



# **Semblance and Event: Activist Philosophy and the Occurrent Arts (Technologies of Lived Abstraction)**

*Brian Massumi*

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Events are always passing; to experience an event is to experience the passing. But how do we perceive an experience that encompasses the just-was and the is-about-to-be as much as what is actually present? In *Semblance and Event*, Brian Massumi, drawing on the work of William James, Alfred North Whitehead, Gilles Deleuze, and others, develops the concept of "semblance" as a way to approach this question.

It is, he argues, a question of abstraction, not as the opposite of the concrete but as a dimension of it: "lived abstraction." A semblance is a lived abstraction. Massumi uses the category of the semblance to investigate practices of art that are relational and event-oriented -- variously known as interactive art, ephemeral art, performance art, art intervention -- which he refers to collectively as the "occurrent arts." Each art practice invents its own kinds of relational events of lived abstraction, to produce a signature species of semblance. The artwork's relational engagement, Massumi continues, gives it a political valence just as necessary and immediate as the aesthetic dimension.

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