

28th CDE Conference Graz 2019



The German Society
for Contemporary Theatre
and Drama in English

20.-23.6.2019, Bildungshaus Mariatrost

Kirchbergstraße 18, 8044 Graz

"Theatre of Crisis: Aesthetic Responses to a Cross-Sectional Condition"

Crisis as a moment of uncertainty that may evolve into a climactic turning or “event” (Badiou) has had a long career on the dramatic stage and in performance theory. At the same time, the term can designate a more mundane situation of perpetual liminality, of managing daily life while consistently teetering between a bleak or/and a hopeful outlook. The conference theme takes up this second meaning of crisis in order to discuss how such ordinary crises have provided subject matter for formal experimentation and aesthetic innovation. Recent critical theory concerned with the global ascendancy of neoliberal biopolitics has emphasized the ways in which crisis—experienced through precarity, insecurity, or austerity—has become an ongoing condition.

Scholars such as David Harvey, Moishe Postone, Lauren Berlant, or Jasbir K. Puar have pointed out that this sense of common crisis has resulted in a gradual wearing out of political subjectivity. Berlant’s notion of “slow death” highlights that this process of bodily and psychological attrition disables the political agency of individuals and communities. Such diffuse forms of crisis have also been characterized as structural violence (Galtung) and/or “slow violence” (Nixon).

A sense of crisis as an ordinary condition poses new challenges to drama and theatre as art forms. If crisis is no longer a single, life-changing event but a slow unraveling, a mode of ordinary living under global capitalism, what does this entail for its representation? How can theatre aesthetics respond to processes of gradual attrition or continued insecurity? How does theatre meet the challenging scale-based tension between the temporal-spatial limitations of performances and the larger temporal-spatial extent of crisis? We invite papers that focus on aesthetic innovation in dramatic texts, their strategies of representation, and related performance practices. Presentations should critically discuss the nexus between innovative aesthetics and theme so that the conference participants can share and contemplate a broad range of aesthetic stratagems.

Conference Team:

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