



# Local Acts (Rutgers Series: The Public Life of the Arts)

*Jan Cohen-Cruz*

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An eclectic mix of art, theatre, dance, politics, experimentation, and ritual, community-based performance has become an increasingly popular art movement in the United States. Forged by the collaborative efforts of professional artists and local residents, this unique field brings performance together with a range of political, cultural, and social projects, such as community-organizing, cultural self-representation, and education. *Local Acts* presents a long-overdue survey of community-based performance from its early roots, through its flourishing during the politically-turbulent 1960s, to present-day popular culture. Drawing on nine case studies, including groups such as the African American Junebug Productions, the Appalachian Roadside Theater, and the Puerto Rican Teatro Pregones, Jan Cohen-Cruz provides detailed descriptions of performances and processes, first-person stories, and analysis. She shows how the ritual side of these endeavors reinforces a sense of community identification while the aesthetic side enables local residents to transgress cultural norms, to question group habits, and to incorporate a level of craft that makes the work accessible to individuals beyond any one community. The book concludes by exploring how community-based performance transcends even national boundaries, connecting the local United States with international theater and cultural movements.

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