxellois à l'événement. Cette expérience enrichissante conforte la jeune femme dans son envie d'imaginer ses propres événements... Et dans l'idée de mettre un terme à sa carrière juridique. Clélie Debehault lui souffle alors l'idée d'investir un domaine laissé en friche, celui du design collectible, comprendre de l'objet design contemporain édité en pièce unique ou en série limitée. Un pari audacieux quand on voit à quel point les collectionneurs ne jurent que par le vintage, créneau dont on sait qu'il n'est pas avare en effets de levier financiers. Là aussi, le succès est au rendez-vous de la première édition de *Collectible*, qui s'est déroulée l'an passé. "On nous crédite de l'invention de l'hashtag collectible", se réjouit celle qui est maman d'un petit garçon. Toujours à l'affût des émergences, Liv Vaisberg se penche dans le même temps sur la performance, pratique omniprésente au sein de la scène artistique contemporaine dont les contours restent mal définis. "J'ai eu la chance d'en parler avec la galeriste Ellen de Bruijne qui est basée à Amsterdam. Cette femme a dédié sa vie à ce type de pratiques. Je me suis rendu compte combien c'était difficile. J'ai également remarqué que ce champ d'expérimentation était sous-représenté dans

des événements majeurs comme la Frieze. Dans ce type de contexte, la performance est réduite à un spectacle ou, pire, à une animation devant laquelle les gens s'arrêtent quelques secondes pour prendre une photo", détaille Vaisberg. Il ne lui en faut pas davantage pour comprendre qu'il y a là matière à une nouvelle mission. C'est d'autant plus vrai que la performance coûte cher aux artistes et qu'en dehors des figures de proue, comme Marina Abramovic (dont on sait qu'elle a longtemps tiré le diable par la queue), la majorité des protagonistes est obligée de se débrouiller avec les moyens du bord. Malgré la difficulté de la situation, Vaisberg lance en 2018 la première édition de *A Performance Affair*, du jamais-vu... Même à un échelon international. Plus qu'une foire, APA se veut une plateforme dont le champs d'action ne se limite pas aux supports habituels tels que la vidéo, les accessoires et la documentation photographique. Preuve de son caractère avant-gardiste, l'événement s'essaie à des dispositifs technologiques inédits, comme des chaînes YouTube permettant de suivre à tout moment ce qui se passe sur place depuis n'importe quel endroit du monde. "L'idée est de placer le geste et le mouvement, ainsi que l'acte performatif, au centre du propos. C'est un défi de créer une économie autour de ça. La plupart des galeries qui représentent des performers en sont encore à vendre des certificats d'authenticité pour attester l'oeuvre. C'est tout à fait insuffisant. Ce qu'il faut, c'est imaginer de nouveaux modes d'emploi, des protocoles juridiques inédits permettant de s'approprier ce qu'il y a d'immatériel dans ces propositions. Ce sera le programme de l'édition de cette année qui porte le titre "re:production". L'ambition est de favoriser l'acquisition, tant du côté des collectionneurs qui se montrent désireux de soutenir la performance mais ne savent pas comment s'y prendre, que de celui des musées dont on se rend compte qu'ils sont encore très frileux en la matière. Notre but est d'arriver à ce que la performance soit un champ artistique durable, qui soit à la hauteur de sa capacité à renouveler nos certitudes sur l'art", résume la cofondatrice. ●

A Performance Affair, Espace Vanderborght, 50, Rue de l'Écuyer, à 1000 Bruxelles. Du 06 au 08/09. www.aperformanceaffair.com



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Pompidou donderdag 5 september 2019

Kunst & Cultuur

Hoe verkoop je performancekunst? Hoe verwerken we de massa beelden die dagelijks op ons afkomen? En wat is identiteit nu precies? Veel uiteenlopende vragen, waarop Nicky Aerts een antwoord zoekt met Liv Vaisberg, Sarah & Charles en journalist Lode Delputte.



© Sarah & Charles

Sarah & Charles, *simulacre et simulation (comic eyes)*

Het Brussels Gallery Weekend staat voor de deur, het moment om de Brusselse kunstscene te verkennen. Het Vanderborghtgebouw wordt voor de tweede keer ingepalmd door A Performance Affair. Maar hoe gaat dat precies in zijn werk, een performance kopen? We vragen het aan initiatiefneemster Liv Vaisberg.

Waar ligt de grens tussen realiteit en fictie, tussen de virtuele wereld op ons scherm en de wereld om ons heen? Die vraag loopt als een rode draad door de nieuwe tentoonstelling van kunstenaarsduo Sarah & Charles in Be Part Waregem.

Het begrip identiteit beheerst de publieke debatten. Maar wat schuilt er allemaal achter het begrip identiteit? De Franse sociologe Nathalie Heinich analyseert het in haar essay 'Wat onze identiteit niet is', verschenen bij Prometheus. Journalist en Frankrijkkenner Lode Delputte las het boek.

Podcast Pompidou - donderdag 5 september 2019


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Dit artikel gaat over Kunst & Cultuur, Pompidou, Liv Vaisberg, Sarah & Charles, Lode Delputte, Nathalie Heinich
Gepubliceerd op 1 september 2019

Delen op



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Playlist

Pompidou

Klara's dagelijkse ontmoeting met de wereld van de kunst. Chantal Pattyn en Nicky Aerts brengen uiteenlopende gasten rond de tafel onder het motto 'Alles voor de kunst!'

Presentatie: Chantal Pattyn / Nicky Aerts

Samenstelling: Gerrit Valckenaers

Contact: via de reageerknop in de Klara-app of via pompidou@klara.be

Van maandag tot en met donderdag, telkens van 17 tot 18 uur op Klara, klara.be en de Klara-app.

Nadien is de uitzending nog 2 weken lang te herbeluisteren via de site en de app.

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La performance en objet de collection

Interrogation sur la commercialisation de la pratique avec trente artistes.

A Performance Affair *Art Actuel* Où Espace Vanderborgh, 50 Rue de l'Écuyer, 1000 Bruxelles. www.aperformanceaffair.com Quand Du 5 au 8 septembre.

Dans le champ de l'art contemporain, la performance a connu ses heures avant-gardistes à l'aube des années soixante. Elle est devenue aujourd'hui une pratique courante dont les codes sont de moins en moins définis à travers une multitude de pratiques transversales qui flirtent tantôt avec la danse, tantôt avec la littérature orale, tantôt avec les expressions sonores tout autant qu'avec des inter-

ventions visuelles variables, de la projection spectaculaire à un solo.

Stimuler l'économie

Cette année, sous l'intitulé "re:production", une bonne trentaine de performances en présentations individuelles ou par des galeries, seront proposées à l'Espace Vanderborgh pendant le Brussels Gallery Weekend. La manifestation artistique initiée à Bruxelles l'an passé, entend non seulement inviter des artistes internationaux en live, elle souhaite aussi "faire évoluer les perspectives, les consciences, engager une réflexion et stimuler l'acquisition d'œuvres performatives". En tentant "d'établir le protocole d'une performance", la plateforme veut mettre tout en œuvre afin de "stimuler l'économie de la performance". Pour ce faire, toutes les œuvres seront à vendre, à des collectionneurs, mais pour-

quoi pas à des responsables de lieux qui pourraient de la sorte les programmer au cours de leur saison. Cette pratique qui se diffuse aussi sous forme de photographies et de vidéos, pourrait apporter à l'artiste une certaine rentabilité au même titre que les œuvres plus traditionnelles, peintures, sculptures, installations...

Parmi les invités du Comité de sélection constitué de sept membres étrangers à l'exception du collectionneur belge Frédéric de Goldschmidt, on compte des travaux historiques et des réalisations récentes. Citons à titre d'exemples l'artiste bangladaise Nazia Andaleeb Preema, qui représente actuellement son pays à la Biennale de Venise, les Belges Ariane Loze et Lieven Segers ou encore l'artiste néo-zélandais David Rickard qui tentera une action durant 24 heures!

C. Lorent



PHOTO MANUEL VASON ©D.R.

24 heures

À Bruxelles, David Rickard tentera une expérience performative de 24 heures!