

THIS is Performance Art

a manifesto written by Marilyn Arsem in January 2011, updated 2019

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THIS is Performance Art

Performance art is now.

Performance art is live.

Performance art reveals itself in the present.

The artists engage in the act of creation as they perform.

Performance art's manifestation and outcome cannot be known in advance.

Re-enactment of historical work is theater, not performance art.

Performance art is real.

Performance art operates on a human scale.

It exists on the same plane as those who witness it.

The artists use real materials and real actions.

The artists are no one other than themselves.

There are no boundaries between art and life.

The time is only now.

The place is only here.

Performance art requires risk.

The artists take physical risks using their bodies.

The artists take psychic risks as they confront their limits.

Witnessing a performance challenges an audience's own sense of self.

Sponsoring performance art, with its unpredictability, requires taking risks.

Failure is always possible.

Performance art is not an investment object.

The work cannot be separated from the maker.

It cannot be held.

It cannot be saved.

It cannot be reproduced.

Performance art is experience - shared time and space and actions between people.

The record of performance art resides in the bodies of the artist and the witnesses.

Performance art is ephemeral.

It is an action created by an artist for a specific time and place.

Witnesses are privy to a unique experience that will never happen again.

Performance art reveals the vulnerability of living.

Performance art reminds us that life is fleeting.

We are only here now.