

# Reading Performance

## An Annotated Bibliography in Real Time: Performance Art in Quebec and Canada III

November 1 – December 15, 2017

A research exhibition and a series  
of discussions and screenings

**ARTEXTE**

Histoire  
de l'art

UQÀM

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## Preface

While this is indeed the third public chapter of Artex-te's collaboration with the UQAM-based *Une bibliographie commentée en temps réel* Art Historical Research Group, the bibliographic, video and textual documentation produced within their expansive research project is a permanently growing and productive part of our collection. It is accessible on-site and on-line and has been making information accessible, encouraging research on performance art in Quebec and Canada since the first edition of the bibliography and programming documentation were deposited in the Artex-te collection in 2015.

Situated within a research project that expands the source index of performance art research, *Reading Performance* is distinguished as a questioning of what performance art does: how it functions within activism, how it circulates and communicates as textual documentation and how it represents and frames questions of identity within video productions. The first phases of this massive bibliographic project identified and mapped performances art information sources. Building on this research, *Reading Performance* delves more deeply into intersecting functions and histories of performance art in relation to specific materialities: video, ephemeral documents, posters; and specific sites: the body, the gallery, the collection.

The *Reading Performance* exhibition mirrors the working methodology of the research group through an approach that creates annotations for a wide variety of performance art sources and presents public forums such as screenings, discussions and exhibitions that offer possibilities for varied forms of knowledge production. Each of the three theme-specific exhibitions are curated, respectively, by student researchers, Jade Boivin, Emmanuel Choquette and Geneviève Marcil. Their curatorial work in the gallery is closely linked to their academic research in art history at UQAM. Their choices of document presentation draw on the continually expanding core bibliographic research project and bring together documents from Artex-te's holdings and other permanent collections such as V Tape, The National Film Board, Western Front, FADO and La Centrale and Concordia University and UQAM libraries.

Artexte takes care of a constantly developing special collection of documents, donated primarily from artists, historians, writers, art centres and publishers from across the country. As such, it contains the writings, interests and practices of a very particular pan-Canadian community that cares about art writing. *Reading Performance* brings many of these publications out of their boxes and shelves and in doing so, inscribes them into the evolving history of performance, and most importantly, brings them together so that new and intersecting readings can be made.

I would like to thank all Artexte staff members for their contributions to this project, with particular gratitude to Frédérique Duval for her significant contribution to research and production. On behalf of Artexte I would like to thank all members of the *Une bibliographie commentée en temps réel* research group for this project that asks necessary questions about the 'work' of performance art and creates manifold possibilities for new spaces of discourse on performance art in Quebec and Canada.

**Sarah Watson, General and Artistic Director, Artexte**

## Reading Performance

### **An Annotated Bibliography in Real Time: Performance Art in Quebec and Canada III** A research exhibition and a series of discussions and screenings at Artexte

*Reading Performance* is the third edition of the two-fold exhibition project *An Annotated Bibliography in Real Time* first presented at Artexte in 2015. Echoing the lively research context at Artexte, this project, taking form as an exhibition, as well as a series of screenings and talks offers a dynamic space for discussion and exchange on past and present performance-based practices, writings and bibliographical research in Quebec and Canada.

This latest rendition is part of the long term university research project *An Annotated Bibliography: Performance Art in Quebec and Canada* initiated by the Art History Department at UQAM. It is dedicated to an extensive bibliographic survey and a comprehensive overview of writings, publications and printed matter on performance-based practices since the 1940s on a local, provincial, and national level. By taking account of the wide variety of existing publications and discourses *Reading Performance* reflects on the collective spirit inherent for performance art, shedding light on various modes of production and circumstances of experience as well as the ongoing reception of performance art, over more than half a century.

*Reading Performance* is a research and writing laboratory that aims to occupy the exhibition space in such a way as to reflect and generate diverse discourses on performance art, as an inherently interdisciplinary and hybrid medium. Within this context the bibliography becomes a discursive tool active in the here and now, a method used to deepen and refine connections between the practice, production and writing of performance art.

*Reading Performance* is a situation, as well as a process and way of reflecting on the relationship between research and artistic production. This exhibition residency revolves around three main themes: text, space and image. The setup of the exhibition is updated and transformed throughout its three iterations via selected texts, documents and videos. As part of the programming, discussions and bibliographic annotation sessions are organized in the space during the exhibition period.

**Jade Boivin, Emmanuelle Choquette,  
Barbara Clausen, Geneviève Marcil, 2017**

## **Part I (November 1 – 18) – TEXT**

### **THE ART MANIFESTO AS PERFORMATIVE TEXT**

This first section of the exhibition is an examination of the artistic manifesto as a performative act, opening up a dialogue between the act of performance and the gesture of writing. With a nod to the theories of J.L. Austin (*How to Do Things with Words*, 1955/1962), this first part of the exhibition considers the manifesto both as a call to action and as an act in and of itself. Through the presentation of videos and publications/periodicals, the manifesto takes form through the different phases of its utterance: writing, dissemination and public reading. This treatment of the manifesto highlights the contribution of artists' writing to the production and reception of performance and the definition of its renewed forms in the interstices between art, performance, poetry, video, dance and theatre. Beginning with a discussion on the politics of bibliographical research, *The art manifesto as performative text* ultimately aims to question the position and methodology of the researcher in art history as well as complex relationships with his/her primary sources.

**Curator: Geneviève Marcil**

## **Part II (November 22 – December 2) – SPACE**

### **STAGING RESEARCH**

Examining the ways in which theoretical and document-based research is at the core of an increasing number of artists' practices, this second part of the exhibition entitled *Staging Research* investigates how discursive and performative practices respond to the site specificity of the exhibition. The exhibited documents and recordings allow for an exploration of the strategies, tools and techniques that artists, such as Sophie Bélair Clément, Marie-Claire Forté, David Tomas, Stéphane Gilot or Francys Chenier, use to render their research visible as part of a process based mode of working. The focus on the various textual and paratextual elements – press releases, publications, recordings and documentation of interventions – surrounding or accompanying artworks, reveals the performativity of their underlying approaches and research based practices. Presented together, these different types of documents and ephemera highlight the processes at work in correspondences, conversations, requests, reports and narratives and engage with the position of the artist as researcher from several critical perspectives.

**Curator: Emmanuelle Choquette**

### **Part III (December 6 – December 15) – IMAGE NARRATIVES OF THE SELF IN VIDEO ART**

The third part of *Reading Performance* looks at how image politics define and reflect the construction and consolidation of identity. Through a parallel staging of videos, artists' writings and related theoretical discourses, the exhibition investigates how images engage in a dialogue with queer and feminist discourses in performance art as well as the genesis of video-based practices. In their consideration of the ongoing relationship between performance, image and body, Canadian and Quebec artists invested in performance-based practices have used video to question the social relationships wherein identity is forged. The aim here is to investigate the reception of these video images as everyday and intimate forms of narration, as well as tools of identity formation on a broader political level. In parallel with the bibliographical research in progress and in keeping with its accumulative and collaborative method of working, this video programme emphasizes the importance of questioning the idea of a subjective art history. Video thus becomes the site of self-narrative, a site where desire and experience can be articulated through visual and media-based language.

**Curator: Jade Boivin**

## Discussions presented in conjunction with the exhibition

### Why Bibliographies Now ?

#### A discussion on bibliographical research at Arttexte

with Nicole Burisch, Joana Joachim (EAHR member at large, Concordia University) and Victoria Stanton.

Moderators: Barbara Clausen and Geneviève Marcil

November 1 at 5 PM (in French and English)

This discussion brings together historians, artists and curators that have participated in bibliographic research projects at Arttexte dedicated to various artistic and performance based practices. Presenting their points of view and themes, these individual and collective researchers ask how the bibliographic form can not only constitute and reveal discourses but also serve as an investigative tool to question the individual as well as institutional politics of performance, craft, feminism, identity and diversity.

## Biographies

Nicole Burisch is a curator, critic, and cultural worker. Her projects focus on discourses of craft, feminism, performance, publishing, labor, and materiality within contemporary art. Burisch worked as Administrative Coordinator at Centre Skol from 2011-2014, as the Director of Calgary's Mountain Standard Time Performative Art Festival from 2007-2009, and as Managing Editor for MAWA's *Desire Change* publication on feminist art in Canada (2017). Her research (with Anthea Black) into curatorial strategies for politically engaged craft practices is included in milestone publications *The Craft Reader* (Berg) and *Extra/ordinary: Craft and Contemporary Art* (Duke University Press) and was at the core of a day of research and discussion at Arttexte (*Skillshare*, 2013).

**BURISCH, Nicole**

*Ethnocultural Art Histories Research* (EAHR) is a student-driven research community based within the Department of Art History at Concordia University. Open to students and faculty invested or interested in exploring issues of cultural representation, and ethnocultural art histories research across various disciplines; activities include: symposiums, curatorial projects, discussion groups, and exhibition visits.

Joana Joachim participated in a research residency at Artexte as a member of EAHR in 2015. She is now a PhD Student in the department of Art History and Communication Studies and at the Institute for Gender, Sexuality and Feminist Studies at McGill University. Her current work examines representations of Black women in Canadian and American nineteenth century genre paintings and photography, with a particular focus on the legacies of slavery located in ongoing discrimination against their hair.

Victoria Stanton is an interdisciplinary performance artist and researcher/curator/educator. She has curated performance art programs for artist-run centres in both Montreal and Toronto, has contributed critical writings about interdisciplinary performance practices – in particular the performative as it is revealed in material and time-based works – to a variety of art publications, and is a founding member of the performance art/research collective, TouVA (with Sylvie Tourangeau and Anne Bérubé). Her first book *Impure, Reinventing the Word: The Theory, Practice and Oral History of Spoken Word in Montreal* (conundrum press, 2001), co-authored with Vincent Tinguely, chronicled a vibrant artistic movement via interviews with over 75 artists. Her second book, *The 7th Sense: Practicing Dialogues / Practicing Workshops / Practicing the Daily Performative / Practicing Performance Art* (SAGAMIE édition d'art, 2017), co-authored by TouVA, and initially researched during their eight-month residence at Artexte (2008–2009), draws upon a profound exploration of “the performative” in performance art.

This is the third presentation of the University research project *An Annotated Bibliography in Real Time: Performance Art in Quebec and Canada III* (2014-2017), under the direction of Barbara Clausen, Département d'histoire de l'art de l'Université du Québec à Montréal.

Research Director: Barbara Clausen

Curators: Jade Boivin, Emmanuelle Choquette, Barbara Clausen, Geneviève Marcil.

Research team: Jade Boivin, Emmanuelle Choquette, Maude Lefebvre, Geneviève Marcil.

Research and project support at Artexte: Hélène Brousseau, Frédérique Duval, Jessica Hébert, Joana Joachim, Marie-Claire Mériau and Sarah Watson

Editors : Barbara Clausen and Sarah Watson

Editing: Frédérique Duval and Sarah Watson; Artexte, and the research team

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