

# PERFORMANCE IDEAS

**Bonnie Marranca**

The start of 2014 marks the inaugural volume of Performance Ideas, a new series that highlights the long-standing editorial commitment of PAJ Publications to bring together the histories of performance in theatre and in visual arts for a more expansive vision of artistic practice. Performance Ideas opens up a distinctive niche in arts publishing in our plan to produce books of conversations and books of essays that focus on performance, music, sound, dance, video, installation, theatre. The first volume in the Performance Ideas series is Paul David Young's *newARTtheatre: Evolutions of the Performance Aesthetic* and the next volume scheduled is *Conversations with Meredith Monk*.

PAJ Publications has been moving in this direction for more than two decades. As I wrote in "Being Here," the introduction to our 100th issue (2012):

The period of the 1990s marked one of the major turns for PAJ. In 1998, with PAJ 58, the journal changed its name from *Performing Arts Journal* to *PAJ: A Journal of Performance and Art*, signaling a growing interest in art-world activities that circulated around performance, media, and installations shown in museums, galleries, and art events . . . . At the same time, in a 1998 keynote conference address at the Institute for Theatre Studies in Berlin, I had articulated what I understood as the problem of creating a performance history, emphasizing "it is time that the two different histories of performance that now exist—one in the art world and the other in the theatre—are brought together for a more comprehensive view of performance history. . . ."

The creation, in 1997, of the Art + Performance series of books that eventually featured volumes on Gary Hill, Bruce Nauman, Yvonne Rainer, Mary Lucier, Reza Abdoh, and others emphasized this more inclusive approach to contemporary performance.

Our new series will explore performance that crosses boundaries of all live art forms and media, situating diverse performance histories in a greater dynamic perspective, in pocket-size volumes that are less costly to produce and to purchase. We remain committed to the printed book—mindful, of course, that the journal may one day be

entirely digital and that in time we can hope to offer books with embedded media. The Performance Ideas series is being developed around current arts issues for a new generation of readers and a new arts curriculum, extending our long-standing approach to history that is now turned toward ideas and practices coming to the forefront in the contemporary arts. In particular, I am referring to the disappearance of sharply drawn lines distinguishing theatre and visual art performance, and all the implications that points to in scholarship, arts writing, funding, and presentation. Certainly, the last two installments of the Performa biennial (2011, 2013) have demonstrated how much performance art has moved toward theatre, which had already drawn on the visual arts in the experimental theatres of the late-sixties and seventies. Yet, artists identified with theatre have not been invited into the biennial, while much of the performance presented there looks like poorly conceived theatre. If, in the future, Performa addresses this dichotomy, it will be a closely watched move.

For now, it is significant that the new Whitney Museum of American Art exhibit, "Rituals of Rented Island: Object Theater, Loft Performance, and the New Psychodrama—Manhattan, 1970–1980," curated by Jay Sanders, is an attempt to bring together performance art and theatre. In addition, our briefly published other magazine *Performance Art* (the name changed to LIVE with the third issue), is acknowledged by Sanders, the Museum's curator of performance, in his essay for the book (in lieu of a catalogue) accompanying the exhibit as one of the important sources of commentary on performance in the seventies. Along with *Performing Arts Journal* and early books such as *Theatre of the Ridiculous*, *Animations: A Trilogy for Mabou Mines*, *Wordplays*, Victor Turner's *From Ritual to Theatre*, and Sam Shepard's *Hawk Moon*, our press also brought out *Performance Art* and LIVE from 1979 to 1982. These issues acknowledge the commingling of performance and club culture, drawing on the wildly promiscuous downtown arts scene. In fact, the same artists written about then in our magazines are predominant voices in the Whitney exhibit. The oblong-size historic magazines will soon be available in a digital version as valuable documents of the era.

As PAJ Publications prepares to enter its thirty-eighth year in 2014, the different strands of the vision we began with and continue to evolve are converging and regenerating in the new century.