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THEA TRICAL FIELDS

Critical strategies in performance, film and video

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Nanyang Technological University

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22 AUG – 2 NOV 2014

Judith Barry
Stan Douglas
Joan Jonas
Isaac Julien
Eva Meyer & Eran Schaerf
Constanze Ruhm

Curated by
Ute Meta Bauer with Anca Rujoiu

THEATRICAL FIELDS

introduces *theatricality* as a critical strategy in performance, film and video. This exhibition presents six video installations shown for the first time in Southeast Asia: *Voice off* by Judith Barry (USA), *Suspiria* by Stan Douglas (Canada), *Lines in the Sand* by Joan Jonas (USA), *Vagabondia* by Isaac Julien (UK), *She Might Belong to You* by Eva Meyer & Eran Schaerf (Germany / Israel), *X Characters Re(hers) AL* by Constanze Ruhm (Austria). Situated in

juxtaposition, the works generate temporal spaces for experimental action, creating unfamiliar proximities and encounters.

Theatrical Fields evokes a deep-rooted intertwinement of the concepts of “theory” and “theatre”. The two terms share etymological roots, as both derive from the Greek word “thea”, which means “to see”. Beyond the theatre, the concept of theatricality also points to the constructedness of everyday life. Theatrical forms make visible how our realities are often staged, and also the ways in which our histories are constructed and performed. The artists in this exhibition make use of various theatrical elements—from “script” to “play”, from “choreography” to “character”, from “protagonist” to “voice” —to question and re-vision society’s existing conventions, repetitions and rituals. The politics of

the theatrical, and also the theatricality of politics configure a compelling space that offers room for manoeuvre, and also a retreat into a temporary exile of the imaginary.

A series of public programmes, including a symposium, will further explore the notion and potential of theatricality as a critical tool in contemporary art and culture.

Theatrical Fields is curated by Ute Meta Bauer (CCA Founding Director) with Anca Rujoiu (CCA Curator, Exhibitions), and was first presented and commissioned by the Bildmuseet, Umea in Sweden (2013).

In 2015, a catalogue including the keynotes from the symposium and additional commissioned essays will be published collaboratively by the Bildmuseet Umea and the Centre for Contemporary Art Singapore.

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Theatrical Fields —Critical strategies in performance, film and video

Theatrical Fields brings together paradigmatic works by seminal artists who exerted a strong influence on contemporary art and its theoretical discourse. With a focus on video installations, *Theatrical Fields* presents single and multichannel projects, where the participating artists navigate between art, film, theatre and dance. Situated in juxtaposition, the works generate temporal spaces for experimental action, creating unfamiliar proximities and encounters. Shifting the role of the viewer into that of an *acteur* who is encouraged to enter these staged spaces, the works and their settings foreground the theatrical and the performative as fields of transformative processes. The way in which the protagonists in all the works perform, move, speak, sing and interact with the constructed interiors makes visible that it is precisely this amalgam of *acteurs* and interiors which produces other spaces.¹

Theatrical Fields introduces theatricality as a political methodology to deconstruct linear ascriptions, and reconfigure them in nuanced positions of diversity. Such political intentions are present in French playwright Molière's critique of authority, in the tradition of Italian Commedia dell'arte, in the use of the absurd in theatre works by Jarry, Artaud, Genet, and Beckett, in the surrealism of Cocteau, in Nathalie Sarraute's deconstructions of character and plot, in Peter Weiss's "play within a

play" *Marat/Sade*, and in the more popular didactic musical plays of Bertolt Brecht and Kurt Weill.

In search for a theoretical position, *Theatrical Fields* explores ephemeral practices that resist appropriation and operate through a process of formation, transformation and dissolution. Following French theory from Deleuze's notion of *agencement*² or assemblage and from Foucault's *dispositif*,³ *Theatrical Fields* evokes the desire to let not only one's body, but also one's mind wander in directions that have yet to be explored. The politics of the theatrical, and also the theatricality of politics configure a compelling space that offers room for manoeuvre, and also a retreat into a temporary exile of the imaginary.

Theatrical Fields seizes the potential of the theatrical as an analytical and critical tool to undermine hegemonic representations of the real. As German philosopher Martin Heidegger brought up for discussion in his essay *Science and Reflection*,⁴ theory is a theatrical process: "the word theory stems from the Greek verb *theorein* [...] The verb *theorein* grew out of two root words theatricality and *horao*. Theatricality is the outward look, the aspect, in which something shows itself—the outward appearance in which it offers itself [...] The second root word in *theorein*, *horao*,

means: to look at something attentively, to look it over, to view it closely. Thus it follows that *theorein* is then *horao*, to look attentively on the outward appearance wherein what presences becomes visible and, through such sight—seeing—to linger with it."

The works and films presented in the exhibition and screening programme, employ different methods and various approaches, yet they all bring into play the theatrical to question and re-vision society's existing scripts and histories. By isolating characters that embody paradigmatic roles in scripts, **Stan Douglas's** *Suspiria* and **Constanze Ruhm's** *X Characters/RE(hers)AL* generate new narratives and hybrid identities, so called "ghosts" that escaped their ascribed narratives. In *Lines of Sand*, **Joan Jonas's** Helen of Egypt wanders through space and time, hence shaping a non-linear narrative that eludes any historical and gender fixation. The protagonist in **Eran Schaerf** and **Eva Meyer's** film *She Might Belong to You* embodies the complexity of a construct that positions a character as an accumulation of layers resisting straightforward interpretation. Blurring boundaries between fiction and real, the theatrical produces a space for disclosures. In **Judith Barry's** *Voice off the mental* and physical space collide only to reveal one's inner fears and anxieties; whereas in **Isaac**

Julien's *Vagabondia* the repressed history of colonialism comes to life through the vagabond wanderings of imagination. In its staged appropriations, the performativity of reality becomes more obvious.

The temporary migration into an imagined space of the theatrical, the carnivalesque, which cannot be possessed as outside of so-called reality—a space that neither belongs to anyone nor can be appropriated—offers an open and therefore negotiable space. And this imagined in-between space of the theatrical can be used to reconfigure another performance of reality through the practice of theatre and theory.

Ute Meta Bauer, 2013

Notes

¹ Michel Foucault: *Of Other Spaces*. Reprinted in Nicholas Mirzoeff, ed.: *The Visual Culture Reader*. Taylor & Francis, Inc., 1998.

² Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari: *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Translated by Brian Massumi, University of Minnesota Press, 1987.

³ Michel Foucault: *The Confession of the Flesh (1977)* interview in *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings*. Edited by Colin Gordon, Vintage, 1980.

⁴ Martin Heidegger: *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*. Translated by William Lovitt, New York, Harper & Row, 1977.

Judith Barry

Voice off (1999)

Installation, two channel video projection, colour, sound, 15 mins.

This two channel video and sound installation explores how the voice might be represented visually. Projected on either side of the shared wall this work explores ideas intrinsic to what the voice is, in terms of possession and loss. The viewer is exposed to two metaphoric narratives that unfold simultaneously on the double-sided screen/wall that divides the gallery into two identical rooms. Invited to pass through the projection, the viewer becomes an integral component of the installation.

Each of the two space stages a different experience of the voice. On one side, a dreamlike sequence unfolds,

representing the personal, intimate and interior encounters that one might have with the voice, with your own voice or with other voices. These are overheard bits of speech, interior monologues, snatches of songs; the sort of thing you catch while moving through everyday life which both possess you and which you try to hold on to or give yourself over to. On the other side of the screen, a man tries to work in his office, but he is continuously disturbed by the sounds that he hears. He demonstrates, from a different perspective, how, through the act of involuntarily hearing, one can also be possessed, even haunted by a voice.

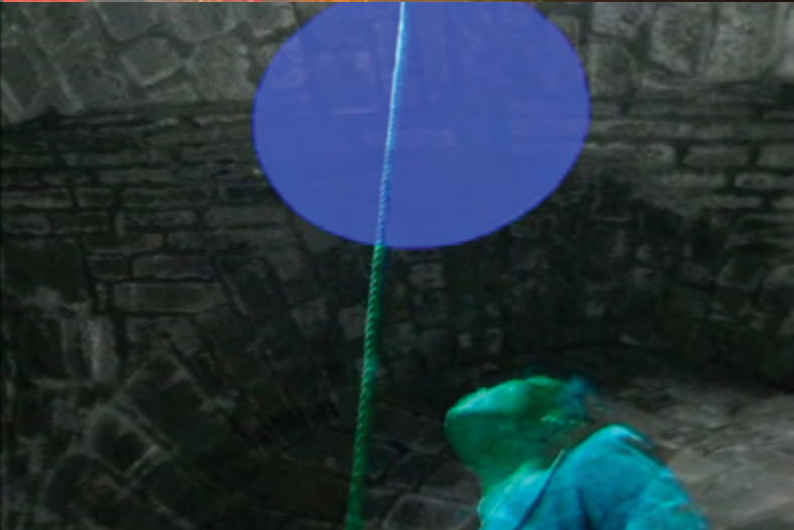
The work of artist and writer **Judith Barry** spans across several disciplines: architecture, film/video, performance, installation, sculpture, photography and new media. Through this rich variety of media, Barry explores complex relationships between issues of public address, representation, and popular culture.

Barry has shown internationally in numerous exhibitions including: the *3rd Berlin Biennale* (2004), Sao Paulo Biennale (1994), the Venice

Biennales of Art and of Architecture, and the Whitney Biennale (1987). Recent exhibitions include: *Take It Or Leave It* at Hammer Museum, Los Angeles (2014); *Americana*, Perez Miami Art Museum, Miami, (2014), *The Content of Form*, Generali Foundation, Vienna (2013); *Critical Episodes*, MACBA, Barcelona (2013); *This will have been: Art, Love & Politics in the 1980's*, ICA, Boston (2013); *The Deconstructive Impulse*, Contemporary Art Museum, Houston (2012); and *dOCUMENTA 13*, Kassel (2012). She was awarded the Frederick Kiesler Prize for

Architecture and the Arts (2000), Best Pavilion at the Cairo Biennale (2001), and a Guggenheim Fellowship (2011) among others. *Public Fantasy*, a collection of Barry's essays, was published by the ICA in London (1991).

Judith Barry was born in Columbus, Ohio, USA, in 1954. She lives and works in New York City, and is currently Director/Professor of the MFA in Visual Arts at the Art Institute of Boston at Lesley University.



Stan Douglas, film stills from *Suspiria* (2002). Courtesy of the artist.

Stan Douglas

Suspiria (2003)

Installation, single channel video projection, stereo sound. Stories recomposed and music remixed in virtually infinite variations.

Titled after Dario Argento's classic horror film of 1977, the piece was produced for *Documenta11* (2002). With *Suspiria*, the artist turns explicitly to a few historical moments of utopian aspiration. The artist interlaces figures and scenarios drawn from the Brothers Grimm, whose fairy-tales helped popularised the idea of the German nation-state, with Marx's 'spectres' of Communism. Douglas's 'ghosts' are shadows of futures that never came to pass: neither the economic and social redemption promised by modernism nor the end to alienation foretold by Communism. The

'ghosts' also point to two obsolete technologies of North American film and television history that are used and deconstructed by Douglas, namely, Technicolor (Argento's *Suspiria* was one of the last films made in the West using this process) and NTSC (the North American colour television standard). The scenes appear in a random rotation generated by computer programming, the number of possible permutations ensuring that, most likely, visitors will never see the same sequence repeat.

Photographer and filmmaker **Stan Douglas** has, since the late 1980's, examined complex intersections of narrative, fact and fiction, while scrutinising the constructs of the media he employs and their influence on our understanding of reality. His interest in the social implementation of Western ideas of progress, particularly utopian philosophies, is located in their often divisive political and economic effects. Douglas's work is often characterized by extensive research and an interrogation of the structural possibilities of film and video, in concert with intricately developed narratives.

Douglas was recently awarded the Scotiabank Photography Award (2013) and the Infinity Award by the International Center of Photography, New York (2012). His work has been the subject of numerous solo and group exhibitions at prominent institutions worldwide, including Haus der Kunst, Munich (2014); Minneapolis Institute of Arts, Minnesota (2012); MOCA, Los Angeles (2012); the Power Plant, Toronto (2011); the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York (2010); International Center of Photography, New York (2008); Staatsgalerie and Württembergischer Kunstverein, Stuttgart (2007); *documenta 11*, 10,

9 (2002, 1997, 1992) and three Venice Biennales (1990, 2000, 2005).

Stan Douglas was born in Vancouver, Canada in 1960, where he lives and work. He is faculty member of the Graduate Studies in Art MFA Programme, Art Center College of Design, Pasadena, USA.

Joan Jonas

Lines in the Sand (2002)

Multi-media installation: various props, 3 video elements
Lines in the Sand, colour, sound, 23mins 45secs;
Drawings, colour, sound, 16mins;
Pillow Talk, colour, sound, 37mins 15secs.

Commissioned by *Documenta11* (2002) and further exploring Jonas's interest in working cross-culturally, the multimedia installation piece *Lines in the Sand* takes as source material two works by the poet H.D. (Hilda Doolittle, a patient of Sigmund Freud prior to World War II): *Helen in Egypt* (1955) and *Tribute to Freud* (1944). In H.D.'s poem, based on classical texts, as well as in Jonas's work, the epic *Trojan War* was not fought for an unfaithful Helen, but for less prosaic reasons such as control over commercial routes and access to the Black Sea. Narrated by Jonas, *Lines in the Sand* transposes H.D.'s re-working of the story of *Helen of Troy* to present-day Las Vegas, with the Luxor Hotel as a key

motif. Simultaneous narratives alternate; one fragmented (*Helen in Egypt*) and another in its entirety (*Pillow Talk*), from the ancient Irish epic poem *The Tain*, in which an Irish king and queen discuss who has the most possessions as a manifestation of the domestic and trivial origins of discussions about property. The artist creates a collage of scenes on the psychological and political power of Helen, representing Helen as an ancient metaphor for property and a justification of all the Trojan wars to come. Juxtaposing images, texts and gestures, through an interlocking series of tableaux and stage sets, the artist creates an elusive, non-linear narrative that eschews any historical fixation.

Performance and video art pioneer **Joan Jonas** has had a far-reaching influence on artists, students, art theorists, art historians and curators. Since the 1960s, Jonas has transcended genres and merged elements of dance, modern theatre and the conventions of Japanese Noh and Kabuki theatre into performance and video art. In the 1980's, Jonas began developing her emblematic, personal grammar of gesture, ritual and sound into intricate, multi-textual works that exhibit a sophisticated layering of nonlinear narrative forms with performance, theatricality, and electronic manipulations of space, time and image.

Jonas's work has been widely exhibited and presented six times at *documenta* (2012, 2002, 1987, 1982, 1977, 1972). Most recently her work was exhibited at the CCA Kitakyushu Project Gallery; Kulturhuset City Theatre, Stockholm; the Museum of Modern Art, New York; MACBA, Barcelona; the Venice Biennale; Performa, New York; the Sao Paolo Biennale; the Incheon Women Biennale and the Yokohama Triennale. In 2009, the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum honoured Jonas with a Lifetime Achievement Award for her extraordinary contribution to the field of contemporary art. Joan Jonas will represent the United States at the *56th Venice Biennale International Art Exhibition* (2015).

Joan Jonas was born in New York City, USA, in 1936, where she now lives and works. As an academic, Jonas has taught at numerous art schools and universities around the world, including the Royal College of Art, London; Rijksakademie van Beeldende Kunsten, Amsterdam; CCA Kitakyushu; Kunstakademie Stuttgart; and, between 2000 and 2014 she served as professor at the MIT Visual Art Program and the Program in Art, Culture and Technology, Cambridge.



Joan Jonas, *Lines in the Sand* (2002). Photo: Werner Maschmann. Courtesy of the artist

Isaac Julien

Vagabondia (2000)

Two screen projection, 16mm film, digital transfer, colour, sound, choreography by Javier De Frutos, 7mins.

Filmed in the house-turned-museum of the British architect and art collector, Sir John Soane, *Vagabondia* is a film in which curating meets choreography. A black female conservator imagines the buried stories and the hidden histories within the museum's cornucopia of the works that Soane plundered on the 'Grand Tour'; she sees ghosts of 18th-century Black London, a dancing vagabond figure among them. Filmed with fluid camera movements and a sensuous attention to lighting and camera work, Julien

makes of the museum a world of shadows, mirrors and frames-within-frames, where the statues also dream and the vagabond spirit of colonialism's repressed memory comes dancing, jerkily, back to life. In *Vagabondia*, the museum's mirrored display is transferred into a double screen projection producing precisely the museum's visual effects. Museum and cinema intersect, merging the virtual with the physical.

Artist and filmmaker **Isaac Julien** draws upon different artistic disciplines to create a poetic visual language. His multi-screen installations express fractured narratives that explore memory and desire.

Julien was a founding member of the Sankofa Film and Video Collective, one of the few film and video workshops set up in the UK in the 1980s to engage in a new politics of representation. He was nominated for the Turner Prize in 2001 for his film installations *Long Road to Mazatlán* (1999) and *Vagabondia* (2000). Julien has earned numerous awards,

including the Special Teddy for *Derek* (a documentary on the English film director Derek Jarman), Berlin International Film Festival, Berlin (2008); an Honorary Fellow, University of the Arts, London (2008); the grand jury's prize at the Kunstfilm Biennale, Cologne, for *Baltimore* (2003); the Frameline Lifetime Achievement Award (2002); and the McDermott Award, MIT, Cambridge (2001). His work has been shown internationally, most recently in solo exhibitions at SESC Pompeia, São Paulo (2012), Milwaukee Art Museum, Milwaukee (2012); ICA, Boston (2011) and group exhibitions at The National Museum of Modern

Art, Kyoto (2013) and the Palais de Tokyo, Paris (2012). He participated in the *3rd Berlin Biennale* (2004) and *Documenta11* (2002). His work *Ten Thousand Waves*, featuring actress Maggie Cheung, most recently was shown at MoMA, New York (2013).

Born in London, United Kingdom, in 1960, Julien lives and works in London. He is currently Professor of Media Art at Staatliche Hochschule für Gestaltung, Karlsruhe, and is also a faculty member at the Whitney Museum of American Art's Independent Study Program, New York.



Isaac Julien, *Vagabondia* (2000). Installation view, the Turner Prize (2001), Tate Britain, London. Courtesy of the artist and Victoria Miro Gallery, London



Constanze Ruhm, *X Characters / RE(hers)AL* (2003/4). Installation view 3rd Berlin Biennale (2004). Courtesy of the artist

Constanze Ruhm

X Characters / RE(hers)AL (2003/4)

Installation: posters series, website, single channel film, colour, sound, 74mins.

X Characters: RE(hers)AL releases seven female characters from seven different movies – each an icon from the history of modernist cinema – and joins them together as a gang of fellow travellers, stuck in the boarding area of an airport. Diverted from and out of their historical context, the seven characters begin to find their bearings in a liminal situation, or rather, a crossroads disguised as a holding pattern. Routes intersect and new patterns emerge as these

sleepwalkers, androids, phantasms, prostitutes and murder victims start to establish relationships and new forms of behaviour in order to connect the gaps in their scripts along the lines of a speculative orientation towards an unknown future. These voices emerge and shape in contradistinction to their original roles and along the contemporary notion of merging scripts between film, theatre, chat and back again, into a hybrid variety of media identities.

Constanze Ruhm is an artist, filmmaker and author whose artistic practice focuses on the relation of cinema, new media and theatrical forms, and investigates questions of female identity and representation.

Ruhm's works have been shown at international exhibitions, as well as at film festivals, including: Internationale Filmfestspiele / Forum Expanded | Living Archive, Kunstwerke, Berlin, Germany

(2013); Internationale Filmfestspiele, Berlin, Germany (2010 and 2011); *The 5th International Video Art Biennial*, Center for Contemporary Art, Tel Aviv, Israel (2012); Tel Aviv Film Festival (2010); The University Art Gallery / Room Gallery, University of California, Irvine (2010); *Extracity*, Antwerp (2008); Museo de la Reina Sofia, Madrid (2008); Generali Foundation, Vienna (2006), and *3rd Berlin Biennale* (2004). In 1995 Ruhm represented Austria at the Venice Biennale

along with Peter Sandbichler. Ruhm also curates exhibitions, realises publications, and both organises and contributes to international symposia.

Constanze Ruhm was born in Vienna, Austria in 1965. She lives and works in Vienna and Berlin. Since 2006, she is Professor for Art and Media at the Academy of Fine Arts, Vienna.

Eva Meyer and Eran Schaerf

***She Might Belong to You* (2007)**

Single channel film, colour, Sound by Peter Steckroth, 37mins.

Produced for Sculpture Projects Münster, *She Might Belong to You* uses films of different genres and from different times that play out in or against backdrops of Münster. A female 'memory activist' puts together an ambivalent cinematic memory of the city. Marked by three women from three films – Inge Deitert in *Alle Jahre wieder* (*Every Year Again*) (1967, directed by Ulrich Schamoni), Käthe Brahm in *Desperate Journey* (1942, directed by Raoul Walsh), and Luise Gumplich

in *Zwischen Hoffen und Bangen* (*Between Hope and Fear*) (2003, directed by Markus Schröder and based on private footage from 1937–1939) – she activates a memory that is neither psychological nor collective. *She Might Belong to You* unravels as it unfolds, precariously connecting inside and outside, before and after, that which is one's own and that which is of others.

***She Might (combination #1)* (2007/2014)**

Clothing pieces, photographs, plywood support, installation variable
Production clothing pieces: Lisa D.
Installation layout: Ofri Lapid

She Might (combination #1) is a display of three combinations of the multi-piece costume Meyer and Schaerf designed for the protagonist of their film *She Might Belong to You* (2007). In the film the costume is combined anew in each scene. The patterns were derived from the costumes of three films – *Alle Jahre wieder* (Schamoni), *Desperate Journey* (Walsh) and *Zwischen Hoffen und Bangen* (Markus Schröder) – which enabled an ever changing combinatorial costume that allows

the protagonist to wander between concepts of time and gender. The colours of the fabrics used are informed by the interior design of the Münster City Theatre that served as the film's location. Drawing on the relationship between dressing and architecture, this colour concept points to clothing as means of assimilation between the subject and their surroundings.



Eva Meyer and Eran Schaerf, film still from *She Might Belong To You* (2007). Courtesy of the artists



Eva Meyer and Eran Schaerf, film still from *She Might Belong To You* (2007). Courtesy of the artists

Eva Meyer and Eran Schaerf

Writer and filmmaker Eva Meyer and artist and filmmaker Eran Schaerf have collaborated since 1997. They investigate locations, language and narratives in order to propose alternative structures of time and space for the self and the other(s). They are especially interested in the way processes and completely divergent, unrelated stimuli can contribute to the meaning of an event. Their solidarity with their subjects may lead to a certain bias, but their documentary fiction is never pure or distanced; it is alternately funny, poetic or surprising.

Their most recent films include: *Pro Testing*, (2010); *Mein Gedächtnis beobachtet mich*, (Ambulante Documentary Film Festival, Mexico, 2008); *She Might Belong to You*, (Sculpture

Projects Muenster, 2007); *Flashforward*, (Intermedium, Munich, 2004); *Europe from Afar*, (4th International Biennale for Film and Architecture, Graz, 2001); *Record: I Love You*, (*Ver Bailar*, CAAC Sevilla, 1999); *Documentary Credit*, (Rotterdam Film Festival, 1998).

Eva Meyer was born 1950 in Freiburg, Germany; Eran Schaerf was born 1962 in Tel Aviv-Jaffa, Israel, and live and work in Berlin, Germany. They have taught at various universities and art schools in Europe and the USA, and currently are faculty members of the Zurich University of the Arts.

Eva Meyer is the author of various works of cinematic thinking including *What Does the Veil Know?* (ed. in collaboration with Vivian

Liska, 2009), *Frei und indirekt* (2010), *Zählen und Erzählen. Für eine Semiotik des Weiblichen*, Wien/Berlin (1983, reprint 2013).

Eran Schaerf's multidisciplinary work focuses on the architecture of narration. He has exhibited in group-exhibitions such as Venice Biennale (2011), *Fake or Feint* (2008), *Territories* (2003), *Manifesta* (1998), *Listener's Voice*, Brussels (2001), *DOCUMENTA IX* (1992). Among his publications are: *fm-scenario – where palms stand – mask – delay*, London (2012), *Blue Key*, Cologne (2002), *Listener's Voice*, Brussels (2001), *Re-enactment*, New-York (1996).

Symposium

Sat 23 August 10.30 am – 4.00 pm

The symposium takes place at TheatreWorks, 72-13 Mohamed Sultan Road, Singapore, 239007

| | | |
|------------------|---|--|
| 10.30 am | Welcome Note | Ute Meta Bauer, <i>CCA Founding Director</i> |
| 10.40 – 11.00 am | Introduction to Theatrical Fields | Anca Rujoiu, <i>CCA Curator, Exhibitions</i> |
| 11.00 – 12.00 am | Roundtable discussion | Eva Meyer and Eran Schaerf, <i>Artists in conversation with Ute Meta Bauer and Katarina Pierre, Director of Bildmuseet</i> Moderator: Ong Keng Sen, <i>Festival Director of Singapore International Festival of Arts (SIFA)</i> |
| 12.00 – 1.00pm | Lunch Break* | |
| 1.00 – 2.00 pm | Screening Theatrical Phantasms: Toward an Uncertain Futurity | Keynote, Timothy Murray, <i>Professor of Comparative Literature and English at Cornell University</i> |
| 2.15 – 3.15 pm | Life or Theatre? Events so far... | Keynote, Eva Meyer, <i>Artist, Writer and Filmmaker</i> |
| 3.30 – 4.00 pm | Q+A | |

*Lunch will be provided by CCA.

Keynotes

Eva Meyer

Life or Theatre? Events so far...

“Events so far... This phrase promises continuity. In our daily serial lives we expect a recap of previous episodes to help us find our way into the story. Yet in claiming to control a plot and its characters by specifying their time, place and identity, this phrase turns out to be a manifestation of seriality itself: the only thing certain is that the narrative elements will reappear. It is then a matter of the theatricality of their reappearance whether or not they disengage from representation and its narrative, and enter a free and indirect relation between life and theatre. ”

Dr. Eva Meyer is a writer and filmmaker based in Berlin. She currently teaches at Zurich University of the Arts. Together with Eran Schaerf, she is the film director of *She Might Belong to You in Theatrical Fields*.

Timothy Murray

Screening Theatrical Phantasms: Toward an Uncertain Futurity

This talk will reflect on the fascination of artworks in *Theatrical Fields* with the phantasmatic past. In providing a brief theoretical overview of “the politics of theatricality,” Murray will reflect on the exhibition’s screenic re-possession of cinematic characters, buried stories, and influential texts in a way that challenges the historical groundings of theatricality in the ethnocentric certainty of culture and law. “What happens to the relation of mnemonic past and theatrical present when the screen functions as the field of phantasms that are liberated by artistic intervention from the certainties of their mythological, historical, and cinematic pasts?” This emphasis on artistic retellings in the present of weighty phantasms from the historical past will then lead to further reflection on their bearing on the future. “What might it mean that prior utopian aspirations might now be recast as the unsettling of uncertain futurity? Might the contemporary re-theatricalization of the screen provide a historically distinct approach to futurity? Or might futurity already be in our grasp either through the digital orientations of ‘future cinemas’ or through the too sudden arrival of

futurity via the vexing uncertainties of the anthropocene and global collapse?”

Timothy Murray is Director of the Society for the Humanities, Curator of the Rose Golden Archive of New Media Art, Professor of Comparative Literature and English at Cornell University, and Co-Director of the Cornell/East China Normal University Center for Comparative Culture. He is editor of *Mimesis, Masochism & Mime: The Politics of Theatricality in Contemporary French Thought* (Michigan, 1997), and is the author of several publications including *Digital Baroque: New Media Art and Cinematic Folds* (Minnesota 2008); *Drama Trauma: Specters of Race and Sexuality in Performance, Video, Art* (Routledge, 1997); and *Like a Film: Ideological Fantasy on Screen, Camera, and Canvas* (Routledge, 1993). Murray has taught at the School of Criticism and Theory and BK Winter School; Ewha Womans University in Seoul, and has lectured widely, most recently at Tunghai University in Taiwan; East China Normal University, Shanghai; Chinese University of Hong Kong; Sorbonne, Paris, and Nanyang Technological University, Singapore.

Roundtable Discussion

Ute Meta Bauer is curator and since 2013 Founding Director of CCA – Centre for Contemporary Art Singapore. She was Dean of Fine Art at the Royal College of Art, London (2012/2013); Associate Professor at the MIT, Cambridge, MA and Founding Director of ACT, MIT's Program in Art, Culture, and Technology (2009–2012); Founding Director of the Office for Contemporary Art (OCA), Oslo (2002–2005); Co-Director of the *World Biennial Forum No. 1*, Gwangju (2012); Artistic Director of the *3rd Berlin Biennale for Contemporary Art* (2004) and Co-Curator of *Documenta11* (2001–2002). Recent publications include: *Intellectual Birdhouse. Artistic Practice as Research* (co-edited with F. Dombois, M. Schwab, C. Mareis, 2012), *World Biennale Forum No 1 – Shifting Gravity* (co-edited with Hou Hanru, 2013). In 2015 she will co-curate the US Pavilion for the *56th Venice Biennale International Art Exhibition* with Paul Ha, MIT List Visual Art Centre, featuring Joan Jonas.

Katarina Pierre is director of Bildmuseet, Umea, Sweden. Since 1995, she has worked at Bildmuseet as a curator and was instrumental to the internationalization of the museum's programme. Umea's University museum is a centre for

contemporary art and visual culture and was 2014 one of the top candidates for the Council of Europe Museum Prize as well as for the Swedish award Museum of the Year. In 2014 Bildmuseet received a Special Commendation from the European Museum of the Year Jury.

Ong Keng Sen is festival director of the new Singapore International Festival of Arts (SIFA) and artistic director of TheatreWorks Singapore (on-leave). He is a well-known performance director and has actively contributed to the evolution of plural Asian aesthetics, as well as the subsequent transglobalisation of these aesthetics in contemporary arts. His work has been presented in many cities worldwide. His latest work is a Michael Nyman opera, *Facing Goya*. He founded and curated the In-Transit festival for the Haus der Kulturen der Welt in Berlin from 2001–3. He has taught in many universities including Das Arts, UCLA, the University of Amsterdam and the National University of Singapore. He is also the founder of Arts Network Asia. A Fulbright Scholar, Keng Sen was awarded the prestigious Fukuoka Prize 2010 for his work in Asian contemporary performance.

Anca Rujoiu is a Romanian curator currently based in Singapore. She is a curator at CCA – Centre for Contemporary Art Singapore and co-director of FormContent, a curatorial initiative in London. Previously, she coordinated the public programme of the School of Fine Art at the Royal College of Art (UK). With FormContent she explored various exhibition models and challenged the relationship between artist/curator often overlapping their roles in the process. Her recent project with FormContent, *It's Moving from I to It* unfolded as a performative script within a nomadic structure testing formats of production and distribution.

Public Programmes

| | | |
|---|---|--|
| Fri 29 August 7.30 – 9.00 pm | Lecture | Ming Wong, <i>Artist</i> |
| Fri 5 September 7.30 – 9.00 pm | Exhibition Tour | Miguel Escobar, <i>Theatre Researcher</i> |
| Fri 12 September 7.30 – 9.00 pm | Exhibition Tour | Petrus Liu, <i>Associate Professor for Humanities at Yale-NUS College, Singapore</i> |
| Fri 26 September 7.30 – 9.00 pm | Artist's Talk | Judith Barry, <i>Artist</i> |
| Fri 10 October 7.30 – 9.00 pm | Exhibition Tour | Stefano Harney & Tonika Sealy, <i>Ground Provisions Collective</i> |
| Fri 24 October 7.00 – 8.30 pm | Artist's Talk* | Isaac Julien, <i>Artist</i> <i>*This lecture takes place at School of the Arts Singapore (SOTA)</i> |
| Sun 26 October 11.00 – 1.00 pm | Special Brunch and Screening Session | Isaac Julien, <i>Artist</i> & Mark Nash, <i>Curator</i> in conversation |
| Fri 31 October 7.30 – 9.00 pm | Exhibition Tour | Hendrik Folkerts, <i>Curator, Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam</i> |

Partner Acknowledgements

TheatreWorks and School of the Arts Singapore (SOTA)

As a response to *Theatrical Fields*, **Ming Wong** will introduce his research on the Cantonese cinema history in Hong Kong, looking at how the arrival of Cinema influenced traditional Cantonese opera.

Ming Wong is a Singapore-born, Berlin based artist who creates digital media installations informed by the history of cinema, to explore the relationship between language, identity and performance. He deliberately 'mis-casts' himself or others in re-interpretations of classic film scenes, often playing multiple roles in foreign languages. He represented Singapore at the 53rd Venice Biennale, 2009, gaining critical acclaim for his presentation *Life of Imitation*, which won a Special Mention. Wong has also exhibited at the Biennales of Lyon (2013), Liverpool (2012), Singapore (2011), Sydney (2010), Gwangju (2010), Jakarta (2009) and at numerous international art institutions.

Miguel Escobar's presentation will focus on the contemporary Javanese *Wayang Kulit* Shadow Puppetry and radical re-elaborations forms of this performance tradition. Miguel Escobar is a translator, web

programmer and theatre researcher who has lived in Mexico, The Netherlands, Singapore and Indonesia. He is fascinated by the intersections between cultural heritage, digital media and interculturalism. He is currently a PhD candidate at the National University of Singapore.

Entitled *Normative Genders and the Prose of the World*, **Petrus Liu's** exhibition tour will address theatricality as a political strategy to challenge gender boundaries. Liu will offer some reflections on the relation between "acting" in the theatrical sense and the political sense of "making a difference" for people who self-identify as queer. The talk will address various theories of gender performativity from Judith Butler to contemporary critical appropriations.

Petrus Liu is Associate Professor of Humanities and Head of Literature Studies at Yale-NUS College in Singapore. He is the author of *Stateless Subjects: Chinese Martial Arts Fiction and Postcolonial History* (Cornell, 2011) and *Queer Marxism in China* (Duke, forthcoming).

Judith Barry (for more information on the artist see page 07)

The talk by **Stefano Harney and Tonika Sealy** relates directly to the ethos of their collective, *Ground Provisions*, which curates events around art as a political form 'from below,' with particular reference to the carnival traditions. They will address the dialectic of regulation and improvisation in connection to Singapore and any city seeking status as an art capital.

Ground Provisions Collective,
Stefano Harney and Tonika Sealy

Stefano Harney teaches ethics at Singapore Management University. Most recently, he co-authored with Fred Moten *The Undercommons: fugitive planning and black study*. He is a member of the *freethought* curatorial collective, and founder of the School for Study, a collective of university researchers.

Tonika Maria Sealy is a founding partners of Ground Provisions, a collective based in the Caribbean and working globally to produce art, education, and social change. She is currently the Artistic

Coordinator for the African, Caribbean, and Pacific Cultural Festival. Sealey holds degrees from Manchester University (UK) and Hult International Business School (Shanghai).

Isaac Julien (for more information on the artist see page 12)

Mark Nash will be in conversation with Isaac Julien addressing the artist's work in *Theatrical Fields*, but also more recent productions such as *Playtime*.

Mark Nash is an independent curator and writer and, until recently, Professor and Head of Department of Curating Contemporary Art at the Royal College of Art London. He collaborated with Okwui Enwezor on *The Short Century* (2002), and worked with Enwezor and Ute Meta Bauer on *Documenta11* (2002). Subsequently, he joined Bauer as curator of film for the *3rd Berlin Biennial of Contemporary Art* (2004). He has extensively curated and written on artists who work with the moving image – including *Experiments with Truth* (Fabric Workshop and Museum, Philadelphia 2004-05) and *One Sixth of the Earth, ecologies of image* at ZKM,

Karlsruhe and MUSAC Leon, an exhibition that continued to explore the artistic legacy of the formerly socialist countries. The topic he first explored in *Reimagining October* at Calvert 22 (2009), co-curated with Isaac Julien.

Hendrik Folkerts's talk will focus on the performance and exhibition series *Stage It!* at the Stedelijk Museum especially its second installment (2013) which explored the relationship between theatricality and visual art performance, and the last edition (2014) addressing the use of the (theatrical) script and score in performance.

Hendrik Folkerts is Curator for public programme since 2010 at the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam. He studied Art History at the University of Amsterdam, specializing in contemporary art and theory, feminist practices and contemporary curatorial practices. Folkerts curated the public program of *The Temporary Stedelijk* at the Stedelijk Museum, a special interim program that was presented 2010/2011, as well as *Temporary Stedelijk 3: Stedelijk @ (TS3)* 2011/2012.

CARNIVAL

In a study dedicated to the work of the French writer Rabelais, the Russian philosopher Mikhail Bakhtin conducted an in-depth investigation of the format, imagery and specific language of the carnival feast. Bakhtin asserts that the carnival operated in opposition to the official culture as a double world whose existence can be traced even in the earliest stages of our cultural development. The carnival marks a suspension of all established orders and norms. It is a “bodily participation in the potentiality of another world”, a deviation from the everyday that subjects reality to its own laws to the extent that there is no life outside the carnival. It produces an idiosyncratic type of communication and imagery that escapes the official daily restrictions. Unlike formal culture, the carnival is a celebration of equality where hierarchical ranks, privileges and prohibitions are abolished. The carnival is a communal performance, an inclusive process that makes no distinction between actors and spectators; everyone participates in the carnival, the carnivalesque/ esque laughter is addressed to everyone and shared by all. For Bakhtin, carnival sits on the border between life and art: “In reality, it is life itself, but shaped according to a certain pattern of play.”

COSTUME

“Items of clothing have quite specific connotations but these can easily be changed, extended, or inverted with a change in the wearer and or situation. Costume then occupies a complex position in the theatre’s semiotic systems.” (Helen Gilbert and Joanne Tompkins). As soon as it appears on the stage, clothing turns into costume. In traditional approaches, the use of costume was limited to a visual presentation of a character or idea through physical appearance. With the stage developments of the twentieth century, however, costume has shifted from simple character identification towards an autonomous and aesthetic function. Costume is linked to the body; it is always more than an ornament. It can serve the body by adapting to the actor’s gestures, movements and attitudes or it

restricts the body by subjecting it to the weight of material and form. Still the use of costume is not confined only to the theatrical context: “so soon as clothes are anything more than a mere device of decency or a protection against the weather they inevitably assume a dramatic quality of some kind”, observes the English art historian James Laver. In origin, he asserts, all clothes are, in fact, theatrical costumes. The history of the theatrical costume goes back to the early stages of humankind. The gesture of the primitive man putting on clothes bears itself a dramatic value.

CHOREOGRAPHY “There is a choreographical presence in all acting, in all the movement on the stage. Choreography has to do as much as with the actors movement on the stage, the pace or rhythm of the performance and the synchronization of word and gesture, as with the arrangements of the actors on the stage. The staging does not reproduce movements and behaviour from day life as is. They are stylized, rendered harmonious or ‘readable’, co-ordinated for the spectator’s gaze, worked and repeated until this staging is, so to speak, choreographed.” (Patrice Pavis)

For Brecht, “a theatre where everything depends on the ‘gest’ cannot do without choreography”, a ‘gest’ being a stylized motion, expression or tone of voice that encapsulates and reveals the worldview of a given character and through its repetition comes to embody the “social relationships prevailing between people of a given period”.

CHARACTER In theatre, the character assumes the features and voice of the actor. The emergence of the term began as only a mask or the role played by the actor, persona, and not the character outlined by the dramatist. The actor and character were completely detached to the point that gestures and words were completely separated. Western traditional theatre reversed this relation leading to a symbiosis

between actor and character. The approach to a character followed numerous shifts from the character development towards naturalism with the expectation that a character is an imitation of reality to the effacement of the character in the symbolist drama. Antonin Artaud and Bertold Brecht, two major figures of the avant-garde theatre proposed a radical separation of actors from characters. In Brecht, for instance, the actor distances him/herself from the character through a moment of critical reflection in which the actors address spectators directly about the constructedness of a character. This moment of rupture makes visible the mechanisms of representation and undermines any potential identification of the audience with a character. In light of these experimentations engendering a fear of the death of the Character, Pavis proposes that “the character is not dead; it has merely become polymorphous and difficult to pin down; its only hope for survival.”

DRAMATURGY “The goal of dramaturgy is to resolve the antipathy between the intellectual and the practical in theatre, fusing the two into an organic whole,” mentioned playwright, and dramaturg Leon Katz. In its broadest sense, dramaturgy could be defined as the art of composition of plays, the study of how meaning might be generated in drama and performance. Dramaturgy gives an understanding of how the unity of the work is created and an analysis of what a work can be. It can be understood as an attribute (the dramatic structure and production elements of a particular playwright or play), a role (a person who helps fuse a myriad of visions and intentions of key players together in a compelling manner) or a function (seeking to enrich the work through questioning received models of production). Classical dramaturgy made a distinction between the internal elements that constitute the dramatic text of a play and its external structure that is related to the performance of the play, showing less concern with the realisation of the play on the stage. Contemporary

theory and practice tends to give equal importance to all elements that contribute to the overall architecture of a play and conceive of a play as a set of relationships and interactions woven together in different ways.

Writers such as Mike Pearson and Michael Shanks propose dramaturgy as a ‘cultural assembly’: “Dramaturgy, as cultural assemblage, works equally with settings, people, bodies, things, texts, histories, voices, architectures. In these connective networks, that are dramaturgical, it is usual to consider things and people as separate, their conjunction considered after their distinction. We proposed instead the inseparability of people, things, values.”

EXPOSITION “In the exposition, the playwright provides the information required to evaluate the dramatic situation and to understand the action to be presented. In classical dramaturgy, the exposition (or protasis) tends to be concentrated at the beginning of the play in the first act or opening scenes, and that is often to be found in a narrative or ‘naïve’ exchange of information. In the extreme case of analytical drama, which does not show the conflict but rather presupposes it before proceeding to analyse its causes, the entire text becomes an extended exposition.” (Patrice Pavis)

MASK-PERSONA The creation of masks can be considered as the first attempt by ancient man to give shape to his/her innermost visualisations and torments to surmount fear and regain security. The masks used in religious rituals allowed a community to transgress the ordinary and instill a symbolic dimension in the everyday. The production of masks was a conscious effort and a result of collective will. In order for a mask to be effective, it needed to be recognised as such by all members of the community. Masking carries with it a double notion of hiding and transforming identity. The Swiss psychiatrist Carl Jung used persona – the Latin term for mask – to

refer to our way of adjusting to the world. Likewise, the persona is the mask that protects us not only from the other people behind the masks, but also from our real self. According to American dance critic Walter Sorell “theatricality in everyday life is close to the idea of wearing a mask because of the private-public opposition, as if we always put on a mask in public, as if we are always authentic in the private. But we have seen that we are never free from acting and performing, and that authenticity is a concept not applicable to behaviour, it is destructive for the psyche and problematic for identity.”

RITUAL

Ritual in general, as defined by scholars Helen Gilbert and Joanne Tompkins who work in the field of post-colonial drama and performance theory, comprises of a series/ routine of presentational acts (showing, telling, dancing, etc.) that often incorporate the representational (imitation, impersonation), and sometimes manifestational acts (usually through a spiritual dimension) which transcend both; acts that are believed to be real and not fictional, even if aspects of play are incorporated into the ritual. They are performed by ‘knowledgeable human agents’ (priests, diviners) and is always efficacious for the community and enacted for a particular audience. Secular rituals, while not specifically religious, invoke concepts such as the state, community and tradition while a ritual conducted in private, such as an individual’s grooming routine, bears significance as a means of defining oneself in relation to society.

According to French sociologist Émile Durkheim “Everything changes when a ceremony takes place (...) Once the individuals are gathered together, a sort of electricity is generated from their closeness and quickly launches them into an extraordinary height of exaltation (...) Probably because a collective emotion cannot be expressed collectively without some order that permits harmony and unison of movement, [their] gestures and cries tend to fall into rhythm and regularity and from there into songs and dances.”

PLAY

“We might call it a free activity standing quite consciously outside ‘ordinary life’ as being ‘not serious,’ but at the same time absorbing the player intensely and utterly.” asserted the Dutch cultural theorist, Johan Huizinga. In performance studies, play is recognised as the potency of uncertainty, one that emphasises on innovation and creativity. ‘Play’ according to the French philosopher Jacques Derrida relates to the play of elements within a paradigmatic structure which makes impossible a single holistic meaning. The term was used by Derrida to suggest certain looseness found within structures of processes of signification, but also the type of amusement associated with playfulness. Play in both senses invites those processes of internal or self-reflexive critique that Derrida has practiced as ‘Deconstruction’. ‘Play’ refers to the impossibility of seeking a single unified meaning in any given context, thus resulting in an acceptance of the ambiguities and contradictions of human activities.

PROTAGONIST

“The term protagonist derives from the Greek *protos* (first) and *agon* (struggle), meaning ‘first contestant’. The term used to designate the leading actor in a Greek tragedy. By extension, protagonist came to refer to the main character in a tragedy as well as to the main actor. A character in opposition or in conflict with the protagonist as character was thus the antagonist. In modern usage, ‘protagonist’ is used to refer to the central character in a play, the one at the centre of the conflicts, and frequently the hero.” (Patrice Pavis)

STAGE

“In the theatre, in the cinema, in traditional literature”, says Roland Barthes “things are always seen from somewhere”. And when it comes to theatre what is at stake is thinking and calculating about “the place of things as they are observed.” A stage, continues Barthes, is the result of an act of cutting out, it is a mode of representation: it frames a segment of the real in order to depict it. In the traditional understanding, stage is an organized

arrangement of shapes and objects, colour and materials, filled with signs and symbols, with the goal to convince the spectator that the universe created is real. However avant-garde experiments undermined the pictorial tradition of stage and explored various approaches to the point where stage design and performance became inseparable or enabled the actors and audience to share the same space. In his writings, Antonin Artaud advocated that the action should be decentralised, coming from all directions and breaking any tangible barriers between actors and spectators: “We intend to do away with stage and auditorium, replacing them with a kind of single undivided locale without any partitions of any kind and this will become the very scene of the action. [...] The action will unfold, extending its trajectory from floor to floor, from place to place, with sudden outbursts flaring up in different spots like conflagrations.” French playwright Simone Benmussa, in restaging and subverting the conventions of a patriarchal theatre, associates the stage with dreams: “Stage is the reflecting surface of a dream, of a deferred dream, it is the meeting place of the desires... (that) create around them a nebulous zone which allows the spectator to divine the other”

MISE-EN-SCÈNE

The term staging or *mise-en-scène* concerns all the resources of stage performance from *décor* to lighting, music and acting. In a broad sense, staging is the act of transposing the writing of the text into scenic performance experienced by the spectators. Staging implies the subordination of each element as to form a complete, organic structure. The *mise-en-scène* is significant for Patrice Pavis for it is able to produce a work that generates its own values and connections instead of representing an individual author/director’s intention’s while for Antonin Artaud it is the language of theatre, a complete aesthetic experience where music, props, movement, gestures come together freeing the performance from the domination of speech means: “This archetypal theatre language will

be formed around staging not simply viewed as one degree of refraction of the script on stage, but as a starting point for theatrical creation.”

THEATRE

“Theatre deals with the imaginary. In other words, it makes use of a technique of constructing space, allowing subjects to settle there: first the construction of physical space, and then of psychological space.” (Josette Féral). The French philosopher, Jean-Francois Lyotard called for an energetic theatre, a theatre not of meanings, signs, but of intensities, forces - where the “gesture of a clinched fist no longer represents the pain produced by a toothache”, but it stands on its own. Theatre is no longer conceived as a representational system; on the contrary it is grounded on nihilism, on the impossibility of substitution. Replacement functions as an act of displacement, a continuous move in various, and often arbitrary directions. The phenomenological approach by playwright and dramatic theorist Bert O. States sees theatre’s primary accomplishment as not to represent the world but to be part of it, to effect a ‘transaction between consciousness and the thickness of existence’. Theatre is a place for the affirmative thinking of the inherent process of alienation (as a Marxist category). Not in the sense that it hints to a loss of origins, to the impossibility of return to a specific source, but as a producer of a state of indifference towards what is exchanged in the capitalist flow. Indifference makes possible a non-hierarchical and discontinuous circulation that abolishes the relationship between illusion and truth, outside and inside, cause and effect, signifier and signified.

THEORY and THEATRICALITY

The theoretical reflection shares a related etymology with theatrical spectatorship. Theatre has evolved from the Greek word *theatron* that stands for a ‘place for viewing’ whereas theory derives from *theorein* meaning to ‘gaze upon’. *Thea* - the sense of ‘sight’ - is central to both theatre production and theoretical investigation; Performance theoretician Herbert Blau once said “Theatre is theory, or a shadow of it... In the act of seeing, there is already theory,” the two meet in the act of contemplation. From Plato to Hegel, from Nietzsche to Deleuze, there is a theoretical tradition of thought manifested in strong fascination with theatre and theatricality. One could even speak about a theatrical turn of philosophy from the end of the nineteenth-century throughout the twentieth-century of indicated for instance by the appropriation of theatrical concepts such as ‘performance’, ‘performativity’, ‘theatricality’ by critical theory. Although this interaction remained in a state of conflictual entanglement, theatrical theory and history of theatre operated in close relationship and influenced each other to the point that they cannot be conceived independently. The so-called ‘anti-theatrical prejudice’ rooted in Plato’s criticism was in fact a rejection of the theatrical apparatus of representation which was later on dismissed by the avant-garde theatre itself through the works of Jarry, Artaud, Beckett and others.

VOICE

Nothing is closer to us than our voice. The voice embodies pure presence; it is the counter-point of a mediated experience: “I do not even have to speak to you, as long as I hear myself. I do not even have to speak; I can sing, scream, mutter, speak to myself in silence.” (Régis Durand). The sign of pure auto-affection, the voice is self-sufficient, in its manifestation it doesn’t borrow from outside itself. Elusive and passing, the voice does not leave any trace or anything one could hold on to. As an expansion of the body the voice gives expression to our fantasies and desires. Barthes speaks of “the grain of the voice” in theatre as anterior to expression, an “erotic mix

of timbre and language”. It follows fantasy’s regressive journey to a point of origins that of “first men”, asserts Durand before they became enslaved by words, when they were “entirely immersed in the sense, buffeted by passion, buried in the body”.

THEATRE OF THE WORLD and THEATRE STATE

“All the world’s a stage, and all the men and women merely players: they have their exits and their entrances; and one man in his time plays many parts, his acts being seven ages. (William Shakespeare) The relationship between acting and society has been explored since antiquity, finding new resonance in the last century. Theatre theorist Josette Féral speaks of the ‘invisible theatre’ where she suggests, given the right “perceptual dynamics”, of seeing and being seen, theatrical mimesis can ‘happen’ anywhere or anytime. In the last half century, the study of theatrical, symbolic and performative elements of state power have been a subject of much scrutiny, with American anthropologist Clifford Geertz’s work on the infusion of theatre into life in Bali shaping the theorising of culture and political science, the essential idea being that “the dramaturgy of power (is not) external to its workings”. A parallel could be drawn with Artaud’s own encounter with Balinese theatre revolutionising his own practice before going on to influence much of Western theatre. Extending on Geertz’s framework, political theorists Julia C. Strauss and Donald B. Cruise O’ Brien, when conceiving of the politics of performance via inflecting and the mirroring of theatrical terms in society, look at staged ceremonies as a form of ritual, street demonstrations as theatre and dramatic speech designed to engage the emotions as individual performances, and how these modes of performance all require a stage/platform, an audience and deal with some concerns akin to those of theatre.

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Centre for Contemporary Art Singapore

The Centre for Contemporary Art Singapore (CCA) is a research centre of Nanyang Technological University, developed with support from the Economic Development Board, Singapore. Located in Gillman Barracks alongside a cluster of international galleries, the CCA takes a holistic approach towards art and culture, intertwining its various platforms: exhibitions, research and residencies.

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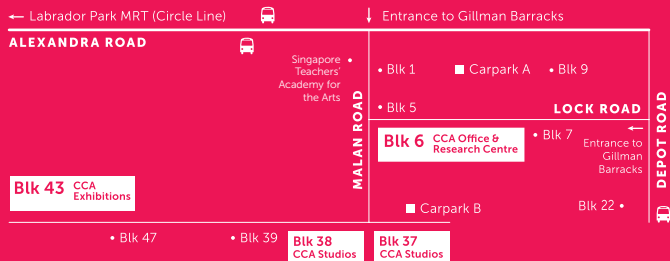
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