

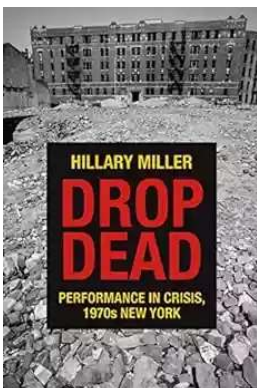
Performance In Crisis - Exploring 1970s New York Performance Works

During the 1970s, New York City experienced a period of profound social and economic crisis. With soaring crime rates, urban decay, and a fiscal crisis, the city was at a breaking point. However, amidst these difficulties, a vibrant underground art scene emerged, particularly in the realm of performance art.

This article delves into the fascinating world of 1970s New York performance works, examining how artists responded to the challenges of the era and finding inspiration in the city's gritty realities. From pioneers like Laurie Anderson and Vito Acconci to lesser-known but equally influential figures, this article explores the diverse range of performance art that took shape in this tumultuous period.

The Birth of Performance Art in New York City

Performance art, as we know it today, grew out of the avant-garde movements of the mid-20th century. However, it was in the 1970s that it truly found its voice in New York City. With venues like The Kitchen, Franklin Furnace, and PS1 Contemporary Art Center providing platforms for experimentation, artists found both refuge and inspiration in these spaces.



Drop Dead: Performance in Crisis, 1970s New York (Performance Works) by Hillary Miller(Kindle Edition)

★★★★☆ 4.5 out of 5



Laurie Anderson, known for her innovative use of technology and multimedia elements, gained notoriety during this time. She combined music, spoken word, and visual projections to create dynamic and thought-provoking performances. In her influential piece "Duets on Ice," Anderson literally strapped ice skates onto her feet and played the violin while skating, symbolizing the precariousness of life in the city.

Exploring Themes of Survival

Survival, in all its forms, became a central theme for many performers in 1970s New York City. The harsh realities of the city's decay and crime rates were impossible to ignore, and artists channeled these experiences into their work.

One particularly striking performance artist of the era was Vito Acconci. Acconci's piece "Seedbed" involved him lying under a ramp at the Sonnabend Gallery, masturbating and whispering his fantasies, while gallery visitors walked above him. By placing himself in such a vulnerable position, Acconci explored themes of exposure and survival in a city that often felt chaotic and threatening.

The Intersection of Performance and Activism

The 1970s were a politically charged time in New York City, with civil rights movements and protests against the Vietnam War taking center stage. Performance artists seized the opportunity to merge their craft with activism, using their bodies and voices to amplify important social messages.

Artists like Adrian Piper and Ana Mendieta incorporated political discourse into their performances, challenging societal norms and advocating for change.

Mendieta, in her powerful work "Silueta Series," addressed issues of gender, displacement, and the erasure of marginalized communities through her use of body imprints on the landscape.

Performance Art as a Catalyst for Change

Performance art in 1970s New York City was not just a whimsical exhibition of creativity; it was a catalyst for change. Artists used their performances to confront the realities of the city, to challenge oppressive systems, and to inspire dialogue among audiences.

These performances often took place in unconventional spaces, like abandoned buildings and parks, reflecting the city's own state of disarray. By embracing these spaces and engaging with the city's challenges head-on, performers brought attention to the issues plaguing New York City and fostered a sense of community among artists.

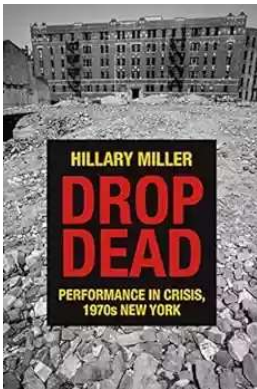
The Legacy of 1970s New York Performance Works

While the 1970s may have been a time of crisis for New York City, it was also a time of immense creativity and innovation. The performance works of this era continue to influence contemporary art practices, serving as a reminder of the power of artistic expression.

From the experimental techniques of Laurie Anderson to the provocative performances of Vito Acconci, the legacy of 1970s New York performance art lives on. These artists paved the way for future generations of performers, demonstrating the importance of embracing difficult times as opportunities for artistic exploration and social change.

Performance In Crisis - Exploring 1970s New York Performance Works offers a glimpse into a time when artists turned adversity into art. By using their bodies, voices, and the city itself as their canvas, they created performances that reflected and responded to the challenges of the era.

From the birth of performance art in New York City to the intersection of performance and activism, this article has explored the influential works that emerged during this tumultuous period. The legacy of these performances can still be felt today, reminding us of the power of art to both confront and transcend difficult times.



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Winner, 2017 American Theater and Drama Society John W. Frick Book Award

Winner, 2017 ASTR Barnard Hewitt Award for Outstanding Research in Theater History

Hillary Miller's Drop Dead: Performance in Crisis, 1970s New York offers a fascinating and comprehensive exploration of how the city's financial crisis shaped theater and performance practices in this turbulent decade and beyond.

New York City's performing arts community suffered greatly from a severe reduction in grants in the mid-1970s. A scholar and playwright, Miller skillfully synthesizes economics, urban planning, tourism, and immigration to create a map of the interconnected urban landscape and to contextualize the struggle for resources. She reviews how numerous theater professionals, including Ellen Stewart of La MaMa E.T.C. and Julie Bovasso, Vinnette Carroll, and Joseph Papp of The Public Theater, developed innovative responses to survive the crisis.

Combining theater history and close readings of productions, each of Miller's chapters is a case study focusing on a company, a production, or an element of New York's theater infrastructure. Her expansive survey visits Broadway, Off-, Off-Off-, Coney Island, the Brooklyn Academy of Music, community theater, and other locations to bring into focus the large-scale changes wrought by the financial realignments of the day.

Nuanced, multifaceted, and engaging, Miller's lively account of the financial crisis and resulting transformation of the performing arts community offers an essential chronicle of the decade and demonstrates its importance in understanding our present moment.



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