



**For Immediate Release**  
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**PERFORMA ANNOUNCES DETAILS FOR PERFORMA 17  
NOVEMBER 1–19, 2017  
THROUGHOUT NEW YORK CITY**

**PERFORMA ANNOUNCES FIRST COMMISSIONS TO INCLUDE PERFORMANCES BY  
YTO BARRADA, WILLIAM KENTRIDGE, JULIE MEHRETU AND JASON MORAN,  
ZANELE MUHOLI, WANGECHI MUTU, AND MORE**

**BIENNIAL INVESTIGATES DADA AS HISTORICAL ANCHOR**

**NEW YORK** – Performa, the internationally acclaimed organization dedicated to live performance across disciplines, announces select commissions and the historical anchor for Performa 17—the seventh edition of the Performa Biennial, to take place November 1–19, 2017, at locations throughout New York City.

Since its inception, Performa has been a leader in commissioning artists whose work has collectively shaped a new chapter in the multi-century legacy of visual artists working in live performance. Founded by art historian and curator RoseLee Goldberg, the organization is dedicated to exploring the critical role of live performance in the history of twentieth-century art, as well as its enormous significance in the international world of contemporary art.

Performa 17’s team of curators and producers will present commissions and projects constructed around focused curatorial research themes that represent timely opportunities to work with a diverse range of global contemporary artists. The resulting commissions and scholarship examine immediate and critical concerns confronting our urban centers, the shifting political and cultural currents of our turbulent world today, and ultimately the role of the arts and of artists in supporting afflicted communities. This edition of the Biennial will focus on the sociopolitical context informing contemporary art today, and how best to engage audiences in significantly understanding and absorbing its aesthetics and intrinsic values. Additional commissions and Consortium projects will be announced in the coming months.

“Performa provides an extraordinary platform for showing the important role of art in society. Through live performance we touch people directly, change their minds, and introduce them viscerally to the complicated emotional and aesthetic expressions of artists responding to the world that we inhabit,” says **RoseLee Goldberg, Founding Director and Chief Curator**. “For the past 18 months, we have examined how artists in several cities on the African continent—Johannesburg, Nairobi, Dakar—consider performance as an extension of their creativity in multiple disciplines—music, dance, film, image making—and how each artist takes us into distinct histories and sensibilities. Along with artists from Guadeloupe, New York to Paris, we are excited to announce the first commissions emerging from this extended engagement.”

**PERFORMA 17 COMMISSIONS INCLUDE:**

**YTO BARRADA** (Morocco/France)  
**WILLIAM KENTRIDGE** (South Africa)  
**TARIK KISWANSON** (Sweden/Palestine)  
**KEMANG WA LEHULERE** (South Africa)  
**JULIE MEHRETU** (Ethiopia) and **JASON MORAN** (USA)  
**ZANELE MUHOLI** (South Africa)  
**WANGECHI MUTU** (Kenya)



**KELLY NIPPER** (USA)

**JIMMY ROBERT** (France)

**TRACEY ROSE** (South Africa)

## **PERFORMA 17 HISTORICAL ANCHOR: “100 DEGREES ABOVE DADA”**

For each Biennial, the Performa team selects a historical movement to anchor the artists, curators, and Performa Consortium’s research in the rich history of artists’ performance from around the world. For Performa 17, the historical research investigation is Dada, which Goldberg regards as the “Big Bang” of interdisciplinary twentieth-century art. The Dada movement began in 1916 with the founding of Emmy Hennings and Hugo Ball’s Cabaret Voltaire in Zurich, fueled by a desire to devise new ways of making art in the midst of a ferocious World War, and to bring together the community of artists, poets, musicians, filmmakers, and dancers residing in close proximity in neutral Switzerland until its end. The movement attracted and influenced Europe’s avant-garde, including artists Jean Arp, Marcel Duchamp, Hannah Höch, Richard Huelsenbeck, Francis Picabia, Kurt Schwitters, Sophie Taeuber, and Tristan Tzara. Live performance, in particular, served as a prime vehicle for spreading the concepts and belief systems of this small band of conscientious objectors under the fraught and unstable sociopolitical conditions of this period. During this time, artists moved with ease between disciplines, driven by an insistence on activism, art events, and performance.

The title “100 Degrees Above Dada” is inspired by French Nouveau Réalisme critic Pierre Restany’s 1961 exhibition, *40° au-dessus de Dada* (40 Degrees Above Dada), which aimed to reexamine Dada beyond its nihilistic origins, and reflect on its language and poetry amid a new Modern context. With Performa 17, the Biennial similarly seeks to question how artists, curators, and writers are approaching Dada 101 years after the movement began, and how it continues to reverberate in our cultural landscape. Several commissioned artists will work closely with Performa’s curators to develop performances that will reinvestigate the defining ideas and concepts of Dada from new contemporary perspectives.

## **PERFORMA COMMISSIONING COUNCIL**

Performa announces the launch of the Performa Commissioning Council to provide direct support for artists as they move through the creative development process of each new Performa commission. The Commissioning Council will work similarly to a museum acquisition committee, providing an exclusive group of patrons the opportunity to not only invest in a work of art but also gain intimate access to the artist and their creative process. Looking ahead to the upcoming Performa 17 Biennial in November, this initiative encourages a personal relationship with Performa’s curators and artists aligned with the organization’s key mission of commissioning new performance projects in visual arts.

Performa’s commissioning process has been the hallmark of the organization since Shirin Neshat’s first live performance, *Logic of the Birds* (2001), originated and produced by RoseLee Goldberg. Performa has produced some of the most memorable and critically acclaimed performance pieces in the medium’s history, by artists including Robin Rhode (2015), Ragnar Kjartansson (2011), Mike Kelley (2009), Isaac Julien (2007), Yvonne Rainer (2007), and Francis Alÿs (2005). Working closely with Performa’s curators and producers, artists are challenged to develop live performances, often for the first time. These seminal experiences gained along the Performa Commission process have often continued to impact their artistic trajectory to incorporate multi-disciplinary elements into their practice. Dedicated to commissioning artists from all mediums and backgrounds, the Performa Commissioning Council will support this core initiative to present performance art to audiences around the world.

## **ABOUT PERFORMA**

Founded in 2004 by art historian and curator RoseLee Goldberg, Performa is the leading organization



dedicated to exploring the critical role of live performance in the history of twentieth-century art and encouraging new directions in performance for the twenty-first century. Since launching New York's first performance Biennial, Performa 05, in 2005, the organization has solidified its identity as a commissioning and producing entity. As a "museum without walls," Performa provides important art historical heft to the field by showing the development of live art in all its forms from many different cultural perspectives reaching back to the Renaissance. The Performa Biennial is celebrated worldwide as the first biennial to give specialized attention to this remarkable history, transforming the city of New York into the "world capital of artists' performance" every other November. Performa attracts a national and international audience of more than 200,000 and more than five million website hits during its three-week run. In the last decade, Performa has presented nearly 600 performances, worked with more than 700 artists, and toured commissioned performances in nearly 20 countries around the world.

The Performa curatorial team is led by Chief Curator RoseLee Goldberg and includes Performa Curators Adrienne Edwards and Charles Aubin, with contributions from Curators at Large Defne Ayas and Mark Beasley as well as Performa Consortium curators. The Performa program is produced by Esa Nickle.

For more on Performa and its programs, including the Performa Biennial, please visit <http://performa-arts.org/>.

#### **BIENNIAL SUPPORTERS**

Toby Devan Lewis, Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, Institut Français à Paris and FUSED, French-US Exchange in Dance.

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