

Performance Research

Call for Contributions

Memento Mori

Vol. 15, No. 1 (March 2010)

Issue Editors: Robert John Brocklehurst and Daniel Watt, Loughborough University

The aim of this issue of *Performance Research* is to examine cultural representations of death and dying and their relation to performance. Calling on professionals and practitioners from across academia, the arts and the 'death industry' 'Memento Mori' will include a range of critical essays, photographic work, artist's pages and interviews that explore the ways in which death and the cultural practices that surround it are represented and memorialised in social and private spaces, from theatre to everyday ritual.

'Memento Mori' examines ways in which performance brings the processes of death, dying, and the memorialisation of the dead to consciousness. Theatre, performance and the cultural practices of death are themselves moments which bring mortality to mind, that enable us to reflect upon our own lives and the lives of those departed. Performance equally struggles with the passing of its own event and the complex archival activity that stands in place of its vanishing. How do the dynamics of performance itself provide an engagement with the process of dying?

How do recent advances in technology change formalized cultural approaches to dying, and has death become mechanical, dutiful and deliberately distanced as a consequence? How does 'staging' death, as a cultural approach to funeral ritual, alter our perception of death? Despite our best attempts at seriousness and respect issues of death and dying provoke grim humour, sensationalist performances and slapstick comedy. This issue questions how and why we attempt to negotiate the processes of death and dying or find representations and memorialisations that attempt to normalize the inevitable.

Key Questions

- How do diverse theatrical and performance events, from the sideshow to Hamlet, provoke reflection upon mortality, and the processes of death and dying?
- By what means do the activities associated with death (oratories, literary readings, music, design, costume and procession) serve similar demands across cultures, and how can the ritual processes of dying and death still resist cultural homogenisation?
- The representation of death often requires the ornate, the hidden and the procedural in opposition to its reality; the banal, the apparent and the random. What new or re-considered forms of language or praxis do we as beings and as cultures, need to engage with the fact of dying and death?
- How have the many forms of historical representation of death, from mourning ritual to charlatan photographic 'ghosts', become a form of spectral discourse for something that cannot be directly confronted?

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Potential topics include:

- Death Ritual: from the Mexican Day of the Dead to mummification
- Death Devouring: from Tibetan sky burials to the taboo of cannibalism
- Memento Mori: from the *Danse Macabre* to the ornate tombstone
- 'Et in Arcadia Ego': death, presence and impossibility
- Of Dying: from the *Ars Moriendi* to the ethics of suicide clinics
- Staging Death: from the ghost in Hamlet to the macabre Grand-Guignol
- Death Defying: from being shot to the live burials of the sideshow
- Representing the After-Life: from the ghostly emanations of Victorian ectoplasm and table-tapping to the modern séances of Derren Brown
- Death Exhibit: from curating death to the autopsies of Gunther von Hagens
- Death Penalty: from the performance of public executions to the web broadcast of terrorist murder
- Death Industry: from the art of the obituary to floral tributes

'Memento Mori' invites proposals for articles, artist's pages and other documents for this issue. In the first instance please send proposals of 300-500 words (full articles should ONLY be sent after acceptance to proceed to draft stage). For artist's pages and other documents please send a sample of up to 3 images (or other material) and an accompanying rationale of 200-300 words.

Deadlines are as follows:

Proposals: **15 May 2009**

Draft Manuscripts: **1 August 2009**

Publication date: **March 2010**

ALL proposals, submissions and general enquiries should be sent direct to:

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General Guidelines for Submissions

<http://www.performance-research.net/pages/guidelines.html>

Performance Research is MAC based. Proposals will be accepted in hard copy, on CD or by e-mail (MS-Word or RTF). Please DO NOT send images electronically without prior agreement.

Please note that submission of a proposal will be taken to imply that it presents **original, unpublished work** not under consideration for publication elsewhere. By submitting a manuscript, the author(s) agree that the exclusive rights to reproduce and distribute the article have been given to *Performance Research*.