

Investigating Sartrean Freedom in Post-1960s Performance Art and Its Social Influence

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Abstract. This study investigates how three performance artworks made between 1973 and 1981 embody, challenge, and reshape Jean-Paul Sartre's existentialist account of freedom. Sartre treats freedom as an unavoidable structure of consciousness expressed through choice, projection, and responsibility; political freedom, by contrast, concerns the concrete rights, recognition, and possibilities distributed through social and institutional arrangements. Using qualitative philosophical and contextual analysis, the essay compares Marina Abramović's *Rhythm 0* (1974), Adrian Piper's *The Mythic Being* (1973–1975), and Tehching Hsieh's *One Year Performance* (1980–1981) (also called *Time Clock Piece*). The works were selected because they place freedom under three distinct but comparable pressures: interpersonal power and bodily vulnerability, racialized and gendered recognition, and the regulation of labor, immigration, and time. Read together, they show how performance art translates an abstract account of freedom into embodied situations while also exposing limits that an exclusively ontological account can obscure. The essay argues that these performances retain Sartre's emphasis on choice and responsibility but recast freedom as relational, politically conditioned, and unequally available in practice. The body consequently appears both as a medium of self-definition and as a site on which audiences, stereotypes, laws, and labor systems organize human possibilities.

Keywords: Sartrean freedom, existentialism, performance art, embodiment, social responsibility

1. Introduction

Freedom has two core meanings in this study. Sartre-style freedom refers to the ability of consciousness to establish a position and look forward to various possibilities according to its own situation at the level of existence; while political freedom is related to the rights, recognition, mobility, resources and actual choices granted or restricted by the social system [1-4]. Performance art makes the tension between these forms of freedom visible through bodies shaped by other people and social structures.

Sartre's theory can be clarified by comparing it with Albert Camus's absurd philosophy. Both thinkers oppose the view that the meaning of human life comes from a predetermined sacred or metaphysical order. However, their understanding of freedom is different. For Sartre, freedom is ontological: consciousness is never completely equivalent to its factuality, because it constantly

denies what is given and projects itself toward unrealized possibilities. Therefore, freedom is inevitable, even if a person's actual choice is severely restricted [1, 2]. On the contrary, Camus started from absurdity - the opposition between human desire for meaning and the silence of the world. His "absurd freedom" stems from soberly accepting this reality and continuing to live without resorting to the source of transcendental meaning [5]. In *The Rebel*, Camus developed this reaction into resistance: resistance to unacceptable situations, while also confirming the boundaries that should not be crossed and the dignity shared with others [6]. Sartre therefore emphasized the inevitable choice of consciousness and the power of self-projection, while Camus emphasized sober resistance, unity and ethical boundaries that could prove the legitimacy of freedom. Their completely different public positions are also reflected in their relationship with literary institutions: Camus received the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1957, while Sartre rejected the award in 1964, believing that writers should resist the identity of the institution. Sartre's refusal shows that his commitment to freedom has gone beyond the field of philosophy and extended to public and political practice.

Sartre's account emerged from a specific historical setting rather than from a timeless discussion of individual liberty. *Being and Nothingness* appeared in 1943 during the German occupation of France, and the public lecture later published as *Existentialism Is a Humanism* was delivered in 1945, immediately after the Second World War [1, 7]. In this wartime and postwar context, freedom was inseparable from questions of action under constraint, complicity, responsibility, and the absence of guaranteed moral instructions.

The works of art examined here belong to a later period with a very different political color. Since the 1960s, artists have increasingly challenged the gap between art and daily life and the authority of established art institutions through live performances, duration, public space, documentation and audience participation [8]. These experiments also took place against the background of anti-war protests, black struggles for freedom, feminist movements, debates on sexual and physical autonomy, and criticism of capitalist labor. "Post-1960s performance art" therefore does not describe one unified movement. It names a field in which artists working in distinct locations tested how bodies were authorized, categorized, watched, endangered, and disciplined. Abramović's *Rhythm 0* was performed in Naples in 1974 and placed bodily consent and spectatorship under pressure; Piper's New York-based *The Mythic Being* (1973-1975) intervened in the racial and gender Politics of public visibility; and Hsieh's New York performance of 1980-1981 connected self-imposed Duration to wage discipline and the precarious legal position of an undocumented immigrant [9-11].

Against this background, this article explores how *Rhythm 0*, *The Mythic Being* and *Time Clock Piece* reflect or challenge Sartre's view of freedom, and how they reshape the understanding of freedom and body. First of all, this article reconstructs Sartre's concepts of choice, reality, responsibility and existence for others. Subsequently, this article goes through a detailed and qualitative analysis of the rules of the work, body movements, scenes, documents, and audience relationships, interpreting them from the perspective of art history research. The purpose is not to prove that Sartre had a direct influence on the three artists. On the contrary, Sartre provides a comparative framework to identify which existential freedoms are explained in which works, and the political environment in which works require amendments to this framework.

2. Sartre's ideology of freedom

Sartre's idea of freedom does not refer to the political idea that people can do whatever they want, nor does it deny differences in legal or material power. It begins with an ontological proposition of

consciousness. Hadley explained this through Sartre's principle: for human beings, "existence precedes essence". This idea was put forward by Sartre in *Existentialism is a Humanitarian*. Unlike objects made according to pre-design, people are not born with a complete and predetermined essence; people "will become as they are" [7, 12]. In this sense, freedom precedes any specific choice, because the self constantly shapes itself through its plans and choices. Nevertheless, this existential freedom must be distinguished from the political conditions that expand or limit the actual ability of the individual.

It is seen that Sartre frequently links freedom with choice-making, which reminds a theory called determinism that seemingly turns down choice-dependent state and thus appears as the opposite to Sartre's interpretation of freedom. Indeed, Detmer clarifies why Sartre considers determinism flawed. Sartre describes what conscious action is like as an alternative of a formal argument. Determinism explains physical events as the effects of prior causes. However, Sartre points out the nuances in human action apart from such events. Assuming determinism treats behavior as the direct result of habits, emotions, or social forces, Sartre argues that consciousness is never identical with these influences because to become aware of a motive is already to stand at some distance from it. This enables the person to question, reject, or reinterpret that motive rather than to simply obey it. In this sense, action involves negating the present state of things and projecting oneself toward a future that does not yet exist [2]. Nevertheless, Sartre's view of freedom does not mean that circumstances are imaginary or irrelevant. Detmer explains Sartre's idea of "facticities," the realities of one's situation, such as money, class, past choices, bodily condition, and social environment. The key idea here is that these facts may set limitations to a person's action, but they do not set a standard on what those facts mean. Sartrean freedom therefore lies not in escaping one's situation completely, but in how one interprets, emphasizes, accepts, resists, or uses those facts [2]. Copleston argues that existentialism is also a resistance to depersonalization, besides an opponent to determinism as argued before. The person is not merely restrained within a job, class, or social label. These roles and societal relationships may compose the person's situation, but are definitely not all of the person's meaning [13].

The discussion also explains why Sartre's freedom is inseparable from responsibility. If a person takes the initiative to choose how to deal with a situation, then the person needs to be responsible for the meaning given to the situation and the actions taken. Responsibility is also social: Sartre believes that a choice will present a certain image that human life may or should present, so the self-shaping of an individual will have an impact on others [7]. This in itself does not provide a complete set of political theories, nor can it explain the inequality of power acquisition. However, it does make meeting others a core element of freedom. Brown's analysis of Sartre shows that consciousness is self-discovered in the relationship with others, just as performance depends on the relationship between the subject, the audience, and the social significance generated by the meeting of the two [14]. Freedom is therefore not merely independent action; it is choice undertaken without fixed guarantees and with consequences for a shared world. This burden helps explain why Sartre associates freedom with anguish.

To better understand the anguish, consciousness's nature of constantly marching into future should be looked deeper into. Hardré clarifies this anguish through Sartre's distinction between being-in-itself and being-for-itself. Being-in-itself refers to what is fixed and unchangeable, such as a material object or one's own past. Being-for-itself, on the other hand, refers to consciousness, which is always moving toward the future and defining itself through action [1]. In this sense, a person's past actions may become part of the being-in-itself, but consciousness is still able to foresee itself beyond the present and choose what it will become next [12]. Rice's view is aligned with

Hardre's. He introduces the point that unlike non-conscious being, human reality is marked by lack, which specifically is reaching toward what it is not yet [15]. Rice's discussion of Sartre's "initial choice" makes this relation between freedom and situation clearer. A choice always begins in a real situation, but human action can also change the situation and give it new meaning [15]. This idea can also explain the concept of bad faith. As Rice contends, bad faith is an attempt to deny one's freedom, possibly achieved by treating themselves as a fixed object or letting institutions, social roles, or other people decide for them [15]. Yet even this denial remains a choice. Freedom allows the individual to create meaning, but it also prevents the individual from staying inside a fixed boundary drawn by the past, which leads to it being both strength and burden.

Whether Sartre's freedom should be understood as one kind of freedom or two, including ontological freedom and practical freedom, lies at the heart of controversy. Some argues that distinguishing two types of freedom enables an acknowledgement of real constraints in specific situation and insistence on choice-making as the dominant force to determine the self. Detmer states his opinion that ontological freedom and practical freedom should be differed clearly. A person in chains can be defined as ontologically free but not practically free in the same way as the master. Ontological freedom, the unavoidable capacity to choose how one relates to one's situation regardless of external constraints, is the consciousness to confront the situation. Indeed, even someone who is physically constrained can still obtain ontological freedom. Practical freedom, evaluating the range of concrete options available for action, by contrast, can be limited by circumstances such as social position or physical restriction. In this case, it is the restricted available options and actions [2]. However, some others refute the validity of such division. Jones states that Sartre upholds to a single concept of freedom centered on the autonomy of choice. They key idea is that freedom does not depend on achieving desired outcomes but on the act of choosing itself. Success or failure does not determine whether one is free [16]. Comparing these two theories, it is evinced that both admit that consciousness that allows for choice-making is the core of Sartrean freedom, but the divergence is at whether there exists a concept of "the extent of freedom" determined by exterior factors. It is worth noting that these different interpretations on Sartrean freedom triggers varying artistic interpretations in artworks, which to some degree ensues this continuous clash of thoughts and further influence public perception of freedom.

In sum, Sartre presents freedom as inseparable from both situation and responsibility. Although human beings always act within external constraints, they remain free to determine the meaning of those conditions through choice [16]. Freedom is therefore not the absence of limitation but the continual creation of meaning through responsible action.

Therefore, later readers relied on Sartre's thought to think about self-creation and actions in the common world. However, his ontological proposition should not be mistaken for a full discussion of political freedom. Issues such as law, race, gender, class, labor and physical vulnerability involve the distribution of practical possibilities, not just the ability to choose consciousness. The subsequent case analysis is based on this distinction to explore the extent to which performance art retains Sartre's ideas and what kind of information it reveals about the political situation - although his abstract model may be lacking in these aspects.

3. Performance analysis

3.1. Overview

In performance art, the body is not only a physical limitation or Sartre-style reality, but also a medium that carries freedom, exposure, identity and responsibility to be made public and politically

significant [17].

These three works were selected through a comparative and purposeful approach, not because they represented all the performing arts after the 1960s. Each work has been extensively documented and academically discussed. They put the artist's body at the core and build a rule-based interactive scene to analyze freedom through observable behavior. At the same time, they also have their own characteristics in terms of location, identity, duration and structure. *Rhythm 0* focuses on the six-hour power delegation between the artist and the audience; *The Mythic Being* repeatedly presents an image with racial and gender color through public space and mass media for two years; *Time Clock Piece* places a year's life under a labor-like schedule. This scope enables this article to compare the constraints at interpersonal, characterization and institutional levels while focusing on the common focus of body selection. Other artists may be able to show different historical contexts, but these cases are especially suitable for testing the evolution from personal and ontological freedom to relational and political freedom advocated by Sartre.

3.2. Rhythm 0

Marina Abramović's *Rhythm 0* most directly handed over freedom and responsibility to the audience. In the six-hour performance, Abramović stood at a table with 72 items related to pleasure, care, injury and death, including flowers, food, knives, bullets and pistols. The audience could touch her body with any object, and she remained passive and bore all the consequences. Abramović later described the performance as a situation where "anyone can do anything to her", clearly linking the work to the activation of freedom and risk [9]. As the performance progressed, the audience's behavior became more and more aggressive. The participant cut through her clothes and skin, exposed and fiddled with her body, put the gun full of bullets in her hand, and pointed at her. Therefore, this work of art not only represents an interaction between the artist and the audience. It builds a situation in which the audience's choice creates the work and directly affects another person's body.

At first glance, Abramović's passivity seems to represent discarding freedom. However, this passiveness itself is the product of her careful choice. Abramović freely constructs the situation, makes rules, and promises to be in it. Therefore, her superficial objectification does not deprive her of her freedom. On the contrary, it represents a relationship of free choice between her and her own situation. In Sartre's words, she deliberately puts herself in the position of "existing for others" [1]. Her body becomes the object of the audience's gaze, desire, judgment, care and attack, but her insistence on the decision of performance itself is the fundamental reason for giving this objectification meaning. This confirms Sartre's view that people are not defined by predetermined essences, but shaped by action and input [7].

The freedom of the audience is equally important. Dixon describes *Rhythm 0* as a "cynetic existentialism" performance because it creates an open system in which the audience was no longer a bystander. The audience enters the system as actors, and their decisions change the development of the system and determine its consequences [18]. Therefore, their freedom is no longer abstract. The audiences' actions are all ways for the audience to define their relationship with others. No participant can claim that the situation mechanically determines their actions, because the same objects and instructions can trigger completely different reactions. Everyone must decide the meaning of the permission to act and the value given to Abramović's body. In this sense, this performance embodies the anxiety in Sartrean freedom: through choice, the audience reveals what kind of behavior they think is acceptable and what kind of world they are willing to participate in creating.

However, *Rhythm 0* also complicates the individualistic interpretation of Sartrean freedom, because it shows that when freedom is free from recognition and responsibility, it becomes domination. Abramović said that she would take responsibility, which can be interpreted as exempting the audience from responsibility, but also giving them the responsibility to decide the direction of the performance. Shalson argues that the work creates conflicting forms of responsibility: while Abramović accepts authorship and its consequences, the audience must decide how to exercise the control they are given [19]. Obtaining permission does not eliminate moral responsibility. The audience may be technically allowed to use pistols or knives, but this permission does not translate violence into morally neutrality. Shalson's concept of enduring objecthood also helps explain why Abramović cannot become a complete object. Her silence and nonresistance invite the audience to treat her as material, but her pain, vulnerability, tears, and physical presence continually reveal that the apparently passive body belongs to a living person. The spectators consequently confront a body that can be acted upon but cannot be reduced entirely to the status of a thing. The prolonged duration and collective structure intensify this conflict because audience members must watch not only Abramović but also one another. They experience uncertainty over whether to intervene, remain inactive, imitate the group, or oppose its behavior. The performance thus develops into a collective negotiation of responsibility toward another body [19].

Through this process, *Rhythm 0* changes the audience's social perception of both freedom and the body. It rejects the simple definition of freedom as the unrestricted right to act. The spectators possess extensive practical freedom, but the performance reveals that such freedom becomes oppressive when it relies on denying another person's subjectivity. Abramović's body also ceases to appear as a purely private possession whose autonomy is protected automatically by individual will. Its treatment is determined by collective permission, unequal control, gendered expectations, and group behavior. The work therefore presents freedom as a relational condition: one person's actions can preserve, threaten, or destroy the practical freedom of another. Abramović embodies Sartrean responsibility, but the social force of the performance lies in making viewers recognize that freedom is never exercised alone. It always takes place in a world inhabited by other vulnerable bodies.

3.3. The Mythic Being

Adrian Piper's *The Mythic Being* investigates freedom through identity, recognition, and social perception. Developed from 1973 to 1975, the project involved Piper's creation of an apparently masculine alter ego. She wore an Afro wig, a moustache, sunglasses, and clothing associated with a particular image of Black masculinity. As the Mythic Being, she appeared in public spaces, performed gestures and actions, repeated statements taken from her adolescent journals, and exposed the persona through photographs, drawings, posters, and newspaper advertisements. The project was therefore not limited to a single performance. It consisted of repeated encounters through which the figure entered streets, galleries, photographs, and mass media.

This work initially seemed to confirm Sartre's assertion that "existence precedes essence". Piper refutes the view that race or gender determines identity by building a new model of existence with the help of clothing, gestures, language and repeated public performances. As Bowles argues, *The Mythic Being* allows Piper to explore alternative forms of masculinity, while revealing the instability of race and gender categories [10]. However, this work also challenges the idea that freedom exists only in self-creation. Although Piper can freely shape the character, she can't control the way others interpret her image. The audience will inevitably interpret her African wigs, mustaches, costumes and postures through existing stereotypes such as race, masculinity, class and danger. According to Sartre, Piper is both a sense of freedom and an existence for others, and his

identity is constantly influenced by the gaze of others. Therefore, this work shows that freedom involves not only self-creation, but also the meaning of facing the society.

The project's entry into the mass media has strengthened this social impact. Smith explained that Piper deliberately published the advertisement of *The Mythic Being* through the Voice of the Country to extend the work from the closed environment of the gallery to the wider public [20]. This way of communication means that the audience may come into contact with this image without the interpretation and protection of the art institution. *The Mythical Being* has entered the same visual environment as commercials, news and popular stereotypes. Therefore, the public must first interpret the body before it can be identified as a work of art. Through these contacts, *The Mythical Being* redefined freedom as a struggle for social readability. Piper shows that individuals can actively construct and change themselves, which supports Sartre's denial of fixed essence. At the same time, she also revealed that self-creation occurs in a social world that has developed into various categories, through which the body is identified. A person can choose how to dress, act, speak or perform, but cannot fully determine how the body will be regarded. Therefore, practical freedom depends in part on recognition: different bodies will not receive the same interpretation, nor will they enjoy the same right to move freely in public space without fear and suspicion. This work has also changed people's social perception of the body. The body no longer conveys a self-evident identity for the viewer to observe. On the contrary, the viewer actively constructs identity by linking physical characteristics with cultural narratives. Race and gender are no longer just regarded as intrinsic truths or biological facts, but as interpretation systems applied to the visible body. Therefore, Piper's plan transforms Sartrean self-creation into a more social model of freedom. Freedom not only includes the ability to transcend the established identity, but also the resistance to social stereotypes. It is these stereotypes that limit the meaning that a particular body can obtain. *The Mythic Being* shows that the freedom of self-creation is inseparable from the social struggle to change the way people perceive the body.

3.4. Time Clock Piece

Tehching Hsieh's *Time Clock Piece* offers a third interpretation of Sartrean freedom by examining time, rules, labor, and constraint. From April 1980 to April 1981, Hsieh punched a time clock every hour on the hour, with each punch accompanied by a photograph documenting both the action and the gradual growth of his hair after shaving it at the beginning of the performance. This self-imposed rule severely restricted his movement, disrupted his sleep, and organized nearly every aspect of his daily life around the next punch. As Lawn points out, the work reinforces workplace technologies and practices, making life itself appear as uninterrupted labor [21]. On the surface, *Time Clock Piece* seems contrary to freedom because the artist places his body under an extremely restrictive discipline. However, this is precisely where the work connects with Sartre's theory. Sartrean freedom does not consist in escaping material constraints or achieving unrestricted action, but in how consciousness grasps a situation, chooses a project, and gives it meaning. Hsieh freely created these harsh conditions and then chose to live within them. Although the rules limited his movement, sleep, and daily activities, the performance demonstrates the continuous relationship between transcendence and external constraint.

Kee's interpretation of Tehching Hsieh's typing statement clarifies this Sartrean structure. The performance began with elaborate statements that established the scope and limitations of each work. These statements resembled contracts through transforming intentions into obligations, and Tehching Hsieh's future actions are judged by this standard [22]. Therefore, in *Time Clock Piece*, freedom is not expressed as comfort or spontaneity, but as a commitment. Tehching Hsieh

chose the rules and assumed the responsibility of abiding by them. He can't regard the rules as a completely external force, because the rules are formulated and accepted by himself. The record strengthens this sense of responsibility. Time cards, photos, witnesses, alarms and records all provide evidence that Tehching Hsieh sincerely tried to complete the performance art. Kee believes that his detailed record has established credibility and shows his serious attitude towards his own statement [22]. In Sartre's terms, these documents show that the project exists through action rather than just through intent. Tehching Hsieh did not become the person who completed the performance just by announcing that he would do so. The project must be completed through thousands of repeated body movements. Every return to the clock is a small reaffirmation of the original choice, and a year becomes a visible structure of continuous commitment.

At the same time, the work places the artist's project within broader histories of labor and bureaucracy, complicating an absolute interpretation of Sartrean freedom. The time clock is not a neutral object chosen by Hsieh; it is a technology historically associated with measuring, supervising, and economically evaluating workers' bodies. Lawn argues that the work reproduces the repetition, boredom, temporal restriction, and experiential limits associated with labor under capitalism [21]. Hsieh must be present at each appointed moment, and every punch records whether his body appeared at the correct time. His life is consequently measured through standardized units of clock time.

Therefore, this work shows the paradox between freedom and self-discipline. Tehching Hsieh is not only the authority who makes the rules, but also the worker who must obey them. Although no visible employer forces him to punch the clock, this behavior establishes a labor structure through self-management. Lawn describes the work as a form of excessive obedience and self-regulation that both imitates and rebels against capitalist expectations of productivity [21]. Although Hsieh engages in continuous labor without producing useful goods in the traditional sense, this repetitive behavior reveals how human existence is measured through activity, efficiency, and time. This structure affects the audience's understanding of freedom in contemporary work and life by showing that control is not always imposed through external authority, but can be internalized through punctuality, personal responsibility, professional ethics, self-improvement, and the obligation to manage one's own time.

Ward's concept of "alien duration" adds a political and legal background to Hsieh's body. During this performance, Hsieh lived in the United States as an undocumented immigrant. Ward emphasizes the irony that *Time Clock Piece* resembles ordinary wage labor although Hsieh could not be legally recognized as a worker [11]. His body exists within a system that depends on immigrant labor while withholding legal recognition. This context reveals the difference between choosing a project and possessing meaningful social choice. Although Hsieh freely chose to punch the clock and gave the task artistic significance, his broader situation was shaped by legal and economic structures beyond his control. The work therefore confirms Sartre's view that consciousness creates meaning without guarantees while also showing that practical freedom is distributed unevenly through social systems.

Through the combination of voluntary commitment and social regulation, *Time Clock Piece* changes the perception of the body from a private organism to a temporal and economic unit. The clocking schedule and photographs turn the body's existence into evidence, while the clock divides the artist's life into measurable intervals. Yet physical experiences such as fatigue, growing hair, facial expressions, and endurance reveal aspects of life that cannot be fully quantified. Lawn argues that the apparent meaninglessness of repetitive labor encourages audiences to reconsider work, time, and productivity [21]. Therefore, Hsieh redefines freedom as the continuous creation of meaning

within systems that regulate bodily existence, where freedom does not disappear under constraint but is shaped by the social organization of time.

4. Conclusion

Rhythm 0, *The Mythic Being*, and *Time Clock Piece* show that the performing arts after the 1960s are much more than an explanation of Sartre's theory. These works were born in the political artistic environment of the 1970s and early 1980s. They contrast existential freedom with physical vulnerability, perception of racialization and gender, labor discipline and immigration status. As Ames argued, existentialism regards artistic creation as a model of human existence, because artistic practice transforms freedom into concrete, creative and responsible actions [23]. These performances retain this insight and show that the ability to choose does not guarantee equal political power or equal practical opportunities.

These three artists have expanded this existentialist model from different directions. Abramovich makes personal choices and responsibilities obvious through the actions taken by the audience on other people's bodies. Piper broke the simple narrative of self-creation and revealed that identity has always been deeply influenced by racial and gender stereotypes and the eyes of others. Hsieh redefined freedom as a continuous self-investment, pointing out that this input is closely intertwined with labor, physical record, immigration and time control.

These three works retain Sartre's core insight, that is, self is not predetermined, but shaped through action. However, they extend the scope of free analysis beyond individual consciousness. Freedom is presented as a relevant and political practice, which occurs between the body, the audience, stereotypes, the media, the law and the labor system. These performances also change the social significance of the body. The body is not a passive container of free consciousness; it is the medium of free manifestation and the place where social power influences possible actions, identities and future possibilities. Therefore, these works clarify the difference between existential freedom and political or practical freedom. Their most convincing manifestation of freedom does not occur in comfortable or unrestricted actions, but in tense situations, when the price, limitations and responsibilities of choice become obvious at the physical and social levels. However, this study has several limitations. First of all, because it only focuses on the three outstanding works created in a specific historical context of American and European art, its conclusion cannot represent every form of performing arts after the 1960s or every cultural understanding of freedom and body. Secondly, since the performing arts are live and short-live, the analysis necessarily depends on photos, written records, artists' statements, interviews and later critical explanations, rather than directly observing the original performance. These forms of documents retain important evidence, but they may not be able to fully capture the physical atmosphere, emotional intensity and different reactions of individual audiences. Most importantly, this study provides an explanation of how performance challenges and may reshape the public's understanding of freedom and body; it does not measure changes in audience perception empirically. Therefore, future research can combine the analysis of philosophy and art history with reception-based methods, including audience interviews, surveys, contemporary comments, archive replies, and comparisons between audiences from different cultural backgrounds. It can also expand the scope of case studies to include artists from outside Europe and the United States, as well as recent digital, participatory and technology-mediated performances. Such research will test whether the free relationship model identified in this article - as the embodiment of freedom, social conditions and freedom to be responsible to others - operates in different historical periods, cultural environments and forms of expression. In this way, future academic research can turn from explaining how performing arts make alternative forms of

freedom imaginable to studying how these artistic encounters can produce measurable and lasting changes in social perception.

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