

**American  
Artists  
on Art**

from 1940 to 1980

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## Performance Art, Film, and Video

By 1970, several artists in both California and the East had taken up performance art—whether as a deliberately chosen alternative to the static object-commodity or as an inevitable outcome of the shifting directions and premises and the expansion of boundaries that had occurred in modern art. In any case, it was not long before museums were hosting performances, as they had eventually presented happenings; and galleries were selling to museums and schools the films and video tapes which artists had made, sometimes as a record of the event, but more often as the art work itself. Video is particularly desirable as a medium for performance art because, unlike films, it allows the artist to see and criticize his/her work during the process of making it. Performance and body art evolved not only from happenings (and their ancestors), but also from Abstract Expressionism or Action Painting in respect to the idea of the art work as event and as the result of the artist's whole body action and identification with the work. The physical body and autobiographical subject matter and content that pervaded the arts of the seventies reflected overall cultural concerns familiar to everyone—whether or not they joined a consciousness-raising group, came out of the closet, took up yoga, ate health foods, jogged, or just went swimming.

During the seventies the magazine *Avalanche* was a primary source of statements, interviews, and photographs of work by artists in performance, film, and video. In the later seventies other journals presenting artists' comments and writings came to the fore, among them *Tracks* and *View*; the latter devotes each issue to an interview with one artist.

### BRUCE NAUMAN (1941- )

Bruce Nauman makes clear how the artist's awareness of his/her own body is communicated to the spectator in performance or body sculpture. See also a previous Nauman interview with Willoughby Sharp, *Arts magazine* (March 1970), which deals with his earlier installations and sculptures and several of his interior architectural pieces, that is, the corridors, with or without video and sound accompaniment.

