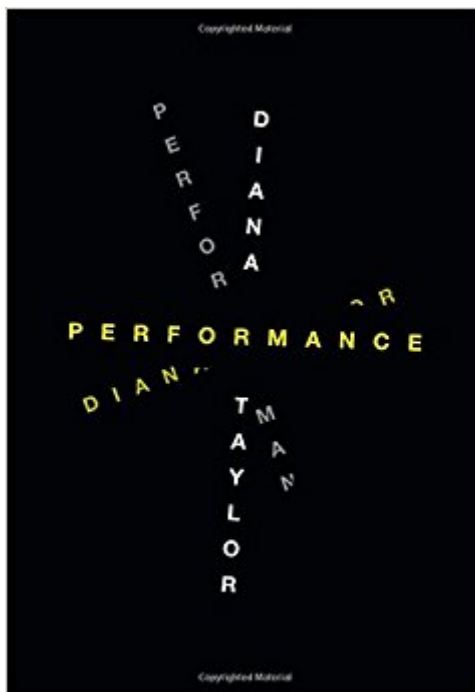


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# Performance



## Synopsis

"Performance" has multiple and often overlapping meanings that signify a wide variety of social behaviors. In this invitation to reflect on the power of performance, Diana Taylor explores many of its uses and iterations: artistic, economic, sexual, political, and technological performance; the performance of everyday life; and the gendered, sexed, and racialized performance of bodies. This book performs its argument. Images and texts interact to show how performance is at once a creative act, a means to comprehend power, a method of transmitting memory and identity, and a way of understanding the world.Â Â

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"Diana Taylor concludes with a strong claim that 'Performance is a powerful weapon. We need to understand it.' In that light she is clearly a warrior and an exemplary scholar. But she is also, as evidenced in the pages of this book, a profoundly insightful, compassionate, hope-filled lover of performers and performance. I've rarely come across such a trustworthy witness to the potential of art and activism. For that last ounce of courage, I think I'll just have to carry this inspiring chronicle of performance studies, performance art, and, from my read, artists of all sorts •and have it with me in every type of backstage dressing room I might occupy."Â Â (Anna Deavere Smith)"Diana Taylor is the best kind of scholar: engaged, partisan, concerned not merely with describing her subjects, but with bringing forth the political power of their work. And that's what this book does: it leavens existing visions in order to nourish new ones." (Jacques Servin, New York University)"At the beginning of this book Diana Taylor makes the claim

that since the 1960s artists have been placing the body 'front and center' in artistic practice, and at the end she asks, 'How would our disciplines and methodologies change if we took seriously the idea that bodies (and not only books and documents) produce, store, and transfer knowledge?' In between, Taylor offers, not so much a set of answers to that question, but instead, an array of perspectives on performance from which we can commence an inquiry into its cultural, aesthetic, and political significance. As such this book provides a comprehensive and enticing introduction to what performance is, what it does, and why it matters. But the book does more: in the examples it discusses and the visual documentation it provides, it inspires us both to see how performance theorizes the world and also how we might imagine its possible futures." (Susan Leigh Foster, Distinguished Professor, University of California, Los Angeles)"Performance offers scenarios... for active pedagogy, inviting students and others to explore and perhaps undo the links between images and writing, texts and performances, so as to conduct their own performatic appropriations." (Loren Kruger Critical Inquiry 2016-06-23)"Taylor's fascinating, multicultural analysis of performance explores not only what performance is but also what it does – what it allows one to see, to experience, and to theorize – and 'its complex relation to systems of power.' . . . Recommended." (M. S. LoMonaco Choice 2016-12-01)

Diana Taylor is University Professor of Performance Studies and Spanish at New York University. She is the author and editor of several books, including *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas* and *Disappearing Acts: Spectacles of Gender and Nationalism in Argentina's "Dirty War"*, both also published by Duke University Press.

Love Taylor's ideas on virtual and actual identity, and how we live in a hybrid space.

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Performance is a doing to, a thing done to and with the spectator. Diana Taylor, *Performance*, 2016, p.86 Writer, Activist and NYU University Professor, Diana Taylor, has accomplished an admirable scholarly feat. Her new book *Performance* (Duke University Press, 2016) presents in accessible language an intelligent and impassioned primer whereby to engage the study of performance - defined as an embodied activity separate from life or 'twice performed' for an audience. Intentionally not written as a hegemonic history, *Performance* provides a kit of discursive tools to analyze contemporary lived experience ranging

from protests, demonstrations, theatre, performance art, dance, music, and other forms of public gesture. In being a useful primer for beginning theorists and advanced practitioners, the book calibrates its tone towards clarity, bolstered by ample case studies and black & white illustrations, while its tenor is one of urgency and timeliness that the very acts of performance that reading, writing, viewing, and taking action entail. Acknowledging the interdisciplinary field within in which she has made a place for herself with reference to John Austin (philosophy), Richard Schechner (theatre), Peggy Phelan (performance studies), José Muñoz (queer theory), Judith Butler (critical theory), Jon McKenzie (performance studies) and many more - as well as acknowledging the role of performance artists-activists like Karen Finley, Regina Galindo, Guillermo Gomez-Peña, The Yes Men, Marina Abramović to name but a few, *Performance* is organized around several key concepts constituting a "brief history of performance theory." As a quiet democratic act which allows for the recognition of performance as theory to glide easily into public conversation the slipping of a veil of knowledge over the body of life - *Performance* nonetheless lodges a solid punch prompting readers into action by beginning with the simple question "what can I do?" With performance characterized as "radically unstable" and an experience wherein "breaking norms is the norm," there is a bent in the works selected towards ones that create political consciousness, if not outright activism and revolutionary thinking. Just shy of a manifesto, *Performance* resists simplistic definitions and easy generalizations of complex world practices and subtle occurrences to push its readers to think about the specific ways in which things do something in the world and to the world. *Performance*, the book, and performance, the medium, presents the capacity to render viewers into more active modes, to become "spec-actors." In wondering if there are always clear lines between art, performance, life, and politics, and how framing can make the same thing different, I think about who this book was written for and its underlying message. In the end, I believe it is for those who wish to make sense of their place in the world as a sentient body and a thinking presence. As Taylor concludes to empower her reader "As an act of imagination, performance allows us to imagine better scenarios and futures" | *Performance* is world making. We need to understand it.

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