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Name: Rebecca Clunn  
Email: [rebeccaclunn@live.com.au](mailto:rebeccaclunn@live.com.au)  
Skype: rebeccaclunn  
Website: <http://existenceperformanceart.wordpress.com>  
[www.myspace.com/rebeccalyncunningham](http://www.myspace.com/rebeccalyncunningham)  
Phone: +61 [0] 7 3122 0346  
University: Griffith University  
School of Business, Department of Management  
Nathan campus Griffith University  
170 Kessels Road, Nathan QLD 4111 AUSTRALIA

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## Introduction

Performance art, a discrete genre within the broader performing arts, makes an important and unique contribution to arts practice in many ways, including its aims, execution, and interaction with the audience. Although the genre has developed significantly and grown in prominence in the past few decades, particularly with the advent of electronic communication, neither the intricacies of the performative moment nor the dynamics of this network have been researched to any extent. This paper aims to examine perceptions of altruism and utopia within in the global performance art network and the practice itself – does a vision of utopia appear within the performative moment? The global performance art network is central to linking performance artists together and facilitating the generation and continuation of this inspirational art medium. The paper unfolds firstly with a brief introduction to performance art, altruism and utopia as understood within the context of this study. Next, the methodology and findings of this pilot study are presented, along with theoretical and practical implications. This paper concludes with this studies limitations and an outline of future research.

## Performance Art

Performance art is a unique genre within the broader artistic domain of the performing arts, emerging from various traditions and cultural movements to become an identifiable genre. Performance art emerged around 1960, with some of its foundations to be found in the work of the actionists [painters/theatre makers], as well as in the cultural movements of Futurism, Dada, Happenings and Fluxus (Goldberg, 1979, 1998). Although these foundations made contributions to the form of Performance Art, they did not define it. While performance artists draw upon historical arts practitioners and practices for inspiration, the genre tends to push the boundaries of our experience by moving beyond a regular canvass or an identifiable stage designed for a particular purpose. Traditionally, performance infers the imaginary, the pretend, or surreal. Performance art however is performance that essentially seeks to strip away any façade, with many artists looking to the real and the ritualistic for sources of meaning, connection and the raising of important questions (Goldberg, 1998). While offering new perspectives, performance art has continued to evade definition and institutionalisation for decades (Wheeler, 2003). However, a conceptualisation of performance art may be: real bodies, real action, in real time.

Performance artists do not wish to pretend, but instead choose real actions. For example, an actor may pretend to bleed; a performance artist will literally bleed (Ayers & Abramović, 2010). Another feature of performance art is the blurring of boundaries between the “artist” and the “audience.” Performances may occur in the street and performers may interact with the audience in very mundane and ordinary ways. However, the experience can be quite moving, even extraordinary, with this opting for the real moment of meeting, the ephemeral contact, allowing space for transformation (Frangione, 2007; Heathfield, 2004; MacLennan, 2004).

Developing this sense of connection requires a certain personal openness and sense of generosity, which forms the basis of my proposal that performance art embodies a sense of the altruistic. Performance art is a very loose term, and the work may come from a variety of impetuses, including political comment, satire, self-exploration, etc. However, performance art may also set out to pose questions, convey ideas, to shine a light on a particular topic with the goal of some form of insight, shift or transformation for both the performer and the audience (MacLennan, 2004).

Performance art practices today are in some ways similar to the practices that took place forty years ago, with many of the symbols, materials, and intentions still in high circulation. One major change, however, is that of technology, with artists utilizing the possibilities new technology brings to various degrees: some artists choosing to remain low-tech and seeming to accept technology begrudgingly, with others surging forward and using technology as the primary medium and location for their work. In the 90s with the proliferation of the Internet, performances could go 'live' with artists utilizing freeware broadcast their works. Now in 2010, artists are using Skype and vimeo to communicate their messages. Some artists also began making personal websites and uploading documentation images and video streaming on their sites, so their performances can be viewed at the viewer's leisure. Digital archives are becoming more and more popular. This represents a great innovation in that geographically isolated performance artists living in many parts of the world can now present and promote their works online. Examples of presentation are artists such as Colm Clarke who was involved in an event called "exist-ence" that I curated in January 2010, where the online freeware, a program called "Ustream" was used to send live images of his performance in Belfast, Ireland to the venue in Brisbane (Cunningham, 2010). Examples of promotion are the countless event pages on facebook and myspace and other social networking sites set up by artists. Artists see

each other's work and relationships can be built without having to rely on local contacts. Although performance art has a priority on the live exchange, there continues to be much talk of documentation so that events are not lost into the ether, but maintain some trace of what occurred (Wheeler, 2003, p. 497). Some examples of online archives include NEW MOVES INTERNATIONAL (International, 2010), Performalogica (Performancelogia, 2010), Indonesian Art Digital Archives (Archive, 2010) and Agor8 (McBride, 2010). In the last two decades, globalisation of the form has allowed transitivity between artists. In view of these changes, the heart of performance art remains steadfast in the present, perpetually concerned with interpersonal engagement and transaction. One driving factor that may enhance the interpersonal engagement within performance art may be the artist's perception of altruism.

## **Altruism**

Altruism is a multifaceted term used in a variety of fields from biology, psychology, sociology, economics, and political sciences. As such, it tends to lack a single encompassing definition. According to Emile Durkheim, altruism is a fundamental basis of social life (Durkheim, 1933, p. 228). Altruism as defined by sociobiologist Wilson, as behaviour that is damaging to the self carried out to benefit others (Wilson, 1975, p. 578). Economist Margolis states that a defining feature of altruistic behaviour is that the individual would be better served to ignore the impact of his/her choices on the welfare of others (Margolis, 1982, p. 15). In the social dilemma literature, altruists are defined as individuals who put more emphasis on the outcomes for others rather than their own when making strategic choices (Piliavin & Charng, 1990, p. 29). While psychologists note that altruistic behaviour must be made voluntarily and intentionally for the betterment of another, while having no expectation for reciprocity or reward (Bar-Tal, 1985-1986, p. 5).

Notably, altruism has been a topic for consideration for centuries, as demonstrated by Aristotle's claim that,

“Every art and every inquiry, and similarly every action and pursuit, is thought to aim at some good; and for this reason the good has rightly been declared to be that at which all things aim” (Aristotle, 2000 {1892}).

Another precursor to modern considerations of altruism was offered by Adam Smith, who in his *Theory of Moral Sentiments* suggested that

“How selfish soever man may be supposed, there are evidently some principles in his nature, which interest him in the fortune of others, and render their happiness necessary to him, though he derives nothing from it except the pleasure of seeing it” (Smith, 2004 {1759}).

From these texts, altruism has been conceptualized as a fundamental quality of humankind. Nonetheless, for many years, it was considered unintelligible to propose that “true” or “pure” altruistic actions could be offered from a self-less base (Margolis, 1982; Piliavin & Charng, 1990; Wilson, 1975). Instead, it was believed that all activities that had appeared to be motivated by a desire to meet someone else's needs could be traced back to have some egoistic or selfish motive underlying it (Piliavin & Charng, 1990). This conception has since experienced a paradigm shift to a view where “true altruism – acting with the goal of benefiting another – does exist and is part of human nature”

Altruism has been included as an intrinsic element of this study as I consider that performance art practice may contain an element of the altruistic, as individuals opt to make work often at personal, physical, and financial cost to themselves. Although the artist may find pleasure in the performance, there is often an emphasis on the impact of their work on others, rather than themselves; the performance offered as a gift. Furthermore, it is worthwhile to question whether altruism may be an underpinning personal perspective wrapped up in the individual artist's personal and social identity and thus their notions of utopia.

## Utopia : A brief history

The concept of utopia has been with mankind throughout the centuries. Almost every society has their own story of the beginning of time, often an idealised memory of some perfect era where humanity's needs were met and harmony flowed freely between human kind and their environment. This notion can be found in Hindu epics, Chinese Taoism, the Dreamtime of the Australian Aborigines, the pagan Golden Age and the Judeo-Christian Paradise or Garden of Eden. Within secular western traditions, this notion has been propelled by writers such as Plato in his *Republic* (Plato, 1955 {360BC}) and Virgil's *Arcadia* to name a few examples (Kumar, 1991, p. 4; Morris & Kross, 2004).

The term "utopia" was coined by Sir Thomas More and it was the land of Utopia that he wrote about in his novel entitled simply "Utopia" (More, 2003 {1516}). The word itself is a pun in its phonetic makeup of three Greek terms: *eu*, meaning good; *ou*, no, non or not; and *topos*, meaning place; the result is a mixture of good place/no place (Kumar, 1991, p. 1; Sargisson, 2007). The negative side, "no place" has remains within contemporary consciousness; even a dictionary such as the *New shorter Oxford English Dictionary* defines utopia as:

The title of a book by Sir Thomas More [1477-1535-. 1] [a] An imaginary or hypothetical place or state of things considered to be perfect; a condition of ideal [esp. social] perfection. [b] An imaginary or distant country. 2] An impossibly ideal scheme, esp. for social improvement.

Definitions such as these suggest that utopia is the state of perfection, which may be unattainable and many scholars deem to be "dangerous" (Levitas, 2007, p. 50; Popper, 1962; Sargisson, 2007, p. 30). It is in this mode where utopia presents its alter ego, dystopia or anti-utopia; the inversion of utopia, where one's dreams of the future are realized in their most hideous and nefarious form (Popper, 1962; Sargisson, 2007; Walsh, 1962, p. 14). When utopia

takes this form, it becomes an oppressive, didactic roadmap to concrete ends (Levitas, 2007). This fear of a dream of perfection turning to nightmare occurs most frequently when the dream becomes static, when ideas develop into dogma (Sargisson, 2007). Fortunately, utopia is not static according to prominent writers in the area (Levitas, 2001; Reis, 2001; Sargisson, 2007).

Utopia is conveyed as a transformation; scholars describe utopianism as “social dreaming” (Sargent, 1967, p. 3, 1994) and a “Not Yet” mentality (Bloch, 1986), of striving towards a better way of being (Levitas, 1990). In addition, utopia is never just a dream as some writers have indicated in statements such as [utopia] “always has one foot in reality” (Kumar, 1991, p. 2). H.G. Wells recalls the tension between the possibility and actuality of utopia (Kumar, 1991, p. 3). Utopias are entrenched in the culture and time in which they have emerged. Utopia within 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century discourse is explored in a range of arenas, from anthropology, political science, and the humanities.

### Utopia as method

Within these disciplines, utopia is experienced in a variety of ways, from literature, social theory, art, music architecture and medicine (Bloch, 1986; Sargisson, 2007, p. 26). Although each of these areas of endeavour approach utopia from a different perspective, one element remains constant: the characteristic of a conscious willingness for social change and transformation (Levitas, 2001; Williams, 1980). It has been written that utopia is “not a social state, it is a state of mind” (Hertzler, 1922, p. 314; Mannheim, 1960). It is from this point of consciousness that utopia ceases to be seen as pure concept and moves to being a method (Levitas, 2007, p. 51). In this sense, what becomes important “is not *what* we imagine, but *that* we image” and in doing so push out the bounds of our imagination (Jameson, 1977; Levitas, 2007). As we imagine the world as it might be, in our individual and/or collective utopias, the act of the dream in turn may catalyse individual and/or collective change (Levitas, 2001). To

the influential writer and poet Carl Sandburg this would be elementary and obviously essential for the development of human kind as “Nothing happens unless first a dream” (Sandburg, 1922).

This act of thinking of utopia; the imagining of the world as it may be in another space in another time does not arise without difficulty (Reis, 2001). According to the German idealists, we, as “knowing subject[s]” must first learn about the world we currently are in (Reis, 2001; Schopenhauer, 1966). This is achieved, as we perceive the world we live in within a specific space and specific time based on our own knowing mind; our world is created continuously through the vagary of references, lenses, perspectives and memories we each hold (Mannheim, 1960, p. 58; Reis, 2001, p. 46). It is with this conscious mind that we co-create, either consciously or unconsciously, our world via the “mirror effect” of the inner and outer states of being (Ferguson, 2003). As we only can imagine what we know, then utopia is a collection or pastiche of elements that currently exist represented in a new way, so utopia is here now (Reis, 2001). Frederic Jameson said the purpose of utopia “...is not to bring into focus the future that is coming to be, but rather to make us conscious precisely of the horizons or outer limits of what can be thought and imagine in our present” (Dolan, 2005; Jameson, 1977; Wegner, 1988, p. 61). There are many volumes on the epistemology of knowledge, but such discussions lie outside the scope of this article. I acknowledge this literature as I am asking whether utopia can exist within the performative moment, and to answer that, one must look at the relationship between utopia and time.



## Utopia in time

So, it appears that we live in the then and the now, while looking towards what may be. Mannheim speaks of utopia being “incongruous with” our perceived reality; rather it “transcends” our perceived reality (Mannheim, 1960; Reis, 2001, p. 46). If our perception is our reality, our hope is Utopia. One may then wonder if utopia may ever be realised, or if it remains in the ever-present future. When is utopia “now”, and is it possible to live in utopia? Schopenhauer claimed that when individuals perceive the world a certain way, this perception becomes manifest within the world (Reis, 2001, p. 50; Schopenhauer, 1966). These perceptions are lived in the live moment; or as Bloch indicates, during the “darkness of the lived moment” [Dunkel des gelebten Augenblick] (Bloch, 1986, pp. 290-300).

Schopenhauer discussed the notion of time as being the “eternal present” or “*Nuc Stans*,” stating, ‘There is only one present, and this always exists: for it is the sole form of the actual existence’ (Schopenhauer, 1966, p. 480). As utopia is a “state of mind” existing in time, and our perception of reality is made known in the present live moment, and as there is only the present, then it must be possible for utopia to be lived now in real time (Hertzler, 1922, p. 314; Schopenhauer, 1966, p. 480) And where might we experience such a utopia in real time? In Art? Both Herbert Marcuse and Ernst Bloch “see art as an arena in which an alternative world can be expressed – not in a didactic, descriptive way as in traditional ‘utopian’ literature, but through the communication of an alternative experience ” (Bloch, 1986; Dolan, 2005, p. 7; Levitas, 1990, p. 148; Marcuse, 1955).

## Utopia in art

In 1989 there was an exhibition of 81 paintings made by eighty women who lived on “Utopia.” Utopia is “an Aboriginal free-hold property” situated approximately 240 kilometres north-east of Alice Springs in the Northern Territory, Australia, and is the territorial lands of the Anmatyerre and Alyawarre people (Brody, 1989; Museum, 2010; Store, 2010). The area was called “Utopia” by German settlers in the 1920’s (Museum, 2010). These paintings depict the utopian stories of the Aboriginal “Dreamtime”. An ancient people making art about utopia, in a place called “utopia” by settlers from around the world [predominately British]. These outsiders performed such great atrocities in and upon this land and to these people throughout the history of the colonization Australia which is far from utopian. I mention this story for both its irony, and its tenuous links from utopia to art and back again. Throughout the history of art, artists have been presenting their ideas of utopia through the medium of their practice; from the dystopias of Picasso’s *Guernica* and the Wachowski brother’s *Matrix* trilogy to the utopian writers of William Morris, the Bauhaus architects and designers and more. Utopia in all its forms is present.

Within performance, scholars argue that it is the live exchange that may best provide a space for experiencing a shared notion of what is possible, to explore humanities potential and to attempt to share “fleeting intimations of a better world” (Dolan, 2005, p. 2) Dolan describes these moments of transaction as “utopian performatives” as

“small but profound moments in which performance calls the attention of the audience in a way that lifts everyone slightly above the present, into a hopeful felling of what the world might be like if every moment of our lives were as emotionally voluminous, generous, aesthetically striking, and intersubjectively intense” (Dolan, 2005).

When speaking of the present moment in art, seminal performance artist, Marina Abramović says,

“The present is the time-frame that we never address, because we are always reflecting on what happened and then projecting what is going to happen...I think it is in credibly important that the nature of performance is about the present, the here and now” (Abramović, Ulrich Obrist, & Orrell, 2010).

Both of these texts are emphasising elements are important to the performance art genre; that of the here and now, a sincere exchange and offering a keyhole view into the potential of humanity. Due to the importance of the present, liveness, and openness within performance art it makes this discrete field a fertile one in which to investigate the realities and perceptions of utopias.

### *Utopia in performance art*

Many performance artists choose to have a direct relationship with their audience, thereby turning observers into participants in the action. In my experience, developing this sense of connection requires a certain personal openness and generosity. Artists choose to make these connections in various ways. One method, Berghuis writes, is physical, “...in order to civilize the mind, one must first make savage the body...” artists making their bodies vulnerable to make a connection with an audience (Berghuis, 2006). Other performers such Marcus Coates in his *Journey to the Lower World* (Coates, 2005) choose to work as pseudo-shaman; others with methods may be a pursuit of metaphysical transformation as a method of connection with the audience, as Nicola Frangione stated “...utopia is real rather than abstract; what is more, real utopia is the mainstay of the ‘extra-action’ of the performer, as traveller of first an inner world and than an outer one...” (Frangione, 2007, p. 84).

Performance art and Utopia thus share the same preoccupation, that of transformation. It is at the moment of exchange, the transaction, as Elvira Santamara Torres once told me, these “ephemeral diamonds” which drives many performers, as I discovered in the ensuing study.

## Study

A sample of over 70 potential interviewees were selected and contacted using convenience and quota sampling to provide a qualified cross-section of the network (Neuman, 1997, pp. 204-222). These artists and curators are located around the globe and at varied stages of their careers, ranging from less than 10 years in the network to greater than 30 years. Ultimately, this group will be represented in the sample in my future research. Within the pilot study reported here, 13 participants were interviewed. This sample is hence by no means an indicator of the network at large.

The pilot study aimed to gain insight into the performance art network and contribute to the development of the parameters of the wider study. In order to frame the question of whether performers do perceive utopia and altruism within their practice, I conducted series of semi-structured interviews that form a pilot study for the research (Fontana & Frey, 2001, p. 660). Interviews had a duration of approximately one hour, during which I asked a series of questions that allowed artists to expand upon their personal drive to create performance art, their perception and operation of the network, their experiences within the network, their perceptions of underlying values within themselves, their work and the network, and finally their perceptions of altruism and utopia (Riege, 2008). Three interviews took place in person and the remainder took place by mediated means, including phone, video phone and Skype, which appropriately links with the nature of the global network. All interviews were recorded after interviewees gave their consent, and later transcribed. The transcripts have been subjected to initial coding and preliminary thematic analysis. Ultimately this process will be reflected upon and further developed analytically.

The semi-structured interviewing technique was utilized as it allowed me to pursue lines of questioning particular to each individual. Individuals who had been practicing for longer periods of time very quickly cut to the core of their work, and discuss their ontological and methodological impulses. However, artists with less experience in the field, often younger artists, did not go into such detail. It would be at this point that I would ask them about utopia or altruism in their work. At no stage did I go into detailed definitions of altruism or utopia, but left the question open to be interpreted however the interviewee thought best related to them and their work. It is interesting to note that when I asked if such values were important [if I asked about altruism, or gifting], a number of individuals were surprised that I needed to voice such a thing, the question seemed redundant, and it appeared that as an artist myself, I should know better than to ask such obvious questions.

Before outlining my initial findings, I will briefly introduce the participants. Interviewee #1, female, 32, Europe, seven years in the field; Interviewee #2, female, 30, Australia, seven years in the field; Interviewee #3, male, 24, Europe two years in the field; Interviewee #4, female 43, Europe, eleven years in the field; Interviewee #5, female, 24 Mexico six years in the field; Interviewee #6 female, 27, Europe, six years in the field; Interviewee #7, female, 27, Europe, four years in the field; Interviewee #8, female, age not disclosed, Europe, twenty-two years in the field; Interviewee #9, female, 55, Australia, thirty-five years in the field; Interviewee #10, female, 27 Australia, three years in the field; Interviewee #11, male 30, Europe, eight years in the field; Interviewee #12, male, 56, North America, thirty-eight years in the field; Interviewee #13, male, 65, Europe, forty-four years in the field.

## Findings

From the thirteen interviews undertaken, three main themes emerged, which will be discussed in turn: 1) the importance of the “live moment”, 2) the notion of an “exchange” , “transaction” or “gifting” occurring within that live moment, and 3) the performers’ personal utopia enacted within that live moment.

### 1) The importance of the “live moment”

“Liveness” was integral to interviewees’ definitions of performance art. Interviewee #1 said that performance art is “very much about the liveness of it, the live encounter between the performer and audience...it’s a meeting between the performer and the audience in a live setting...I like to engage in a sort of two-way communication. Not only perform for them but to engage them in the conversation or actions with me somehow...” Interviewee #6 spoke regarding the liveness of the audience being interesting “I don’t know how they are going to respond.” Interviewee #4 defined performance as an art form where “the body is the instrument and the performer is the creator and it has to be in the moment.” Interviewee #13 also talked about not being an artist at all, and not even performing, but rather, it is a “communication” between him and whoever chose to watch and engage with him.

The live moment was also important when discovering why these individuals made the work in the first place. When asked why they made their work and what maintains their interest in making work, interviewees talked about a desire, an urgency to do so. Interviewee #1 described it as “a very, very strong drive to keep making work. It’s almost addictive...What I see is a search, I’m looking for something. I don’t know exactly what it is but I’m looking for something and I just can’t stop doing that...” while Interviewee #3 said they make work “Because it’s the voice I have” and Interviewee #4 “It is something I can do”. Others say they

needed to search for something, or there is something they wanted to share in the moment of performance [interviewee #5 and 11]. Interviewee #12 said that the primary reason for his sustained interest in performance art was its ability to be “transcendent.”

“Somebody does something and you can’t describe it in the abstract. Somebody does something and... everything you thought you knew about art and human beings and the world and the cosmos is slightly shifted and that, it seems to me, is the best that you can ask of any kind of art and of almost any experience. And that’s what keeps me coming back.” [interviewee #12]

Every participant mentioned the importance of the live moment, and this moment then becomes the location or the site for the exchange within the performance itself.

## 2) The notion of an “exchange” , “transaction” or “gifting” occurring within that live moment

The element of the exchange or transaction appeared in many of the interviewees’ definitions of performance art. When asked to respond to the notion of performance being a potential meeting between the performer and the audience acting as a site for transaction and transformation, Interviewee #5 responded by saying “that is sort of the point of performance, to put parenthesis around the moment and be able to share that with whoever is there.” Interviewee #7 mentioned that this exchange could relate “to every piece of good art...there and then you can transact your feelings...it’s like a conversation...a place to have a conversation.” Both Interviewee #11 and #13 also referred to their work as being a dialogue, a “conversation.” Interviewee #9 said that that was “a given” that the work was a gift “pardon the pun”.

Interviewee #5 also spoke about physical exchanges in performance saying that, “A lot of relational art projects, or performance art projects go in that direction, giving things out, or giving a service to the public in some way without really expecting anything back...in some circumstances it can be altruistic in that way, but it depends more about the public than the artist.” These ideas were also realized in the work of Interviewee #11, as in many of his works, there is a literal offering of a gift within or as a result of performative work. Interviewee #11 talked about his work being more of a dialogue with the public. He prefers to work in public spaces rather than in a gallery or theatre setting, and also talked about an interest in everyday things. Many of his works he mentioned included cooking in public and offering the food to the general public as part of the performance. Interviewee #1 talked about “the sharing of the moment” while Interviewee #3 mentioned the desire to “give, share myself with society”.

Interviewee #13 spoke of the notion of *Die Gabe*. I had never heard of this term before, and asked him to extrapolate. *Die Gabe* was defined as a something more than a gift. *Die Gabe* is something that “changed my life...Now I am a completely different person” [interviewee #13]. It was also mentioned that the reciprocity within *Die Gabe* is not direct but general. The offering can be to anyone, but once you have received *Die Gabe*, you must then give it back to someone else [interviewee #13].

Interestingly, when interviewees were asked directly if they thought performance art was altruistic, the responses were mixed. Interviewee #1 thought that although altruism might be a goal of many artists it is not always the reality. Interviewee #2 said directly that performance art is altruistic and others that it can be altruistic in the sense that gifting occurs where the performer offers the audience something without expecting anything back in return. Interviewee



#7 said “well I would hope so...a lot of the time, the performances are quite uncomfortable, and even though you do get kind of an adrenaline rush before any kind of live performance, I feel like...if someone doesn't get something out of it, what's the point!.” Both Interviewee #7, 8 and 10 discussed altruism as occurring within the work itself, but this was not the case in every work, it depended on the intentions of the artist. Interviewee #9 said that of course it was altruistic. And Interviewee #11 said that it is not altruistic in the sense that it purposefully goes about to help people who needs help; it does not make food for people who have cannot afford food, but of course the work is made and put out into the world with the hope that it will help somebody.

Participants were also asked about the network, and it became evident that this notion of generosity and altruistic intention within the practice extends out into the global performance art network. Participants talked about how they generally experienced the network to be friendly, supportive, and open. Interviewee #1 described the network as a “family” while Interviewee #8 talked about artists having a great “love” for each other. A sense of “goodwill” was reference to occur, especially when working internationally as “everything is done on goodwill basically, because nobody has got any money” [Interviewee #2]. Interviewee #8 also discussed the necessity of this type of community as performance art is “not functioning within the market place, it functions within a community collective experience...It's not enough to be a performance artist doing work in a gallery on your own...we need each other.” Participants said they experienced some form of hierarchy, but this usually stems from a deep respect of individuals who have been operating within the field for long periods of time. However, the majority of these seemingly elevated individuals do not relate to other community members as if they are of a different status. Interviewee #13 talked about there being multiple networks, some of which were hierarchical, but others who purposefully set out to be non-hierarchical.

These non-hierarchical networks are those that he was interested in and purposefully opted out of the hierarchical networks as that way of working does not align with his world view. The network was described as being more “egalitarian” [Interviewee #8]. There was a closeness and camaraderie mentioned between artists. Interviewee #1 said that “it doesn’t matter really where you are or where you’re from because there are some core things we share. And we work very often on ingredients of our lives as well, which makes it [personal relationships] even kind of stronger.” Interviewee #12 talked about the “cosiness” of the community and the “familial” which he enjoyed as being part of an international community of performance artists. Interviewee #2 [quoting seminal artist Guillermo Gomez-Pena], described the network as a “strange tribe” with fundamental similarities and moral codes found to underpin individuals’ world views. Interviewee #8 proposed that the performance art network might be altruistic saying, “Maybe the type of person who is attracted into performance art is generally a person who really desires to communicate with others in a very urgent way. Why would you do performance art unless you really wanted to communicate with people with your whole self. You tend to like people; you’re a people person.” There is a flip side to this warm and fuzziness as Interviewees #9, 11 and 12 stipulated there being cliques, and a disjointed quality to the network. Further exploration of the networks operational dynamics is required: however this lies outside the scope of this study.

Although this pilot study only began to scratch the surface, this sense of transaction and exchange with altruistic incentives tended to begin with the individual, moves out into the work where the exchange occurs and further gravitates to the artists interactions with each other within the network.

### 3) The performer's personal utopia was enacted within that live moment.

When asked about their personal utopia, some could not extrapolate greatly on their perspectives of utopia as they; "hadn't really thought about it" [Interviewee #5] while another said that they do not have a personal utopia [Interviewee #4]. Interviewee #3 thought that utopia might be "a discourse that works between borders" but that it "can never be achieved because it is such a subjective thing" [Interviewee #3]. Interviewee #2 said "I'm trying to create utopia...I really believe in people and I think that's something that we can evolve with, people's belief in other people...I basically want to evolve people's love of people." Other interviewees mentioned elements such as "generosity" [Interviewee #1] and "freedom of speech...freedom of action"[Interviewee #5] were mentioned. Interviewee #7 said, "It would be great if we could all treat the world better...It would be nice if we were all treated equally...I'm just talking about how we can make the world a better place..."

When presented with the statement "The performative moment between artist and audience may act as a microcosm of the performer's personal utopia," the majority responded in agreement that this takes place in performance in varying degrees. Interviewee #5 said "...every piece of work made by artists aims for that image of utopia... not just in performance, but in all works of art." Interviewee #1 replied, "...in the performance situation, there's this encounter and the sharing of the moment. And I like when audience members interfere in my performances and things. So it's like they're giving me something that I deeply love, hopefully I'm giving them something..." Interviewee #8 said that it may occur, but it does not within her work, even though she is "a very idealistic person" wanting to make the "world a better place" and that although she doesn't have a "utopian vision," a picture of how the world should be, there was a strong "motivating desire to make the world a better place." Many interviewees mentioned that

these notions of utopia were not concrete ideas to be pushed upon the audience, but rather a more open, fluid and questioning discourse, asking how we can better exist.

When Interviewee #13 was asked about utopia, he said he wasn't interested in utopia, in the impossible. However when he spoke about *Die Gabe*, he spoke of this as being the ability to show the possibilities, what is possible in the here and now, what is possible at the moment of the encounter, where *Die Gabe* can take place. *Die Gabe*, being a live moment, a gift, and exchange that transforms, appears to align with the definition of both performance art and utopia used within the study. This notion of utopia being able to be experienced and realized within a performative moment, was affirmed throughout the interviewees' responses and thus reaffirms the utopia literature; utopia as a state of mind, utopia as a method of experiencing and bettering our existence.

Together, the three themes of liveness, exchange, and a lived utopia highlight central values that were expressed by each of the interviewees, albeit with various terminology. These will be further extrapolated within the following conclusions.

### **Limitations and Future research**

Within this study, the focus has been on "performance art." However, it has been found that in some countries "performance art" as a descriptor of the practice may be used interchangeably with alternatives such as, "Performance," "Action Art" [in Spanish speaking countries] and "Live Art" [in the United Kingdom]. Within this study "Action Art," "Live Art," and "Performance" are recognized as "Performance Art." Further research is required to identify more detailed definitions, differences, and nuances between this set of terminology.

In addition, both utopia and altruism were difficult topics to explore due to their individual interpretations and definitions. As such, varieties of responses to the terms appeared and in some cases misunderstandings as these terms hold various cultural weights. In future research, it may be useful to offer some theoretical definitions of these terms in order to provide a framework before asking participants for their perceptions.

The implication of the technology on these notions of utopia and altruism within the performative act was also beyond the scope of this study. The way the technology and the virtual body has affected the viewer's relationships with work does however pose interesting questions for future research. It was found that the dynamics of the network may also have some impact on the artists' perception of altruism and utopia, however; again, such explorations were beyond the scope of this study.

Although this study began with my experience of the work and the network, being myself an artist, I was conscious and careful throughout the interview process to leave all questions open. I did not set out to prove myself right, but rather find out what other artists were experiencing. Therefore, I endeavoured to pursue lines of questioning the interviewee offered rather than attempting to confirm my suspicions. Although the findings did show that there is a sense of altruism and utopia within the performative act, this pilot study has shown that perhaps this is not the best line of exploration to take. Perhaps a greater search into notions of *Die Gabe* of the "gift" and of the "encounter" is better, as these are terms that the artists themselves were using more readily. Further study into *Die Gabe* would be useful. However, at this time, these texts are in German [a language I do not speak] and no English translation is yet available.

This study is also limited as it consisted of only 13 volunteer participants. This willingness to offer their time to the study with no personal reward may indicate that these individuals hold a greater propensity for altruistic ideals. Although some participants work as both artists and curators, eight of the thirteen participants had been involved in performance art for less than ten years; as such the results of this study are biased. Further research is required engaging a larger participant pool in order to provide more definite results on this subject. Ultimately, the research will provide further insights into the performance art genre and the values therein, and contribute to both the performance art, and utopian literatures.

## Conclusions

This preliminary data indicates that, in performance art, the artist drags their dreams into reality; the performative moment, being a living moment, allows for a visioning of the world, as it could possibly exist - utopia thus experienced. Together, the three themes of the live, the transaction, and vision of utopia within the performative moment highlight central values expressed by each of the interviewees. Each of these themes relates back to the theories mentioned: An altruistic offering of a version of utopia was experienced within the live moment in real time within an performative context (Hertzler, 1922; Schopenhauer, 1966).

These preliminary findings are valuable as they are a step towards finding greater insight into the wider cultural value of the genre. From the theory, it was found that it is possible to realise utopia within the live moment, and that true altruistic acts are possible. The results of this pilot study indicate that the concepts of utopia and altruism are linked to the performance art genre, its people, and practice. In addition, trajectory of the three themes confirm that notions of

altruism and utopia begin with individual artist, are then enacted within the performative moment, and extended further, out into the global performance art network. Thus the performative moment between the performance artist and audience acts as both a microcosm of the performer's personal utopia and a location of transaction and transformation. This appears to be most hopeful. Utopia can be experienced, live, now, and will continue to evolve, be shared, and experienced within the context of performance art.

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