

# Socially Engaged Performance 1965-2024: By Those Who Lived It



## Meeting the Moment: Socially Engaged Performance, 1965–2024, by Those Who Lived It by Jan Cohen-Cruz

★★★★☆ 4.3 out of 5

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Socially engaged performance is a form of performance art that seeks to engage with social issues and create social change. It often involves collaboration with communities and other organizations, and uses a variety of artistic strategies to address complex social problems.

In recent years, socially engaged performance has become increasingly popular as artists seek to use their work to make a positive impact on the world. However, the history of socially engaged performance is long and varied, and it has evolved significantly over time.

This article provides a comprehensive overview of socially engaged performance from 1965 to 2024, featuring firsthand accounts from those who lived it. We will explore the origins of socially engaged performance, its

key characteristics, and how it has been used to address a wide range of social issues.

## **The Origins of Socially Engaged Performance**

The origins of socially engaged performance can be traced back to the 1960s, when artists began to question the traditional boundaries of art and to explore new ways to engage with the public. This period saw the rise of performance art, which allowed artists to break free from the constraints of the gallery and to create works that were more participatory and interactive.

One of the key pioneers of socially engaged performance was Allan Kaprow, who coined the term "Happening" in 1959. Happenings were large-scale, immersive events that often involved the participation of the audience. Kaprow believed that art should be a collective experience, and that it should have the power to transform society.

Other early pioneers of socially engaged performance included Joseph Beuys, who used his work to promote social and environmental change, and Fluxus, a group of artists who used performance to critique the commodification of art.

## **Key Characteristics of Socially Engaged Performance**

Socially engaged performance is characterized by a number of key features, including:

\* **Collaboration:** Socially engaged performance often involves collaboration with communities and other organizations. This collaboration can take many forms, from working with local residents to develop a performance to partnering with social justice organizations to address a

particular issue. \* **Interactivity:** Socially engaged performance is often interactive, allowing the audience to participate in the work and to shape its meaning. This interactivity can range from simple gestures to more complex forms of engagement, such as participatory workshops or community-based projects. \* **Social change:** Socially engaged performance often seeks to create social change. This change can be small-scale, such as bringing attention to a particular issue, or it can be more transformative, such as changing people's attitudes or behaviors.

## **How Socially Engaged Performance Has Been Used to Address Social Issues**

Socially engaged performance has been used to address a wide range of social issues, including:

\* **Social justice:** Socially engaged performance has been used to promote social justice and to challenge inequality. Artists have used performance to raise awareness about issues such as racism, sexism, and homophobia, and to advocate for change. \* **Environmental sustainability:** Socially engaged performance has also been used to promote environmental sustainability. Artists have used performance to raise awareness about climate change, pollution, and other environmental issues, and to inspire people to take action. \* **Community development:** Socially engaged performance has been used to foster community development and to empower marginalized communities. Artists have worked with communities to create performances that reflect their experiences and to address the challenges they face.

Socially engaged performance is a powerful tool for social change. It allows artists to engage with the public in a meaningful way and to create works

that have the potential to make a real difference in the world.

The history of socially engaged performance is long and varied, and it continues to evolve today. As artists continue to find new ways to engage with social issues, we can expect to see even more innovative and impactful work in the years to come.



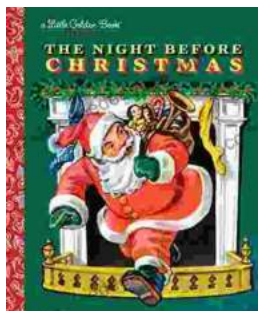
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