

Special Revised
Chronology

Radical Presence

Black Performance in Contemporary Art

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CHRONOLOGY

Valerie Cassel Oliver and Sharla Hammond

Edits in bold type by Sur Rodney (Sur)

1840s

Dominating the entertainment industry in the United States are blackface minstrel shows. Usually performed by whites in blackface makeup, the theatrical skits, musicals, and dance events portray American blacks as lazy, ignorant, dim-witted, happy-go-lucky buffoons. Archetypes such as the mammy, the tragic mulatto, and the dandy emerge during this period and will persist for more than a century. Black performers, including Thomas Dilward and William Henry Lane, also engaged in minstrel theater. The genre declined significantly after the Emancipation Proclamation and Reconstruction but survived into the early twentieth century. Blackface acts carried over to vaudeville, performed by such renowned artists as Al Jolson.

1863

The Emancipation Proclamation, an executive order signed by President Abraham Lincoln, effectively frees more than 3.1 million enslaved African American men, women, and children. In 1865 the ratification of the Thirteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution completed the abolition of slavery.

1910s

Spurred by segregation, prejudice, often horrific injustices, and economic deprivation, the Great Migration begins. The movement of blacks from the American rural South to the industrial North and later to the frontier West began immediately after the signing of the Emancipation Proclamation but increased starting around 1910 and continued throughout most of the twentieth century.

Bert Williams becomes one of the most renowned entertainers and comedians of the vaudeville era. Like many other African American performers of his day, Williams frequently appears in blackface.

1914–18

World War I erupts in Europe. The United States joins the war in 1917, bringing to European shores a large number of African Americans serving in the military.

1915

Race films become part of the American popular landscape. These films, created outside the Hollywood studio system and produced for a black audience, featured all-black casts. Though they sometimes played to stereotypes, race films would be widely celebrated as providing more authentic portrayals of blacks as well as exploring diverse narratives. They offered leading roles to actors who were generally relegated to minor parts in mainstream movies. Race films declined in the wake of the Hollywood Antitrust Case of 1948.

1916

During World War I, Dada, an avant-garde cultural movement challenging traditional art, emerges in Zurich and Berlin. It would have a profound impact in Europe and later in the United States. The intermingling of mediums such as photography, film, and performance, with an emphasis on the body, to create new sounds and spectacles would align with the musical genre of jazz, whose dissemination in Europe was aided by African American GIs and émigrés.

1920s

The Jazz Age arrives in America as the contemporary music and dance of African Americans crosses over and is assimilated into mainstream American culture.

1929

The stock market crash ushers in the Great Depression. Black Americans, already on the lowest rung of the economic ladder, are often the most adversely affected.

1942

The United States enters World War II, and once again black Americans serve in segregated units.

1954

Black poets such as Theodore “Ted” Joans, Bob Kaufman, and LeRoi Jones become part of the

Beat movement, which merged poetry with jazz, launching the modern spoken-word tradition in African American poetry. This reframing of Dada precepts reverberates with the infusion of blues/jazz/soul elements.

The Supreme Court ruling in *Brown v. Board of Education* declares state laws permitting separate public schools for black and white students unconstitutional, paving the way for integration.

1957

Congress passes the Civil Rights Act of 1957, with the goal of protecting the right of all Americans to vote.

1959

Benjamin Patterson, then visiting Germany to explore developments in experimental music, writes a letter to his family and offers a score, *Paper Piece*, as a Christmas gift and activity. He would later create a number of scores elevating simple gestures into music and performance events.

1960

Conceptual art, with its roots in the work of Marcel Duchamp and others, emerges in the United States, Latin America, Asia, and Europe.

Benjamin Patterson returns to Germany to attend the International Society for Contemporary Music festival in Cologne. After a disappointing encounter with Karlheinz Stockhausen, he meets John Cage, who invites him to perform with him at the Contre Festival at Mary Bauermeister’s studio. Performing with them are George Brecht, Cornelius Cardew, Toshi Ichihyanagi, David Tudor, and La Monte Young.

1963

Patterson presents several performance events during the Yam Day festival in New York, including *Yam Day (Rush Hour)* at Penn Station and *Yam Day (Hat Sale)*, *Tour*, and *Final Examination* at Smolin Gallery.

In New York, Ellen Stewart establishes La MaMa, which becomes the city's premier venue for experimental theater and performance art.

March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom: A hundred years after the signing of the Emancipation Proclamation, some 250,000 people gather in front of the Lincoln Memorial to demand civil and economic rights for African Americans. Martin Luther King delivers what would become known as his "I Have a Dream" speech.

1964

In New York, Patterson performs the iconic work *Lick Piece* in collaboration with Letty Eisenhauer at the Fluxhall (George Maciunas's loft on Canal Street).

LeRoi Jones records the track "Black Dada Nihilismus" with the New York Art Quartet (trombonist Roswell Rudd, alto saxophonist John Tchicai, bassist Lewis Worrell, and drummer Milford Graves).

1965

Malcolm X is assassinated at the Audubon Ballroom in Harlem.

Rioting breaks out in the Los Angeles ghetto of Watts, the most devastating racial uprising in the United States to date.

Some cultural historians designate this year the beginning of the black arts movement.

Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* is published.

Benjamin Patterson contributes two significant texts—"American Studies Seminar II" and "Notes on Pets"—to the book *The Four Suits*, edited by Dick Higgins for Something Else Press.

1966

Huey Newton and Bobby Seale found the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense in Oakland.

1967

The Anacostia Museum of Culture and History in Washington, DC, is established. The following year the Studio Museum in Harlem opens.

Between the late 1960s and the early 1980s a number of African and African American students enter the UCLA School of Theater, Film, and Television as part of an Ethno-Communications initiative designed to be responsive to communities of color. Dubbed the

"L.A. Rebellion" and the "Los Angeles School of Black Filmmaking," these students would include Charles Burnett, Haile Gerima, and Barbara McCullough, who would film performances by the artists David Hammons, Maren Hassinger, Senga Nengudi, and Franklin Peters.

1968

On April 4, Martin Luther King is assassinated at the Lorraine Hotel in Memphis, where he had traveled to support the city's black sanitation workers' strike.

The Last Poets, a group of provocative spoken-word artists, is formed on May 19 (Malcolm X's birthday) at Marcus Garvey Park in East Harlem. The original members were Gylan Kain, Felipe Luciano, and David Nelson.

The Democratic Convention is held in Chicago. Protests and a police crackdown result in riots that are broadcast to the world.

Adrian Piper performs *Meat into Meat* at Loft Performance in New York. It becomes her first recorded performance work.

James Brown releases the recording "Say It Loud—I'm Black and I'm Proud," which quickly peaks at number ten on the Billboard Hot 100. The funk song is adopted as an anthem for black power and determination.

1969

A series of clashes between New York police and gay and lesbian citizens culminate in a riot at the Stonewall Inn after a police raid. The event launches the gay liberation movement.

Angered by the Metropolitan Museum of Art's exhibition *Harlem on My Mind* and its disparaging treatment of African American art, African American artists and art critics establish the Black Emergency Cultural Coalition (BECC).

Sam Greenlee's novel *The Spook Who Sat by the Door* is published.

1970

Hip-hop, which would become an international musical and cultural phenomenon, arises from block parties in the South Bronx.

Former University of California assistant professor Angela Davis is accused of murder, kidnapping, and conspiracy in relation to a shootout outside a Marin County courthouse involving weapons that she had bought. Davis goes into hiding to avoid arrest. She would later be acquitted of all charges.

Brothers Dale and Alonzo Davis launch Brockman Gallery Productions in Los Angeles. The gallery would become a leading venue for avant-garde work by African American artists, particularly those working and living in Los Angeles, including David Hammons, Maren Hassinger, and Senga Nengudi.

1971

Pieces of a Man is the debut studio album of the American musician and spoken-word artist Gil Scott-Heron. His musical fusion of jazz, blues, and soul as well as social and political lyrical content was delivered in both rapping and melismatic vocal styles.

1972

Marsha P. Johnson legendary transgender rights activist and popular figure in New York City's gay art scene from the 1960s, renown for wearing thrift store dresses, flower crowns and tinsel-laced wigs, makes a first performance début on a theater stage in *Sabled Fables* a production by the Hot Peaches presented at Sammy's Bowery Follies, NY, in June.

1973

From 1973 to 1975 Adrian Piper enacts and documents a series of public interventions under the rubric the Mythic Being. Piper alters her appearance to resemble a male of indeterminate ethnicity, moving about the city to register the public's response.

1974

Writing in *Le Monde* in the summer of 1976, Ishmael Reed champions multicultural writers as the authentic voices of their communities. According to Reed, politics and aesthetics have been shaped by racism, sexism, and homophobia. He argues that revealing the hidden narratives of those who have lived "on the borders" and "in the shadows" could transform American realities and that recognition of difference could promote true equality for minorities.

Just Above Midtown Gallery (JAM) opens in New York. The brainchild of the filmmaker Linda Goode-Bryant, JAM becomes the premier venue showcasing the work of experimental and avant-garde black artists in New York.

1975

The filmmaker Camille Billops and her husband, James V. Hatch, establish the Hatch-Billops Collection, a living archive featuring oral histories of performing and visual artists, documentation of their work, and ephemera. They produce a series of publications highlighting their collection. The archive is now housed at Emory University in Atlanta.

1976

Papo Colo performs *Walking Sculpture* and *Coronation* along West Broadway, in New York, walking along the street with pieces of wood, which he later uses to erect a structure.

Alex Haley publishes the Pulitzer Prize-winning novel *Roots*. The novel would later become a television miniseries and reshape the dialogue about the history of blacks in the United States.

1977

Senga Nengudi's performance work *Performance Piece—Nylon Mesh and Maren Hassinger* is presented at Pearl C. Woods Gallery in Los Angeles. It becomes the prelude to her exhibition *Répondez s'il-vous plaît* at Just Above Midtown Gallery in New York.

Sur Rodney (Sur) exhibits *Candy Darlings*, in a group invitational at 112 Greene St, NYC. The artwork presents a large b/w Photostat documenting his performance mimicking a picture of Warhol Superstar Candy Darling he'd seen reproduced in an issue of AFTERDARK magazine. The Photostat exhibited has Sur posing foreground to three of his life sized paintings of Candy Darling's pose.

Joe Lewis performs *Autos' Six Handed Choppin'* at Franklin Furnace. The following year *Distances: Movement and Shape of the Universe, not Built to Scale*, is performed in a New York University Parking Lot at Grand and Broadway, NYC; 3 Mercer Store; and at 96 Grand. Lewis renown for his co-directorship of Fashion Moda in the Bronx, curates and mounts numerous exhibitions and performance events. Lewis will be awarded grants in new genre from CAPS and the NEA for his performance work from 1976-1982.

The exhibition *The Concept of Art* is presented at Just Above Midtown Gallery (JAM) in New York. The final segment of the exhibition, "The Afro-American Artists in the Abstract Continuum of American Art, 1945-1977," features many visual

artists engaged in performance work. JAM publishes an accompanying catalogue, *Contextures*, edited by Linda Goode Bryant and Marcy S. Phillips.

As a protest against the denial of statehood to Puerto Rico, Papo Colo performs *Superman 51*, in which he runs down New York's Westside Highway with large pieces of wood tied to his arms, legs, and torso. Colo runs from Fifty-First Street until his body fails, exhausted by his burden.

1978

William Pope.L conceives and enacts his first major performance action, *Times Square Crawl*.

Senga Nengudi organizes *Ceremonies for Freeway Fets* under an expressway in downtown Los Angeles. The ritual-like event features the artists David Hammons, Maren Hassinger, Franklin Parker, and Roho and is sponsored by Brockman Gallery, the C.E.T.A. Program, and Cal Trans.

1979

While in graduate school at Otis Art Institute, Ulysses Jenkins conceives and presents the multimedia ritual performance *Two Zone Transfer*. The work features fellow students Kerry James Marshall, Greg Pitts, and Ronnie Nichols.

Under the pseudonym RodForce, Sherman Fleming embarks on a series of physically demanding endurance works that underscore the artist's willingness to transgress racial and sexual taboos while pushing his own physical limits. His first action, *Something Akin to Living*, is presented at the J. Wayne Higgs Studio Gallery in Washington, DC.

The song "Rapper's Delight," by the Sugarhill Gang, helps bring rap to national prominence.

1980

Ulysses Jenkins begins his collaboration with Maren Hassinger and Senga Nengudi with the presentation of *Adams Be Doggereal* at Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions (LACE).

Maren Hassinger participates in *Remy Presents: Project Grand Central*, an exhibition curated by Allan Schwartzman. For the project, Hassinger conceives and enacts the work *Crucifixion/Red Cross* as a "kinetic sculpture" in which she integrates commuters and their movements into a performance/installation piece by placing small crosses on them.

Lorraine O'Grady begins a series of performance events around her arts persona, *Mlle Bourgeoise Noire*, who would appear over the course of three years at various art openings in New York, at such venues as Just Above Midtown Gallery and the New Museum of Contemporary Art.

Senga Nengudi performs *Get Up* at Paper Mill in Los Angeles. The work is a collaboration between Nengudi, Maren Hassinger, Houston Conwill, Yolanda Vidado, and Franklin Parker and is sponsored by the Los Angeles Printmaking Society. Later in the year, Nengudi will again collaborate with Hassinger and Parker on a new work, *Alive*.

Sur Rodney (Sur) hosts the *Sur Rodney Sur Show* and the *All New Sur Rodney (Sur) Show* on Manhattan Cable and at the Mudd Club, respectively.

Lorraine O'Grady's second performance, *Nefertiti/Devonia Evangeline*, premiered at Just Above Midtown Gallery on October 31. In an unexpected turn of events, one month after *Mlle Bourgeoise Noire's* invasion of the avant-garde gallery protesting the timidity of its artists, Linda Goode Bryant, the gallery's visionary founder-director, invited O'Grady to represent JAM in *Dialogues*, an exhibit created to showcase nearly a dozen downtown alternative art spaces. This new occasion was fundamentally different than *Mlle Bourgeoise Noire*, this performance compared the difficult relationship of O'Grady and her sibling Devonia via historic comparison to Nefertiti and the younger Mutnedjmet. O'Grady also addressed political targets such as doomed attempts to identify with "African" cultures and to resurrect their rituals then current in certain strains of African-American art.

1981

David Hammons's action *Pissed Off* is captured in a series of photographs by Dawoud Bey. In the action, Hammons literally urinates on Richard Serra's sculpture *T.W.U.* (1980), located at the corner of Franklin Street and West Broadway in Lower Manhattan. During the action, Hammons is caught by a New York police officer and given a citation for his actions.

Collaborating with Cheryl Banks and Butch Morris, Senga Nengudi presents the performance work *Air Propo* at Just Above Midtown Gallery in New York.

Jack Waters co-founds Allied Productions, Inc. discerning that his practice of mixing diverse creative forms would be best facilitated by fusing his interest in collaboration and social

process with how his art is realized. This same year Waters co-founds POOL, a choreographer's collective that creates and performs multi media performance, rituals, site specific installations, and ephemeral events, and performs at White Dog Studio, Tilted Arc at Federal Plaza and Squat Theater the following year. POOL becomes the resident dance company of the legendary Pyramid Club in New York City's East Village during the 1980s.

1982

Ulysses Jenkins establishes Othervisions Studio with monies from a National Endowment for the Arts grant. The studio is located at Vermont Avenue and Adams Boulevard in Los Angeles, near the University of Southern California.

Papo Colo and Jeanette Ingberman establish Exit Art in New York, an interdisciplinary cultural space that presents exhibitions, films, and theater works.

Adrian Piper begins hosting a series of audience-interactive events titled *Funk Lessons*. The events highlight the dynamics of racial stereotyping (e.g., black people have rhythm and can dance). She later produces the more pointed performance works *Calling Card* (1986–90) and *Cornered* (1988), which draw on the uncertainty of race and ethnic determinations at a moment of cultural reflection on race and a demand to shift minorities from the "margins" to the "center."

In Los Angeles, Senga Nengudi collaborates with Maren Hassinger, Ulysses Jenkins, and Franklin Parker on the performance piece *Flying* in Barnsdall Park. The performance is presented in conjunction with the exhibition *Afro-American Abstractions*, presented at the Los Angeles Municipal Art Gallery.

Senga Nengudi collaborates with Blondell Cummings and Yasunao Tone on the performance work *Blind Dates* at Just Above Midtown Gallery in New York.

The Gracie Mansion Gallery sets up in a storefront at 337 East 10th Street in the East Village with Sur Rodney (Sur) as co-director. The gallery moves to a more spacious storefront at 167 Avenue A in 1984. The following year PEOPLE magazine will feature Gracie and Sur celebrated amongst the most intriguing people in America for the December 1985 issue. The controversial double page spread, styled by Sur, has him standing alongside a limo parked in front of the Life Cafe on 10th Street at Avenue B, outfitted in a chauffeur's uniform, holding a tray with martini glasses with Gracie in rhinestone studded sunglasses wearing a

full-length mink coat over a Jackson Pollock dress painted by Mike Bidlo. The gallery would become one of the best known in the East Village during this boon with Sur's assistance from 1982–1988 representing artists Guy Augeri, Buster Cleveland, Claudia DeMonte, Jonathan Ellis, Judy Glantzman, Rodney Alan Greenblat, Al Hansen, Stephen Lack, Ed McGowin, Marilyn Minter & Christof Kohlofer, David Sandlin, Hope Sandrow, David West, David Wojnarowicz, and Rhonda Zwillingler.

Lorraine O'Grady performs *Rivers, First Draft*, a one-time only performance created by O'Grady for "Art Across the Park," curated by Gilbert Coker and Horace Brockington. It was performed in the Loch, a northern section of Central Park, on August 18. Presented as a "collage-in-space," with different actions taking place simultaneously on two sides of the stream and further up the hill, it was a three-ring circus of movement and sound that, unlike the randomness of Futurists attempting to shout each other down, played more like a unitary dream.

1983

Ulysses Jenkins presents the performance *Without Your Interpretation* with members of his Othervisions band. The performance—which takes place at the Art Dock, near the University of Southern California in Los Angeles—is videotaped.

Standing in Cooper Square in Lower Manhattan, among other street vendors, David Hammons hawks snowballs, selling them according to size in the action *Bliz-aard Ball Sale*. The performance is captured in a series of photographs by Dawoud Bey.

Rammellzee and K-Rob release the hit single, "Beat Bop," an experimental hip-hop song produced on the Tartown label. The song would be used in the documentary film *Style Wars* (1983), directed by Tony Silver. Rammellzee was also associated with several hip-hop bands, including the Gettovetts and the Death Comet Crew, which included Stuart Argabright, Michael Diekmann, and Shinichi Shimokawa.

Wild Style—featuring such performers as Fab Five Freddy, Lady Pink, the Rock Steady Crew, and Grandmaster Flash—is released. It is widely considered the first hip-hop motion picture.

Papo Colo performs *Against the Current*, an action in which he launches a canoe into the river and paddles upstream until he is forced to abandon his efforts.

Senga Nengudi collaborates with Maren Hassinger to present the performance work *Spooks Who Sat by the Door* at the Long Beach Museum in California, as part of the group exhibition *Home Show*.

Sur Rodney (Sur) performs *Untitled (Taped Mouth)* at the Gracie Mansion Gallery. Sur's gesture informing his choice to remain silent. The performance was staged for a photographer sent to take a portrait of Gracie and Sur sitting in an installation created by Rodney Alan Greenblat for an article on the gallery that appears in the *SoHo Weekly News*.

Lorraine O'Grady's *Art Is . . .*, a joyful performance in Harlem's African-American Day Parade, was, from the point of view of the work's connection with its audience, O'Grady's most immediately successful piece. It's impetus had been to answer the challenge of a non-artist acquaintance that "avant-garde art doesn't have anything to do with black people." O'Grady's response was to put avant-garde art into the largest black space she could think of, the million-plus viewers of the parade. A 9 x 15 ft. antique-styled gold frame mounted on the gold-skirted float moved slowly up Adam Clayton Powell Boulevard, framing everything it passed as art, and the 15 young actors and dancers dressed in white, framed viewers with empty gold picture frames to shouts of "Frame me, make me art!" and "That's right, that's what art is!"

1986

Terry Adkins establishes the Lone Wolf Recital Corps, a performance unit with a revolving membership engaged to activate Adkins's installation-based works. Members have included James Andrew Brown, Jamal Cyrus, Sherman Fleming, Charles Gaines, Cavassa Nickens, Demetrius Oliver, and Kamau Patton, among many others.

RodForce (aka Sherman Fleming) performs the work *Fault: Axis for Light* at the Washington Project for the Arts in Washington, DC.

1987

RodForce (aka Sherman Fleming) performs the work *Ax Vapor, Equestrian and Other Stories* at New Langton Arts, San Francisco.

1988

Dr. Leslie King Hammond and Lowery Stokes Sims organize *Art as a Verb: The Evolving Continuum*, an exhibition focusing on the creation of art from

action. Among the artists whose work is included are David Hammons, Maren Hassinger, and Senga Nengudi.

Benjamin Patterson emerges from semiretirement as an artist with the exhibition *An Ordinary Life* at the Emily Harvey Gallery in New York.

Sherman Fleming, in collaboration with Kristine Stiles, presents the work *Western History as a Three-Story Building* at Area Corporative Educational Services in Hamden, Connecticut. He also presents the work *Underground Structures* at DC Space in Washington, DC.

1989

The sculptor Houston Conwill presents *The Cakewalk Humanifesto: A Cultural Libation*, an installation work activated through movement, at the Museum of Modern Art in New York. The artist describes the work as choreographing history and tracing social and political change as well as the persistence of black culture.

RodForce (aka Sherman Fleming) presents *Ax Vapor* at the Washington Project for the Arts in Washington, DC. He also presents *Underground Structures* at George Mason University in Fairfax, Virginia, and again later that year at the Ark at Duke University in Durham, North Carolina.

Sherman Fleming again collaborates with Kristine Stiles to present *REDBEDGREATCAVE* at Franklin Furnace in New York. The work is later presented at Intermedia Arts in Minneapolis (1990) and the Center for Creative Arts in Greensboro, North Carolina (1991).

Dread Scott emerges on the national art and political scenes while still a student at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. His work *What Is the Proper Way to Display a US Flag?* becomes the focus of controversy over its use of the American flag.

1990

By the 1990s art world terms like *multiculturalism* give way to discussions of individual identity and works under the rubric of “identity politics.”

The National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) becomes embroiled in the “culture wars,” which pitted a vocal minority against artists’ freedom of expression. Bowing to pressure from Congress over the funding of “obscene art,” NEA chair John Frohnmayer vetoes proposed grants for four performance artists—Karen Finley, John Fleck, Holly Hughes, and Tim Miller—who become known as the NEA Four. They later sue and in 1993 are awarded amounts equal to

the grants they would have received. The case *National Endowment for the Arts v. Finley* is later reviewed by the Supreme Court.

Daniel Tisdale presents the installation/performance *The Black Museum* at INTAR Gallery in New York.

1991

Benjamin Patterson is an artist-in-residence at the Pittsburgh Center for the Arts and Carnegie Mellon University. The residency culminates in the creation of a new work, *Blame It on Pittsburgh or How I Became an Artist*, and a series of performances of early iconic works such as *Paper Piece* (1960), *Pond* (1962), and *Symphony No. 1* (1964).

The exhibition *David Hammons: Rousing the Rubble* is presented at the Institute for Contemporary Art, Long Island City, New York; the Institute of Contemporary Art, Philadelphia; and the San Diego Museum of Contemporary Art. The survey features documentation of Hammons’s early body prints and performance actions.

1992

The first race-based riots in years erupt in Los Angeles and other cities after a jury acquits several L.A. police officers of charges of excessive force in apprehending Rodney Glen King after a high-speed chase. The beating, captured on videotape, incited protests against police brutality directed at black men and other men of color.

Daniel Tisdale presents the street action *Transitions, Inc.*, commissioned by Creative Time in New York. Over two days Tisdale (aka Tracey Goodman, owner of the fictitious company) hawked his products to the public with the promise that they could alter the physical appearance of users, ostensibly turning “minorities into majorities.” The proposed transformation of the user was said to promise greater ease in entering the mainstream, leading to increased wealth and social standing. The performance is met with humor and outrage by members of the general public.

1993

Adrian Piper organizes the exhibition *Color for Printed Matter* in New York. In conjunction with the show, she edits a special issue of the periodical *New Observations*.

Face, Broadway Window, an exhibition by Lyle Ashton Harris, opens at the New Museum of Contemporary Art in New York.

Dressed in “tribal clothing,” Coco Fusco and Guillermo Gómez-Peña lock themselves in a cage on the lawn of the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis as part of the performance work *The Year of the White Bear*.

Sherman Fleming presents the endurance piece *Pretending to Be Rock* at the City Gallery in Raleigh, North Carolina. He would again present the work at Real Art Ways in Hartford, Connecticut (1996); the DC Arts Center in Washington, DC (1997); and the Painted Bride Art Center in Philadelphia (2002). The piece, which lasted more than two hours, involved Fleming positioned nude on the floor on hands and knees while hot wax dripped from an apparatus above him, literally transforming his body as it fell and covered his flesh. In the DC performance, Fleming collaborated with Josephine Nicholson, who was suspended at a distance above him with water cascading upon her during the same period of time.

1994

Benjamin Patterson sets up *Reisebüro Fluxus*, an interactive installation in which the artist simulates a travel agency that specializes in tours to historic Fluxus sites in Paris, Nice, Stuttgart, and northern Italy.

Daniel Tisdale performs the work *Danny: The Last African American of the 22nd Century* at Franklin Furnace in New York. As an extension of the performance, Tisdale creates an artist’s book of the same title.

1995

African American men from across the country gather on Washington’s National Mall on October 16 for the massive Million Man March, advocating “unity, atonement and brotherhood.”

Sherman Fleming presents the work *Un/Sub de Jacht op Zwarte* at Arti et Amicitiae in Amsterdam. After returning to the United States, he presents the action *Making of Stream* at the Philadelphia Museum of Art.

As part of a final Happening at a memorial event and program organized by Geoffrey Hendricks and Sur Rodney (Sur) for the artist Al Hansen at Judson Memorial Church, Hendricks and his collaborator Sur perform in an unusually styled “wedding event.”

1996

From 1996 to 1999 Coco Fusco collaborates with Nao Bustamante on the performance work *Stuff*

at the Institute of Contemporary Art in London. The work plays off the stereotype that links Latin women and food with tourism and consumption through sexuality.

Adrian Piper publishes *Out of Order, Out of Sight*, a two-volume collection of her writings, with MIT Press.

Senga Nengudi presents a lecture/performance event titled *Making a Scene of Ourselves—The Black Arts: Nappy Ruminations on Life in America*, at the University of Colorado, Colorado Springs.

At Lombard/Freid in New York, Daniel Tisdale presents the installation *Tisdale '96* and kicks off his most extensive performance work to date, *An Artist for a Change* (1996–98), the embodiment of performance and politics cum social sculpture.

The Contemporary Arts Museum Houston presents *The Kitchen Table Series*, an exhibition of photographs by Carrie Mae Weems. The series proves pivotal for Weems's practice and her use of archival photographs, famous images that she restages or original tableaux that perceptively function to comment on race, sex, and gender. Weems would later revisit this framework in the creation of two bodies of work: *Constructing History: A Requiem to Mark the Moment* and *Carrie Mae Weems: Social Studies*.

1997

Inspired by the passing of her grandmother, Coco Fusco performs *The Last Wish (El ultimo deseo)* at the Galeria Tejadillo in Cuba for the 7th Havana Biennial. The piece, a meditation on death and the repatriation of exiled Cubans, underscored the uneasy relationship of love of country, longing, and the hardship of embracing a disappearing memory. Fusco is later featured in the Johannesburg Biennale. Her work *Rights of Passage* deals with themes of race and apartheid.

Tracey Rose presents *Span I* and *Span II* for 'Graft', the Colin Richards curated show at the SANG during the 2nd Johannesburg Biennale in South Africa. Rose sat with shaved head on a sideways TV displaying a close up image of a reclining nude, a classic art history image. Head bent, Rose busied herself with knotting strands of her own shaven hair. The bravura performance took place inside a glass cabinet. In *Span I*, the complementary part of the piece, a red-overalled prisoner incised text on to the opposite wall of the gallery, memories from Rose's childhood, often dealing with the role that hair, how straight it was, how curly, and thus how it defined race, had played in her childhood.

1998

Trenton Doyle Hancock performs *Off Color* at the Gerald Peters Gallery in Dallas. In the performance, Hancock physically becomes or embodies his mythical creature the Mound. He is fed by his "dealer" and excretes that consumption by expelling "air" in the form of balloons pushed from the back of the structure by another art dealer.

The curator Paul Schimmel organizes the seminal exhibition *Out of Actions: Between Performance and Object, 1949–1979* for the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles.

1999

Senga Nengudi begins the work *Walk a Mile in My Shoes*, which involves sending pairs of shoes to others in the United States and abroad with the request for the recipients to walk one full mile using the shoes and then return them with documentation. The project continues to this day.

2000

The interdisciplinary performance group My Barbarian is founded in Los Angeles. Members include Malik Gaines, Jade Gordon, and Alejandro Segade.

Jean-Ulrick Désert creates a photographic series based on the action *The Hip Decadence of Reductive Glamour*. In this work Désert dons a wig, makeup, and women's clothing, performing "beauty" through visual quotations from Parisian fashion magazines. He also begins the yearlong performance work *Negerhosen2000*, in which he wears traditional German lederhosen and travels around the country interacting with native Germans and tourists.

Nayland Blake video *Starting Over*, is presented at the Matthew Marks Gallery, NY, for his exhibition *Double Fantasy*. In the video Blake dances with taps on his shoes wearing a bunny suit made to weigh the same as his lover, Philip Horvitz. Under the weight of the suit he struggles with an attempt to follow choreographic directions from Horvitz who can be heard offstage. Blake's work often explores ideas about whiteness and blackness, not only as they relate to race, but also as skin itself and how that skin determines one's identity. Blake, whose mother is white and father is black, has presented work which often deals with role-playing and asks questions about the search for identity and considers role playing, the skin's role in race and personal identity, and the concept of "passing" in terms of identity.

Daniel Tisdale conceives and hosts the talk show *15 Minutes 2000* at Franklin Furnace in New York.

2001

Derrick Adams becomes the curatorial director of Rush Arts Gallery in New York. The space would offer a venue for experimental events and performances by an emerging generation of performance artists such as Shaun Leonardo.

Freestyle, an exhibition featuring the work of young and emerging African American artists, opens at the Studio Museum in Harlem. In the catalogue's introduction, curator Thelma Golden uses the term *post-black* to describe the aesthetic freedom shared by those featured. The term would provoke debates regarding the definition and its impact on a new generation of artists and the new millennial art world.

Charles McGill performs *Playing Through a performance component to his exhibition *Black Baggage* at Gallery M in Harlem, NY. The performance has McGill hitting golf balls from various locations in Harlem: from the hood of an abandoned charred automobile draped with a piece of artificial grass, from a pile of whole watermelons placed in the gutter, and other sites. Soap Box-Style speeches were given at the various sites. McGill is accompanied by Paul Leroy Gehres, his caddy, popularly known as the artist Leroy "King of Art."*

2002

The survey exhibition *William Pope.L: The Friendliest Black Artist in America* is organized by Mark Bessire of the Institute of Contemporary Art, Maine College of Art, Portland. The institute applied for funding from the National Endowment for the Arts to support the development of the exhibition. The application was approved but later rescinded. The Warhol Foundation for the Arts, along with the Rockefeller Foundation and the LEF Foundation, funded the exhibition as well as its tour. In 2003 the exhibition traveled to DiverseWorks Art Space, Houston; Portland Institute for Contemporary Art, Oregon; and Artists Space, New York.

For the 2002 Whitney Biennial in New York, William Pope.L performs the work *The Great White Way, 22 miles, 5 years, 1 street*.

2003

In collaboration with Ricardo Dominguez, Coco Fusco presents *The Incredible Disappearing Woman*, a performance with video projections

that explores issues surrounding the US-Mexico border and considers the banalization of political and sexual violence in an information-saturated culture.

2004

The Republican National Convention takes place in New York. It is rocked by a series of protests, marches, rallies, and demonstrations by such groups as ACT-UP; the War Resister's League; United for Peace and Justice; the Poor People's Economic Human Rights Campaign; and the environmental group Time's Up! These events provide fodder for Carrie Mae Weems's performance work *Selling Hopes and Dreams in a Bottle*.

Shaun Leonardo begins a series of performances that will pit El Conquistador against the Invisible Man. The series, in which the artist physically battles an invisible opponent, involves performances in San Francisco, New York, and Poland.

Benjamin Patterson embarks on a two-month performance event titled *My Grand Birthday Tour*. Traveling by boat and train, he journeys from his home in Germany across Russia and eventually to Japan. During his travels he presents a series of solo performances in Russia, Mongolia, China, and Japan.

Coco Fusco completes the video work *a/k/a Mrs. George Gilbert*, a meditation on the performance of identity as fostered by the real-life search for Angela Davis in the aftermath of the August 7, 1970, shootout in a San Rafael, California, courthouse.

In the performance work *The White Man Project*, Jean-Ulrick Désert hires a white actor to portray him and offer free art lessons to the public at the BRUCE New Art Foundation in Rotterdam, the Netherlands.

Zachary Fabri captures and then edits for video a series of actions reminiscent of the non sequitur performance works of the 1980s. Often using his own body, Fabri offers humorous yet poetic meditations on the body.

Daniel Tisdale appears in the PBS reality series *Colonial House*, touted as experimental history.

Kalup Linzy performs at Le Petit Versailles, an East Village community garden that presents events including art exhibits, music, film/video, performance, theater and community projects. For a small group in attendance he performs *Labisha [the diva]*, in a *Diva in Distress* and screens some of his early videos. He returns in 2005 to perform a Tina Turner impression and show his video *Conversation with the Churen IV: Play Wit De Churen* for an overflow crowd.

2005

Double Consciousness: Black Conceptual Art since 1970 is presented at the Contemporary Arts Museum Houston. It features works by pioneers of conceptual art, including Terry Adkins, Charles Gaines, David Hammons, Maren Hassinger, Senga Nengudi, and Adrian Piper.

The Studio Museum in Harlem presents the exhibition *Frequency*, a follow-up to the critically acclaimed *Freestyle*. *Frequency* features the work of several emerging black artists, including Kalup Linzy, Adam Pendleton, and Xaviera Simmons.

For the 2005 exhibition *Greater New York* at P.S.1 Contemporary Art Center in Long Island City, Clifford Owens performs *Tell Me What to Do with Myself*, an audience-interactive piece in which participants could instruct the artist, who was separated from the audience by a wall, to perform various actions. From 2005 to 2006 Owens is an artist-in-residence at the Studio Museum in Harlem. During his residency he invites a number of performance artists, critics, and curators to visit him. These interactions are the basis of a body of work titled *Studio Visits*, featured in the exhibition *Quid Pro Quo*, presented at the Studio Museum in 2006.

Hurricane Katrina hits the Gulf Coast, causing major destruction and numerous deaths. Storm surges result in the breaching of levees in New Orleans's Lower Ninth Ward, the site of many of the estimated more than 1,700 deaths. The vast majority of those killed and displaced by the storm are African American.

For *The Interventionists: Art in the Social Sphere*, an exhibition at the Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art (MASS MoCA), William Pope.L launches *The Black Factory*, a mobile installation art project on wheels. *The Black Factory* was designed to travel, stopping in towns and engaging citizens to meditate on "blackness," bringing to the "factory" any objects that represent blackness for inclusion in the evolving installation.

From 2005 to 2007 Dread Scott travels around the United States performing the action *Gideon's Manifesto*, in which he places next to the Gideon Bible (standard in most hotels) a copy of Karl Marx's *Communist Manifesto*.

Sur Rodney (Sur) performs *Yellow* at the Museum Ludwig in Cologne.

2006

Kalup Linzy: All My Churen, which features several of the artist's soap opera-inspired video shorts, opens at LA > ART in Los Angeles.

Maren Hassinger and Senga Nengudi celebrate their nearly three decades of collaboration with the performance event *Side by Side*, featured during the Nomadic Nights Series at Fondation Cartier pour l'Art Contemporain in Paris.

WACK! Art and the Feminist Revolution opens at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles. The exhibition includes work by many seminal figures from the 1970s and 1980s, including Senga Nengudi, Lorraine O'Grady, and Adrian Piper.

Lyle Ashton Harris shows up at a Yale University classroom and begins the arduous task of transforming himself first into Michael Jackson and then into a victim of male-on-male prison rape. The documentary video *Performing MJ* is as visceral as the performance itself and provokes a frank discussion of the emasculation of black men through the intractable nature of fame or imprisonment.

Xaviera Simmons debuts *How to Break Your Own Heart: Visitors Welcome* at Art in General in New York. The performance-installation brings to mind the communal nature of music and its ability to chronicle histories. The installation functioned as a social sculpture with Simmons performing as a DJ and transforming the space into a "listening room" and occasional rehearsal space for local musical artists. In the same spirit of engaging the public, she later mounts *Landscape: Expanded Engagement, Extended Space* at Jamaica Center for Arts and Learning in Queens, New York. The installation melds photography and social sculpture as the artist travels around the city, setting up a public photography studio in which people can be photographed for free.

2007

For one year Papo Colo jumps residential, commercial, and municipal fences throughout New York's five boroughs. The artist documented his transgressions in a series of photographs and with monthly poems encapsulating his experiences of freedom and reckless abandon.

Zachary Fabri performs the work *My High Fructose Corn Syrup Fix and White Flour Constipation* on the streets of Reykjavik, as part of the Sequences Art Festival. It would become one of many performance works that Fabri captured and then edited for video.

2008

Terry Adkins organizes *Round 29: Thunderbolt Special; The Great Electric Show and Dance* at Project Row Houses in Houston with Andre Brown, Sherman Fleming, and Charles Gaines. As

an extension of the installation works, the artists join forces as the Lone Wolf Recital Corps to present a performance at the Eldorado Ballroom in Houston.

Theaster Gates presents Yamaguchi in Residence at the Experimental Station in Chicago. The work is based on a fictitious but foundational convergence of Japanese and black cultures as told by the artist, who integrates his passion for ceramics with his black roots as rendered through ritual, food, material production, and communal engagement.

Theaster Gates's exhibition *Heartland* is featured at the Van Abbemuseum in Eindhoven, the Netherlands. During the installation Gates presents his close collaborators the experimental music ensemble the Black Monks of Mississippi, who are often joined by musical monks from around the world. The Black Monks combine the Eastern ideals of melodic restraint with the spirit of gospel in the black church and the blues genre, deeply rooted in American musical tradition. Uniting diverse spiritual and religious practices, they serve to musically enrich many of Gates's future exhibitions, turning them into transcendent and participatory experiences.

Sur Rodney (Sur) performs the work *Free Advice* alongside the Montauk Highway, near Shinnecock Hills, in Long Island, New York.

Xavier Simmons, in collaboration with Jibade-Khalil Huffman, presents the performance work *Oscillation: (For a minute there, I lost myself)* at the Museum of Arts and Design, New York. The performance is part of a series titled Mix: New Performance at the museum, organized by the artists Steffani Jemison and Jessica Sucher.

2009

On January 20, Barack Obama is inaugurated as the first African American to hold the office of the president of the United States.

Patterson restages the performance event *Galerie Légitime* in Paris with Bertrand Clavez.

Maren Hassinger performs the piece *Women's Work*, which was conceived in Paris in 2006 during a collaborative performance event with Senga Nengudi, *Side by Side*. The piece was reprised for *Quiet as Kept*, an evening of performances organized by Ulysses Jenkins at the California African American Museum in Los Angeles.

Visually referencing the iconic 1968 Memphis sanitation workers strike, Dread Scott dons a sign that reads, "I Am Not a Man" and walks the streets of Harlem for one hour.

Terry Adkins and his Lone Wolf Recital Corps perform at P.S.1 Contemporary Art Center and the New Museum in New York.

Derek Jackson creates a platform for his performance *Night Life* as an environment for Galen Richmond's curated 2009 the *Sacred and Profane*, an annual arts festival at the Battery Steele, on Peak's Island, just off Portland, ME. *Night Life* presented "True Love" lyrics and vocals by Derek Jackson, video documentation by Charles Lum, still photographs by Tarabelle, music by Jim Doherty, LED stage by Tom West, a mirrored dance floor by Aaron Krach, bunny suit by Diana Duane worn by Jackson, guest performances by Burn Kit 2600, Goldie Peacock, Ren, Tarabelle, Toby and Amanda, Emory, and Ahna the Ladybeast. That same year the first incarnation of *Hi Tiger*, his proto-punk band, is formed.

2010

Theaster Gates and the Black Monks of Mississippi perform *A Closer Walk with Thee* as an extension of the exhibition *Hand + Made: The Performative Impulse in Art and Craft* at the Contemporary Arts Museum Houston.

Benjamin Patterson: Born in the State of Flux/us opens at the Contemporary Arts Museum Houston. The retrospective exhibition features scores, artist's books, poems, films, and visual objects created by the African American Fluxus artist over the course of fifty years.

Theaster Gates's *Cosmology of Yard* is featured in the Whitney Biennial in New York.

While in residence in Brazil, Zachary Fabri creates a series of video works based on actions performed during a residency in Belo Horizonte, Brazil, at the Jardim Canadá Centro de Arte e Tecnologia.

Dread Scott performs *Money to Burn* on Wall Street in New York. Wearing \$250 in bills in denominations ranging from \$1 to \$20, Scott invited the public to join him in burning money. Police halted the performance less than twenty-five minutes after it had begun.

Jacoby Satterwhite performs at MoMA PS1 in Long Island City, New York, as a part of the exhibition *Weerrq!* and in a one-night performance event at Jolie Laide Gallery in Philadelphia.

2011

Perspectives 173: Clifford Owens, featuring the photographic series *Photographs with an Audience*, opens at the Contemporary Arts Museum

Houston. Owens also performs the event in Houston, continuing the series.

Over the course of a week, Third Streaming in New York presents a series of five short performance events by Derek Adams titled *Communicating with Shadows*. Using controlled lighting, Adams projected photographic documentation of performances by Joseph Beuys, David Hammons, Bruce Nauman, Adrian Piper, and other artists and inserted himself into the iconic history of performance art.

Dread Scott creates the action *Flags Are Very Popular These Days*, in which he added flags from Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan, and Pakistan to overpasses above rural highways (in some cases switching out the American flags that had been installed at these sites).

In November, MoMA PS1 opens *Clifford Owens: Anthology*. The exhibition features a series of photographs of the artist performing scores written for him by various African American artists, bringing visibility to an intergenerational group of artists whose practices revolve around performance work.

Jamal Cyrus debuts the performance work *Texas Fried Tenor* as part of the larger series *Learning to Work the Saxophone* at the Art House at Jones Center (now the Austin Museum of Art). The performance and installation are commissioned as part of the 2011 Texas Art Prize exhibition.

Wayne Hodege performs *Negerkuss* as an extension of the exhibition *Making Mirrors: Of Body and Gaze* at the Neue Gesellschaft für bildende Kunst, Berlin.

2012

At the Armory Show art fair in New York, Theaster Gates presents the work *See, Sit, Sup, Sing, Holding Court* at the Kavi Gupta Gallery booth. Over the course of the fair, Gates interacts with the public through dialogues on the intersection of art and commerce, community and economic development, and his vision for the future of art as social sculpture and economic engine.

Xavier Simmons is an artist-in-residence at Theertha International Artists' Collective in Colombo, Sri Lanka. While there she conceives and performs the action *Number 14 (When a Group of People Come Together to Watch Somebody Do Something)*.

Simone Leigh's exhibition *You Don't Know Where Her Mouth Has Been* opens at the Kitchen in New York. The exhibition features Leigh's monumental ceramic work as well as a video work in which she integrates the body with her ceramics practice.

Theaster Gates is featured in Documenta 13 with the monumental project *12 Ballads for Huguenot House*, in which construction materials salvaged from an abandoned house in Chicago are transported to Germany and used in the restoration of a historic building in Kassel.

As part of the Brooklyn Academy of Music's thirtieth anniversary Next Wave Festival, Dread Scott presents the performance work *The Decision*, a meditation on democracy in the United States and the extent to which it has been predicated on the subjugation of black bodies.

Simone Leigh's work is featured at the Whitney Biennial in New York as a component of Jason Moran and Alicia Hall Moran's series *Bleed*.

Jacolby Satterwhite performs the work *Reifying Desire: Model It* at the Studio Museum in Harlem as part of the exhibition *Fore*. Earlier in the year he participated in the exhibition *Shift* at the Studio Museum, presenting the multimedia project *Country Ball 1989–2012*.

Adam Pendleton presents *An Evening with Adam Pendleton and Lorraine O'Grady* at MoMA on April 23 wherein a video Pendleton made of his interview with O'Grady in her studio, is projected background to O'Grady reading from a script Pendleton edited based on excerpts from his taped interview with her.



