

## About BELLYFLOP Magazine

BELLYFLOP Magazine is here to make a splash into the ocean of performance (for now, the bit that runs through the canals of London).

Started up as a lone enterprise by Louise Mochia, BELLYFLOP has now developed into a collaborative artist-led undertaking based at Chisenhale Dance Space. As a peer group, a generation perhaps, we are opinionated and this is what motivated an online platform for provoking debate and embracing contributors' subjective engagement at grass-root level. We operate with a DIY ethic through voluntary contributions from various artists, creating an artistic forum for debate where viewpoints (from scandalous to mundane) can be shared with other artists/practitioners/interested parties. It is BELLYFLOP's aim to bring visibility to an artistic community working outside of the mainstream, bringing exposure to the ideas and efforts of discerning individuals, as an active attempt to stimulate new perspectives and critical thought.

Essentially BELLYFLOP revolves around the art of contemporary dance, however, we try not to get too pedantic about these things and focus on all areas of performance as and when we feel like it - you get everything from musings on the everyday life of the artist to musings on popular culture. On the BELLYBLOG you can locate random ramblings from the BELLYFLOP team and get the latest word on events, happenings and opportunities in and around London.

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The impact of recent financial cuts to the cultural sector has left many organisations reconfiguring their working models so as to carry on regardless. Considering the situation from a positive perspective this sudden (but not unexpected) shock to our economic system presents interesting challenges and change. The flip side to this rusty coin is that survival is contingent; only some of us will work out how to resource and re-deploy our skills effectively in order to remain afloat.

The fragility of it all is just too depressing, but in a way, not an unfamiliar state to be in. Those of us who identify ourselves as performers, or, advocates of performance have become masters of self-defence; buffering polite but definitely prejudicial and hierarchical attitudes towards the form. The uncertain qualities bestowed upon performance are simultaneously its friends and its foe. Conveniently, performance is turned against itself; its currency becomes a desirable and not an essential, making people scared to invest. This fear is twofold; firstly there is the fear that performance won't make a monetary return on investment. Secondly, and in the case of Live Art and Performance Art particularly, its insubordinate, transgressive and anarchic tendencies make it difficult for the masses to swallow.

Poor performance, always defending itself. So how does poor performance address this predicament? How can performance negotiate the market without compromising its politics or fundamental principles? As performers (dancers, in particular) we have developed the skills to shape, hone and choreograph the ultimate unruly object and the most fluctuating of economies - those of time and the body. Despite our worst fears we are very well placed to exercise these embodied skills in other areas; in the re-conceptualisation of our organisations and funding strategies. So what do alternatives to monetary investment and institutionalised systems look like if practiced as forms of art themselves - as economies of time and the body? What are the aesthetics of hard graft and how can this labour be championed as an artistic practice instead of one of slavish and reluctant subordination?

Many organisations practice the art of working together; this is crucial both for the development and survival of their various singular and collective endeavours. As artists, we are intertwined by a network whose connections at first might appear purely professional. On the contrary, now more than ever this relationship has become personal. The gesture of donating time and energy between such organisations is considered a performative action, i.e. making art happen becomes an art in itself. But, often constituted as artist-led and not

IMAGES  
Timothy Hunt, Christopher Mollon  
performing Home (2011)

# BEYOND NECESSITY

CAN WE SAVE PERFORMANCE, OR RATHER, CAN  
PERFORMANCE SAVE ITSELF?





for profit, organisations of this kind have difficult and conflicting relationships with money; they are in the market for art, not in the art market and so their currency is manifested as sweat equity as opposed to financial equity.

Many artist-led organisations are negotiating the thorny subject of money in different ways albeit for common goals. For example, some organisations have nurtured a relationship with Arts Council England and other funding bodies in order to make what they are making. On paper, and with the validation that a funding logo affords, this is of course a very positive thing. However, there is a common misconception that in order to obtain these funds, organisations have to forfeit their principles by practicing the rhetoric of Arts Council speak. At O U I Performance, York, we utilise ACE funds and have therefore experienced this potential trade-off first hand. However, in order to do what we feel is becoming increasingly important, i.e. pay artists for their work, we have learned to swallow our pride. We have mastered and even enjoyed the fine art of asking. Organisations engaging with this strategy seem acutely aware of the potential problems within a culture where artists are not paid for their work. Performance artist Jorn J. Burmester, calls this the 'pay to play festival', a model that potentially does not recognise the time, effort and skill of the artist.

In stark contrast, there are organisations that have never received funding, nor have they ever applied;

they don't miss the money because they never had it in the first place. As such, they have successfully circumnavigated the system so that they will never be reliant upon it. Situating themselves just as far outside of the mainstream system as you can get, ArtEvict, a collective based in London, are a perfect example of this. Using squats and empty, disused buildings the work happens without any money changing hands. Organisations who embrace this model are, according to performance maker and doer Gillie Kleiman, able to 'enjoy the freedoms that lack affords'. The not getting paid bit is in fact the point and is demonstrative of the fundamental principles of performance art; that the exchange happens in the event of meeting between the artists as a form of *communitas*. The artists' rewards for their time, effort and skill reside in this, perhaps, more valuable economy. Having experienced these rewards personally, I recognise that the depth of this exchange is one that cannot be quantified in monetary terms.

For some organisations, monetary funds are crucial, not necessarily to pay artists but to pay for the physical space that houses its community and hosts its events. To keep a roof over their head and to facilitate performance, studio holder rent and space hire is the main source of covering necessary costs. In this instance, the temporality of cash flow problems is ever-present and ever-present in the perpetual cycle of monthly rent. As an example, ] performance s p a c e [ is an organisation situated in an industrial building in Hackney Wick, East London.

Like so many organisations, they have applied to Arts Council England, respective local councils and other institutional funding bodies and were unsuccessful on all counts. Consequently, countless organisations such as this are exploring other, innovative ways of raising money. For ]performance s p a c e[ their forthcoming fundraiser, Beyond Necessity, will present performance, video and panel discussions by national and international performance artists in order to raise enough funds to secure its survival. The concern for organisations such as this is that whilst raising profile and awareness, the contingency of the fundraising model reaps monetary rewards that are dangerously short term. The fragility of our organisations has begun to mimic the temporality of performance itself; only in this case the ephemerality of loss happens without the romance. It is for this reason that strategies like this make me understandably nervous; yet seem absolutely necessary when faced with little or no other choice. These solutions only go some way to realising the sustainability and longevity that organisations need and deserve. How long before we need another fix? Is the time, effort and skill necessary to organise such events relative to the funds that they ultimately raise? Can we save performance, or rather, can performance be used effectively to save itself? The answer has to be yes.

This is a call to arms raising questions pertinent to all of us, not just those who run organisations. How long can performance survive on such fragile funding initiatives? How can organisations focus on developing and strategising their long term futures if they are only able to project their thoughts to the short term; the immediacy of day to day/week to week survival? Essentially, how long before the riches of sweat equity, those deposits of time, energy and skill run out? We use the term 'active spectator' so frequently but now more than ever the active bit becomes crucial. If we want to save performance we must be willing to put our hands in our pockets and roll up our sleeves to make it happen. We can have a share in the sustainability of organisations such as these by investing with our physical and creative skills as much as with our purses. We, the art community are replete with resources even if financial ones are deplete; practising this ideology is a rich currency and a powerful performative action in itself.

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