

Lindsey Payne

Professor John Gallaher

INTRO TO GRADUATE STUDY IN ENGLISH

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Defining Performance Art Studies

1. Primary Questions/Concerns Addressing Performance Art Studies



Adrian Piper, *The Mythic Being: Sol's Drawing #1-5*, 1974. Walker Art Center, Minneapolis.

Evidence suggests that performance can be categorized from getting dressed for any job in the morning to showing skills in front of an audience. A baker dresses to bake and is therefore a person performing the part of a baker just as professors dress to lecture. Openly categorizing performance art qualifies everyone with an occupation as an artist. Each performer's walk of life is their stage. This can be problematic in narrowing down who qualifies as an artist in performing arts creating a large platform. It is in perspective that determines what art is and what it isn't. Some think a person spinning plate on stage is a performing artist. Others include waiters and waitresses showing off for attention as performing artists although they are not on stage. Performance art is time based and typically presented on stage or public platform, but the definition varies per person. Placing teachers, police and military in the same category as stage performers under the category of performance artist is what some scholars have done recently. "Is performance studies a 'field,' an 'area,' a 'discipline'?" The sidewinder snake moves across the desert floor by contracting and extending itself in a sideways motion. Wherever this beautiful rattlesnake points, it is not going there. Such (in)direction is characteristic of performance studies. This area/field/discipline often plays at what it is not, tricking those who want to fix it, alarming some, amusing others. Astounding a few as it side-winds its way across the deserts of academia" (Schechner, 2025).

Although it is true that they are performing their daily role, and clock in for work, it is not a time-based performance on stage. What are the qualifications when there are different opinions?

In Studio Ghibli's *Kiki's Delivery Service*, a male character is a baker who shows off to a cat by putting on a show spinning large trays. This can be seen as a performance because it stands out over time as a talent that the actor is displaying. Animation is performative in general.

There is a script, storyboard, or idea in mind while executing an animation. Puppetry in animation is performed just the same as acting. The performer is also the animator because the animator is creating movement that makes the film and character come to life. Animation is male dominated and although the number of women is increasing; it is still something to address. The usage of AI in art, animation and film has created setbacks for artists because now talent is currently not something that is seen as valuable in the way it used to. Art such as painting is not mentioned as performative art, but some artists film the creation process as performance art like behind the scenes. This also does not mean as much to some because of the creation of fake actors who look realistic. The world of film is similar with questioning what is performance art as now actors and actress can be replaced with AI actors and actresses. Is artificial intelligence a performer? Or is it not considered a performer? AI is emulating and eliminating human places in the world. Does the creator have to be human to be a performer? Whose opinion stands over time? AI users who crank out works of art using prompts or artists who create work with their own minds, bodies and creativity? Do hologram performances count as performances if the celebrity is already deceased? How do we know if anything is real when AI can make anyone do anything online even if the celebrity is dead? How can we determine what is real in a world of simulation?

Feminist art performance can be categorized from cooking to video art. A repeated gender normative that categorize females and depending on perspective, can literally determine gender. Others determine gender by the sex of the baby when it is born. "Gender reality is performative... The [gender] act that one does, the act that one performs, is, in a sense, an act that has been going on before one arrived on the scene. Hence, gender is an act which has been

rehearsed, much as a script survives the particular actors who make use of it, but which requires individual actors in order to be actualized and reproduced as reality once again“(Butler, 2025).

Performance can determine gender from some perspectives while others do not accept performance as gender. Legalities can regulate these terms and determine what is and isn't.

Performance art is undefined as much as it is defined, making it difficult to organize.

2. Conflicts in Performance Art

The genre of performance art is notoriously confusing and, in an arts context, controversial”

Historically, **performance art has been a medium that challenges and violates borders between disciplines and genders, between private and public, and between everyday life**



and art, and that follows no rules” (Spivey, 2025).

‘We don’t really have a script’ ... still from The Quay Brothers’ animation *Street of Crocodiles* (1986). Photograph: Zeitgeist Films

Animation is similar to confusion and blurring lines between what is real and what is not, what is performance, what is not. My Animation Instructor Paul Ward at AUB quoted Suzanne Buchan’s essay, focusing on the Quay Brothers’ strange animated puppet films, on” how these films in particular (and animation in general) address their audience. Using a phenomenologically-influenced theoretical frame, she asks what happens when a viewer “experiences” an animated film? What if we know that the “world” we are viewing has no relation to the real, phenomenal world of actuality— and, more to the point, if we also know that

the moving things we can see are really inanimate, rather than animate? In the Quays' skewed universe, found objects (screws and other paraphernalia) and the aforementioned puppets blur the edges between different "worlds" (Ward, 2025).



Still from Lindsey Payne's (Me) animation *flowers of antimony* (2015). Photograph: Bijou Festival

Although it is conflicting, it is also intriguing about performance art and why I began animating to express what is between worlds in ways only visual poetry can speak.

3. Shared Values in Performance Art Studies

Concert halls and multiple gallery spaces and venues are places that uphold shared values where performance art can take place. Walt Disney Concert Hall is a place where performance art consistently takes place with music as well. Fluxus Artist Allison Knowles performed her art "Make a Salad" there and I was included in the performance. She took much longer than planned but as it is time-based art, it was performed that way on purpose. Timing is important in film, animation, and live performance art. They all challenge social norms by doing things in their own way or innovating new ideas. Every animator in stop-motion animation uses different timing although there are popular times.

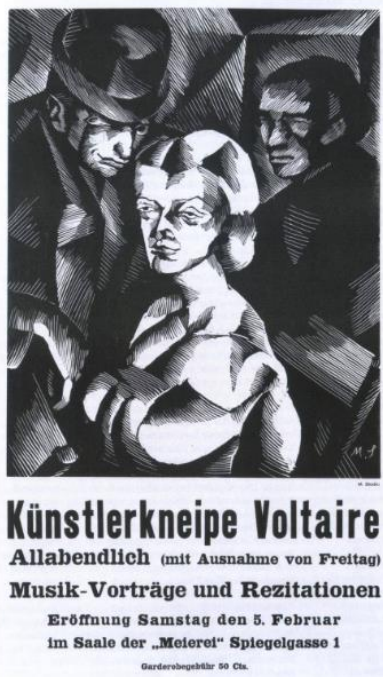
4. Engaging in Performance Art Studies

Performance art performed at Galleries is at times interactive. Audiences can engage with artists and are often included in the art performance. Audiences view videos/films and animations at a theater or venue or private viewings.

Writers typically are professors and practitioners in the craft who find success in writing about performance. Additionally, articles from art forums are popular in regard to writing about performance art in the arts context, although animation can also be categorized in the arts context. Screenwriters and Playwriters make a living writing for performance. Authors occasionally have their work turned into movies, plays and occasionally participate in writing it for performances.

5. Performance Art Studies Throughout Time

Cave drawings served as animation as the first animation performance using flickering fire. Now phones and tablets can create animations. Unlike animation, live performance art has never been dominated by males.



Marcel Slodki, Poster for the opening of the Cabaret Voltaire, 1916, lithograph

Performance art started with Avant Garde, such as Dada. Dada's roots are in performance. The movement was founded in 1916. Hugo Ball and Emmy Hennings opened a room for art performance

California Institute of the Arts, where I studied in 2015 (Experimental Animation) and again in 2019 (Experimental Sound Practices) had the first Feminist Art Program in the USA 1971. Installation and video art were common.



Yoko Ono, "Cut Piece" (1965). Performance art. Carnegie Hall, New York. Photos: Museum of Modern Art, NY.

Performance art in the 60's and 70's was liberal with experimentation allowed with much uncharted territory. Yoko Ono is an important female in performing arts that made her art as a sacrifice referencing Buddha, wearing her favorite clothing asking the audience to cut it away.

Performance Art (live) continues today in an Arts context mainly in the gallery space world-wide and performance spaces that include music. At CalArts, it combines music with performance and also showcases experimental film, theater and music performances at art spaces, concert halls and theaters.

6. Performance Art Studies Contributions to Understanding People

Performing creates empathy in the audience, and interactive art creates a personal experience. "Performance studies is an interdisciplinary field of research that draws from the social sciences, the humanities, and the arts. It focuses on the pervasiveness of performance as a central element of social and cultural life, including not only theater and dance but also such forms as sacred rituals and practices of everyday life, storytelling and public speaking, avant-

garde performance art, popular entertainments, microconstructions of ethnicity, race, class, sex, and gender, world fairs and heritage festivals, nonverbal communication, play and sports, political demonstrations and electronic civil disobedience, sex shows and drag performance—potentially any instance of expressive behavior or cultural enactment. Within this field, performance entails the presentation or "reactualization" of symbolic systems through both living and mediated bodies. The paradigm of performance studies has been surveyed in numerous essays and book chapters by writers such as Dell Hymes, John J. MacAloon, Philip Zarrilli, Ronald J. Pelias and James VanOosting, Richard Schechner ("Performance"), Dwight Conquergood, Janelle G. Reinelt and Joseph R. Roach, Jill Dolan, Carol Simpson Stern and Bruce Henderson, Peggy Phelan ("Introduction"), and Jon McKenzie. The first book-length survey of the field was Marvin Carlson's *Performance: A Critical Introduction* (1996), and a critical anthology, *Performance: Critical Concepts in Literary and Cultural Studies*, edited by Philip Auslander, appeared in 2003. Discussions can take place through performance art by creating experiences and characters that affect an audience cerebrally and emotionally.

7. Other Resources, and Success in Performance Art Studies

Universities such as Yale University has databases full of scholarly articles and full text plays. There are several art magazines, books and videos at libraries around the world. There are film and animation databases that students at various locations and professionals can access. General performances can be accessed everywhere. Additional journals are:

- *Theatre Journal*
- *Performance Research*

- *Research in Drama Education: The Journal of Applied Theatre and Performance*
- *International Journal of Performance Arts and Digital Media*

The most successful Performance (arts context) studies are often by practitioners who write about their craft. Artists with their art performed in galleries will have their information and art in articles online and their personal websites. Books on creative writing, screen plays, plays, and art performances can also be found in miscellaneous stores online and occasionally in person.

Success is making a living in performance art by writing plays, creative writing, performing at galleries and concert halls, working in animation. In addition, teaching and writing about the topics is ideal and an ultimate success.

Performance Studies: A Moving Target,

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