

# PER/FORM\_HOW TO DO THINGS WITH [OUT] WORDS

23 MAR — 21 SEP 2014



**Mathieu Abonnenc / Jennifer Allora & Guillermo Calzadilla / Brad Butler & Karen Mirza / Geneviève Cadieux / Jean-Pierre Cometti / Agnès Dahan / Adrian Dan / Angela Detanico & Rafael Lain / Carole Douillard / Cevdet Ereğ / Köken Ergun / Esther Ferrer / Chiara Fumai / Ryan Gander / Simon Fujiwara / Dora García / Camille Henrot / Sandra Johnston / Amelia Jones / Latifa Laâbissi / La Ribot / Ines Lechleitner / Franck Leibovici / Cristina Lucas / Haroon Mirza / Antonio Negri / Roman Ondák / Falke Pisano / Chantal Pontbriand / Chloé Quenum / Pedro Reyes / José Antonio Sánchez / Julião Sarmiento / Ulla von Brandenburg / Carey Young / Héctor Zamora**

**CA2M**

Centro de Arte Dos de Mayo  
www.ca2m.org

*PER/FORM*, as a project, brings together different types of works and activities such as installations, interactive installations, performative installations, performative video or sound installations, live performances, live interactive performances, live participatory and performances. It also presents conversations and discussions in the context of the project itself, even in the context of the exhibition display itself.

*PER/FORM*, as an investigation into performance, is exactly what it says, it goes through forms, as «per» signifies a passing or a going-through, a movement. It indicates transversality and flux. It also attempts to see, experience and understand what lies in between forms, and beyond form, beyond what one sees or hears. In that sense it is a forceful call upon the imagination. It is necessary for a society to preserve spaces, even more so provide spaces, in which change and self-fulfillment can be experienced beyond the vicissitudes of the everyday. The fact that museums are opening up to performance, that contemporary art itself is enhanced by the «performative» is indicative of this necessity. The performative mode is one that encourages materials, ideas, subjects to be examined in unusual, non-conventional ways. It engages the freedom of thought and of the imagination as it opens knowledge-formation up to mixing materiality, including that of the body, with unique combinations handed down by different artistic disciplines combined, as well as theory and history. In this sense, art can develop innovative perspectives on the world and on being-in-the-world.

*PER/FORM* has a subtitle : *How To Do Things With [out] Words*. This is what performativity does. This subtitle is a play on John L. Austin's book *How To Do Things With Words*. The book, published in 1962, became a source of reference for understanding performance already in the seventies. It dealt with situations, contexts, and how language, that is words or gestures, could act upon these. (Austin admits that gestures can be locutory acts just as words are). This pragmatist stance is closely tied to performance and performativity. How words, gestures, the formation of concepts and structures operate is key to dealing with contemporaneity, the world we live in.

*PER/FORM* is an investigation into the question of performance that is once more haunting us, as it did so energetically in the 1960s and 1970s. «Performance» is ever-present in museums, galleries, art centers, art fairs, universities and art schools. It is still not clear what it is or what it is however. This is a project that aims at dealing with those questions. Performance came about as a new way of doing things, and a new way of thinking. These new ways presented a different perspective on dealing with the real, and making art.

Our era corresponds to one of crisis. Crisis is affecting values and stability all around, and calls for a constant reinvention of the world and of oneself. Performance and performativity are devices that are enabling in that sense. This is most probably one of the reasons why, in the world of art, it has taken on a new importance. The resurgence of performance at a time of crisis is indicative of a strong collective desire for change. The presence of performance in museums for example points towards the need to enliven situations that are seen as dormant.

Performance activates time and space in the context of museum activity, and also in the wider contexts of the art world and the «real» outside world of the everyday. Performance enables the real world to permeate the normally closed walls of the institution. It deconstructs many things in the museum: the role of the viewer/spectator which becomes that of an «activator», the meaning and display of objects, the increased presence of bodies or importance given to them, the widening of the subjects being dealt with in relation to the real world, the increased transversality of forms that deal with these subjects, the role of the curator or educator, along with that of many other functions in the organization.

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*PER/FORM* calls for a «manifesto» because it is not only an endeavor which aims at describing how performance and performativity work through artistic practices and in artistic situations or institutions in the context of contemporaneity. It is also the voicing of an attitude towards art as well as towards the world itself.

*PER/FORM* as an event brings together things to see and things to hear. Three «Intensity Days» will present live performances, activated installations, conversations and discussions convening artists and theoreticians participating in the project. By combining acts of doing, acts of making and acts of speaking and thinking, these days will hopefully bring yet more light on what performance and performativity are, what effects they produce and to what avail. Situated in the exhibition display itself, a room is designated as the Intensity Laboratory, a place to gather, to exchange and to keep and show on an on-going basis traces of the «acts» that will have been produced during the three Intensity Days or in-between. This room can be considered as the agora at the heart of the project, a space where art and life can come together and where life issues can be dealt with through gesture and speech.

The book published on the occasion of the exhibition brings together visual essays by each participating artist. Each essay is a statement on what performance and performativity can be. Scores, drawings, documents, text, design, work together to produce different views on the question, each belonging to the particular worlds of the artists. The authors of the texts in the book look at a question from different perspectives. **Amelia Jones** deals with the important question of the material and the immaterial in performance; **José Antonio Sánchez** reflects on the tropes of performativity, action, manifestation and realization; **Jean- Pierre Cometti** discusses experience and its reevaluation through performance, while **Antonio Negri** links the political to performance in contemporaneity.

If one were searching for an entry point into the project while meandering through, one might consider it to be **Dora García's** contribution, *The Artist without Works : A Guided Tour around Nothing*. This piece deals with the immateriality that is often associated to performativity.

That which is to be done or undone is a paradigm that comes up again in *Walk The Chair*, a piece by **La Ribot**. Fifty folding chairs lay about the exhibition display. Quotations on movement are inscribed on the surface of each chair. The visitor can pick up the chair and, in order to read the texts, has to turn it around on all sides, exploring the possibilities in «reading» the words through bodily movement itself.

A similar device comes up in *Philosophical Casino*, by **Pedro Reyes**. Large dices lay about a carpet displaying quotations from Spanish philosophers throughout history. The work explores the fact of dealing with meaning in a random exploratory way.

In *Waterfall (on The Economy of Action)*, **Adrian Dan** puts in place a device, trekking poles dispersed here and there. Volunteers will be able to venture out wherever they wish to with the poles, in the museum or in the city, photographing them here and there with their smartphones and sending the images back to Dan, who will do a live editing and simultaneous projection of the documents he receives. Dan proposes a remix of the former artist's indexical object and the photographic process as it is digitalized in today's world.

**Esther Ferrer** in *Preguntas con respuestas (Questions with Answers)* proposes a number of questions to the audience, for which each member becomes a personal interlocutor for the artist. Things here are done with words in an explicit manner, revealing the hidden side of words, the non-words, or the non-space, behind the words. Here the exchange becomes the work.

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**Cevdet Erek** addresses the world of work and its constrained rhythms with a sound installation called *Week*. Here space, architecture, sound and light interact with the visitor to create an in-situ and unusual experience of a familiar situation.

*Grosse fatigue*, a video work by **Camille Henrot**, explores the over-information era that characterizes contemporaneity by displaying a personal archive she has accumulated over time. This work presents an encyclopedic if not plethoric view of how the world today appears through print and the moving image.

Knowledge, the way it is formed, the way it is processed and eventually historicized is ever-present in *PER/FORM*. It comes up in most of the installation works or live performances.

*The Game of Power* by **Brad Butler** and **Karen Mirza** is a situation where a group of people interact with chairs, rearranging them several times until a person is asked to identify the position of power. This process is repeated, fostering a discussion on how gestures and speech «perform» in the context of a power play and resistance to it.

In **Jennifer Allora** and **Guillermo Calzadilla's** video *Apotomē*, a singer sings while advancing along the shelves of a storage room in the Museum d'histoire naturelle in Paris. The remains of elephants brought over to Europe lay on those shelves and are a testament to colonial development. The deep voice resonates into the viewer's body as it attempts to create a trans-historical bond with these animals, questioning historical truth, and the effects of the passing of time.

A will to envision new perspectives on history comes up also in **Mathieu Abonnenc's** *An Italian Film (Africa Addio)*. In this performative «working through» of historical facts, the work, emaking reference to Katanga copper objects used as currency at a time corresponding to colonialism, exposes historical processes that are still affecting a contemporary global context. It mixes historical geo-politic developments together with the underpinnings of economy, the art market and of the history of cinematography.

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In *The Viewers*, a piece put together by **Carole Douillard**, for ten to twenty «visitors» or participants, non-actors or actors as they are, presents the protagonists in a group standing in the exhibition space. The gaze is central to the piece, exhibiting the gaze, positioning it in the exhibition, turning-the-tables on other viewers, putting the act of viewing itself on display. Nevertheless, it soon becomes something else, the bodies performing as a whole, become more and more individual as minutes go by, exposing what «being» is through visuality.

In **Carey Young's** work contractual arrangements, legal texts or situations, where words play a crucial role, are often conceptually twisted in order to subvert their meaning or bring about new unconventional ones. This happens in *Declared Void II* where a wall text tells the visitor that if he stands in a designated area he agrees to be «a citizen of the United States of America».



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Dora García, *The Artist without Works : A Guided Tour around Nothing*, 2009

In *An\_Infinato*, **Haroon Mirza** develops a situation by installing diverse components from which an unpredictable sound emerges. Mirza chooses vintage furniture or equipment to build up his installations. In the context of these, the everyday is transformed into an active agent of perception and change. Here, as it is also the case for Cevdet Erek, knowledge is acquired by experiencing a display of expanded consciousness.

**Ulla von Brandenburg's** work *Die Strasse* also plunges to viewer into a sensorial experience mixing a film with a display of natural cotton and colored fabric. This proposition echoes the film which shows the frame of a house in construction in which very diverse characters evolve in a choreography inhabiting this skeleton space. Social space, the space of «being-in-common» is exercised, tested, experienced, somewhere between a thing to be and the thing that is.

**Cristina Lucas**, in *Mundo femenino y Mundo masculino* presents dualities in the world through two globes on which continents and oceans have been redrawn and renamed using words associated with sexual vernacular language in different regions of the world. Here also one is confronted with the perception of the other as it comes about not only through sex but also through language and the way language adapts to specific contexts and situations. This approach is further explored in the 41 minutes performance *Pantone* where several historians comment on an evolving map.

**Franck Leibovici** in *memos, briefs and reports –the papers*, presents a labyrinthine installation made of 35 hanging «scores» on paper on which he has mapped excerpts of the Wikileaks, made up of classified and unclassified documents. This installation is part of the Mini-operas for non-musicians. Here, a deambulation through the «spatialized» words enables an unusual reading of the texts taken from the Wikileaks.

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*The Body in Crisis* is a work that **Falke Pisano** is also presenting in multiple variations. All converge into a quest into the meaning and history of representation as it situates itself in the locus of the body. This work points to the shifts that have affected not only the way the body has been represented through the ages, but also how performative this representation is.

In *Imagineering* **Ryan Gander** addressed himself to a publicity agency requesting that it develop a commercial that could promote imagination. How can one promote imagination, and especially how can it be done by the powers that be? Here Gander addresses not only the current state of affairs from a socio-economic perspective, but he also seems to be questioning the state of art itself in the current context of economical and social crisis.

In **Julião Sarmento's** series of simultaneous performances called *The Index*, a dozen performers, dancers, actors, or non-actors as well, play out the different roles, the different tasks where the body is exposed in terms of masculinity and femininity, showing off the complexity of relationships and of being-in-the-world.

**Chiara Fumai** works through sexual stereotypes, repression and representations of the body and the way they appear in different media by developing lecture-performances such as *Chiara Fumai reads Valerie Solanas* and *I did not say or mean 'warning'*.

**Köken Ergun's** work is based on the exploration of ceremonies and rituals through video, with a particular attention given to gesture and to the way theatricality is structured in situations such as beauty contests, civic holiday festivities or religious endeavors. He specifically investigates marginalized communities as the Filipinos and their beauty contest in Israel or Ashura, a ceremony involving a mass-theatre production and an individual weeping ritual commemorating a battle that was detrimental to the Caferi Shiites in Turkey.

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With this last piece, as in several others that we have come across in PER/FORM, we are confronted with the potentiality of acts being done «with[out] words». A discreet piece nudged against a wall, *Pilha Dicho/Hecho* by **Angela Detanico** and **Rafael Lain** consists of piles of copies of the book *Cómo hacer cosas con palabras*. These are organized in piles echoing the expression Dicho/Hecho, each letter being translated into a number of copies distributed in distinct piles. Here, the materiality of «How to do things with words» concretely appears and takes on a form and a mass.

The materiality of performance also transpires in the video documenting **Héctor Zamora's** performance *Immaterial Inconsistency*. As twenty bricklayers toss around hundreds of bricks as though they were playing soccer. Gestures here are just what they are, gestures, nevertheless, the gestures seem «inconsistent» in the face of the risk involved in the task. The piece stages work itself in the context of today's workplace. By enhancing its materiality, it also points to the virtual or immaterial economy that is taking over the workplace at a fast pace.



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Pedro Reyes, *Philosophical Casino*, 2012-2014

**Latifa Laâbissi** develops an anthropological take on modern and contemporary dance as well as she performs *Écran somnambule* (Somnambulate Screen) and *La Part du rite* (The Part of the Rite), a take on Mary Wigman's Dance of the Sorceress. In the second one, Laâbissi herself, as though a therapist (navigating between the psyche and the body), goes about the scene moving the body, moving towels in an incessant succession of gestures which are a counterpoint to the narrative's content, a reflection on dance as meaning, and meaning as dance.

*Studio Pietá: The King Kong Komplex* by **Simon Fujiwara**, is a lecture-performance which comments on a video reminiscing a beach-scene photograph of his British mother in the arms of an Arab boyfriend. His narrative takes on the guise of the anthropologist, the essayist and the eroticist.

*Pas de deux*, by **Geneviève Cadieux**, plunges wholeheartedly into the representation of the female and the male as it transpires through gestural expression. On each one of the juxtaposed screens the feminine and the masculine bodies display their inherent distinctions in micro-gestures that accentuate differences, as well as commonalities.

What is **Roman Ondák's** claim with *Stampede*? as the counterpart to a performance he developed for a crowd engulfing itself into a museum gallery and slowly thinning itself out as the light is dimmed, this video seems to enact the «unavowable» community in another manner, per/ forming the likes of the idea of community itself, a community without community.

Ondák's take on being-in-the-world as it echoes itself through the formation/deformation of community comes up once more in the performance *This Way, Please* in which museum guards are posted in their position throughout the museum following the chronology of their individual age. This placement thus creates an invisible line linking the individuals in the mind of the viewers and connecting the different spaces in the museum.

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*2 Lions in Three Steps*, **Ines Lechleitner's** work, explores the specific context of the Dos de Mayo commemorative event. It does so by asking a performer to prepare a traditional dish and observing closely the gestures, rhythms and structure associated with the «making-of». The work functions as a set of translations from one sense to the other, including the processing of personal as well as collective historical material.

Also a response to the specific situation where *PER/FORM* unfolds itself, **Sandra Johnston's** *Off the Record* takes its point of departure in Franz Kafka and his depictions of characters' gestures in *The Trial*. Johnston works with these developing sequences for choreography separate from the intentions and inner thoughts of Herr K. The performers own resistance to the ensuing «lack» of meaning, absurdities or inconstancies comes to the forefront, as she struggles to maintain the act as a manifestation and/or disclosure of being itself.

On the first floor of the museum, **Chloé Quenum** has devised an installation that inhabits the outside and inside spaces in the entrance. Contemporaneity and Iberic history mingle, and even more so when the piece is activated and citizens and visitors are invited to inhabit this space by bringing in books or aural tales in relation to the fragments of history that the ceramic tiles carry with them.

*PER/FORM* as a project materializes the concepts that underlay performativity as it functions through a diversity of forms. It points towards the potentiality and complexity of performance as it comes up in contemporary artistic practices. *PER/FORM* is with, as it is without, at the intersection of possibilities that remain open to an unknown.

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## 22 MAR INTENSITY DAY PROGRAM 17:00 — 23:00 H.

### ALL OVER AND ALL DAY

**Adrian Dan** *Waterfall (on the economy of action)* (2014). Interactive performative installation.

**Dora García** *The artist without works: a guided tour around nothing* (2008). Performative installation.

**La Ribot** *Walk the Chair* (2010). Interactive installation.

**Julião Sarmiento** *The Index* (2013). 8 performances.

**Roman Ondák** *This Way, Please* (1999). Performance.

### SPECIFIC LOCATIONS

**Pedro Reyes** *Philosophical casino* (2012/2014). Interactive installation (second floor).

**Cevdet Ereğ** *Week* (2014). Performance, installation space (second floor).

**Chloé Quenum** *Tales for Saturday* (2014). Activation of the in-situ installation *IN/OUTDOORS* (ground floor).

### AUDITORIUM

17:00 **Héctor Zamora** *Material Inconsistency* (2012). Film (Sao Paulo and Istanbul versions of the performance). 15 min.

18:00 **Geneviève Cadieux** and **Julião Sarmiento** Conversation with **Chantal Pontbriand**, English with simultaneous translation.

19:00 *An introduction to PER/FORM.* a discussion with **Jean-Pierre Cometti**, **La Ribot**, **Franck Leibovici**, **Chantal Pontbriand**, and **José Antonio Sánchez**, moderated by **Ferran Barenblit**. English with simultaneous translation.

20:30 **Falke Pisano** and **Carey Young**, Conversation with **Pablo Martínez**. English with simultaneous translation.

21:30 **Angela Detanico** and **Rafael Lain**, *Fragments* (2014). Performance, 20 min.

22:00 **Héctor Zamora** *Material Inconsistency* (2012). Film (Sao Paulo and Istanbul versions of the performance). 15 min.

### INTENSITY LAB

**Adrian Dan** *Waterfall (on the economy of action)* (2014). Interactive performative installation (artist present)

21:00 The bar opens

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## 20 SEP INTENSITY DAY PROGRAM 17:00 — 23:00 H.

### ALL OVER AND ALL DAY

**Adrian Dan** *Waterfall (on the economy of action)* (2014). Interactive performative installation.

**Dora García** *The artist without works: a guided tour around nothing* (2008). Performative installation.

**La Ribot** *Walk the Chair* (2010). Interactive installation.

**Roman Ondák** *This Way, Please* (1999). Performance.

### SPECIFIC LOCATIONS

**Pedro Reyes** *Philosophical casino* (2012/2014). Interactive installation (second floor).

**Franck Leibovici** *mini opera for non-musicians* (2008 — 2014), participative performance (terrace).

**Chloé Quenum** *Tales for Saturday* (2014). Activation of the in-situ installation *IN/OUTDOORS* (ground floor).

### AUDITORIUM

17:30 **Chiara Fumai** *Chiara Fumai Reads Valerie Solanas* (2012 — 2013). Performance, 30 min., English with simultaneous translation.

20:00 **Chiara Fumai**, *I did not say or mean 'warning'* (2013). Performance, 40 min. English with simultaneous translation.

22:00 **Latifa Laâbissi** *La Part du rite* (The Part of the Rite) (2012) with Isabelle Launay. Performance. 40 min.

### AULA

17:00 **Agnès Dahan** *A performative workshop of designed books*. English (booking required)

### INTENSITY LAB

17:00 **Mathieu Abonnenc** and **Latifa Laâbissi** Conversation with **Chantal Pontbriand**, English.

18:00 **Sandra Johnson** *Off the Record* (2014). New in-situ performance developed in Madrid.

19:00 **Dora García**, Workshop with **Pablo Martínez**, Spanish.

21:00 **Latifa Laâbissi**, *Ecran somnambule* (Somnambulate Screen) (2012). Performance, 22 min.

(\*) Program subject to change

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## 10 MAY INTENSITY DAY PROGRAM 17:00 — 23:00 H.

### ALL OVER AND ALL DAY

**Adrian Dan** *Waterfall (on the economy of action)* (2014). Interactive performative installation.

**Dora García** *The artist without works: a guided tour around nothing* (2008). Performative installation.

**La Ribot** *Walk the Chair* (2010). Interactive installation.

**Roman Ondák** *This Way, Please* (1999). Performance.

### SPECIFIC LOCATIONS

**Carole Douillard** *The Viewers* (2014). Performance, 120 min. (second floor)

**Pedro Reyes** *Philosophical casino* (2012/2014). Interactive installation (second floor).

**Chloé Quenum** *Tales for Saturday* (2014). Activation of the in-situ installation *IN/OUTDOORS* (ground floor).

### AUDITORIUM

17:00 **Cristina Lucas Pantone** (2007). Performance, 40 min., Spanish.

18:30 **F. Barenblit** and **C. Pontbriand**. Presentation of the book *PER/FORM*. English with simultaneous translation.

19:00 **Amelia Jones**, *To perform; performativity; performance... The Art and Politics of the Material Trace*. Lecture, English with simultaneous translation.

20:00 **Köken Ergun**, Workshop around *Ashura* (2013) English with simultaneous translation.

22:00 **Simon Fujiwara** *Studio Pietá: King Kong Komplex* (2013). Lecture performance, 60 min., English with simultaneous translation.

### AULA

17:00 **Chantal Pontbriand**, *Curatorial workshop on PER/FORM*, English (booking required).

### INTENSITY LAB

18:00 **Ines Lechleitner**, *2 Lions in Three Steps* (2014). New performance developed in-situ in Madrid.

20:00 **Butler & Mirza**, *The Game of Power* (2012 — 2014). Interactive Performance, 60 min. English/Spanish

21:00 **Esther Ferrer**, *Preguntas con Respuestas*. Performance, Spanish

21:30 **Esther Ferrer**, Conversación con **Pablo Martínez**, Spanish

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**PER/FORM\_How To Do Things With [Out] Words**

22 mar — 21 sep 2014

**Guides tours**

Fri 18:30 h. Sat 12:30 h. Sun 12:30 and 18:30 h.

### Publication

**Book** with essays by:

Jean-Pierre Cometti, Amelia Jones, Antonio Negri, Chantal Pontbriand, J. A. Sánchez and visual essays by the artists

### Other exhibitions

**Los Torreznos.**  
8 feb — 18 may 2014

**Teresa Margolles. El testigo**  
18 feb — 25 may 2014

**Otto Karvonen**  
21 feb — 20 apr 2014

**Raqs Media Collective**  
12 jun — 19 oct 2014

### Other activities

**Adult Learning**

*But... Is this Art? VI*  
Wednesday 19 feb — 9 apr  
18:30 h.

**Acting, Dance and Performance**

*Black Box/White Cube*  
27 mar — 13 apr  
Thursdays 20:00 h.  
Sundays 18:30 h.

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