



## LOOK WHO'S TALKING

Legendary performance art historian RoseLee Goldberg brings us inside the extraordinary Performa 13 biennial, in which over 100 visual artists from around the world presented live performances at more than sixty venues throughout New York City. Moving across disciplines including dance, music, film, architecture and design, Performa 13 captured a moment in time when increasing numbers of artists were looking to performance as a crucial medium for expressing their ideas and major cultural institutions were embracing the power of performance to communicate to a broad public.

From the renowned Performa Commissions program — which presented ambitious new work by Paweł Althamer, Rosa Barba, Boris Charmatz, Raqs Media Collective, Subodh Gupta, Florian Hecker, Rashid Johnson, Joan Jonas, Ryan McNamara, Eddie Peake, Alexandre Singh, Marianne Vitale, Tori Wranes — to the inaugural Pavilions Without Walls program, in which the biennial explored the character of contemporary art in Norway and Poland, and including special thematic focuses on ideas of citizenship, the voice and the historic anchor of Surrealism, Performa 13 was an exhilarating look at the state of artists' performance today. Collecting writing by over 50 critics and curators, as well as the beautiful photographs of Paula Court, *Performa 13: Look Who's Talking* is an invaluable historical document that will provide insight, knowledge and inspiration for years to come.

"Performa is a gift to New York!" — Jerry Saltz, *New York Magazine*



With a Foreword by Jens Hoffmann



PERFORMA

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PERFORMA 13

RoseLee Goldberg



# PERFORMA 13

PERFORMA

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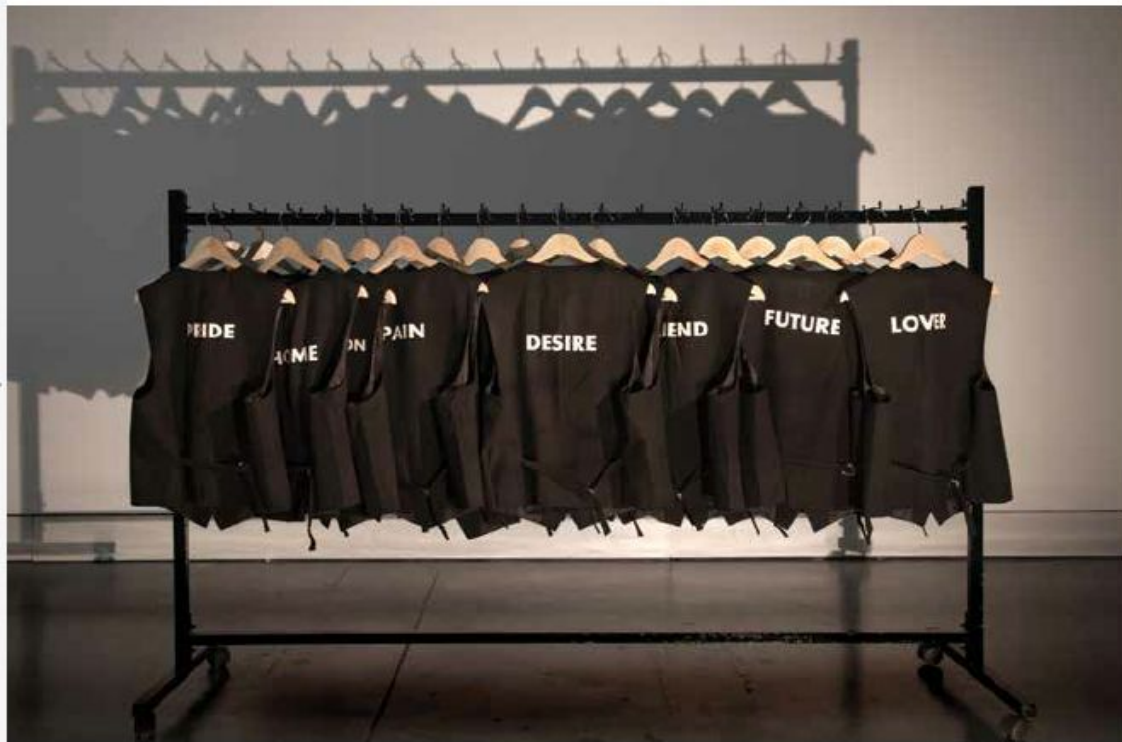


Photo by Dan Haimovich

Einat Amir, *Our Best Intentions* (2013), performance and video installation, still images from video.

## EINAT AMIR

### OUR BEST INTENTIONS

A crossover between psychodrama therapy, theater, and authentic participation, Einat Amir's *Our Best Intentions* was at once a participatory performance and a video installation—a cinematic version of the work. After signing a waiver, donning black vests with words like “mother,” “desire,” “awkwardness,” and “pain” written on the back, and entering a setting reminiscent of a reality TV show or sitcom, one suspected the performance was being filmed.

*Our Best Intentions* established a situation where the difference between performance and authenticity was effectively foreclosed, as participants were simultaneously the “content” and “viewers.” There was no audience beyond the twenty participants. “Interpreters,” who had been exposed to Amir's process during earlier performances, became professional facilitators, leading participants through different activities and scenarios and organizing groups into four staged areas that were recognizable as a dining room, bedroom, living room, and study.

First, the dining room interpreter asked her group to introduce themselves, and after a few quick warm-up activities, they enacted a scenario in which one of them entered into dialogue with his dead sister, who was played by another member of that group. Next, in the bedroom, practice exercises took place for the duration of the allotted time, seemingly without purpose. The interpreter, a drama coach, led the group through a mishmash of wordplay, free-association games, improvisation, and physical movement. It wasn't until the third group in the living room was activated that the words written on the vests came into play and gained meaning during another psychodrama role-play scenario. When the facilitator asked the group to strike a pose resembling or embodying the word they each wore, the “Father” sat on top of the armchair, while the “Mother” kneeled by the coffee table in a subservient manner, offering a glimpse at Amir's working premise that there may not be any contradiction between performance and authenticity. Finally, in the study, the interpreter whispered instructions to her group, their actions looking like a contemporary dance performance to the other participants, who were left unaware of what exactly was taking place.



*Our Best Intentions* built on theater and psychology's historical relationship to achieve a contemporary art experience aimed at audience participation, leading to a meaningful and transformative performance. Amir's efforts succeeded in the creation of an intimate, familiar setting, where a group of strangers shared personal stories, emotionally connected, physically interacted, played, and ultimately performed the "self." The stage and direction Amir provided extended contemporary cultural conditions in which we ostentatiously present and share our personal selves and actively "like" and interact with others, while also frantically protecting our privacy.

Courtesy of the Einat Amir

Einat Amir, *Our Best Intentions* (2013), performance and video installation.

