

# THE BODY PIERCING ARCHIVE EXHIBIT

BY NICK JOHNSON

Photo by Kendra Jane B

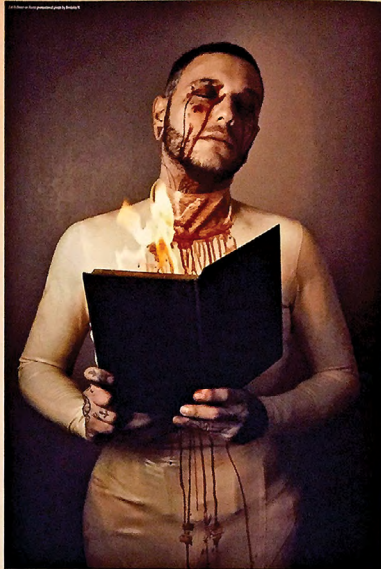
Welcome to the Body Piercing Archive's 2018 Annual Exhibition!

## THE PERFORATED BODY

*an Exploration of Piercing in Performance*



"Performance art- a nontraditional art form often with political or topical themes that typically features a live presentation to an audience or onlookers (as on a street) and draws on such arts as acting, poetry, music, dance, or painting." —Merriam Webster Dictionary.



For most performance artists and academics, the definition is not so easily defined. Performance art can be for entertainment, providing a detached yet pleasurable addition to our daily lives. However, sometimes, performance art can be a deeply felt



communion between the actor and the audience that transcends ordinary conversations and understandings. Like archetypal myth and religion that go beyond intellect, the performance percolates through the recesses of an artist's internal world connecting to the audience's emotions of euphoria, desire, and connectedness as well as fear, anxiety, grief, pain, or loneliness.



Entering the annual Body Piercing Archive exhibit at Conference is something I always look forward to. Each year seems to surpass the previous in quality and execution. It is not dissimilar to a well-curated museum hall. This year reached deep down and touched a very personal place in my heart with *The Perforated Body: an Examination of Piercing in Performance*. I came to body piercing through suspension and found my people, my tribe, my community. Seeing the many faces of my mentors and peers represented and getting to know more about those that inspired them stirred me with emotion and passion like never before.

I took every opportunity I could to sit in on guided tours with each of the different docents to gain greater insight and perspective on the numerous artists and performers represented. Couple this with the class session on Piercing in Performance and it created a fully realized and dynamic conversation about a topic paralleling our industry that newer piercers may not have known about.

To quote the opening panel of the exhibit, "For the professional body piercer, 'Piercing' is familiar, repetitive, and sometimes even mechanical. Yet piercing retains a mysterious complexity beyond the clinical eye... In performance, 'piercing' may engage an audience's feelings of astonishment, wonderment, repulsion and/or fear. As well, perforating or penetrating the flesh can be utilized to non-verbally communicate aspects of power, autonomy, violence, and/or sexuality." This last line I feel brings the act of piercing full circle when a client comes in to get pierced, perhaps they too are trying to communicate their own personal power, autonomy, or sexuality.



The exhibit included Bob Flanagan's exploration of pain and the body while living with cystic fibrosis, Genesis P-Orridge's exploration of identity and the occult, and Stelarc's journey to transcend the body, among many others. Each artist represented has a strong will and way to show the world something through their personal lens.

Other highlights of the exhibit were Ron Athey and Divinity P. Fudge's "Human Printing Press" from *Four Scenes From a Harsh Life*, hung much as it originally was above the heads of the audience. This small piece which sparked a congressional hearing on funding for the art in the United States was enlightening to hear about. The ability to see the costumes and props from CoRE up close allowed me to see the hardwork and dedication Steve Joyner has put into such an amazing performance group. The

Jon John exhibit brought tears to my eyes, as I listened to Paul King talk about his relationship with such a beautiful life lost too soon.

As a piercer and as a suspension practitioner, this year's exhibit has given me quite a bit to ponder about where life will take my peers and myself. I sincerely hope that in ten or twenty years time I will have the opportunity to see more of my contemporaries or even myself alongside such legends. The Body Piercing Archive is such an amazing and important entity, without it a lot of our history could have been lost to time. It's important to know where you come from so that you can better see your own road ahead of you. If you can, please support the BPA and our industry's other historians such as Scared Debris. I look forward to next year's exhibit and seeing more of our beautiful history.

**Body Piercing Archive Exhibit** documents and friends in the Jon John display. *Clockwise from the left*, Ron Athey, Dr Dominic Johnson, Steve Joyner, Paul King, Allen Falkner, Dr Julian Carter, and Darryl Carlton (stage name Divinity Fudge). Photo by Shanna Hutchins

# THE BPA EXHIBIT ASSORTED PANELS

## SIDESHOW

Historical Circus Performers



## Franko B



2019 Exhibit PLANET HOLLYWOOD

Fakin Masfah



## STELARC

Stelarc is a performance artist who has visually probed and acoustically amplified his body. Between 1976-1988 he completed 20 body suspension performances with hooks into the skin. He has used medical instruments, prosthetics, robotics, Virtual Reality systems, the Internet and biotechnology to engineer intimate and involuntary interfaces with the body. He explores Alternate Anatomical Architectures with augmented and extended body constructs.



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PHOTOS BY  
KENDRA JANE B  
EXHIBITION PANEL  
DESIGN BY  
BECKY DILL

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# LATIN America

**Katia TIRADO**  
 Her body is a canvas for her art. She has been performing in various venues across the world, including the Venice Biennale and the Venice International Theatre Festival. Her work is a blend of dance, theater, and visual art, exploring themes of identity, culture, and the human condition.

**La Negra**  
 Virginia Lopez Ethoverry

**Matias Tafel**

**Luna Duran**

**Beto Rl**

**Emilio Gonzalez**

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# Moments in Music

**Genesis Breyer P-Orridge**

**Psychick BIBLE**

**MODERN PRIMITIVES**

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 APP CONFERENCE 2018

