



Off Sites

Contemporary Performance beyond Site-Specific

Off Sites: Contemporary Performance beyond Site-Specific rethinks current definitions of “site-specific performance”—a genre of theatre that adopts spaces outside of traditional theatre buildings and uses the experience of space, place, and situation as an integral component to the structure and content of a theatrical work. This book looks at key productions of artists working in this genre, including *Private Moment* by David Levine and *Geyser Land*, conceived and directed by video artist Mary Ellen Strom and choreographer Ann Carlson.

This incredibly rich and vital part of theatre in the past several decades has become diverse enough that the term “site-specific” has ceased to adequately describe it. Contextualizing site-specific practices in both visual and performing arts discourses, author Bertie Ferdman traces the evolution of that term from an experimental staging practice to an engaged situational event.

Substituting the term “off-site,” she illustrates the ways in which a new generation of artists have challenged the disciplinary frameworks of site-specific theatre. She focuses on five distinct ways in which these artists do that: 1) blurring the traditional boundaries between the fictional and the real; 2) changing how the audience and actor interact with each other and whether they are physically together or apart; 3) fabricating sites from physically bound, conceptually constructed, or virtual spaces; 4) establishing live situations in real vs. fiction; and 5) challenging our preconceived notions of time and space. The first chapter outlines the book’s primary goals, traces the genealogy of site-based work through the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, and presents the theoretical groundwork for the book. Each subsequent chapter focuses on a particular type of “off-site”: Disciplinary Sites, Spectator Sites, Temporal Sites, Urban Sites, and contains several case studies. Main questions asked by this study include: How are artists and performances engaging with site? What sites do contemporary theatre practices engender? How does live performance negotiate such sites?

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