



MAN ON THE RUN
'A hurried and lost figure in a world beset by ecological, economic and political crises'

RUN IT BY ME

STAGE FLIGHT

Gregg Whelan, a professor of performance at Falmouth University, explains why running can be art

➔ **PERFORMANCE ARTISTS** are increasingly making running their muse. 'Artists are beginning to exploit sport's ability to produce meaningful narratives from pure physical action,' says Gregg Whelan, who holds an Arts and Humanities Research Council Fellowship to explore the cultural agency of running and its relationship to endurance and participation. He takes us on a whistle-stop tour of 'running as art'.

1 RUNNING MAN
A man in a suit runs through central Helsinki, his briefcase under his arm, black shoes clattering on the city streets. He looks anxious, sweating as he negotiates the crowds – perhaps he's late, or lost, or both. We see him once and think little of it. But then we see him again, and again. He has been tearing through Helsinki once a week since May last year and finishes this May. He is *Running Man* (above), an artwork by Finnish artist Nestori Syrjälä, winner of a national

prize by the Finnish State Art Commission. 'It's an image of contemporary humanity,' he says. 'A hurried and lost figure in a world beset by ecological, economic and political crises. I think about running as something primeval, something fundamental to the human psyche. In our dreams and nightmares, we are still running.'

Given that Syrjälä also runs, what makes *Running Man* art and a 'running man' just that? Syrjälä frames his work as a public monument. 'Public monuments are glimpsed



Vicki Weitz wanted to explore how people do the same thing day after day. Running five hours a day for 26 days seemed to do the trick.

many times rather than studied visually like paintings in a gallery,' he says. 'Their power and presence are more conceptual; people know they are there and what ideas and histories are connected to them.' As monuments mark events, or people, of historical distinction and difficulty, so too does *Running Man*.

kiasma.fi/en

each day, every day,' says Weitz, whose work was prompted by a motorcycle accident that meant she had to use a wheelchair for the best part of a year. 'It was a performance about motivation, support, participation and fear,' she says.

vickiweitz.co.uk



2 FUN RUN
The Australian theatre company All the Queen's Men takes the legend of Pheidippides as the inspiration for its production *Fun Run*. Staged in public spaces, the performance – part endurance event, part pantomime, part epic theatre – involves a lone performer running a treadmill marathon as the hero's tale unfolds around him. Pheidippides' journey may have been a solo effort but this show gets its entire audience up and moving.

allthequeensmen.net

4 WORK NO. 850
In Martin Creed's *Work No. 850*, from 2008, a runner sprinted through Tate Britain's Neoclassical Gallery, a quiet space full of static art works, every 30 seconds. The Turner Prize winner was inspired by a mad dash with friends through the Palermo Catacombs, which reminded him of that joyous, child-like delirium going at full tilt produces and gave him the desire to place that breathless movement into the heart of the gallery.

martincreed.com



5 MONKEY SEE...
Comedian Richard Gadd's intense, award-winning 2016 show *Monkey See Monkey Do* saw the performer giving voice to the monologue that had played out in his head since he suffered a sexual assault some years earlier. Gadd spends the hour-long show huffing and puffing on a treadmill, in perpetual flight from the inner demons that relentlessly chase as the show reaches its powerful finish.

[@MrRichardGadd](https://twitter.com/MrRichardGadd)

3 26 IN 26
At the Edinburgh Fringe Festival in 2013, artist Vicki Weitz's performance – *Twenty Six Marathons in Twenty Six Days* – consisted of her running back and forth along the Royal Mile, weaving in and out of the crowds for up to five hours a day. 'I wanted to explore how someone – anyone – gets up and does something