

BLOCK TO CELEBRATE BOUNDARY-BREAKING PERFORMANCE PRACTICES

“Performed in the Present Tense” symposium to focus on the field of performance art

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Didier Morelli, "White Men Making White Smoke: More of Less" (2014). 7a*11d International Performance Festival, Toronto. Photo Credit: (Henry Chan)

EVANSTON, Ill. --- When asked if her works were ahead of their time, avant-garde performer Charlotte Moorman replied, "The works I perform are of this time. They're performed in the present tense."

On April 8 and 9 an international group of curators, scholars and performers will convene at Northwestern University's **Mary and Leigh Block Museum of Art** to consider the present field of performance art during "**Performed in the Present Tense**," a free two-day symposium that will take place in two locations on Northwestern's Evanston campus.

Inspired by the Block Museum's current exhibition, "**A Feast of Astonishments: Charlotte Moorman and the Avant-Garde, 1960s-1980s**," the symposium will use the multifaceted practice of the 1960s musician, performance artist and advocate of the avant-garde as a point of departure. Participants will examine Moorman and other artists who have engaged with performance, the frame of the score, curating performance and being curated as performers themselves.

"**Performed in the Present Tense**" brings together artists and scholars to reflect both on the history and current practices of such work, focusing specifically on the contemporary interest in presenting performance in art museums and galleries.

Attendance for the full April 8-9 symposium is free and open to the public.

April 8

The symposium opens at **7 p.m. Friday, April 8 at the GYM at 640 Lincoln Street**, the Northwestern art theory and practice building, with graduate students **Didier Morelli**, Ira Murfin and Elliot Mercer, and **School of Communication** faculty member **Stephan Moore** performing canonical works by avant-garde artists Geoffrey Hendricks, John Cage and Yvonne Rainer. The performers will join Brown University performance curator **Noémie Solomon** in a conversation about the cultural history and politics involved in re-performing classic performance works.

April 9

On Saturday, April 9, the symposium will begin at **10 a.m. at the Block Museum of Art at 40 Arts Circle Drive**. Presenters include Kenyan-born, Canadian performer **Brendan Fernandes**, and New York's Travis Chamberlin, associate curator of performance at the **New Museum**, and **Jenny Schlenzka**, associate curator at **MoMA PS1**. Visiting scholars **Amanda Graham** and **Francesca Pola** will compliment their projects with presentations on the history of performance in cultural institutions in the U.S. and Europe, and collaborators Mashinka Firunts and **Daniel Snelson** will launch "Present Tense Pamphlets," a rapid-publishing score platform.

The two-day program was organized by **Susy Bielak**, associate director of engagement and curator of public practice at the Block Museum, and visiting scholar **Amanda Jane Graham**, Andrew Mellon Postdoctoral Fellow in Dance Studies at Northwestern's **Alice Kaplan Institute for the Humanities**.

"Performance scores are often diagrammatic or textual, and usually are bound to the page," Bielak noted. "We are interested in the question of translation between the page and the exhibition or performance. How does a performance curator embody the roles of collaborator, producer, instigator? How, in turn, can curation reignite the meaning of a score?"

Throughout the day on April 9 student participants in Graham's course "Scoring the Avant-Garde" will offer their own performances, inspired by the wide array of scores in **Northwestern University Music Library's** John Cage Notations Collection.

"The students have been examining work by artists such as Dick Higgins, composer La Monte Young, choreographer Anna Halprin and architect Lawrence Halprin, who proposed that scores extend to all fields of human endeavor," said Graham. "Saturday's performances will reflect the wide-range of scores and performance practices in the contemporary landscape."

Among the day's performances also will be a restaging of dance and choreographer Simone Forti's seminal 1961 "Huddle." Forti personally taught the score to the performers during her January 2016 Evanston campus master class, "Thinking with the Body."

"Performed in the Present Tense" will conclude at 5 p.m. Saturday, April 9 at the Block Museum with a reception celebrating the scholars, audiences, artists and performers who have come together for this unique event.

The symposium is co-sponsored by Northwestern's departments of art history, art theory and practice, and performance studies; the **Alice Kaplan Institute for the Humanities**; the **School of Communication's dance program**; and Mellon Dance Studies.

This event has been organized in conjunction with the exhibition, "A Feast of Astonishments: Charlotte Moorman and the Avant-Garde, 1960s-1980s," on view at the Block Museum of Art through Aug. 17, 2016.

Topics: Arts and Events