

1976–2025: Pamela Gilbert's Ritual Integration Performance at the Experimental Art Foundation (EAF)

In May 1976, Pamela Gilbert presented her first and seemingly last performance work, "Ritual Integration Performance," at the opening of a new exhibition in an art space in Adelaide; the Experimental Art Foundation (EAF). Only grainy, unfocused photographs and undeveloped negatives remain of the event. The performance blended people, shadow, ritual, and the environment. This bold performance involved three white-robed figures tying rope between pillars, binding another figure, and later embracing. It's a dramatic and intriguing scene.

A decade on, Gilbert took up an Administrator role at another volunteer-run art organisation in Adelaide, the Contemporary Art Society (CAS), and produced a book titled *Women in Japanese Theatre*. During this time in the mid Eighties, Gilbert was also Editor of the CAS Broadsheet, a quarterly art journal, however, we lose sight of her whereabouts following her resignation in June 1985.

The images of Gilbert's performance provide us with a glimpse into the event, however they're limited in the information they can provide us. You had to be there. Yet each time I look at the photos or negatives of Gilbert's performance I can't help but notice something new. A small detail I hadn't noticed before. The images are more than merely documentation, enabling the chance to 'see details that you hadn't noticed because you were there but you couldn't be looking everywhere.'¹

The images capture a moment in time and highlight a seemingly overlooked work. Despite being presented at a significant exhibition opening, Gilbert's performance didn't receive commentary or review, unlike her male peers at the EAF. These rediscovered snapshots offer a chance to connect with a seemingly forgotten event and shed light on female-led performance in 1970s Adelaide.

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Alexandra Nitschke, 2025

¹ Goldberg, Roselee. "How RoseLee Goldberg Reshaped the Landscape of Performance Art." *The Slowdown*, interview by Spencer Bailey, 27 Sept. 2019, timesensitive.fm/episode/roselee-goldberg-performa-reshaping-performance-art/. Accessed 15 Mar. 2025.