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## “ARCHIVING” PERFORMANCE: “REENACTING” CREATIVITY

*The ephemeral material which constitutes performance certainly does not make it neither an easy object of study, nor even a subject that offers itself for an immediate dialogic treatment or one aimed at ‘saving’ it. Several attempts try to ensure that performance ‘remains’, that does not ‘disappear’, that does not vanish consuming itself in the very act of its manifestation. Among the most successful experiments that have played with the many facets of the ontology of performance there is certainly the reenactment, which can be considered as a valid form of ‘archiving’ performance. In fact, precisely because it is able to respect, perhaps more than other ‘saving’ attempts, the ontological characteristics of performance itself, its specific codes and its particular structures, the reenactment results at the same time also a smart and innovative way to try to do historiography in the field of performance. From the reenactments done by Marina Abramović to the performative anthology by Clifford Owens, performance has been able to ‘save itself’ by ‘self-archiving’, meaning by giving the re-performance and its aware differential variance, the task of doing so.*

The ephemeral material which constitutes performance certainly does not make it neither an easy object of study, nor even a subject that offers itself for an immediate dialogic treatment or one aimed at ‘saving’ it. In other words: to deal with performance, to study it, to work on it, trying to “save it from the passage of time” is never a simple effort. Several attempts are aimed at ensuring that performance “remains”, that does not “disappear”, that does not vanish consumed in the very act of its manifestation. Among the most successful experiments that have played around with the many facets of the ontology of performance, the reenactment, in my opinion, can be considered as a valid form of “archiving” performance. Indeed, precisely because it is able to respect, perhaps more than other attempts of “conservation”, the ontological characteristics of performance itself, its specific codes and its peculiar structures, the reenactment seems to me also a smart and innovative way to try to make historiography in the field of performance.

As highlighted by Richard Schechner in the opening pages of *Performance Studies: An Introduction*, the object of analysis of performance scholars lies in behavior, in action, in “what people do in the very act of their actions”, defined as “repertoire”. While it is true that much of the historiographical reconstruction is done through what is known as the “archive”, like books, photographs, archeological material, historical ruins, in short, everything having a material and tangible consistency, on the other hand it is equally evident that what distinguishes and differentiates the investigation of Performance Studies is its focus on the “repertoire”, meaning the set of “embodied practices” that, having an intangible and ephemeral nature, tend to disappear<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Schechner 2006: 1.

This distinction between archive and repertoire, recalled by Schechner, has its origin in a broader reflection made by Diana Taylor in his famous book *The Archive and the Repertoire*, in which Taylor points out, among other things, that one of the main aims of performance and Performance Studies is precisely to seriously consider “the repertoire of embodied practices as an important system of knowing and transmitting knowledge”<sup>2</sup>.

Over the years the issues concerning the ephemeral dimension of performance have created diverging opinions on the ontology of performance and on the ways through which it is possible to store, reproduce or pass on performative practices, whatever their specific nature (not primarily artistic) and their context of belonging. Some scholars, including Diana Taylor, tend to argue that, despite the ephemeral nature of performance, it is actually possible to rely on some practices of transmission, which, through the *embodiment*, and therefore through the use of the body as a form of *archive*, enable performance to “remain”, even if consecutive partial changes, for obvious reasons, intervene during the reproduction process. However, among the Performance Studies scholars, there is also someone, like Peggy Phelan, who has a different opinion about the ontology of performance and the related possibilities of “saving” it.

The live performance can never be captured or transmitted through the archive. A video of a performance is not a performance, though it often comes to replace the performance as a thing in itself (the video is part of the archive - what it represents is part of the repertoire). Embodied memory, because it is live, exceeds the archive’s ability to capture it. But that does not mean that performance - as ritualized, formalized, or reiterative behavior - disappears. Performances also replicate themselves through their own structures and codes. This means that the repertoire, like the archive, is mediated. The process of selection, memorization or internalization, and transmission takes place within (and in turn helps constitute) specific systems of re-presentation. Multiple forms of embodied acts are always present, though in a constant state of againness. They reconstitute themselves, transmitting communal memories, histories, and values from one group/generation to the next. Embodied and performed acts generate, record, and transmit knowledge.

The archive and the repertoire have always been important sources of information, both exceeding the limitations of the other, in literate and semiliterate societies. They usually work in tandem and they work alongside other systems of transmission - the digital and the visual, to name two<sup>3</sup>.

If for Diana Taylor performance, although ephemeral, offers itself to operations of transmission passing through the use of the body, for Peggy Phelan, instead, performance is manifested in the very act of its “disappearance”. Since the essence of performance is so closely linked to the dimension of “present” and “presence”, any attempt to preserve it, record it or reproduce it, is in itself flawed. To use Phelan’s terms, the ontology of performance is a form of “presentation” that precludes any possibility of “reproduction”<sup>4</sup>.

Closer to the school of thought of Diana Taylor, and therefore favorable to attempts to “save” performance, Rebecca Schneider in her latest book *Performing Remains* provides, as evident in the title, a clear demonstration of her position.

<sup>2</sup> Taylor 2003: 26.

<sup>3</sup> *ibid.*: 20-21.

<sup>4</sup> Phelan 1993: 146-149.

And yet, in privileging an understanding of performance as a refusal to remain, do we ignore other ways of knowing, other modes of remembering, that might be situated precisely in the ways in which performance remains, but remains differently? The ways, that is, that performance resists a cultural habituation to the ocular - a thrall that would delimit performance as that which cannot remain to be seen<sup>5</sup>.

It seems evident that in this idea in support of the thesis according to which it is possible to “save performance” the *fever of archive*<sup>6</sup> of Jacques Derrida, especially evoked by Diana Taylor, is echoed. In fact, according to the French post-structuralist philosopher “there is nothing outside the text”, where “text” and therefore “writing”, for Derrida are not only “graphic writing” or “literature”, but the entire and inclusive range of cultural expressions and social practices that constitute the systems of “inscribed” power.

Indeed the reenactment, literally the “reconstruction” or “recreation”, really seems to be one of those attempts through which the body proposes itself as an archive, trying to “enunciate a past that reaches us through what has been forgotten”. If, as Derrida argues, all languages, “texts” and forms of “writing” are based on their own codes, then the very existence of these codes and the ability to decipher them should lead to the possibility to identify and repeat their hallmarks.

The possibility of repeating and thus of identifying the marks is implicit in every code, making it into a network that is communicable, transmittable, decipherable, iterable for a third, and hence for every possible user in general. To be what it is, all writing must, therefore, be capable of functioning in the radical absence of every empirically determined receiver in general. And this absence is not a continuous modification of presence; it is a rupture in presence. [...] To write is to produce a mark that will constitute a sort of machine which is productive in turn, and which my future disappearance will not, in principle, hinder in its functioning, offering things and itself to be read and to be written<sup>7</sup>.

If you consider performance as a form of “writing”, as understood by Jacques Derrida, then the practice of reenactment, in its most successful implementation attempts, appears to fulfill the requests of “performative re-embodiment”, interpreting and reiterating the peculiar ontological codes of the “performance text”.

“Reenactment” is a term that has entered into increased circulation in late twentieth- and early twenty-first-century art, theatre, and performance circles. The practice of re-playing or re-doing a precedent event, artwork, or act has exploded in performance-based art alongside the burgeoning of historical reenactment and “living history” in various history museums, theme parks, and preservation societies. In many ways, reenactment has become the popular and practice-based wing of what has been called the twentieth-century academic “memory industry.”

[...] Indeed, looking even cursorily at reenactment as a practice one is soon hounded by the paradoxes of performativity and the fecund question [...] that all representational practice, and indeed all communicative behavior, is composed in reiteration, is engaged in citation, is

<sup>5</sup> Schneider 2011: 98.

<sup>6</sup> Derrida 1995.

<sup>7</sup> Derrida 1988: 3-21.

already a practice of reenactment, or what Richard Schechner has termed “restored” or “twice-behaved” behavior. [...] all bodily practice is, like language itself, always already composed in repetition and repetition is, paradoxically, both the vehicle for sameness and the vehicle for difference or change. [...] Citation, repetition, and “twice-behaved behavior,” as the very material of daily behavior, provide the basis for why and how reenactors can reenact at all<sup>8</sup>.

In the above-mentioned book *Performing Remains*, Rebecca Schneider analyses some experiences of reenactment, focusing in particular on the cases of artistic reenactments and reconstructions of wars. Schneider explores the reenactments of the American Civil War, in which she took part<sup>9</sup>, as well as some examples of reenactments concerning theater, performance, art and photography. Particularly interesting in this context is her analysis of the “artistic reenactment” starring Marina Abramović, and her extremely famous exhibition at MoMA, *The Artist Is Present*, in spring 2010<sup>10</sup>. Living and working in New York City at that time, I had the opportunity to go to MoMA several times, to visit the retrospective and to live “the experience of participating in [the] reenactment”<sup>11</sup> performed by Abramović.

For about eleven weeks (less than three months), from 14 March to 31 May 2010, and for a total of about six hundred hours, the Museum of Modern Art in New York hosted the first and most comprehensive retrospective of the works done by “Lady Performance”<sup>12</sup> during the last four

<sup>8</sup> Schneider 2011: 2-10.

<sup>9</sup> *ibid.*: 7-9. In 1998 I began to attend US Civil War battle reenactments to try and understand what reenactors were doing and why they were doing it. [...] In the course of attending Civil War reenactments, I repeatedly betrayed my own biases in that I was continually surprised by the complexities involved in the (re)actions I witnessed. Problems of ambivalence, simultaneous temporal registers, anachronism, and the everywhere of error were not lost on any of the reenactors with whom I spoke, despite their common depiction as, by and large, simple or naive “enthusiasts.” In affective engagement, many of them find reenactment to be, if not the thing itself (the past), somehow also *not not* the thing (the past), as it passes living history and reenactment, but the “liveness” of the matter is key across multiple styles, as is the ambivalence of the live, or its inter(in)animation with the no longer live.[...] I attended multiple Civil War reenactments between 1998 and 2006 where I observed participants putting themselves in the place of the past, reenacting that past by posing as if they were, indeed, soldiers and civilians of the 1860s. [...] Because I did not participate as a reenactor, this book is not about the experience of reenacting though it is about the experience of participating in reenactment. The book is a theoretical investigation into reenactment as an activity that nets us all (reenacted, reenactor, original, copy, event, re-event, bypassed, and passer-by) in a knotty and porous relationship to time. It is about the temporal tangle, about the temporal leak, and about the many questions that attend time’s returns.

<sup>10</sup> Details on this exhibition, including videos, movies, interviews, photographs, essays, can be found in the webpage that MoMA has dedicated to this event:

<http://www.moma.org/interactives/exhibitions/2010/marinaabramovic/>

There is also a catalog annexed to the “exhibition-performance”, Klaus Biesenbach, *Marina Abramović. The Artist Is Present*, The Museum of Modern Art, New York, 2010, and a documentary movie, *Marina Abramovic: The Artist Is Present*, by Matthew Akers and Jeff Dupre, 2012.

<sup>11</sup> Phrase used by Rebecca Schneider talking about her taking part in the American Civil War reenactments, in Schneider 2011: 9.

<sup>12</sup> “Lady Performance” is the title of the event with Marina Abramović, organized by the Department of Visual Arts at the University of Bologna, on 28 January 2011, at the Aula Magna of Santa Lucia, as part of the Artefiera events. That epithet occurs in many circumstances in relation to Marina Abramović. I am using this note to remind that the bond of the Serbian performer with the Bologna’s artistic scene goes back to many years ago. I am referring to the series of performances that Abramović, along with her then partner in art and life, Ulay, has enacted at the Gallery G7 Geneva Grigolo, operations always aiming at strongly testing the physical and psychic endurance of the two performers. More specifically, I would like to mention *Imponderabilia*, a performance realized by the two artists at the Gallery of Modern

decades. The exhibition was on two different floors of the museum. On the sixth floor, in the *Joan and Preston Robert Tisch Gallery*, a retrospective collected almost all the major works (around fifty) of the Serbian artist, including her early interventions and sound pieces, her installations, photographs, videos, her solo performances as well as those performed in collaboration with Ulay (Uwe Laysiepen), for a long time her partner in art and life<sup>13</sup>. The intent was to create a “chronological installation of Abramović’s work [...] revealing different modes of representing, documenting, and exhibiting her ephemeral, time-based, and media-based works”<sup>14</sup>.

The ways through which Abramović and the staff of curators at MoMA headed by Klaus Biesenbach decided to “exhibit” these works, creating a sort of “performative archive” of the artist, have followed different paths. In some cases the idea was to rebuild the exhibition space with the objects required by the specific performances. For other performances, instead, the MoMA proposed the exhibition of photographs or the projection of videos. Yet, there is a third variation that Abramović has decided to use to create the retrospective of her works: she instructed some of her “students” in order to reproduce and reenact some of her historical performances in the most accurate and faithful way<sup>15</sup>. By so doing, it was possible to pass through the naked bodies of *Imponderabilia*<sup>16</sup>, re-performed, or better reenacted, in rotation by couples of her students who were standing, naked, at the entry point of the room inside the gallery (although in this case, unlike in 1977, it was not the only point of access; in fact it was possible, for those unwilling to go through the naked bodies of the performers, to opt for a second entrance to the next room). Some students/performers of Abramović, just to provide a further example, were lying naked on a wooden table with a skeleton on their bodies. This was a reenactment of the *Nude with Skeleton* of 2002/2005<sup>17</sup>. Others, exclusively among women this time, sat on the seat of a bicycle attached to the wall, with the feet hanging in the air, and subjected to a gradually increasing intensity of light in space: reenactment of *Luminosity*, a performance originally performed by Marina Abramović at the Sean Kelly Gallery in New York in October 1997 and lasting two hours<sup>18</sup>.

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Art of Bologna, in June 1977, again in the context (including the financial context) of Artefiera. In this performance, Marina and Ulay, naked at the entrance of the gallery, made the visitors rub against the naked bodies of the two performers to gain access. Simultaneously a video-camera was filming and broadcasting in real time these “entrances”, in order to enable those who had already entered to observe the behavior, reactions, expressions (including often the awkwardness and embarrassment) of those who followed them in their performance. The performance became famous also for an hilarious anecdote, according to which a police assistant chief did suspend the performance, asking Marina and Ulay to show their passports. But, being naked, they did not have their passports with them.

<sup>13</sup> The artistic and sentimental bond between Marina Abramović and Ulay goes back to the period between 1976 and 1988. Their collaborative performances belong to those years.

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.moma.org/visit/calendar/exhibitions/965>

<sup>15</sup> Forty-one performers, all Abramović’s students, performed the reenactments of some of the performances presented at MoMA, alternating cyclically during the opening hours of the museum. Here are their names: Maria José Arjona, Brittany Bailey, John Bonafede, Lydia Brawner, Rachel Brennecke (aka Bon Jane), Rebecca Brooks, Isabella Bruno, Alfredo Calle Ferran, Hsiao Chen, Rebecca Davis, Angela Freiberger, Kennis Hawkins, Michael Helland Igor Josifov, Elana Katz, Cynthia Koppe, Heather Kravas, Gary Lai, Abigail Levine, Jacqueline Lounsbury, Isabelle Lumpkin, Elke Luyten, Alexander Lyle, Justine Lynch, Tom McCauley, Nick Morgan, Andrew Ondrejeak, Juri Onuki, Tony Orrico, Will Rawls, Matthew Rogers, George Emilio Sanchez, Ama Saru, Jill Sigman, Maria SHM, David Thomson, Layard Thompson, Amelia Uzategui Bonilla, Deborah Wing-Sproul, Yozmit, and Jeremy Zimmerman.

<sup>16</sup> Biesenbach 2010: 100-103.

<sup>17</sup> *ibid.*: 172-175.

<sup>18</sup> *ibid.*: 158-161.

If these last three cited examples are obvious cases of reenactment, the simultaneous performance enacted by Abramović in person a few floors below, in the Donald B. and Catherine C. Marron Atrium at MoMA, is even more singular. While on the sixth floor, for the first time in history, a museum presented live re-performances of the works of Abramović, entrusting the execution to other performers, in an attempt not only to make her historical performances available to a wider audience, but also to convey the presence of the artist, some floors below “the Artist” was instead actually “present”. Sitting quietly on a wooden chair for the duration of the opening of the museum (never abandoning her position), Marina Abramović was ready to accept and stare into the eyes, always in strict silence and for all the time desired by her “visual deuteragonist”, anyone who, after having waited in line, could sit on another wooden chair placed in front of hers. During the first weeks of the performance a simple table, also made of wood, was separating them. Later, it was removed from a performing space which was extremely (and intuitively) very essential and circumscribed by a white tape enclosing a large rectangle around which the viewers/visitors gathered, including those in line waiting to sit in front of “lady performance”. Other spectators peered everything from other multiple observation points: balconies, staircases, corridors of other floors of the museum<sup>19</sup>.

The performance here re-performed by Abramović is, in turn, a reenactment with variation of *Nightsea Crossing*<sup>20</sup>, a performance enacted for twenty-two times together with Ulay, between 1981 and 1987. In the original version, Ulay was the only one sitting in front of Marina. In the reenactment performed at MoMA, however, as just said, anyone could take part in the performance, sitting in front of Abramović for all the desired time (and within the limits permitted by the museum daily opening hours).

Obviously this is not the place to specifically consider the significance of this, as well as of other works of Marina Abramović. Such an attempt, in fact, would involve much more space and a different kind of reflection. What I would like to highlight here, instead, is the way in which Abramović plays with the ontology of performance in creating some forms of reenactment. Lady performance, who knows better than many others the identity-traits of a subject, the performance precisely, of which she made her specific artistic and expressive mode, grafted on it a “restoration of behavior” which, if not in compliance with the expressive codes of the subject matter, could very easily betray the very identity of the restored object, distorting its character and distinctive traits. Performance, as Abramović has always argued, is closely linked to the dimension of the present: “*performance is about being in the present, it’s about creating a luminous state of being*”<sup>21</sup>.

*Reperforming* and therefore *reenacting* obviously implies creating a new form of performance, referring to, and therefore referring (from the Latin verb *rēfēro*: to bring back) the “*doing*” to a previously acted “*fact*”. In this specific context it results particularly interesting to consider the reenactment as an internal mode of performance, consistent with the performance’s nature, and therefore useful to “archive” the performance itself, to “preserve” it and then pass it to those who were “not present” at the time. Focusing on attempts aimed at “saving performance”, we need to take into account those which mostly seem to respect the intrinsic nature of performance, properly typing its own codes. Abramović, who made those genetic codes become the essence of

<sup>19</sup> The structure of the MoMA in New York, redesigned in the late nineties by the Japanese architect Yoshio Taniguchi, offers multiple “points of view” on the arts displayed therein.

<sup>20</sup> Biesenbach 2010: 138-143.

<sup>21</sup> *ibid.*: 152.

her expressive DNA, certainly knows how to disassemble and reassemble the polymeric chain of performance and its individual units of nucleotides of presence. After all *The Artist Is Present* was not the first occasion in which the Serbian artist experienced the performative reenactment. In 2005, for seven consecutive nights, from November 9 to 15, Marina Abramović had realized *Seven Easy Pieces*<sup>22</sup> at the Guggenheim Museum in New York, presenting, night after night, the “re-performances” of five works of five different performers, the re-performance of one of her previous works, and closing, the seventh and last night, with a new performance<sup>23</sup>. Talking about this Abramović work, and a few days before the opening of the exhibition *The Artist Is Present*, Carol Kino wrote in *The New York Times*:

Ms. Abramovic saw [Seven Easy Pieces] as a way “to take charge of the history of performance.” In the 1990s, as younger artists became interested in work of the ‘60s and ‘70s, she said she noticed that some were restaging historical works themselves, often without consulting or even crediting the originator. “I realized this is happening because performance is nobody’s territory,” she said. “It’s never been mainstream art and there’s no rules.” Finding this unjust, she decided to set them herself, by recreating the works in consultation with the relevant artists and estates. Better she should do it now, she said, because “they will do it anyway when you’re dead behind your back”.<sup>24</sup>

In the Abramović’s words, reported here by the writer and journalist Carol Kino, it seems quite evident the intent to use the reenactment as a way “to take charge of the history of performance”, a tool that must follow some moral rules.

Let’s return back for a moment to what was initially said about the reenactment, to close the brief reflection here made in this regard and to show how, in the field of performance, the reenactment, in its many aspects and variants, is gradually spreading, helping to intensify the speculation and the artistic experimentation around the ontology of performance.

Entering, or reenacting, an event or a set of acts (acts of art or acts of war) from a critical direction, a different temporal angle, may be, as Rich suggests, an act of survival, of keeping alive as passing on (in multiple senses of the phrase “to pass”). This keeping alive is not a liveness considered always in advance of death nor in some way after death, as Abramovic might prefer in wanting to monumentalize her work to commemorate her as dead in advance,

<sup>22</sup> *ibid.*: 186-201. More exactly in *Seven Easy Pieces* Marina Abramović enacts the following performances:

First night, November 9, 2005 – Reperformance of Bruce Nauman, *Body Pressure*

Second night, November 10, 2005 – Reperformance of Vito Acconci, *Seedbed*

Third night, November 11, 2005 – Reperformance of VALIE EXPORT, *Action Pants: Genital Panic*

Fourth Night, November 12, 2005 – Reperformance of Gina Pane: *The Conditioning, first action of Self-Portrait(s)*

Fifth night, November 13, 2005 – Reperformance of Joseph Beuys: *How to Explain Pictures to a Dead Hare*

Six night, November 14, 2005 – Reperformance of *Lips of Thomas*

Seven night, November 15, 2005 – *Entering the Other Side*

<sup>23</sup> It is useful for the purposes of this reflection to recall Abramović admission, quoted by Cypriano in: Fabio Cypriano, *Performance and Reenactment: Analyzing Marina Abramovic’s Seven Easy Pieces*, *Idanca.net*, (<http://idanca.net/lang/en-us/2009/09/02/performance-e-reencenacao-uma-analise-de-seven-eeasy-pieces-de-marinaabramovic/12156/>, written September 2009, accessed March 10, 2010.): «My idea was to establish certain moral rules. If someone wants to remake a performance, they must ask the artist for the rights and pay for it, just like it’s done with music or literature. For me, this is the honest way to do it, even if you want to make your own version».

<sup>24</sup> Kino 2010.

sealing her, in this way, into the archive. Rather, it is more a constant (re)turn of, to, from, and between states in animation - an inter-(in)animation (to quote Moten, to quote Donne again). For “survival,” to use Rich’s word, may be a critical mode of remaining, as well as a mode of remaining critical: passing on, staying alive, in order to pass on the past as past, not, indeed, as (only) present. Never (only) present<sup>25</sup>.

The reenactment, therefore, can be certainly considered, as already pointed out, a way by which to be able to experience a form of “archiving performance”, that, of course, at the very moment in which it is made, determines not only a gesture of “survival”, but also a critical positioning of the act of “remaining”: “a critical mode of remaining, as well as a mode of remaining critical” indeed. This critical awareness in the case of the reenactment implies that we necessarily become conscious of the fact that in order to continue to stay alive, it is crucial to “convey the past as past and not, instead, as (only) present”<sup>26</sup>.

The case of the American artist Clifford Owens, from this point of view, appears both emblematic and explanatory. *Anthology*<sup>27</sup> is the title of his exhibition at MoMA PS1<sup>28</sup> in New York, between 13 November 2011 and 7 May 2012. This work of Owens, consisting of photographs, videos, and especially live performances, was originated by the artist’s idea of giving voice, in a different way from the usual, to some African-American artists/performers, not always duly remembered. According to Clifford Owens in fact the African-American performance art has not long been bestowed adequate recognition and, consequently, its history has remained largely unwritten. For this reason Owens, who was not interested in producing a real academic research about it, has thought of creating a compendium of African-American performance that did not have antecedents, and that was at the same time both highly personal and of historical nature and value. To pursue his goal, Owens asked a diverse group of African-American artists to provide him with the “scores” for the performances - literally some written or graphic instructions for the actions that he would have performed with precision.

*Anthology* has been created performing the “scores” received from twenty-six renowned artists; most of these “scores” had been composed from scratch specifically for Owens and his project. In this way during his “artistic residency” at MoMA PS1 in summer 2011, Owens used the entire building to implement the “scores” of the performances that he had received, some of which were limited to be vague commands, while others appeared to be highly choreographed movements and actions. On a weekly basis, Clifford Owens enacted these performances in various locations of the museum, the basement room of the boiler, the roof and the attic, continually demonstrating how, through his personal and subjective reading of each of the “scores”, he “underscored”, indeed, the mutability and the elastic nature of the received set of instructions. The photographs taken during these performances, the filmed videos, as well as some of the used objects, became the main material of the exhibition, while the artist continued to regularly perform live some of the scores during the entire period of his exhibition at MoMA PS1<sup>29</sup>.

The *Anthology* of Clifford Owens, as well as the reenactments of Marina Abramović with *The Seven Easy Pieces* and *The Artist is Present* are clear examples of how it is possible to try to

<sup>25</sup> Schneider 2011: 6-7.

<sup>26</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> <http://momaps1.org/exhibitions/view/340>

<sup>28</sup> <http://momaps1.org/about/>

<sup>29</sup> Copeland - Bowles Lew - Owens 2012.

“save” performance, and to make it a kind of historiography, sometimes critical, using its internal codes and playing with them in a conscious way. By doing so nobody expects to crystallize the performative present: an attempt of this kind would in fact be counterproductive as well as primarily unfounded, given the nature of performance. In these experiments aimed at “saving” performance, also to make it accessible to a “future” and wider audience, it is clear the performers’ use of a performative writing which is conscious of the difference<sup>30</sup> between a performance and its reenactment; such reenactment, reiterating the performative and identity mechanisms that are intrinsic to the performance itself, remains consistent with the ontological nature of the object in question. It almost seems that, at least at the moment, the only efficient way by which performance can be “saved” is through the “self-archiving”, by giving the re-performance and its aware differential variance, the task to do so. And this is not only because, as Abramović affirms, “a performance is like a musical piece, an opera, or a piano concert; of course it will be different with each different interpreter after the original voice or virtuous is gone”<sup>31</sup>, but also because the performative reenactment conceives the “rescue of the present” only in terms of a form of care of the future of the past.

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## Movies

- Marina Abramovic: The Artist Is Present*, Dir. Matthew Akers e Jeff Dupre, US, 2012.

<sup>30</sup> Derrida 1979.

<sup>31</sup> Biesenbach 2010: 20.