

# MODIFICATIONS 2010

In 2010 the Aarhus Art Building takes the first step in the implementation of a whole new strategy, where each year the exhibition program will be planned on the basis of an overall theme. The chosen theme must be challenging and topical and lend a voice to central issues in the world of art right now. In 2010 the theme is *Modifications*.

*Modifications* is a reference to the Danish artist Asger Jorn's exhibition of the same name in Paris 50 years ago, where he presented a series of kitsch-paintings on top of which he had painted his own additions. With the exhibition Jorn attempted to once and for all dispel the notion of art as something sublime and autonomous. The members of the international artist group Situationist International, which Jorn along with the French theorist Guy Debord had founded a few years earlier, held a firm belief in the revolutionary potential of the artistic process. Art was seen as a possible way out of the meaningless and empty pseudo-society that the members of the group referred to as the 'Society of the Spectacle'. Although the group

ended up dissolving itself rather than art as such, contemporary art in many ways still stands on a similar bastion: between destruction and construction – or between partial displacement and pure action, one might also say. This state of the art, so to speak, within contemporary art, plus its historical source, forms the basis for the theme *Modifications*. It is the intention of the 2010 exhibition program to shed new light on the issue and to raise the question of whether art presents a way out of the all-encompassing grip of the Society of the Spectacle. A question that is just as relevant today as it was 50 years ago.

# HISTORY OF DISAPPEARANCE

LIVE ART FROM NEW YORK 1975 - NOW

13. NOVEMBER 2010 – 9. JANUARY 2011



*History of Disappearance* is an exhibition offering a rare opportunity to see some of the historical highlights of experimental performance art.

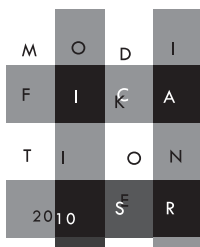
The exhibition has been mounted in collaboration with Archives of Franklin Furnace in New York, which exhibits documentations of important moments ranging from the performance art of the avant-garde of the 1970s through the politically changing times of the 1980s to the new millennium.

## ARCHIVES OF FRANKLIN FURNACE

Archives of Franklin Furnace was formed in 1976 by the artist Martha Wilson, who is still the director of the archive today. In the early days it existed as an exhibition space in her loft. Works dedicated to time-based art forms – that is, art publications, performance art, installation art and so-called 'live art' – were gathered and exhibited there. It was radically new to exhibit this kind of art at the time.

The archive was one of the first organizations to take time-based art seriously, and entered the struggle to create a place with space for this kind of art. In the 1980s and the early 1990s in particular, Archives of Franklin Furnace was a highly active organization, for example also participating in the advocacy of artists' public rights. With the overall mission of "making the world a safe place for avant-garde art", the organization has since then worked to present, preserve, interpret and disseminate the works of the avant-garde.

Archives of Franklin Furnace has been able to stay abreast of the times. In 1996 the physical exhibition venue was closed and relaunched instead as a virtual institution. Today one can visit the archive's database at [www.franklinfurnace.org](http://www.franklinfurnace.org) and browse through much of the archive material.



MODIFICATIONS 2010  
IS SPONSORED BY

Augustinus Fonden  
Knud Højgaards Fond  
Danske Initiativpuljer  
STARK

BIKUBENFONDEN



THE EXHIBITION IS SPONSORED BY

The Danish Arts Council Committee for International Visual Art

The Cultural Development Foundation – The Municipality of Aarhus

The Danish Arts Council Committee for Visual Arts

THE AARHUS ART BUILDING  
IS SPONSORED BY



## ÅRHUS KUNSTBYGNING

J.M. MØRKS GADE 13 DK-8000 ÅRHUS C

T: +45 86 20 60 50 E: [info@aarhuskb.dk](mailto:info@aarhuskb.dk) W: [www.aarhuskunstbygning.dk](http://www.aarhuskunstbygning.dk)

# Performance Art and its Institutionalization: A MAP

## What is Live Art / Performance?

Inserting Life into ART - Making ART - Life

Not Theater: Experience / Process / Real time and Space

Not pretend Critical Content and Form conceived + performed by artist Audience Interaction

Crossing Boundaries. The personal is Political

Anti - Entropy Critical of conventional assumptions

Endurance - Deviance - Difference - Process

## What is ART?

(Beauty? OR Meaning?)

Purity Objective Timeless Status Quo / status Immediate Pleasure Taken-for-Granted or causing certainty

Social Change Subjective Contextual/Ephemeral Disruption To make you think Critique/causing question for whom?

## What is Avant Garde Art?

Critique of the System Initially Shocking and Break down of the taken for Granted political Out in Front RISK TAKERS

COG in the Wheel revitalizing Dead Forms as an Aesthetic Against the machine

Anti-commodity/Anti-status Innovation over Time

## What is an INSTITUTION?

BRICK and MORTAR ARCHITECTURE ESTABLISHED SOLID SYMMETRY HIERARCHY PLANNED ORDERED ROUTINE SYSTEMIC Defined-Domination conventional Traditional informed and managed unwieldy MACHINIC

AGAINST DIFFERENCE AGAINST RANDOMNESS AGAINST THE OUTSIDE AGAINST CHAOS

The INSTITUTION OF ART PROMOTES ART AS AN AUTONOMOUS SPHERE - SEPARATE FROM LIFE and other Social Forces

## The Relationship: LIVE ART to INSTITUTION OF ART

Conflicted Ambivalent Paradoxical Generational Parental Patronage/Patronised Integrated Negotiated Subsumed Inevitable Co-dependent

Performance Art becomes INSTITUTIONALIZED as its own Field through a democratic effort. It is neither entirely subsumed into the institution nor refused by it - stays on the edge - Both inside + out

## Changes in LIVE ART OVER Time 1970-2000 (USA)

1970s	1980s	1990s	2000s
<b>CONTENT</b> AUTOBIOGRAPHY CONCEPTUAL	IRONY OUTRAGE	Identity politics PUBLIC ART PEDAGOGY	ALL previous + new media
<b>FORM</b> RITUAL	STAGED MONOLOGUE	STAGED ACTION	ALL previous + virtual
<b>AVANT Garde-ness</b> ART/Life = FORM	ART/Life = Content + popular Audience	ART/Life = Content OR FORM	AESTHETIC Innovation
<b>Politics</b> Against ART ESTABLISHMENT	Social ISSUES	Identity Politics and Social WORK	aesthetic Innovation FORMALISM
<b>Audience</b> Small/LOCAL ART PEERS	Non-Local Non-ARTS	Mass Media General	ART WORLD (all + none)
<b>Venue-Type</b> Street Independent	Proliferation of indie Venues	Mass Media societal level indie venue	MUSEUM, Indie, virtual, global art + world
<b>Institutionalization</b> Documentation ARTIST - RUN ORGANIZATIONS	Govt. Funding UMBRELLA ORGANIZATIONS established	Integration and De-institutionalization	global art world MUSEUMS + indie

Based on High Performance Magazine, HISTORICAL RESISTANCE and INTERVIEWS

## Who or What is an ARTIST?

The Identity of the ARTIST and the social context that surrounds the artist suggest that the ARTIST is alone, a go-between, speaking his/her own language in an autonomous space separate from other social norms, conventions and groups.

IS ARTIST STATUS A CLASS STATUS? High or Low? Where does the ARTIST belong with Elites? with Workers? with Intellectuals?

## What is an Individual?

**EUROPE**  
SOCIAL CLASS STATUS is "Inherited and not likely to change in a life time" "Accept your position in life" Social supports exist to live a dignified life State Funded ARTS, Health Education + Welfare

**USA**  
Myth of: Social Mobility Personal Freedoms "You can do or be" "Be Happy" anything It's all up to you do it yourself Everyone is equal

History of Disappearance is showing an extract from Archives of Franklin Furnace's considerable collection of art publications over time. The books have been published collectively as so-called 'community-based art', or as individual publications with the focus on among other things socially-based art or activism.

## DISAPPEARING HISTORY

The title of the exhibition, *History of Disappearance*, tells us that we are dealing with historical material that can easily perish or disappear for posterity. Performance art and artists' books are each in their own way time-based art forms. They are thus fragile and ephemeral to work with in terms of preservation.

Performance art exists in a single moment. Even if the works are documented on film, there is no guarantee that the material can be shown in just 20 years' time, given the speed at which technology is developing.

Artists' books are paper objects which are in themselves fragile to preserve. Similarly, the small editions of the books make it difficult to ensure that they will endure for posterity.

The traditional art museum has neglected to turn its gaze towards the preservation and display of the avant-garde and ephemeral art forms; both because the content of the works has at times been politically unpopular, and because the museums have not developed effective systems and preservation methods that are optimal for preserving time-based material.

The exhibition *History of Disappearance*, and Archives of Franklin Furnace's work to bring time-based art into the light thus also write the history of avant-garde art's frailty and its struggle for survival.

More on Franklin Furnace:

In Hall A you can see and hear the director of Archives of Franklin Furnace, Martha Wilson, talking about the history of the archive in the video *Whither the Alternative Space?*

## PERFORMANCE ART

In performance art the artist's self and body are involved in the actual work. It is art that takes place as a form of performance in front of an audience, and sometimes also with participation from the audience. However, some performances are conducted without an audience, and in such cases are documented among other ways by means of video or photography.

*History of Disappearance* shows documentations of performance art as video material that reproduces how various performances have taken place.

Performance art is a time-based art form. This means that it exists as a performance here and now. Although performance art appears to overlap with theatrical art, it has its roots in visual art. In particular, performance art grew out of the conceptual art of the 1970s, where the focus on ideas was stronger than the more traditional focus on aesthetics, form and colour.

More on performance art:

In Hall A you can see and hear the director of

Archives of Franklin Furnace, Martha Wilson, talking about the history of performance art in the video *The History of Performance Art According to Me, Martha Wilson*.

## ARTISTS' BOOKS

Artists' books are an art form where it is the textual material that becomes art. The artists often play with the book form, for example by writing upside down, stringing sentences together in criss-cross patterns or piecing cuttings and pictures together into a book. Again it is the ideas more than the actual object that constitute the artwork. The books are book experiments, and they are fragile in the sense that they exist in very limited editions, all the way down to a single copy.