TEACHING AS ART
The Contemporary Lecture-Performance

Patricia Milder

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Actors representing the anonymous collective Bruce High Quality Foundation (BHQF) sang, "Whatever you ask for, that's what I'll be," and the rest of George Michaels's "Father Figure" in the karaoke ending to their lecture-performance *Art History with Benefits*. The performance took place at the X Initiative in Chelsea last November, as a part of Performa 09. It was one of many lecture-performances presented at the biennial; William Kentridge, Alexandre Singh, Guillame Desanges, and Terence Koh also performed their own wildly varied takes on the academic lecture. Seeing their work in rapid succession over the course of three weeks brought a few questions to mind: Why, for one, are so many visual artists attracted to this particular form of live performance? What is the precedent in art history, and how does this work compare to the lecture-performance being created in the dance and theatre worlds? I set out to discover the wide range of aesthetic and conceptual possibilities for the increasingly popular form.

Twentieth-century artists such Chris Burden, Yvonne Rainer, Robert Morris, Robert Smithson, and Joseph Beuys have used lecture-performance to blur the lines separating art from discourse about art. In contemporary performance, artists are continuing, in this tradition, to push past the boundaries of disciplines (Desanges, for example, is foremost an art critic and curator) as well as the boundaries between art and life. These are popular themes in contemporary art practice in general, but more specific to lecture-performance is the idea of teaching-as-art. The best lecture-performances always seem to originate from artists who believe that teaching itself is a central component of their artwork. Institutional critique also factors heavily in most iterations of the form. Though it is by no means the only conceptual framework for contemporary lecture-performance, I've found that the most interesting work of this kind comes from artists who meld a critique of institutional structures with a specific and idealistic view: the belief that consciousness stemming from teaching and learning can lead to a new way to live in society.

The BHQF uses the form to illuminate problems in the commercialized structure of the art world and art education. The choreographer Jérôme Bel explains the philosophical foundations of his works, which are often about exposing systematic structures in the dance industry, more directly than he has found possible through

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movements of the body alone. Explanation, in his dances, is seen as the path toward the emancipation of performers and spectators, an idea borrowed from the writings of Michel Foucault. Other artists mine American history and traditional forms outside of art education. The National Theater of the United States of America (NTUSA) looks at the commercial history of the theatre as well as the history of early twentieth-century self-improvement lectures called Chautauquas. Sharon Hayes engages with the history of American political speech, especially the history of activist speech stemming from important twentieth-century political movements. These artists provide a small, cross-disciplinary sampling of lecture-performance as activism through education.

THE BRUCE HIGH QUALITY FOUNDATION

Back in November 2009 at X Initiative, when Michaels's song piped over the speakers at the end of BHQF's *Art History* lecture, slides that played during the lecture portion of the performance flashed by on the screen: photographs of Mariah Carey, Peggy Guggenheim, Andrea Fraser, Brooke Shields, and Jean Michel Basquiat. Through clear references to actual sex between the artists they've singled out and their sponsors (Fraser and her collector, Carey and her husband-producer Tommy Mottola, and so on), BHQF makes the obvious point about the relationship between artists, money, and the market. This is hardly a new juxtaposition: in Marina Abramović's *Role Exchange* (1975), she switched jobs with an Amsterdam prostitute for four hours. As in Abramovic's piece, sex isn't really the central issue for the BHQF. The collective uses these references, however, to help define their young male, intentionally obnoxious "bad boy" aesthetic.

The title *Art History with Benefits* refers to popular culture's "friends with benefits," sexual partnerships without emotional attachment. "What happens in the art world, stays in the art world," another Bruce quote, takes its inspiration from Las Vegas's normal-rules-don't-apply-here slogan. BHQF wants to drag the commercial relationships that form the basis of trade in the art world down to size by associating them with the lowest American sexual and cultural practices. It's a crass but useful technique, and one that often riles observers. In the 2010 Whitney Biennial, for example, the collective's piece included a video montage with a voice-over that mockingly personifies America, at one point describing "her" as woman who is in a physically abusive relationship. Spousal abuse as joke. It is easy to see why a feminist heckler shouted retorts during one performance of *Art History with Benefits*.

Even as the collective enjoys success at the Whitney and a high level of recognition in the art world, they continue the alternative actions that earned them attention in the first place. Using Joseph Beuys as a model helps bring some legitimacy to their capitalistic anti-capitalist position, but their insider-outsider stance is inherently problematic. Still, it's impossible to write off their alternative actions completely. In addition to their performances, videos, sculptures, and installations, the collective creates new art world spaces in order to mirror, mock, and replace establishments that are not usually within the control of artists—the contemporary art survey show, for example, or the art school.

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Art History with Benefits was presented as a part of the Bruce High Quality Foundation University (BHQFU), a conceptual art piece/model university that was founded on September 11, 2009 in Tribeca. This university is intended to be a real place of higher education and research focused on the community aspect of scholarship as well as, in the words of the BHQFU Website, "a fuck-you to the hegemony of critical solemnity and market-mediocre despair." The ideas behind this space are more successful than the actual school, which doesn't affect commercial MFA culture in the least. The school functions more successfully at this point as idea-art than it does as an actual learning institution. However, some level of function in the model institution is essential to the idea.

The way the Bruces see it, art school education—specifically the $200,000 debt-making MFA model—is an education "mired in irrelevance. Pushing [artists] into critical redundancy on the one hand and professional mediocrity on the other." The performance of *Art History with Benefits*, then, takes the form of the lecture in order not only to disrupt or challenge the educational institution, but also to replace what the artists see as misinformation with essential knowledge about the industry and history of art. The overall thrust of the BHQFU is to embrace John Dewey's philosophy of progressive education and successful experiments like the Summerhill School in England. The work not only bemoans the problem with the art institution—over-commercialization and commercialized education—but also offers a creative alternative.

Lecture topics at BHQFU range from "Occult Shenanigans in Twentieth/Twenty-first Century Art" and "What's a Metaphor?" to "The Bruce High Quality Foundation Detective Agency" and "Edyfying," which is a series of performative lectures organized by Beatrice Gross. The series—which places itself in the lineage of Robert Morris's 1964 performance entitled *21.3* in which Morris lip-synched to a 1939 filmed lecture by art historian Erwin Panofsky—"presents a series of contemporary performative events concerned with the dramatization of knowledge and its dissemination." Lecture-performance is used so heavily at the BHQFU because the form is such a useful and recognizable symbol of the overall blurring of the line between instruction and art in this alternative university.

The actual working relationship between art and pedagogy in BHQF's works, especially the university, resonates so strongly with people because despite the collective's talk of new forms, the concepts behind their work refer directly to art history. Although little has been written about the history of lecture-performances, the general story of origin, as far as visual art performance that addresses the role of the speaking artist, tends to settle on Joseph Beuys's *How to Explain Pictures to a Dead Hare* (1965). Through the symbolism of that performance, Beuys addressed discourses about art, rejecting institutionalized practices and insisting on a more personal and community-oriented approach. BHQF references *How to Explain . . . ,* along with other works by Beuys, in order to label their lecture-performances and other alternative art practices as Social Sculpture.

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Top: The Bruce High Quality Foundation, *Art History with Benefits*, Performa 09. Photo: Michelle Proskell. Courtesy X Initiative. Bottom: Sharon Hayes, *I March in the Parade of Liberty, But As Long As I Love You I'm Not Free*, 2008, The New Museum. Photo: Andrea Geyer. Courtesy of the artist.



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In an essay entitled "Beuys in Ireland" from his book *From Head to Hand*, David Levi Strauss says that art, to Beuys, was "the understanding of the labor in the process of creation." He goes on to explain:

> He believed that if this labor could be better understood and applied socially, it could transform the world. Beuys's theory of Social Sculpture arose from his recognition that the core of sculpture is the transformation of matter or substance. If we include in our definition of matter 'the actual substance of thought or expression,' then the transformation of matter can also include thought, speech, and society.[1]

In his first visit to America in 1974, Beuys attempted to transform American thought with a ten-day three-city lecture circuit entitled *Energy Plan for the Western Man*, which was organized by gallerist Ronald Feldman. Transcripts from Beuys's lecture at The New School reveal that while people were lined up outside to get in, the crowd inside was rowdy and not always on Beuys's side. Still, in this lecture-performance (here an outward form of Social Sculpture), Beuys patiently explained his most basic ideas about art, politics, and education—that they are one. At the same time, he played out those ideas. He was explaining art and thereby making art; attempting to ignite creativity in others by making his ideas known to them through dialogue.

In addition to being a model for BHQF's lectures, *Energy Plan* inspired other lecture-performance works, such as Keith Hennessey's Beuys-style lecture with diagrams in *Crotch: All the Joseph Beuys References in the World Cannot Heal the Pain, Confusion, Regret, Cruelty, Betrayal, or Trauma . . .* (Dance Theater Workshop, 2009). Beuys's lecture series marks a defining moment in the blurring of the line between performance and pedagogy. Lecture-performance, however, is just one aspect of the artist's alternative teaching practices that have been adopted by contemporary artists. His methods and ideas about art and teaching are also the basis for BHQFU.

Beuys founded the Free International University (FIU), a research institute based on his expanded concept of art, in his studio in Dusseldorf in 1973. The original institute continued as a working association until 1988, two years after his death. Although Beuys founded the University and shaped the idea, it was not a hierarchical organization. No one had special importance within it. It was a political movement. As such, many of the same questions that surface today about hypocrisy and political sincerity in regards to BHQF's success in the art world arose for Beuys in the 1970s and 1980s. Still, even for him, the paradox of working against a capitalistic system from a vantage point of success within it never really disappeared. Beuys explained in an interview with *Art Papier* in 1979:

> I try to avoid the profit system . . . I am against the profit. But as long as I live in the capitalistic system I would be stupid to relinquish my money because I have to deal with the struggle against the system, and therefore I need the money to struggle against the profit system. But when the whole system is delivered by the majority of the people, and new laws are existing

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> on the economical level avoiding every money thing, then everything is through. But as long as things are not through, I have to care for money to work against the system.[2]

Later in this interview, he addresses the question of receiving funding from the West German government, which surely wouldn't be providing money for FIU if they knew the true intentions of its founder. Beuys didn't have a problem taking funds from anywhere and even said that he'd be happy if the government fully funded the university. He said he could imagine that very quickly there would be a new level of society reached if the university was financially secure. Like BHQFU, it's easy to respect the FIU as a work of art, but more difficult to believe hyperbolic statements about the revolutionary potential of this type of education, especially when it is government funded.

By connecting their forms to Beuys, the Bruces find precedent for their seemingly contradictory actions. Perhaps the greatest clue to the true methodology of Social Sculpture, and lecture-performance that places itself in that lineage, is Beuys's idea about "the manifoldness of people's intentions and inventions against the system."[3] Every ideology, according to Beuys, gets absorbed in a capitalistic system because as a system itself, it is already working inside of capitalism. The only methodology that can really work against capitalism is what he calls "the color, the manifoldness in the unity." In other words, that which is all encompassing of the creativity of individuals, which truly sets us free from dependence on money and state in a given structure, won't itself ever be defined, categorized, and systematized. Working with the fleeting substance of verbal language and the changing thoughts of an audience-as-students is material as amorphous and non-systematic as it gets.

JÉRÔME BEL

In such cases as another Performa 09 artist, Terence Koh, who gave his lecture-performance *Art History: 1642–2009* (2009) at the National Arts Club, and The V-Girls, whose performance panel discussion *The Question of Manet's Olympia: Posed and Skirted* (1989) appeared at UC Berkeley, the new content in these artists' pieces is most relevantly described as the removal of content. Where Koh presents art history as gibberish and the V-Girls present critical theory as jargon, choreographers such as Xavier Le Roy and Jérôme Bel offer a more productive, if occasionally too even-handed, approach to institutional critique in the form of lecture-performance. Bel's *Veronique Doisneau* (2004) is a biographical work that proves how an artist can use direct language to reveal a social structure to an audience—in this case, the ballet—without straightforward anti-institutional rhetoric (which is, often, simply a parody of established rhetoric).

In this piece, like his *Pichet Klunchun and Myself* (2005) as well as Le Roy's *Product of Circumstances* (1999), a part of the inner workings of a traditional form is explored through the language of the emancipated—talking—dancer. In Bel's work in particular, we see that criticism of an institution, such as ballet, is not an aggressive push against a social structure from without, but is rather sympathetic to the players of

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roles in this world, and hence the larger world. Bel's tonal approach is delicate; he has a precise ability *not* to laugh at what is immensely important to participants in the field. That is not to say that classical ballerinas and dance professionals all relate to Bel's work. But for those who think about the implications of traditional social constructions on the stage, he provides a few measured explanations that result in a particularly aestheticized knowledge, and a certain freedom from prescribed and largely unquestioned social roles.

Bel was once asked in an interview to define emancipation and he responded, "It's knowing what you're taking part in. Not being alienated. Knowing what you're doing, what it belongs to and what you're playing."[4] This is the experience that *Veronique Doisneau* can provide for those who watch it. It attempts to bring to the fore what is happening and how it is working on you and with you; how you as an audience member are complicit in it.

The performance begins when the dancer Veronique Doisneau comes out on to the stage of the Paris Opera house, states her name and some other biographical, humanizing information, and tells the audience that she will be retiring from her career as a ballet dancer after this evening. Her gaze is raised to the cheap seats, high in the balcony, bringing attention to the grand architecture of the theatre and the multiple social levels of the audience. She tells us that in the hierarchy of the Paris Ballet she is a "Subject," which means she can dance the Corps de Ballet parts and soloist roles. We learn how much money she makes, that she never became a star, and that a meeting with Rudolf Nureyev was fundamental for her. He taught her that through the mastery of the language of dance, emotion is created. He also said that the sense of movement should be respected, and not interpreted. She explains this, ironically, in the context of a show that serves to interpret not only the movements, but also their social history.

The first dance she demonstrates on stage, singing the music herself so that we hear her breath and voice as we see her move, is the second variation of "The Shades Pas de Trois" in the third act from Nureyev's *Bayadere*. She goes on to discuss which choreographers' ballets she enjoys and which she does not. She talks about pieces she liked to dance and roles she always wished she had the opportunity to perform. To illustrate her views, she dances excerpts from works such as Merce Cunningham's *Points in Space*. Cunningham, she says, taught her to dance without music and listen to the other dancers' rhythms as she moved. Before this number she sits on the floor and takes off her pointe shoes as the audience watches and waits, witnessing the work behind the ballerina's transformation.

At one point, she mentions that she loves watching Céline Talon dance, especially in Mats Ek's *Giselle*; Talon then enters the stage and dances the part as Doisneau watches, seated at the front of the stage with her back to the audience. As Doisneau continues to talk, we discover how physically painful it is to hold oneself in the still positions required from the corps during the beautiful scene from *Swan Lake* in which thirty-two dancers become a human stage to highlight the stars. She talks

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directly to the sound person before she recreates this role, looking up and saying, "Bruno, can you put on the music please?" Little asides like this expose the actual moment of this particular show even as Doisneau reveals the larger institution of ballet from a dancer's perspective, through biography and personality as well as the exposure of fundamental professional information.

The show is beautiful in and of itself; Doisneau carrying an enormous stage, intriguingly sad yet also so plainly the quintessential work-a-day, matter-of-fact ballerina. It also carries an extra bit of power, transforming one's mind in a specific way through the transmission of knowledge about a traditional institution. It doesn't do so in a way that poisons one's experience of ballet, but it lets the audience in and reminds us that in this structure, we are important participants. It asks us during the show, and remains to remind us every time we sit and watch a lovely ballet, that we exist within this institution and at once we must be aware of how we negotiate our desire to live in society with our desire for emancipation from oppressive social structures.

So, then, how does the experience of viewing a show like *Veronique Doisneau* change the experience of viewing a traditional ballet? What does it add? What does it take away? Does Bel's art have the power to change a person? Is his method of explanation, bringing this direct language into bodies that normally don't talk, really transmitting useful knowledge into the minds that receive it? At the New York City Ballet's performance of *The Sleeping Beauty* on January 28, 2010, someone with extensive knowledge of both ballet and Bel asked me during intermission if I was thinking about hierarchy and social construction during the show. My answer at the time, in light of principal dancer Ashley Bouder's most graceful ways with the difficult steps, was quite simply "No." I acknowledged that the beauty of the traditional performance had carried me away. I was enjoying myself.

But was that statement completely true? On second thought, I recognize that through the education that Bel provided in *Veronique Doisneau*, I was processing the experience on multiple levels. As I acknowledged the precise arrangement of the presentation, I became free to enjoy it on honest terms. Ballet is a social construction, but it is also an enormous peak that reaches the highest potentials of what collaborative staged art can be. It shows bodies pushed to their ultimate limits: ballerinas are giants, we look up to them; we sit in awe of their physical feats. But intellectual understanding of the politics behind such beauty goes a long way in making us see the microcosm of the stage as well as our place within society. Bel's gift is the ability to deconstruct, instruct, enlighten, and yet somehow *not* take away.

THE NATIONAL THEATER OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Shown as part of the Under the Radar festival in January 2010, NTUSA's *Chautauqua!* used the history of New York City and the history of the Public Theater, which was where it was being shown, in order to educate audiences about the implications of mass entertainment and cultural education in general. The foundation of this work, directed by Yehuda Duenyas, is an intentional melding of theatre-as-high-art and theatre-as-entertainment. The members of NTUSA inject sincere education

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(delivered through the lecture form) into this mix as a way to emancipate themselves as authors and performers, as well as the audience, from blind participation in the money-based, mass entertainment model of commercial theatre.

Chautauqua! opens with a speech directed at the audience. Dick Pricey announces that he is one of the stars of NTUSA and then enters into a brief history of the real Chautauquas, as well as the intentions of the current performance: not re-enactment, but re-invention. In the first few minutes of the show the audience learns that the Chautauquas originated in western New York state in 1874 when a local preacher invited a number of Sunday school teachers and their families to Lake Chautauqua for a series of lectures on religion and progressive politics. After a few years as a summer event, the idea spread, the formula was imitated, and the name "Chautauqua" stopped referring to the lake and began to be used as a common reference for these educational festivals. Between the 1870s and the Great Depression, the Chautauquas brought lecturers, scholars, explorers, scientists, dancers, and entertainers to small isolated American communities, set up the "brown tent" and attempted to "uplift the common man" in order to "strengthen the national fiber."[5]

The Chautauquas were born as a religious movement, but they were nothing like the evangelical tent meetings that included dramatic sermons and swooning worshippers. As Pricey says in his opening monologue, "They were premised on the enlightenment principle that the world was governed by certain fundamental laws, and that these laws were knowable, and that the path of knowledge was the road from barbarism to civility." In order to achieve their sober tone and bring the nation together with a common base of knowledge, they also had to distance themselves from vaudeville and the circus, which in the Chautauqua world of restraint, were considered low forms of entertainment that appealed to people's basest instincts. However, everything changed in 1904 when the movement was professionalized. In the interest of the bottom line, the business Chautauquas started to give the people more of what they wanted: sex, spectacle, and magic. As Pricey explains it, they bent to the forces of money and brought in aspects of the vaudeville world of which the movement was once so critical.

In this re-invention of the Chautauqua lectures, NTUSA mimics the actual form—meshing lectures with songs and vaudevillian entertainment—but the company members also create a bit of a parody of this historical movement and, like Bel, they self-consciously deconstruct the theatre. Their focus is also on the expectations of the audience and the role of the performer, but they move away from Bel, and toward the BHQF, when tapping into the actual historical forces of economic history as it relates to the history of the theatre. One of the company's main concerns regarding the act of going to the theatre for entertainment or education is the force of money in the relationship between the performers and the audience.

Because of this, the audience is placed in a curious position during *Chautauqua!* Because of the many layers of meaning that are coated in reality, parody, and acting, the spectators are asked to use their imagination and play the role of the historical

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Chautauqua audience members. They are also confronted with an awareness of themselves as audience members and their financial and social relationship to the actors on stage. This layering of experience is a requirement for lecture-performance to be defined as such, considering its double existence as an aesthetic and educational experience. Since NTUSA refers to the historical Chautauqua lectures specifically, the company conveys information in a way that mimics the direct, populist approach of these seminars; this contrasts with artists who refer to a certain highbrow style of art education. The company is, after all, more concerned with the issue of economics in regard to mass entertainment than work from the dance or art world traditions.

As the show progresses, guest speakers make appearances, more history is relayed, and eventually the acts start to show signs of more base entertainment value. Leggy dancers (or a comedic portrayal of them, complete with the chubby male dancer) come onstage; modern dancers also appear at one point, dressed in black, sending up abstract "high art" movements. At the Public Theater performances in January 2010, the *Chautauqua!* grand finale featured an enormous group of teenage Broadway singers performing numbers from famous musicals that had their start off-Broadway at the Public. For the final number of this giant spectacle, all the singers and dancers stayed on stage while Pricey performed a burlesque routine. As he stripped naked, he made these final remarks (the same final remarks that he makes every time they perform this piece):

> At this point I should probably admit that we have been paid to create this piece. But that's not why this has turned out this way. I don't feel like you've paid me to do this.
>
> The promise we made to our funders was that we would create a piece that would be both artistic and entertaining. Originally entitled The Chautauqua Lectures, one of our most devoted supporters asked to change it so that so that people wouldn't think it was just a bunch of boring lectures. The exclamation point helped.
>
> But, still, I'm here . . . This is not a leg show. I did this . . . as a demonstration . . . of love. For the community. It's because I love you. If that's what you want.

SHARON HAYES

Sharon Hayes's *Love Addresses* are deeply connected to the history of activist political street speeches. The general format of these performances consists of Hayes on a street corner with a microphone, reading a politically charged letter to a lost lover. She has performed variations of the work at The New Museum in New York (*I march in the parade of liberty but as long as I love you I'm not free*, 2007), as well as for the Institute of Contemporary Art London's "Talk Show," a month-long exhibition and performance festival addressing aspects of human speech, in May 2009. The performances, which she also drew upon for her video piece at the 2010 Whitney Biennial, increasingly highlight the role the media plays in specifically political activist speech. *Parole* (Whitney Museum, 2010) features video documentation of

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these street speeches read by Hayes and by people picked off the street in various cities. In the video installation, the tension between public political speech in its pure historical form—with a bullhorn on the street, rallying a crowd to action—and documentary footage that replays and spins the sound bite, mirrors the public/private aspects of her script.

Because the underlying issue Hayes refers to is that of queer rights and the historical moment she generally stays tied to is the downtown New York arts and AIDS activism scene of the early 1990s, her lecture-performance uses directly political language. It stems from forms of political speech rather than academic discourse; its contents are mixed with intimate personal details about her love life. The sentiment that the "personal is political" makes its way into all of her work and, along with her pleadingly sweet voice, results in a disarming style of constructed speech that both engages and confronts the accidental viewer. The lover's existence sets a personal context for how politics affect an activist's day-to-day life—the relationship ended when Hayes's lover became disillusioned with the fight for equality.

We know that the political information in which Hayes soaks her speeches is real. It is pulled from current events and sets us in time and place so that looking the other way becomes an active endeavor. The personal and specific intrigue brought by the feeling of seeing into a lost lover's heart is a disarming soap opera, meticulously constructed. For example, an excerpt from *I march in the parade . . .* (2007) at the New Museum:

> Why don't you call me? . . . You refuse to answer my messages, my letters, my phone calls, but I know, the ears are the only orifice that can't be closed. You would be surprised how different it is here now. No one seems to talk about the war. It's like we can't find the words or we're tired of saying the same things over and over. There's no movement here and yet so much happens. In May I started a list of things I wanted to talk to you about. Cheney's pompous warning to Iran, the Blackwater scandal, the bombings at the al-Ghazi market, and all this hurried talk of Baghdad returning to normal.[6]

In the communal tone of her work, Hayes is evoking a certain era in the history of activism—her New York City in the early '90s—that is steeped in the specific histories of the activisms that influenced it: the activism spurred by Bowers v. Hardwick, the Stonewall rebellion, the Black Power movement, the Civil Rights movement, the Feminist movement, and so on. She always refers to the moment in which she became political and the context of that political action in New York being based around a community of people who made art, attended political meetings, rallies, readings, exhibitions, and performance—all with the same sense of urgency. After all, she and her friends were also attending numerous memorial services for AIDS victims: these were the days before protease inhibitors, when their fight was not only against the disease, but also against government neglect. It was an aggressive time of non-stop hard work; in the keynote address at the Creative Time Summit, November 18,

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2009, Hayes describes the feeling of this era of her life as the ecstatic pleasure of "aligning the feeling of belonging with the feeling of wanting to belong."

In her performance work she tries to bring the audience into the feeling of that time: the tense, high-stakes enjoyment that comes from actively engaging with a community that is seeking political and social progression in a city and country fraught with ambivalence. Hayes's works include an honest and educational verbal plea to a mostly inactive group of passersby. If you are on the crowded street and you're listening to her, you are also noticing how many people are not—this is an essential component of the work. For those who are simply walking by, the work consists of her and a small, attentive audience. For those who have come specifically to see her, the work consists of her and a large group of people who walk by without paying attention to her words.

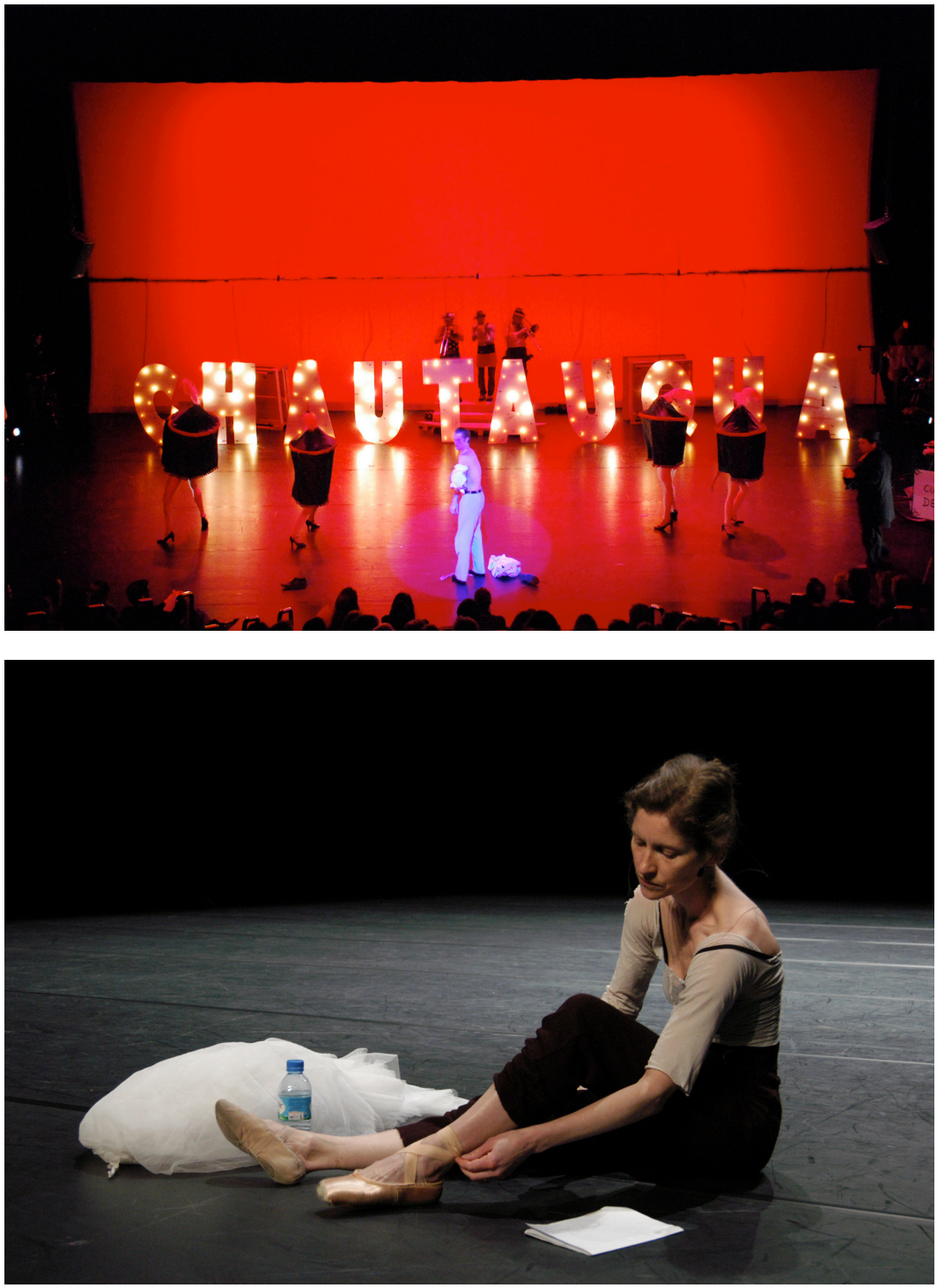
This is lecture-performance that melds actual political discourse and performance rather than arts discourse and art (an indirect political statement by way of metaphor). It conveys Hayes's interest in the power and the limits of in-person political activist speeches, based in the successes and failures of the culture of twentieth-century activism that she references. Artfully imbuing the form with new information, she not only invokes the past, but also takes advantage of the residues of power once held in it.

In her works she conveys the feeling that art can create change, that the community can still be ignited, and that words are only important insofar as they are actually connected to political actions. In fact, the words become political actions. Hayes, more than any other artist working in lecture-performance, makes work that rests within Beuys's expanded definition of art. She puts no theoretical limits on the definition of her speech as performance or on the receptions of her audience. The changing roles of the audience and the performers in her pieces are not based on a direct attempt to reform the theatre or to make a metaphorical point about society through changing the roles of audience and author. Instead, she takes her cues from a history of activist politics that carries the weighty precedent of creating actual changes in society.

Like Beuys, she would like to meld political action with art action, stepping outside of an art-centric approach to the emancipation of the spectator. Her work revels in the history of twentieth-century activist speech and explores this kind of speech's possibility to exist in another form: as education as art.

On April 5th, 2010, there was a panel discussion at the Martin E. Segal Theatre Center, City University New York, called "Intersections with Art and Performance." Getting into the theatre felt like waiting for some kind of exclusive nightclub. A couple of people squeezed by the intern guarding the gate, but eighty others crowded outside the door saying things like, "I'm not on the list? But I work at MoMA!" It was a ridiculous scene: particularly in hindsight, given the lack of new material or actual substance in the talks. Perhaps the commotion outside set the panelists

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Top: The National Theater of the United States of America's *Chautauqua!* Photo: Justin Bernhaut. Courtesy Yehuda Duenyas. Bottom: Veronique Doisneau in *Veronique Doisneau* by Jérôme Bel. Photo: Anna Van Kooij. Courtesy of the artist.

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up to fail—how exciting can a non-performative academic panel discussion ever really be? You wait for Studio 54, and you get Nancy Spector, Chief Curator of the Guggenheim, regurgitating the press release for her museum's recent Tino Sehgal exhibition. This panel was not billed as a self-consciously performative series of talks, but it brought forward, in one way or another, most of the major issues addressed by the lecture-performances of the artists discussed here.

The absolute highlight of the evening, which also featured Maggie Hoffman and Eric Dyer of Radiohole as well as the video artist Alix Pearlstein, was a presentation by Hayes. Because she is a performer who works so directly and interactively with audiences, her way of addressing the room was the most eloquent, connected, and honest. Pearlstein, who isn't used to performing live, was shy and nervous at the podium; when Spector spoke, she spoke for the Guggenheim. When asked about Sehgal's *The Kiss* (2004) and its exclusive re-enactment by white, heterosexual couples, there was a moment when Spector's opinion and role seemed to conflict. (Sehgal's politics are more "ecological" than social, she explained, her expression seeming to indicate that she was fully aware of the absurdity of that argument.) This internal struggle was briefly interesting, but for the most part she spoke from above and the information bounced right off this audience full of art and theatre professionals. Museum-curator-speak, after having been so heavily parodied in lecture-performance, now serves as its own parody. Andrea Fraser's *Museum Highlights*, in which she poses as a museum tour guide and uses overblown curatorial language to address everything from the drinking fountain to the gift shop, comes to mind too readily to take Spector seriously. It is clear that everyone involved, from the audience to the speaker, knows they are just going through the motions and playing these specified roles.

While Radiohole was an entertaining addition to the evening, and a good representative of alternative theatre, Hoffman and Dyer's presentation was absolutely theatrical, indirect. They spoke with their eyes closed, with fake eyes made out of paper taped onto their eyelids. The difference between their performance and Hayes's talk can only be described in terms of the speakers' connection with the audience. When Hoffman and Dyer performed their lecture, the audience watched; when Hayes spoke, the audience was fully engaged. There was a shift in the room, people focused; Hayes made eye contact and explained her points with an urgency to be understood. This might be explained by the terms of the discussion itself, which focused on the spaces for performance. Radiohole is still interested in the rectangular frame of traditional theatre, while Hayes has followed her investigations into locations where the interactions between the audience and performer are not as defined.

More specifically, I was cued into the virtuosity of Hayes's live speech. In lecture-performance, public speaking is an aesthetic component. Clear articulation and elocution is absolutely necessary. Even Bel, who challenges the expectations for dance virtuosity from an audience, always exhibits oratory elegance. Lecture-performance (or at least successful lecture-performance) does not have, as many assume it does, an easy, DIY aesthetic. The works I've focused on have all been rehearsed, precisely constructed, and layered with meaning on many levels. There is an intricacy in the

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form; the relevant question is not whether this rehearsal and development process is theatrical rather than visual art performance, which is the subject the "Intersections" talk circled around. It is, rather, how the precise construction of the form serves to hold and disseminate the message, meaning, and direct impact of a work of this nature's true substance: progressive thought.

NOTES

1. David Levi Strauss, *From Head to Hand* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 34.

2. Joseph Beuys, "I put me on this train! Interview with Art Papier," in *Energy Plan for the Western Man: Joseph Beuys in America: Writings and Interviews with the Artist,* ed. Carin Kuoni (New York: Four Walls Eight Windows, 1990), 46.

3. Joseph Beuys, "Speech upon receiving an honorary doctorate degree from the Nova Scotia College of Art And Design, Halifax, 1976," in *Energy Plan* (see note 2), 51.

4. Jérôme Bel, "*Pichet Klunchun and Myself,* 2005: Interview with Jérôme Bel by Jan Ritsema," *Catalogue Raisonné* (1994–2005) (Paris: Laboratoires d'Aubervilliers, 2008).

5. *Chatauqua!*, by The National Theater of the United States of America, P.S. 122, New York, 2010.

6. Sharon Hayes, *I march in the parade of liberty but as long as I love you I'm not free* (2007), from New Museum of Contemporary Art, audio file, http://www.newmuseum.org/exhibitions/17.

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