

## **The Explicit Body in Performance**

**Rebecca Schneider**

Performance art is a term that first appeared around 1970 and was applied retroactively to describe artists performative expressions post-abstract expressionism from the late 1950s. However, the roots of performance art are clearly in the modernist avant-garde, especially Futurism and Dadaism. See Roselee Goldberg, *Performance Art: From Futurism to the Present* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1988). Performance has actually become a marker for the break between modernism and postmodernism, supported by the argument that performance replaced modernist notions of a work of art as a formal, framed, material object with the notion of art as an event, a transaction. See Philip Auslander, *Presence and Resistance: Postmodernism and Cultural Politics in Contemporary American Performance* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1992); Johannes H. Birringer, *Theater, Theory, and Postmodernism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991); and Henry Sayre, *The Object of Performance: The American Avant-Garde since 1970* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989). This notion of a "break" between modernism and postmodernism hinged on performance is obviously problematic, especially since, as Robyn Brentano has pointed out, "many of the characteristics of performance that scholars have cited to qualify it as a postmodern phenomenon - its interdisciplinary, collaborative, antihierarchical, contingent, and indeterminate qualities - are all aspects of performance that were evident in the modernist setting (in Dada, Futurism, and Surrealism)" (Brentano, "Outside the Frame: Performance, Art, and Life," *Outside the Frame: Performance and the Object* (Cleveland, OH: Cleveland Center for Contemporary Art, 1994)). See also Susan Rubin Suleiman's *Suspensions of this "break" in Subversive Intent* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989).