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Theatre and Migration

Theatre, nation and identity: between Migration and Stasis

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Abstract Title -

Designing Audience Experience for Mobile Performance: Atmospheres, Environment
and Technological Agency.

This paper emerges from work undertaken in collaboration with academics at University of Miami and as part of the Leeds Institute of Teaching Excellence's LITE Creativity and the Mobile Phone Fellowship with Dr Maria Kapsali. It focuses on issues arising from the creation of two public performance projects staged in historic houses and their grounds in April 2017 and May 2018 in which a scenographic sensibility was central to the creation of both live and digital performances. The digital performances were both experienced via mobile phone screens which Dorita Hannah suggests recast spectators as participants and creates scenarios which can facilitate a new reflexive or critical engagement with performance material (2017). Through the mobile phone screen, the realm of scenography is expanded beyond the frame of the stage and these ubiquitous devices consequently offer the potential for new interactions and exchanges to emerge: "the screen has become an extension of the body and lived space as well as a contemporary site for re-iterating or challenging worldviews." (2017: 40). What might this mean for making contemporary performance? This paper will focus on examples from two site-specific performances in heritage contexts: *Estate* resulted in a 360° experimental film delivered via smartphone screen and VR headset, and *Within This House*, a relational performance on the site of a First World War Auxiliary Hospital augmented through a digital artefact and triggered through GPS location. The audience were central to the design and experience of both performances and the digital content allows engagement with the performance long after the live event has finished. Arnold Aronson notes the tensions between live performance and the screen and wonders if scenographic concepts need rethinking: "Can virtual space or non-dimensional space have power?" (2008: 29) – these examples from beyond the theatre stage highlight potential issues for future performance practices.

Key Words

Scenography, Digital Performance, Audience, Mobile Phone, Augmented Reality