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Performa 07

By Ellen Pearlman, excerpted from a longer article



Xu Zhen, *In Just the Blink of an Eye*, 2005, Performance at James Cohan Gallery November 8-10, 2007

Roselee Goldberg, the director of the visual art performance biennial Performa 07, deserves an honorary key to the City from mayor Bloomberg as a high/middle/lowbrow cheerleader for the arts. New and improved over Performa 05, with over 100 events, Performa 07 had something for everyone: education and academic panels, dance, theater, a radio station, films, a convenient tie-in with the first Asian Contemporary Arts Fair, the commission of ten new works, the exhumation and examination of seminal old works and even fun and games with haircuts proffered by kids. Assistant curated by Define Ayas, lasting a whopping three weeks with up to eight mostly free events a day, the scope was unusually generous.

China dipped its toe into the pond by staging Xu Zhen's "In Just a Blink of an Eye" cosponsored by the James Cohan [sic] gallery and the Long March Gallery of Beijing. Two migrant workers from Chinatown were recruited to enact the moment of falling over in impossible-seeming twisted stances. The pieces succeeded insofar that viewers glanced at the convoluted human forms, noting their existence in the most perfunctory way. Then, in a scene repeated by somnolent Americans as they pass thousands upon thousands of undocumented migrant workers underneath their very noses, they left.