

# PERFORMA 17

PERFORMA 17 FINAL REPORT

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FREE

## A MUSEUM WITHOUT WALLS

### The Performa 17 Biennial



RoseLee Goldberg/ Founding Director and Chief Curator

Since its inception, Performa has been a leader in commissioning artists whose work has collectively shaped a new chapter in the multi-century legacy of visual artists working in live performance.

For Performa 17, our team of curators, research fellows, and producers spent two years, investigating a range of critical subject matter, in particular the use of live performance as central to artistic practice in African art and culture, the intersection of architecture and performance, and the hundred-year legacy of Dada.

Performa curators visited Dakar, Nairobi, Addis Ababa, Tangier, Johannesburg and Cape Town as part of our research process, examining how artists in these disparate cities consider performance as an extension of their creativity in multiple disciplines—visual art, music, dance, film, poetry, photography—and how each artist introduces us to distinct histories and sensibilities. The resulting commissions and scholarship examined immediate and critical concerns confronting our urban centers, the shifting political and cultural currents of our turbulent world, and ultimately the role of the arts and of artists in articulating the complex sociopolitical context informing contemporary art today. Each Performa

Commission was conceived to engage audiences in significantly understanding and absorbing these many different aesthetics, values, cultures, and climates.

Performance and architecture have long been a focus of Performa, which has conspicuously taken the position to cross-pollinate the conceptual and actual underpinning of visual art and architectural vocabularies. For Performa 17, choreographers, architects, and performers created works that not only illustrated but also defined new viewpoints for reading architecture, its spaces and its experiential substance, while utilizing existing plazas and buildings as frames and mirrors for action. Alongside these polemic inquires, and the programming they produced, Performa, as with every biennial, selected a particular “historical anchor” to both build on our extensive archives, and provide reference and a springboard for contemporary artists. This year, the powerful and disruptive Dada movement continued to inspire and inform artists around the globe.

The Performa Biennial provides an extraordinary and very public platform for showing the essential role of art in society. Through live performance we touch people directly, change their minds, and introduce them viscerally to the complicated emotional and aesthetic expressions of artists responding to the world in which we live today.

- RoseLee Goldberg, Founding Director and Chief Curator

“Thanks to RoseLee Goldberg, performance art has a place in new museums and history books.” - *The Economist*

“Today, virtually every institution in the country that shows contemporary art has robust performance programming. Now, in this live-art-friendly world, RoseLee Goldberg and her fellow Performa curators have had to make their presence felt with sheer volume.” - *Art In America*

“Since its foundation in New York in 2004, Performa has excelled in the field of live art. Established as an organization to support the study and development of live performance. Performa is a biennial, an institute, an online magazine and an agency that commissions new productions.” - *L’Officiel, France*



“Performa has always made a case for the importance of performance art and considers the ways artists’ bodies become active sites and the central medium of their work. In using their bodies, artists position themselves both as subject and object, allowing for a critical process where the individual directly confronts the social, political and cultural...” - *Metropolis*

“The Performa 17 Biennial isn’t so much an art exhibit as it is a shape-shifting mecca of magical thinking. Every other year the arts organization, known for its innovative commissions of live performance, descends on New York City with work by artists from around the world.”

- *WNYC Radio*



## BARBARA KRUGER BRANDED PERFORMA 17



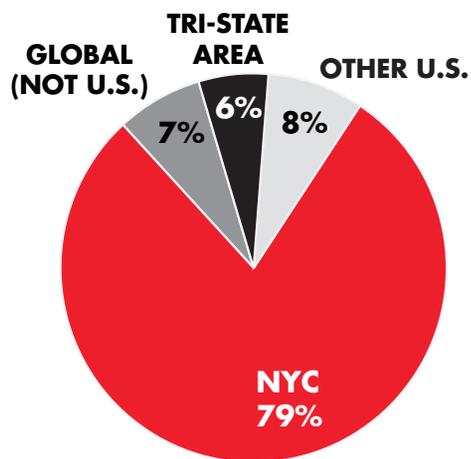
The visual identity for Performa 17 was designed by Barbara Kruger and adopted across the Biennial’s collateral including logo, website, social media, and digital and printed marketing materials, created in collaboration with Project Projects.

Kruger’s iconic typography captures the intensity of life in the city, the impact of commercial branding on our daily lives, and the necessity of the critically resistant voice of the artist in the public domain. Kruger’s Performa Commission and Biennial visual identity interacted and intertwined to blur the lines between branding, public art, performance, commerce, and appropriation.

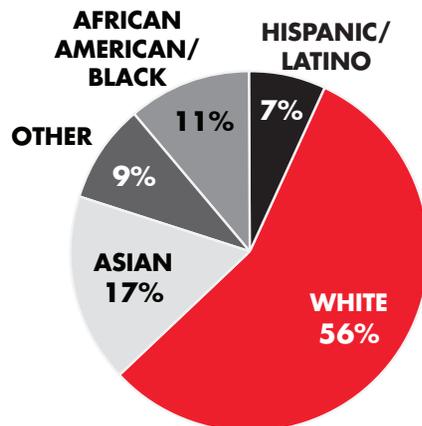
# A BIENNIAL FOR NEW YORK CITY

Interfacing directly with the city, its streets, buildings, public spaces, and cultural venues, the Performa Biennial functions as a dynamic form of urban activism, provided places for people to gather, engage, react, and explore. As with the previous six biennials, New York City provides a powerful context and unique setting for the biennial program. Local and visiting audiences often describe the feeling of discovering the city as their favorite part of the program. We strive to find locations and venues across the city for our work that add a unique dimension to a project and provide an opportunity to collaborate with a new organization and engage with a new local community. This year in particular we produced and presented a significant number of works in Harlem using the Harlem Parish on 118th Street as an uptown base of operations and programming to compliment our downtown biennial hub in SoHo.

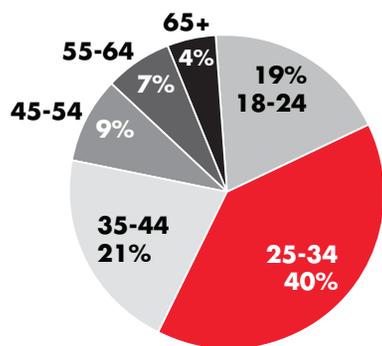
## PERFORMA 17 AUDIENCE BY LOCATION



## PERFORMA 17 AUDIENCE DEMOGRAPHICS - ETHNICITY



## PERFORMA 17 AUDIENCE DEMOGRAPHICS - AGE



## BIENNIAL BY THE NUMBERS

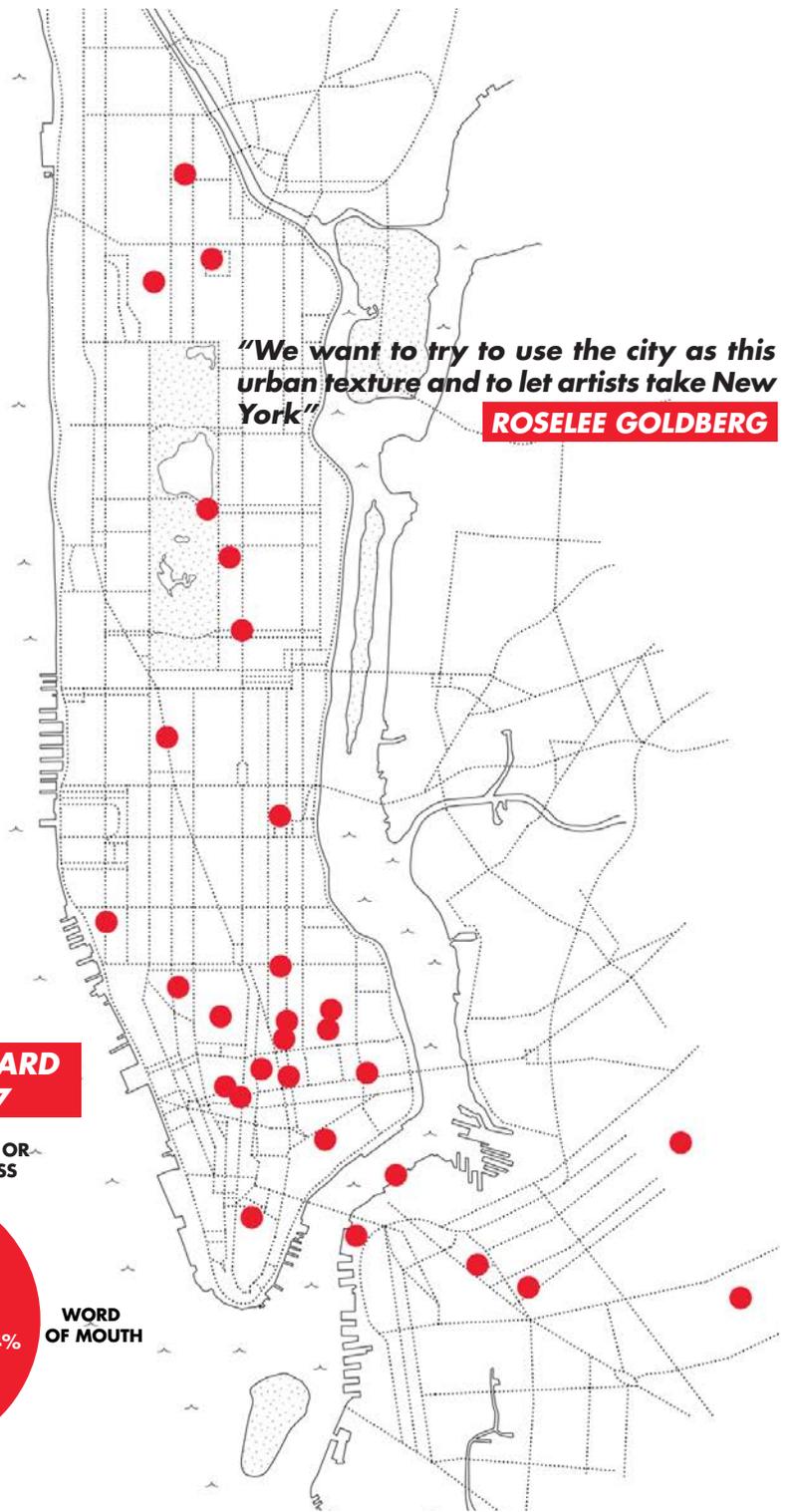
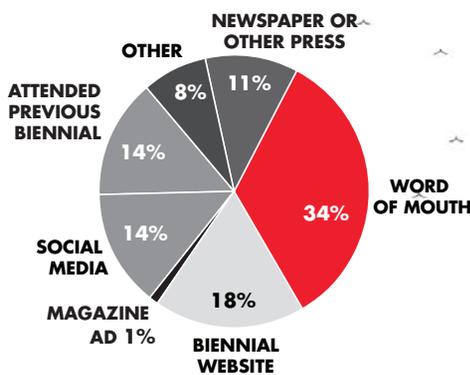
- 48 artists
  - 12 curators
  - 31 Performa Commissions and Projects
  - 2 International Pavilions
  - 12 Biennial Consortium projects
  - 133 events; 77 free, 56 ticketed
  - 33 venues
  - 31 cultural partners
- Over 55,000 Attendees over 3 weeks

## THE BIENNIAL CONSORTIUM

The Biennial Consortium is a selective network of New York City's art and cultural institutions, all presenting and supporting performances and exhibitions that align with the Performa 17 Biennial.

- Abrons Arts Center
- African Film Festival
- Anthology Film Archives
- Art in General
- Black Lady Theater
- Bronx Museum
- Bronx Academy of Arts and Dance
- Brooklyn Academy of Music
- City Point
- Connelly Theater
- Danspace
- Estonian House
- The Glass House
- Harlem Parish
- Leslie Lohman Museum of Gay and Lesbian Art
- Lugemik (Estonia)
- Metropolitan Museum of Art
- Participant Inc.
- Queens Museum
- Storefront for Art and Architecture
- Times Square Arts
- WhiteBox Arts Center
- PUBLIC Arts

## HOW AUDIENCES HEARD ABOUT PERFORMA 17



"We want to try to use the city as this urban texture and to let artists take New York"

ROSELEE GOLDBERG

## NARCISSISTER

### THE BODY IS A HOUSE

Participant Inc. presented a video and performance by Narcissister, whose live works deploy humor, pop songs, elaborate costumes, and her trademark mask – all tools for dismantling what Stuart Hall calls "fixed and closed stereotypical representations." Short-form live works were interspersed with performances made for the camera, allowing for multiple costume changes. Each evening concluded with a respondent in conversation with Narcissister, including Ariel Osterweis, and Lia Gangitano, among others. Presented by Participant Inc.



Photo © Cameron Cuchulainn

## XAVIER CHA

### BUFFER

Buffer was a perception-altering new work by Xavier Cha. Comprised of three scenes that toggle back and forth like browser windows in a state of perpetual buffering, it laid bare the intimate yet alienated relationships we have with the bodies on our screens. Presented by BAM Fisher.



# OUR GLOBAL IMPACT

Performa's Pavilions Without Walls program was created in 2013 to forge strong partnerships between New York and countries around the world, fostering cultural exchange and connecting international artists with global audiences and New York City's cultural landscape. Performa Pavilions programming showcases the most vibrant and significant art from each country.

## SOUTH AFRICAN PAVILION

Born and raised in Durban, South Africa, Founder and Chief Curator RoseLee Goldberg has long championed South African artists. The opening of the major new Zeitz MOCAA and A4 Arts Foundation in Cape Town in 2017 has rapidly expanded the art and performance scene in Johannesburg. Performa seized on this exciting momentum to present a South African Pavilion with seven of the most important artists in the country today.

For South African artists, art and politics are not separate spheres of practice but complex systems in which they play important cultural and intellectual roles. Performance, in particular, has emerged as a flexible vehicle for these artists living under politically repressive regimes, because it is able to speak across the multitude of cultures, languages, tribes, identities, songs and landscapes of South Africa and beyond. Bringing together South African artists who have developed deeply personal and individual vocabularies in post-apartheid culture, Performa aimed to elucidate the complex strategies and conceptual frameworks defined by the contradiction, disparity, and skepticism generated in the midst and wake of dramatic political shifts, and to reveal their relevance to the global conversation.

Curated by RoseLee Goldberg. Supported by the Ford Foundation and the South African Pavilion Committee: Wendy Fisher, Fundação Sindika Dokolo, Liza Essers - Goodman Gallery, Patrick Gaspard, Emile Stipp, Tracey and Phillip Riese, Robben Stichting, Stephen Friedman Gallery, Jonathan Jawno, SAFFCA - Southern African Foundation For Contemporary Art. With additional support from the FNB Joburg Art Fair, WHATIFTHEWORLD and Stevenson Gallery.



### Commissions and projects in the South African Pavilion Without Walls included:

Kendell Geers  
Nicholas Hlobo  
William Kentridge  
Mohau Modisakeng  
Zanele Muholi  
Tracey Rose  
Kemang Wa Lehulere

**"The way Performa 17 effortlessly integrated artists from our part of the world into a truly international program would not have been conceivable even a decade ago, and should be a model for other large, ambitious international shows."**

**JOOST BOSLAND, DIRECTOR, STEVENSON, CAPE TOWN (SA)**

**"As the only biennial dedicated to performance art, Performa 17 more than lived up to its reputation and to its responsibility. The umbrella theme of 'Dada as historical anchor' was particularly apt for a performance biennial with a focus on African artists for whom the inextricable link between art and politics is often explored in highly experimental ways. By approaching artists whose primary medium is not necessarily performance art, Roselee Goldberg has boldly facilitated innovative growth of participating artists' practices."**

**LIZA ESSERS, DIRECTOR, GOODMAN GALLERY (SA)**

### WILLIAM KENTRIDGE



#### URSONATE

Presented over two nights at the Harlem Parish, Johannesburg-based artist William Kentridge took on Performa 17's historical research theme of Dada in this new performance based on Kurt Schwitters's seminal 1932 sound poem *Ursonate*. The new live performance mixed his familiar film, drawing, and animation with his commanding performance of the *Ursonate* punctuated by an improvised coda with three members of the New York based chamber orchestra The Knights.

### KEMANG WA LEHULERE



#### I CUT MY SKIN TO LIBERATE THE SPLINTER

For his Performa Commission presented at the Connelly Theater in the East Village, Cape Town artist Kemang Wa Lehulere created a new body of sculptural works that were developed as the instruments and props for a new 40-minute live performance featuring theater director Chuma Sopotela, four of his studio assistants, and the South African trumpet player Lesedi Ntsane. With actions and movements borrowed from South African children's games and improvised sounds referencing *Cosmic Africa*, the 2003 documentary about astrophysicist Thebe Medupe, the performance bridged these planes of knowledge with constellations drawn from indigenous astrology, tribal wisdom, and religious rites.

### NICHOLAS HLOBO



#### UMBHOVUZO: THE PARABLE OF THE SOWER

Nicholas Hlobo's performance expanded on an earlier installation *The Umbhovuzo: The Parable of the Sower*, which was first presented in Johannesburg. For this new iteration at the Harlem Parish, nine male performers, wearing vintage sewing machine covers re-constituted by Hlobo as decorative headdresses, occupied an installation of Hlobo's works. Four of them silently operated sewing machines at towering workstations, three of them sat as if waiting, one of them posed completely still at a mirror, and one circled the main floor of the church and balcony improvising phrases and sounds, amplifying and questioning the prescribed gender roles that shape domesticity, labor, and globalization. Co-presented by the Rolex Institute.

**"What I love that came out of this Biennial was how political a lot of the work was, but not because people are thinking 'oh I have to make a political statement,' but because these are each deeply humanist artists. All the artists we are working with, reflect powerfully on the society in which they live, and the work all had a political edge yet, it was also extraordinarily beautiful."**

**ROSELEE GOLDBERG**

## ESTONIAN PAVILION

The Estonian Pavilion Without Walls featured newly commissioned performances by Flo Kasearu, Anu Vahtra, and Kris Lemsalu who collaborated with New York-based musician and artist Kyp Malone. The Performa team spent two years researching and visiting Estonia to commission and present the Pavilion in partnership with the Estonian Contemporary Art Development Center (ECADC) with funding from the Estonian Ministry of Culture.



Commissions and projects in The Estonian Pavilion Without Walls included: Flo Kasearu, Kris Lemsalu in collaboration with Kyp Malone, Anu Vahtra, Call for Action: Key Moments in Estonian Performance Art, Merike Estna and Maria Metsalu, curated by Maria Arusoo and presented by Art in General, Tallinn-based Lagemik Bookshop at the Performa Hub. The Estonian Pavilion Without Walls was organized by Esa Nickle and Maaike Gouwenberg, with Curatorial Fellow Evelyn Raudsepp. Co-presented by the Estonian Contemporary Art Development Center (ECADC). Partners: Kumu Art Museum, Center for Contemporary Arts, Estonia, Art in General, the New York Estonian House. Supported by the Estonian Ministry of Culture, Outset Estonia, and the Estonian Contemporary Art Development Center (ECADC).

### ANU VAHTRA



#### OPEN HOUSE CLOSING. A WALK

Anu Vahtra's first live performance, *Open House Closing. A Walk* was an artist led walking tour that activated vacant storefronts and spaces in SoHo, each displaying a different "scene" in a lecture about the life and times of Gordon Matta-Clark and the current phenomenon of "post-gentrification" that results in a scourge of vacancies and pop-up shops. Stopping at 20 locations throughout SoHo in the dark of night, the artist led groups of 25 audience members, each armed with a flashlight, drawing links between SoHo's past and present using only a portable projector, gaffer tape and her dead-pan Estonian humor.

### FLO KASEARU



#### AINULT LIIKMETELE (MEMBERS ONLY)

Flo Kasearu created an animated tribute to The New York Estonian House, a membership based cultural organization founded in 1929 and still in operation on East 34th Street. For her performance, the artist guided groups through the different rooms of the house where she had installed eight poignant live scenarios created in collaboration with local members of the private club as well as installations of her own drawings and sculptures. Along the way audience members received an award sticker for each stop and a special edition of the Estonian House newspaper created by the artist to enjoy with a drink at the members bar at the end of the performance.

### KRIS LEMSALU & KYP MALONE



#### GOING GOING

Together with Kyp Malone, Kris Lemsalu presented a live performance that featured the melding of sculptures, video, songs and spoken word. The performance included kinetic ceramic-based sculpture by Lemsalu and animated video works by Malone. This new project was the second of a series of collaborative works with musicians to enliven Lemsalu's sculptural installations and bring her performance and ceramics practices together.

**"Estonia is enormously proud to be collaborating with the Performa 17 Biennial in the Pavilion Without Walls program in what we see as a groundbreaking event for the contemporary art scene in Estonia. Highlighting the country's most outstanding young artists in the culturally-charged context of New York makes possible an artistic exchange with a global reach."**

**KERSTI KALJULAI, PRESIDENT OF REPUBLIC OF ESTONIA**

**"Flo Kasearu, Kris Lemsalu, and Anu Vahtra all created uniquely multi-layered and ambitious projects, each staying true to their creative DNA while taking their practice into completely new territory. The process of producing the works in collaboration with the Performa team was nothing short of transformational for both the artists and the local art community. It was also the first time that the Estonian community living in New York had been looked at through the lens of contemporary art."**

**KARIN LAANSOO, DIRECTOR, ESTONIAN CONTEMPORARY ART DEVELOPMENT CENTER, OUTSET ESTONIA**

## HISTORICAL ANCHOR: DADA

For each biennial, the Performa team selects a historical movement to anchor the artists, curators, and Biennial Consortium's research in the rich history of artists' performance from around the world. For Performa 17, the historical research investigation was Dada, which RoseLee Goldberg regards as the "Big Bang" of interdisciplinary twentieth-century art. During this time, artists moved with ease between disciplines, driven by an insistence on activism, art events, and performance. Performa 17 sought to question how artists, curators, and writers are approaching Dada 101 years after the movement began, and how it continues to reverberate in our cultural landscape. Several commissioned artists worked closely with Performa's curators to develop performances that investigated the defining ideas and concepts of Dada from contemporary perspectives.

### BRIAN BELOTT



#### PEOPLE PIE POOL

For his Performa Project, *People Pie Pool*, Brian Belott immersed himself into the rebellious legacy of Dada, American standup comedy, the history of slapstick, and vaudeville. For the historic stage of the Abrons Arts Center, Belott choreographed a comedy of simultaneity, paying homage to the work of Kurt Schwitters, the Marx Brothers, Andy Kaufman, Lenny Bruce and many others. Belott's motley cast of 71 included visual artists, comedians, property lawyers, bird watchers, scientists, musicians, influencers, a basketball team, and other assorted exhibitionists in overlapping and interrupting performances over the course of 70 minutes. Through an improvisational performance that was consistently absurd, nonsensical and irrational, the piling up of acts displayed the artist's unique ability to take the audience on an exuberant, satirical and anarchic ride.

# AFROGLOSSIA

## YTO BARRADA

### TREE IDENTIFICATION FOR BEGINNERS

For her Performa Commission Moroccan artist Yto Barrada created a multimedia refraction of her mother's 1966 first visit to the United States, as part of a group of African students participating in the Operations Crossroads America program, a precursor to the Peace Corps. Rather than accept the capitalism-and-democracy narrative proposed by her hosts, the young Moroccan socialist saw through to the revolutionary potential of the Pan-African, Tricontinental Black Power, and anti-Vietnam war movements. With a new animated film Barrada chronicled multiple layers of this history — overlapping, subjective and unreliable — incorporating archival materials, film, textile painting and educational toys. The film was presented with live sound effects performed by the artist and revealed by a stunning handmade theatrical curtain she created especially for the performance at the Connelly Theater in the East Village.

## TEJU COLE

### BLACK PAPER

For his Performa Project, *Black Paper*, presented at BKLYN Studios in Downtown Brooklyn, Teju Cole laced together hundreds of photographs, field recordings and interviews all taken by the artist in the aftermath of the 2016 Presidential election into a powerful 40-minute immersive live experience. Progressing from light to dark, the mosaic presentation on six 16-foot screens hanging just above the audience's eye-level surrounding them completely, was an intuitional multimedia response to the 2016 elections, addressing deeply buried emotions, haunted spaces, dreams and premonitions, and shadows and darkness.

## JULIE MEHRETU & JASON MORAN

### MASS (HOWL, EON)

Ethiopian born American painter Julie Mehretu created a pair of towering, turbulent, monumental paintings in a former neo-Gothic church in Harlem in the months following the 2016 elections. Jason Moran, American jazz pianist, composer, and visual artist, would join her regularly in her cavernous temporary studio where he composed a set of phrases and gestures that appear and disappear throughout the resulting hour-long improvised performance. *MASS (HOWL, eon)* was performed at the Harlem Parish by Moran on piano, Jamire Williams on drums, and Graham Haynes on cornet. Mehretu's paintings were represented through two towering video projections comprised of six detail views of each painting, methodically expanding and contracting to encompass larger fields of view as well as sections of minute detail.

## WANGECHI MUTU

### BANANA STROKE

For her Performa Commission *Banana Stroke*, New York and Nairobi-based artist Wangechi Mutu created a new live performance that drew on both macro- and micropolitics, from international legislature and its consequences to the public depictions and details of the lives of women in her native Kenya. Performed on the stage of the Grace Rainey Rogers Auditorium at the Metropolitan Museum of Art on a stark white set designed by Mutu, the resulting action painting, performed by the artist, integrated layers of video taken of the Kenyan landscape with those of her artistic process and recitations of "A Far Cry from Africa" by Derek Walcott. Co-presented by Live Arts at The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

## TRACEY ROSE

### THE GOOD SHIP JESUS VS THE BLACK STAR LINE HITCHING A RIDE WITH DIE ALIBAMA [WORKING TITLE]

For Performa17, Tracey Rose created a new interdisciplinary performance that took the structure of a boxing match, framing and using the choreography of the sport to convey combat and competition, as well as trust and affection, and ultimately exhaustion and a sense of the unexpected. Experienced in the round, Rose created a dynamic theatrical installation, comprising and centering around three free-standing mesh screens in red, black, and green, referencing the flags for UNIA, Pan African, black American nationalist, and Black Liberation movements. The performance included videos made by Rose in which she reenacts her previous works as well as homages to key figures who have influenced her including Vito Acconci, Francis Alÿs, Coco Fusco, David Hammons, Allan Kaprow, Pope.L, Lorraine O'Grady, and Adrian Piper.



Coined and organized by Performa Curator Adrienne Edwards, the title is a neologism that riffs off of the term polyglossia, defined as multiple languages co-existing in one area, for which the abbreviation "Afro" references the incredible complexity, heterogeneity, and multiplicity that is Africa. *AFROGLOSSIA* highlighted a range of artistic voices and coalesces diverse perspectives from various regions of the African continent into a single program platform, allowing viewers to experience distinct approaches to experimental interdisciplinary art and ideas currently being made by artists from Kenya, Ethiopia, Nigeria, Morocco, and South Africa. Questions of what is radical, how the conditions of everyday life inform artistic choices, and what constitutes experimentation in cross-boundary performance emerged as important animating forces in the program's commissions and projects. *AFROGLOSSIA*'s commissions were each points of convergence, with the artists taking up a specific set of social, historical, political, and economic scenarios and experiences in their own formally distinct ways. Intermingling fiction, poetry, essays, films, performances, painting, music, videos, and photography, the program provided a means through which to contemplate the intersection of radical art and radical politics as articulated by artists themselves from Africa and its diaspora.

Through travels to these countries over the past two years, discussions with the artists, and given the current political climate here in the United States as well as there, the power of the voice, and the resonating ways an individual can speak to the concerns and realities of the collective, became the thrust of this Performa 17 platform. The fact that these voices are often challenging, even opaque, obscure, and defiant, made them an especially compelling focus, reflective of their creative lives and values. For the assembly of artists in *AFROGLOSSIA*, the vast majority of whom were born in the 1970's and came of age in the aftermath of their country's various independence movements, experimenting with cross-boundary artmaking with a distinct ethical dimension is a natural and logical expression of their tendency for radical rule bending.

### AFROGLOSSIA commissions and projects included:

- Yto Barrada
- Teju Cole
- Kwani Trust
- Julie Mehretu and Jason Moran
- Wangechi Mutu
- The Nest Collective
- Tracey Rose



Curated by Adrienne Edwards. Supported by the Ford Foundation. Co-presented with Anthology Film Archives and African Film Festival, *AFROGLOSSIA*'s commissions were contextualized by a special four-day film program comprising moving image works that influenced the participating artists' commissions or their overall practice.

# PERFORMING PUBLIC ART

Producing new live work in public space has been a part of the Biennial program from its inception. Working with partners such as Times Square Arts, NYC Parks, Brooklyn Bridge Park, 28 Liberty and the NYC Department of Transportation, Performa commissioned and presented eight major public projects for Performa17.

## BARBARA KRUGER

Barbara Kruger took on a skatepark in downtown Manhattan, a billboard in Chelsea, a yellow school bus, and 50,000 MTA Metrocards, reaching a broad cross section of communities while exploring the role and power of mass media. These public works linked to a live performance of a stylized merchandise “drop” in SoHo.



UNTITLED (SKATE)



UNTITLED (SKATE)



UNTITLED (KNOW, BELIEVE, FORGET)



MTA CARD FOR PERFORMA 17



UNTITLED (SCHOOL)



UNTITLED (SCHOOL)

*“Parks’ public art program, Art in the Parks celebrates its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary [in 2017], and we could not be more thrilled to add Barbara Kruger to the list of over 1,000 artists who have exhibited their work in New York City parks.”*

**WILLIAM CASTRO, NYC PARKS COMMISSIONER**

## ALEX SCHWEDER & WARD SHELLEY

### THE NEWCOMERS

In the plaza of 28 Liberty Street in Downtown Manhattan, American architects and artists Alex Schweder and Ward Shelley presented *The Newcomers*, a 9-day durational architectural performance that spanned both time and distance with responsive and ambulatory forms of habitation. Joined by collaborators Lena Kouvela and Sarah Burns, the group built and lived in an evolving nomadic structure that changed each day from a temporary home to a makeshift bridge in order to reach the next day’s supplies along their route.



Photo by © Kurt Sneddon



*“Fosun was proud to partner with Performa and artists Alex Schweder and Ward Shelley on *The Newcomers*. We have a longstanding history of presenting unique arts and cultural experiences at 28 Liberty for our office tenants and the Lower Manhattan community to enjoy. *The Newcomers* brought our iconic plaza to life with the perfect blend of art and architecture, and the inquisitiveness of passersby who engaged with the artists each day.”*

**JAMES CONNORS, FOSUN PROPERTY HOLDINGS, 28 LIBERTY**

# ZANELE MUHOLI

## MASIHAMBISANE – ON VISUAL ACTIVISM

For *Masihambisane – On Visual Activism* South African photographer and visual activist Zanele Muholi expanded on the notion of photography, media, and activism across the city of New York with large-scale multi-screen exhibitions in Times Square, MTA subway stations and City Point shopping center in Brooklyn. The work was also a façade for social events and performances, which she initiated to gather together black LGBTQ groups in various neighborhoods of New York City for communion and music.



***“This is beyond ads, I’m not here to entertain, I’m here to share information. I’m part of Performa because I want to share information and knowledge that our people possess, especially Black LGBTI people from South African cities, from Cape Town, from Deben, from Johannesburg, people who have never had passports until they received an invite from me to inform them that they are invited to come to New York.”*** **ZANELE MUHOLI**

# MOHAU MODISAKENG

Mohau Modisakeng’s *ZION* took the form of a procession of live performers who traveled the city, stopping at several historically significant landmarks along the route that made connections between the removal of the community at Seneca Village from Central Park and the establishment of black communities in Harlem.



## ZION - CHAPTER 1

The first chapter commenced from Mother AME Zion Church in Harlem - the first African- American congregation in New York City. The route ran along Adam Clayton Powell Jr. Boulevard, Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard, passed the Hotel Theresa Building, and ended in front of a brownstone house on W 126th Street.



## ZION- CHAPTER 2

The second chapter commenced on the steps of the Metropolitan Museum and proceeded to Summit Rock in Central Park, which is located just north of the site once occupied by the 19th century community of Seneca Village.



## ZION- CHAPTER 3

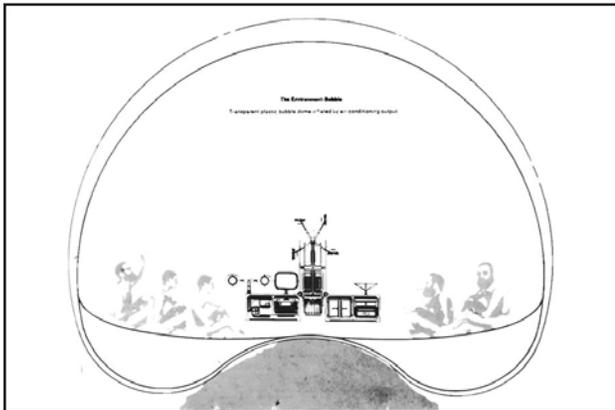
The third and final phase of the performance took place in Time Square, proceeding along 42nd Street to the Broadway Plaza between 42nd and 43rd Streets. The combination of the procession and the performance represented a balance between journey and destination, transience and settlement, wandering and being home.

***“For Harambee Dance Company, this was a magical collaboration and experience working with Performa, and Mohau Modisakeng. Solidly produced and supported by Performa, brilliantly directed by Mohau, and for our dancers, it was an honor to bring the vision and message of ZION to life.”*** **FRANK W. MALLOY III, HARAMBEE DANCE COMPANY**

# CIRCULATIONS

*Circulations*, Performa 17's architecture and performance program organized by Charles Aubin, unfolded as a multilayered platform of commissioned site-specific live performances, architectural experiments, a symposium, and a publication. It proposed that performance can serve as a radical tool to rethink the discipline of architecture, and to allow architecture to intercede in critical present-day debates. By confronting the built environment with human bodies, human activities, and human memories, *Circulations* aimed to offer a new, broader definition for architecture, extending beyond bricks and mortar and into social and political life.

## FRANÇOIS DALLEGRET WITH DIMITRI CHAMBLAS & FRANÇOIS PERRIN



The widely influential blueprint designed in 1965 by Canadian architect François Dallegret, *The Environment-Bubble*, was brought to life for the first time for Performa 17. Initially envisioned as a flexible, temporary dome that would transform our modes of living, the "Bubble" became a reference point for generations of architects questioning their discipline and seeking a radical dissolution of public and private spaces. François Dallegret collaborated with architect François Perrin and choreographer Dimitri Chamblas, to realize Dallegret's 1965 *Environment-Bubble* as an active site of intellectual and physical engagement with free daily dance workshops, open to the public.

## JIMMY ROBERT

### IMITATION OF LIVES

In the early 1920s, the Weimar Republic saw the brief success of a new theater and film genre called the *Kammerspiel*, or "chamber drama." Depicting small groups of people whose interpersonal conflicts played out within confined spaces, these chamber dramas offered less spectacular images than the Expressionist plays, and seldom favored happy resolutions. With his first Performa Commission, *Imitation of Lives*, Jimmy Robert built on this game of reflections: two characters - NIC Kay and Quenton Stuckey - are mirrored and doubled by the Glass House and play with the pavilion's transparency and reflectiveness to appear and disappear. Robert's performance addressed the complex processes by which the self is constructed, or mis-constructed, through the gaze of others. Co-Commissioned by the Glass House.



Photos by © Michael Biondo

## BRYONY ROBERTS, MABEL O. WILSON & THE MARCHING COBRAS OF NEW YORK

### MARCHING ON

*Marching On* took place in Central Harlem's Marcus Garvey Park, exploring performance as a means of occupying public space in the neighborhood. The choreography of *Marching On*, developed by the Marching Cobras' Terrel Stowers and Kevin Young with Roberts and Wilson, acknowledged the public dimensions of contestation and the right to public space itself as central to free expression within the cultural fabric of our cities and neighborhoods, particularly in the context of marching and performing arts in black communities. Co-presented with Storefront for Art & Architecture.



## MAKING ROOM FOR ACTION

*Making Room for Action* was a day-long program of talks, screenings, conversations, and performances with an international group of architects, scholars, and artists addressing how performance can serve as a radical tool to rethink the discipline of architecture. In keeping with Performa's open-classroom approach, this conference was open to both speakers and audience members to join in.

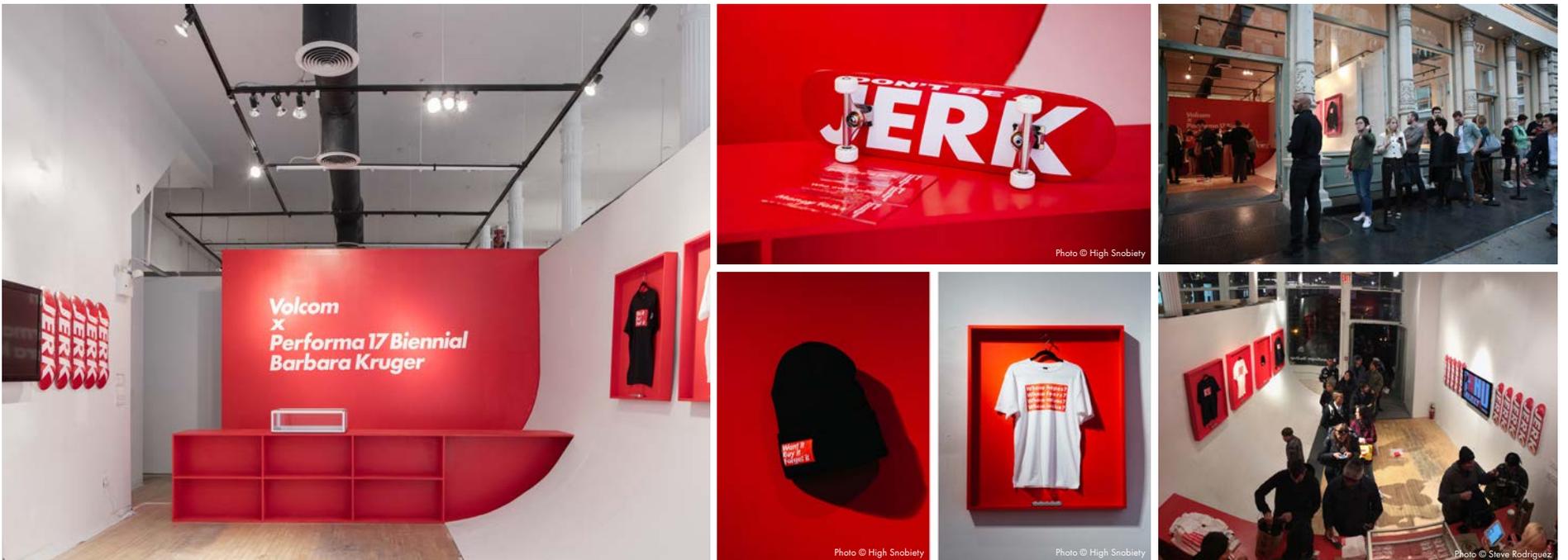


Speakers included: Lluís Alexandre Casanovas Blanco, Elizabeth Diller, Giovanna Borasi, Yve Laris Cohen, and Thom Moran (T+E+A+M), Cooking Sections (Daniel Fernández Pascual and Alon Schwabe). Co-organized by Charles Aubin and Carlos Mínguez Carrasco. The Performa Institute is supported by The David & Elaine Potter Foundation and the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs. Making Room for Action received additional support from the Graham Foundation for Advanced Studies in the Fine Arts and the Consulate General of Spain New York.

## BIENNIAL PARTNERSHIPS

### BARBARA KRUGER X PERFORMA X VOLCOM

**U**ntitled (*The Drop*) by Barbara Kruger was a live performance riffing on the phenomenon of the merchandise drop pioneered by the skate brand Supreme. The performance linked Supreme's marketing strategy of long lines for new merchandise and the brand's appropriation of Kruger's style in the mid-90's to comment on an endless cycle of re-appropriation and on the sometimes extreme social engineering found in profit driven marketing strategies. Performa partnered with the skate and clothing brand Volcom to contextualize the performance and to co-opt a legitimate corporate mechanism to realize this uncanny experience of waiting on a long-line to enter a SoHo shop wherein the audience had a limited amount of time to shop for a limited amount of products including Kruger branded t-shirts and skate decks at retail prices.



**"The drop itself is the performance. I walk around New York and L.A., and I would see people lining up at a number of stores—not just one. The idea of sitting in chairs and waiting for a group or a brand or a text is the kind of alignment and social relation I've made my work about for years, so this was a chance to actually quote that."**

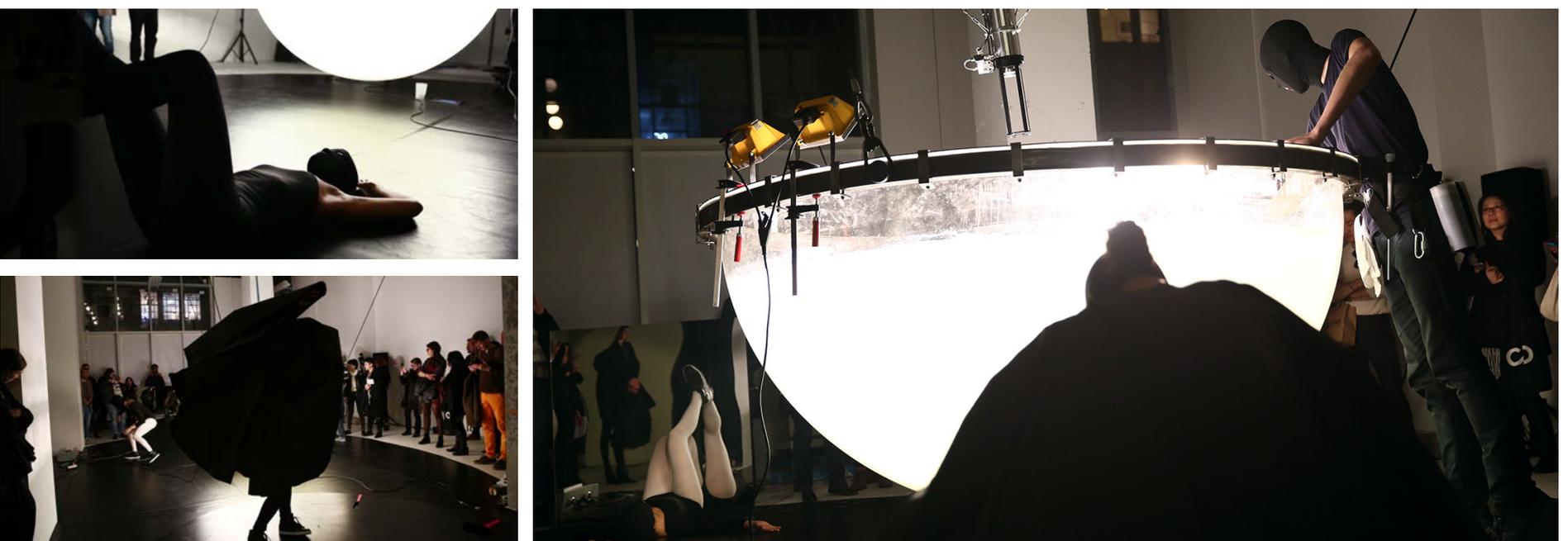
**BARBARA KRUGER FOR W MAGAZINE, NOVEMBER 2017**

**"I am grateful that Volcom was invited to participate with Performa on Barbara Kruger's brilliant performance, 'The Drop'. Performa's inventive approach to performance art was inspiring to witness first-hand. We look forward to any opportunities to partner again in the future with this ground-breaking performance art group"**

**MIKE AHO, VOLCOM GLOBAL CREATIVE DIRECTOR**

### KELLY NIPPER X PERFORMA X BROWN ARTS INITIATIVE

**I**n 2017, Performa and The Brown Arts Initiative (BAI) at Brown University announced a new three-year collaboration. The inaugural component was the co-commission of a new work by artist Kelly Nipper with MIT's Self-Assembly Lab for Performa 17, which was developed during an artists' residency at the Granoff Center for the Creative Arts at Brown University in summer 2017. During her residency at BAI, Kelly worked with BAI staff and Brown students to develop the visual and dance components of the performance. The collaboration encompasses the co-commissioning of new artistic work for future Performa biennials, the exchange of artistic and scholarly talent among Performa artists and curators and Brown faculty and students, and internship opportunities at Performa for Brown students.



In collaboration with MIT's Self Assembly Lab, Kelly Nipper created *Terre Mécanique*, her second Performa Commission. *Terre Mécanique* was a 30-minute performance with two Laban trained dancers and one MIT lab technician, an architectural scale liquid print head suspended by a specially designed winch system over an 8' diameter spherical tank full of gel medium suspended from the ceiling and three object-environments. Entering into the performance space, the audience encountered a performance already in progress in a setting that was an abstraction of the liquid printing lab at MIT and an analogue darkroom. The performance brought together the artists' interest in early experiments in the evolution of still and moving images, Laban Movement Analysis, and the transformation of space through the process of engineering and object production. *Terre Mécanique* is considered by the artist as the first foray into a major new body of work.

**"This collaboration goes to the heart of what the BAI does: expand on Brown's legacy of enriching artistic practice by supporting all that is experimental, forward-thinking, and cutting-edge in the arts across departments, among artists, and with eminent partners like Performa."**

**BUTCH ROVAN, FACULTY DIRECTOR AND MUSIC PROFESSOR, BAI**

# THE PERFORMA 17 BIENNIAL HUB

The Performa 17 Hub at 427 Broadway in SoHo was designed by renowned architect Markus Miessen and his team at Studio Miessen in Berlin. The Performa Hub functions as the headquarters of the Performa Biennial, offering daily programs for the Performa Institute, a centrally based space for gatherings and regrouping before and after events, daily work space for artists and staff, information and advice on schedules, ticketing, directions, and all manner of spontaneous programming and special events.

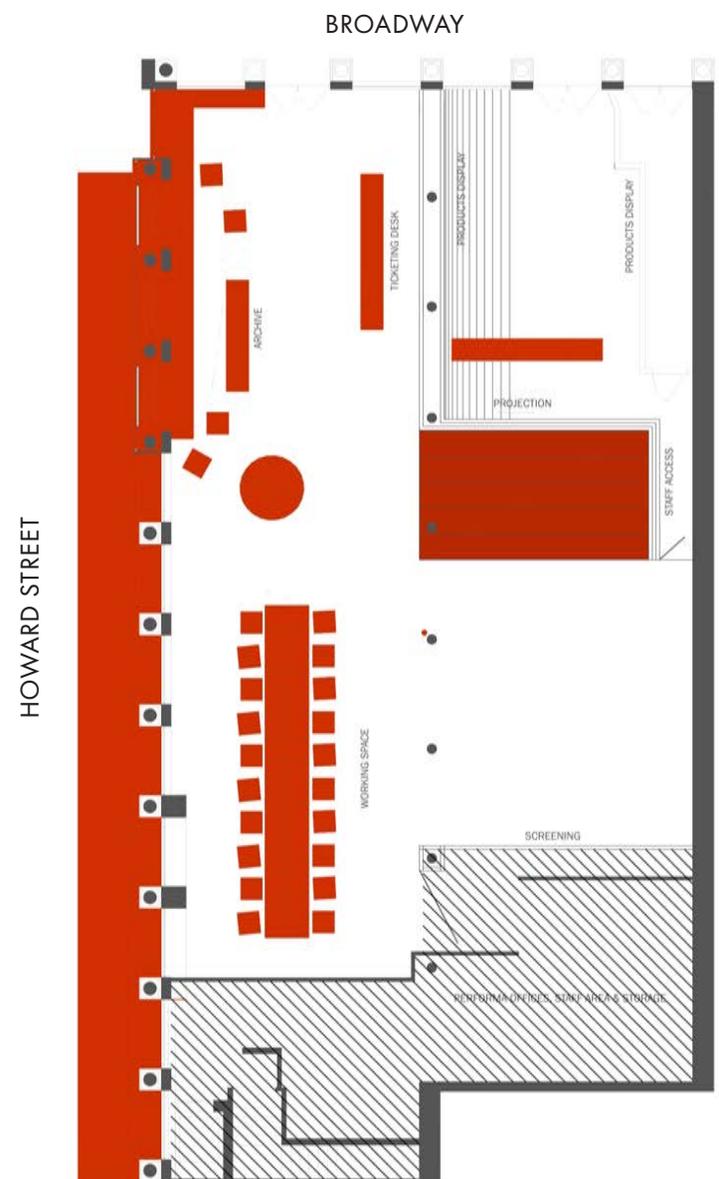
The Performa Institute is our year-round think tank that includes public programs, conferences, online and print publications, and a repository of performance scholarship, archives and documentation. The Performa Institute presents a range of in-depth programs for the presentation and exploration of ideas and the exchange of research and knowledge, with a focus on the study of history and on forging a new intellectual culture surrounding contemporary art. The Performa Institute presented over 40 artist talks, panel discussions, workshops, film screenings and lectures which were anchored by three major undertakings: two conferences on Performa's archives and performance and architecture, respectively, and an extended, wide-ranging residency by the Kenya-based literary network, Kwani Trust.



Photo © NKubota



Photo © NKubota



The Performa Institute is supported by The David & Elaine Potter Foundation and the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs

**“We have been involved in the development and design of the Performa Hub since 2009. For all of us here at the studio in Berlin, it has been a great pleasure and privilege to support Performa and to find new and exciting ways to translate ideas regarding community and spatio-social distribution into a set of physical stage sets and displays, which help to create an interface between the Biennial and the city of New York. We are very much looking forward to future adventures.”** **MARKUS MIESSEN**

## KWANI TRUST

Kwani Trust, a Nairobi-based literary network, presented *Everyone is Radicalizing*, an experimental subversion of its upcoming printed journal issue *Kwani no. 9*. The Kwani platform at Performa featured an installation, which included photography, oral history, audio recordings, and film screenings, as well as a series of daily public programs at the Performa Hub. *Everyone is Radicalizing* took as its point of departure aspects of radicalization across East Africa with a focus on the Kenyan Coast and North Eastern Kenya as a nexus of cultures, religions, and politics. The project uniquely amplified the area's historical and cultural context by taking a broad, exploratory look at phenomena often described in monolithic terms, such as terror, insecurity, violent extremism, and radicalization in the region and beyond. Speakers Included: Philosopher Kai Kress, Kenyan artist and poet Neo Musangi with Nigerian writer Emmanuel Iduma and American artist Lyle Ashton Harris, Kenyan artist Wangechi Mutu and Performa curator Adrienne Edwards, Kenyan artist Neo Musangi with scholar Tavia Nyong'o, Moroccan artist/curator Omar Berrada, and Nigerian writer/photographer Teju Cole.



# THE PERFORMA INSTITUTE

## ANTOINETTE AURELL



Photo by © Stephanie Bokenfohr

*The Ancient Art of Laying of the Stones* was led by Antoinette, Amoxli Yari Yolotili, Protector of Jewel Heart. On the opening day of the biennial, and audience assembled to learn about crystal healing and explore topics including brain waves, chakras, energy bodies, traumas, entities, demons, disease, circular/sacred time, and awakening.

## ADULT CONTEMPORARY



Photo by © Stephanie Bokenfohr

*Adult Contemporary*, a reading and performance series founded in 2013 by Svetlana Kitto and Katie Brewer-Ball, presented a salon-style evening of experimentation, genre collapse, and extraordinary conversation with performers Erin Markey, Joseph M. Piece, and poet Pamela Sneed.

## NICHOLAS HLOBO

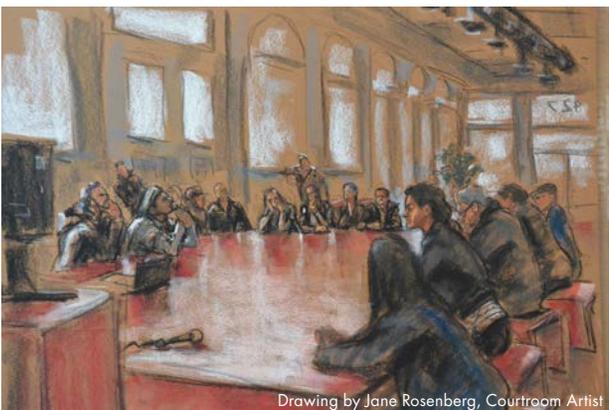


Film still by Todd Garrison

As part of the Institute's artist conversation series, RoseLee Goldberg sat down with artist Nicholas Hlobo to discuss his Biennial performance *umbhovuzo: The Parable of the Sower*. The series included conversations with Jimmy Robert, Wangechi Mutu, Kemang Wa Lehulere, Flo Kasearu, Brian Belott, and Byrony Roberts and Mabel O. Wilson.

## ARCHIVES CONFERENCE

With the recent acquisition of the Performa Archives by NYU's Fales Library, Performa is on course to develop its online archive to house the past twelve years of the biennial's activities. At this daylong conference at the Hub, artists, activists and scholars spoke about their practices that revolve around archives and together brainstormed new digital platforms, designs, software, and syllabi for establishing the foundation of Performa's archives. Presenters included Anthony Elms, Chief Curator ICA Philadelphia, Sur Rodney (Sur), Independent curator and archivist, C. Spencer Yeh, Artist, Nicholas Mirzoeff, Professor of Media, Culture, and Communication at NYU Steinhardt, Deena Engel, Director, Program in Digital Humanities and Social Science Department of Computer Science, NYU, and Barbara Clausen, Curator and Professor at Université du Québec in Montreal, amongst others. The conference was organized by Mark Arthur.



Drawing by Jane Rosenberg, Courtroom Artist



Photo by © Stephanie Bokenfohr



Photo by © Stephanie Bokenfohr

## TRACEY EMIN

Acclaimed British artist Tracy Emin was interviewed by Vincent Fremont, the former head of Andy Warhol's Factory and current ARTnews SA's CEO, while painting live in front of the audience. She invited audience participation by answering any questions that were thrown at her throughout the event.



Photo by © Austin Fremont



Photo by © Austin Fremont

## KELLY NIPPER

Performa commissioned artist Kelly Nipper sat down with Noam M. Elcott, Associate Professor of Modern and Contemporary Art and Media at Columbia University, and Skylar Tibbitts from MIT, to discuss her performance *Terre Mécanique* and the collaboration with MIT's Self-Assembly Lab as part of Performa's new three-year partnership with the Brown Arts Initiative at Rhode Island's Brown University.



Film still by Todd Garrison

## YVONNE RAINER

On the very last day of the Biennial at the Performa 17 Hub, Yvonne Rainer, who Performa has commissioned, produced and toured since 2007, premiered a new performance-lecture based on her recent foray into fiction writing called, *Revised: A Truncated History of the Universe for Dummies. A Dance Rant*. Rainer, the legendary choreographer/filmmaker and poet, mesmerized the full to capacity house with her dark story of Apollo, the God of the Sun, who "comes down to earth to try to improve things here, only to get into trouble."



## OPENING NIGHT GALA/ TRIBUTE TO YOKO ONO & WENDY FISHER

Performa hosted the Performa 17 Opening Night Gala at Harlem Parish, in honor of Yoko Ono and Performa Board member and Chair of the South African Pavilion Committee Wendy Fisher. The evening was conceived as a “live retrospective” of Ono’s work and featured several of her iconic performance pieces including *Sky Piece to J.C.* (1965), and *Touch Poem for Group of People* (1963 winter), with installations, films, and iconic interactive artworks such as *Painting to Be Stepped On* (1960). Laurie Anderson paid tribute to Ono with an emotional speech and performance of *Voice Piece for Soprano* (1961). Artist William Kentridge paid tribute to Wendy Fisher and to the opening of her new South African institution, the A4 Arts Foundation in Cape Town.

The night ended with a rousing performance of *Imagine* led by South African singer Vuyo Sotashe in both English and Zulu, accompanied by the Ono Orchestra. The evening’s meal was conceived by renowned chef Peter Hoffman, who drew inspiration for the menu from the Biennial’s historical anchor, Dada. Paying homage to the movement’s radical energy, guests were instructed to create their own salad with scissors and fresh vegetables in a homage to the cut up poems of Tristan Tzara, followed by a main course inspired by the painter George Grosz and dessert after Hans Arp.



## THE MALCOLM MCLAREN AWARD

The Malcolm McLaren Award was launched in 2011 as a way to honor its namesake, the deeply influential pop culture impresario, artist, fashion designer and filmmaker. McLaren died in 2010, and his partner, Young Kim, worked with curator Mark Beasley to establish the prize in his name. The inaugural award was presented to Ragnar Kjartansson by Lou Reed in 2011, followed by winner Ryan McNamara presented by Christian Marclay in 2013 and Edgar Arceneaux presented by Richard Hell in 2015.

Cape Town-based Kemang Wa Lehulere received the fourth edition of the Malcolm McLaren Award for his commission *I cut my skin the liberate the splinter*. The award was presented by the critic Carlo McCormick and accepted on the artist’s behalf by Vuyo Sotashe, the South African jazz singer. The award was designed by Mark Newson and celebrated with a DJ set by Venus X at PUBLIC Arts.



## PERFORMA 17 OPENING NIGHT ARTIST PARTY

Following the Opening Night Gala, Performa board member Roya Sachs, architect David Adjaye and The Performa Visionaries hosted the Performa 17 Opening Night Artist Party at the iconic Halston House, which was once at the center of the 1970's New York social scene and legendary for glamorous disco-era parties. The Party was sponsored by La Perla and featured DJ Oscar Nñ.



Top Row (left to right): **Amanda Kim, Richie Shazam, Chloe Wise.** Photo by Hunter Abrams/BFA.com, **Zoe Buckman, Antwaun Sargent, Oscar Nñ.** Photo by Hunter Abrams/BFA.com, **Mike Aho and Steve Rodriguez.** Photo by Hunter Abrams/BFA.com

Middle Row (left to right): **Performa 17 Opening Night Artist Party at the Halston House.** Photo by Hunter Abrams/BFA.com, **Ivan Pun, Jonathan Cho, James Hirschfeld, Hanneli Rupert.** Photo by Hunter Abrams/BFA.com, **Amy Guttman, Justine Osborne, Wendy Fisher, Ronald Guttman, Linda Mirels.** Photo by Benjamin Lozovsky/BFA.com

Bottom Row (left to right): **Barbara Hoffman, Tracey Rose, Zanele Muholi, Teju Cole.** Photo by Benjamin Lozovsky/BFA.com, **Julie Mehretu, Rashid Johnson, Jeanne Greenberg Rohatyn.** Photo by Benjamin Lozovsky/BFA.com, **Kimberly Roberts and Mia Moretti.** Photo by Hunter Abrams/BFA.com

## PERFORMA AFTERHOURS

Performa AFTERHOURS was a post-show get-together featuring a range of exciting emerging artists, held on two nights during the biennial at the newly opened PUBLIC Arts event space and club in the basement of the Public Hotel. Evenings drew loosely on Performa 17's historical anchor, *100 Degrees Above Dada*, featuring artists invested in art's revolutionary potential. The program kicked off with a DJ set by DJ BEARCAT, followed by performances with members of the Sisonke collective that including drag, dance, music, and poetry. The second AFTERHOURS featured a performance by Johannesburg-based multimedia artist Tabita Rezaire, sound by DJ Shyboi, and an operatic performance by Richard Kennedy alongside a full band and dancers. AFTERHOURS was programmed by Job Piston and Lydia Brawner, and co-organized with New York-based feminist DJ collective DISCWOMAN.

### RICHARD KENNEDY



### TABITA REZAIRE



### ZANELE MUHOLI & SISONKE COLLECTIVE



# HEARD ON THE STREETS



## BUILDING COMMUNITY AROUND THE PERFORMA BIENNIAL CONNECTING WITH BIENNIAL AUDIENCES NEAR AND FAR

64,520 Instagram followers

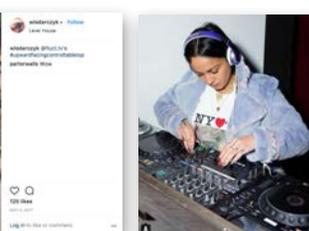
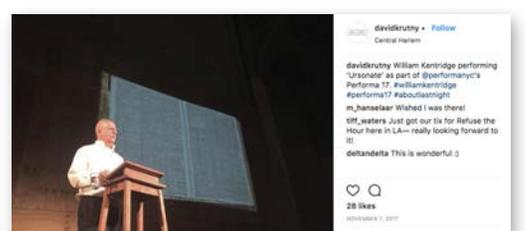
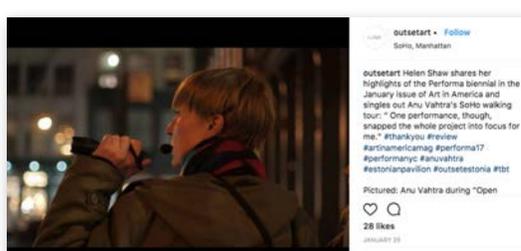
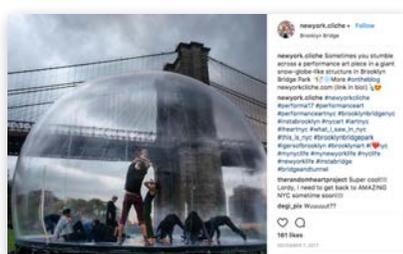
200,000 Instagram post engagements

41,000 Facebook followers

25,000 Facebook post engagements

320,000 impressions on performa-arts.org

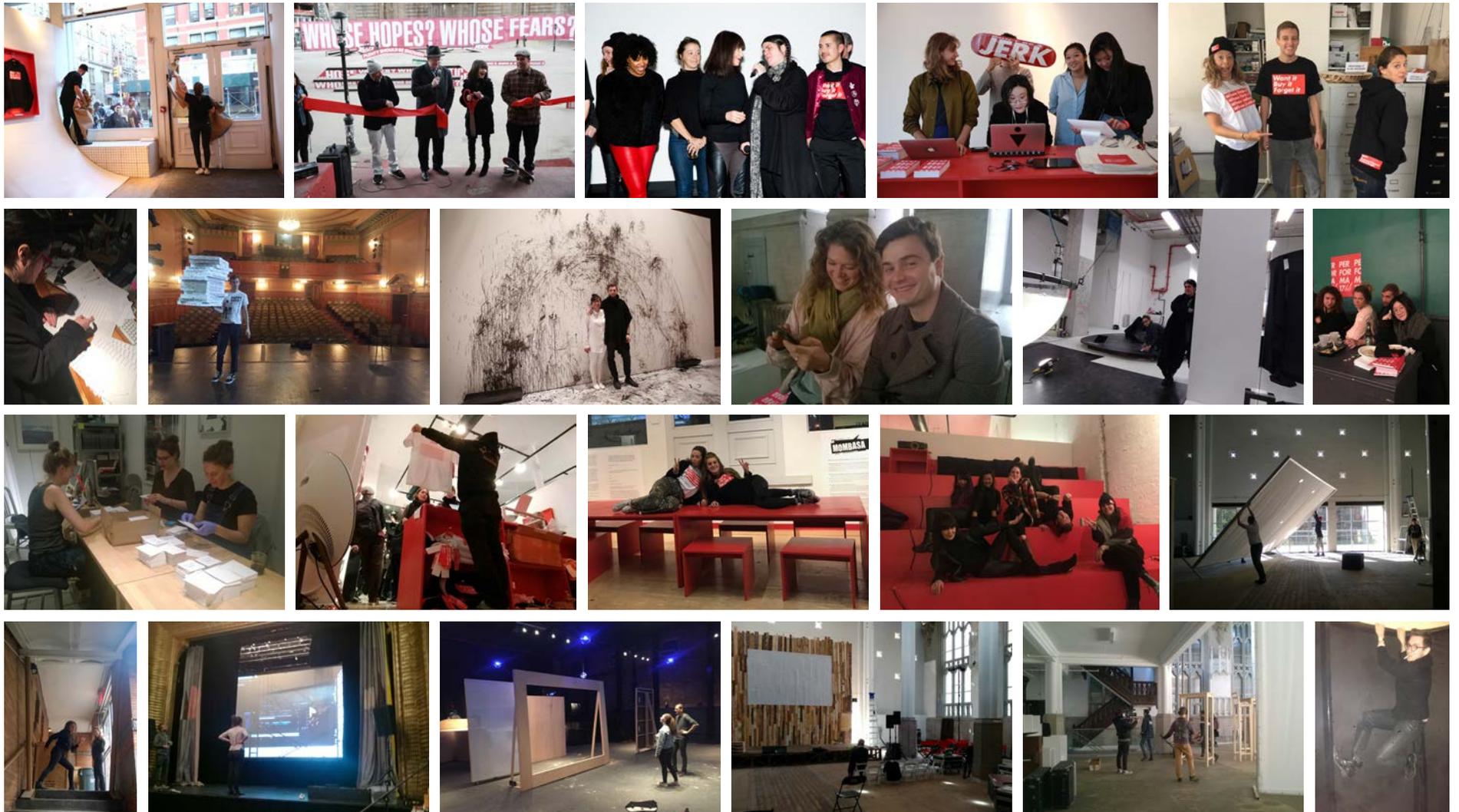
85,000 unique visits to performa-arts.org



# MAKING IT HAPPEN

## THE TEAM

It takes a village to realize the Performa Biennial – that village includes the Performa Board and Staff, a small army of dedicated volunteers, production crews, construction contractors, studio assistants, the staff and crew of our many partner organizations and above all, the artists who dedicate up to two years working on their biennial commissions and projects. We are extremely grateful to the Performa Board of Directors for supporting and celebrating our efforts throughout the process and for providing ballast and backbone to the organization.



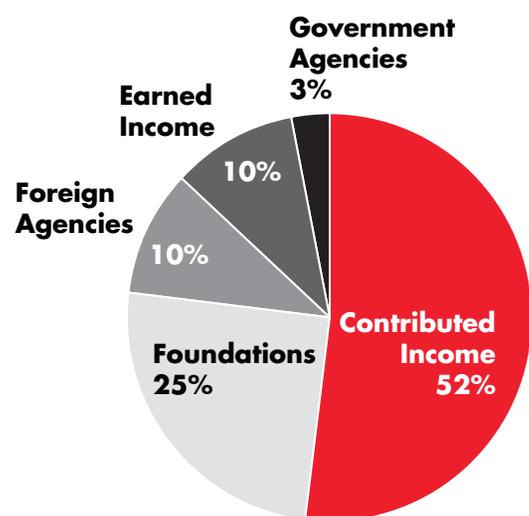
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 Charles Aubin, Curator  
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 Maggie Chan, Assistant to the Director

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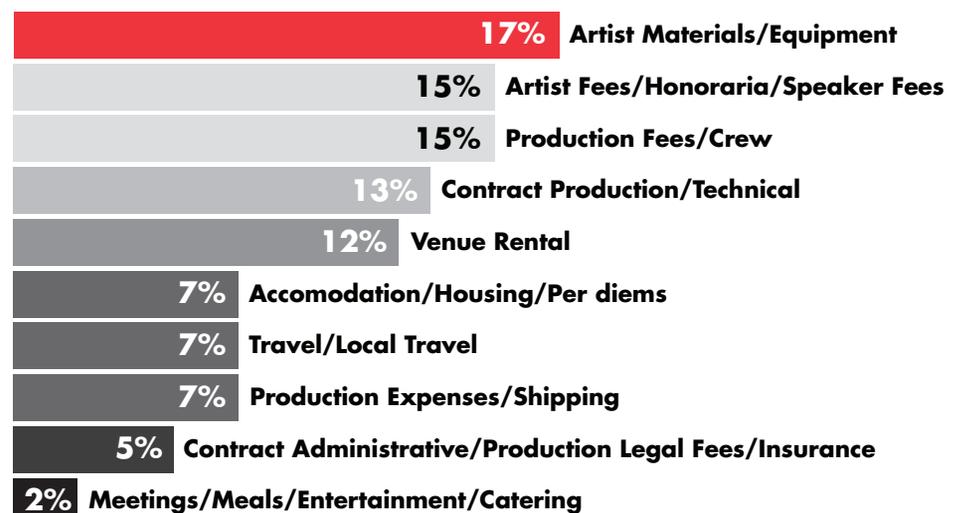
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 Barbara Kruger with Project Projects, Design  
 Perry Garvin Studio, Website



## THE FUNDING

Funding for the Biennial comes from over 35 generous foundations, government, institutional and corporate sources, and individuals. Each of these funding relationships are built around a shared vision for the Biennial program. We are grateful for our Founding Patron Toby Devan Lewis, and our Commissioning Council members who are specifically devoted to building a fund that supports artists and their Performa Commissions directly. We also thank our Membership Circles who make the biennial possible by supporting the operation of our organization.



## THE COST

The budget for the Biennial (not including operating) was \$1.18 million. This figure contains all of the expenses related to Performa Commissions, Projects and Institute programming produced and presented by Performa as well as the cost of marketing, documenting and presenting the biennial. These figures do not include expenses assumed by our partnering organizations.

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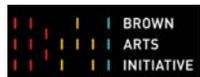
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## STAY IN TOUCH!

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