TDR

New York University
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Shannon Steen
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Nancy Mauro-Flude
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Elisabeth Dutton and E. Lucy Deacon
Branislav Jakovljević and Danica Pajović

and **Student Essay Contest Winner**
Mitchell Herrmann

TDR

TDR is scholarly, accessible, and dynamic. TDR is inclusive and interdisciplinary. Each article is tightly focused—but taken as a whole TDR is global. With its broad range of topics, TDR is at the cutting edge of performance studies. Its writers and editors support progressive political and social movements, art and ideas. Written by and for scholars and artists—and their students—TDR is where leaders and future leaders in the field of performance studies go for performance texts, performative writing, editorials, reviews, interviews, and research articles about the performing arts, performance in everyday life, popular entertainments, sports, business, and politics—the broad spectrum of performance.

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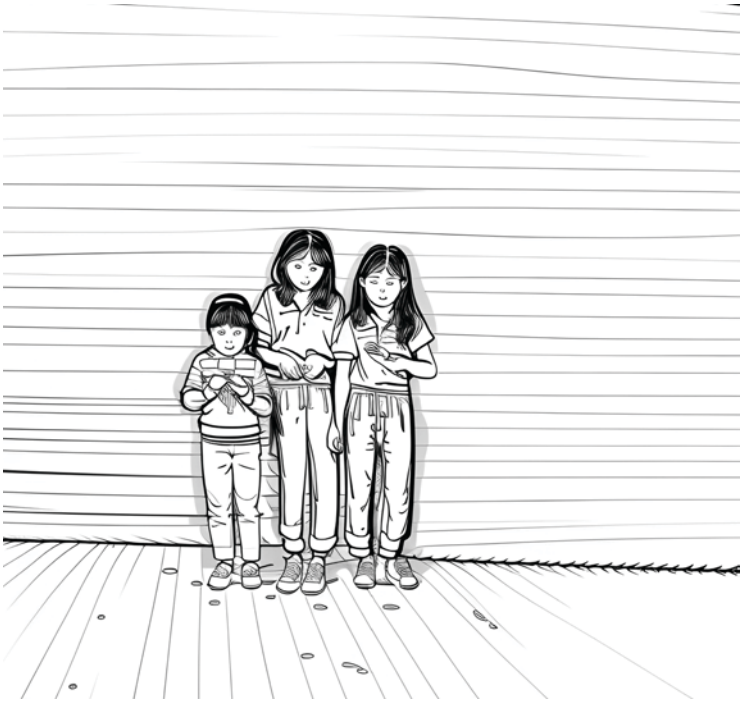
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Above: *Three young girls, 1998, Guatemala. See "The Role of Reciprocity: A Priest, His Photographs, and the Perpetration of Sexual Violence" by Kevin Lewis O'Neill. (Image by Kevin Lewis O'Neill)*

Front Cover: *In Serbia, on the first day of classes in 2025, high school students joined the protest that marked 10 months since the collapse of the railway canopy in Novi Sad. See "Performing the Political Unknown: A Report on the Student Protest Movement in Serbia" by Branislav Jakovljević and Danica Pajović. (Photo courtesy of FDU students)*

Back Cover: Tekyeh Dowlat*, painting by Kamal-ol-Molk, housed in the Golestan Palace Museum. See "Unraveling Myths and Reassessing the Legacy of Tekyeh Dowlat" by Milad Azarm. (Public domain)*

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Student Essay Contest Winner

"Air become Spirit": Joan Jonas's Elemental Media 4

Mitchell Herrmann

From the beginning of her career, Joan Jonas has investigated "elemental media" such as air, water, and earth. Her practice recalls a distinctive form of media-reflexivity associated with early modern practices of magic, which embraced the agency and performativity of these natural materialities. Jonas is a media artist in the fullest sense of the word: not merely an early adopter of the video camera and other technical devices, but a poetic alchemist of media in their deep history.

Articles

Unraveling Myths and Reassessing the Legacy of Tekyeh Dowlat 26

Milad Azarm

Tekyeh Dowlat, once a major center for ta'ziyeh performances, has been subject to speculative claims regarding its construction date, location, and alleged European influence. Contrary to claims that it was modeled after London's Royal Albert Hall following Naser al-Din Shah's 1873 CE trip to Europe, newly examined Qajar-era documents, including the Shah's diaries, confirm that its architectural plan was finalized in 1870 CE. A critical examination of historical records corrects persistent myths surrounding its origins, structure, and legacy.

Unmasking the Transhistorical: The Medieval Mysteries and Iranian Taʿziyeh Compared 43

Elisabeth Dutton and E. Lucy Deacon

Comparing the use of masks and other face coverings in the "mystery plays" of medieval England and taʿziyeh-khani, the Shiʿi form of devotional drama, reveals similar anxieties and impulses surrounding representation of the holy. In performance, what can or must not be shown of divinity? Is the (new) 21st-century inclination toward veiling the faces of holy characters in the taʿziyeh restrictive or an analogue display of divine resplendence? Comparison with the Christian medieval tradition affords a nuanced understanding.

Dancing in the Postsocialist City: Cao Fei's Choreopolitical Aesthetic 68

Xueli Wang

A key figure of the urban turn in 1990s Chinese art, Cao Fei is primarily known for her experimentation with virtual worlds to create futuristic techno-fantasies of urban life. However, Cao's decades-long interest in dance marks an overlooked dimension of her engagement with the postsocialist Chinese city. Video works feature spontaneous dancing by amateurs in unlikely urban spaces that disrupt and transform the spatial logic imposed by China's reform-era city planning.

The Role of Reciprocity: A Priest, His Photographs, and the Perpetration of Sexual Violence 91

Kevin Lewis O'Neill

Photographs are meant not just to be seen but also gifted. Father David Roney, a sexually abusive priest, moved from Minnesota to Guatemala in 1994 with his camera to minister to a remote Indigenous community, becoming the primary author of its visual history by gifting thousands of photographs. Roney's performative generosity allowed those living in poverty to attain a visual record of their lives, but his gifts came with reciprocal obligations.

"Koe no ma 声の間": Yoshimasu Gōzō and the Voice In-Between 105

Vivien Jiaqian Zhu

Contemporary Japanese poet Yoshimasu Gōzō's voice in his live performances exemplifies "in-betweenness," *ma* in Japanese, literally an interval between two things—both spatially and temporally. In Yoshimasu's poetic "radio play," this interval is between the human voice and the electric sound produced by the radio and other machines. The sonorous body of the poet mobilizes all senses in the acoustic space of the performance and corporealizes sound into a haptic expression of the poetic spirit.

Cognitive Motions: An Afroreferenced PaR Approach to Reforesting the Performing Arts 116

Cristina Fernandes Rosa

Cognitive Motions (CM) is an Afroreferenced Practice as Research methodology anchored on the scholarship of Congolese philosopher B. Fu-Kiau. This approach operationalizes the Bantu-Kongo cosmogram (Dikenga) and distills synthetic ideograms from philosophical principles as tools for investigative improvisation and dismantling the colonial "monoculture of thought" ingrained in our sensorial and neuromuscular systems.

Astro Labe in the Antipode: The Networked Commons as Apotheosis of Guerrilla Theatre. . . .145

Nancy Mauro-Flude

Subversive acts can resist systems of dominion through disoriented, peripheral practices and anarchist cosmologies. In Hobart, Tasmania, anarchist DJ Astro Labe head-butted Tony Abbott, former prime minister of Australia. His act of guerrilla theatre defies conventional frameworks and demands new interpretive tools.

Constitutional Repertoires: Civic Performance at the Threshold of Autocracy 172

Shannon Steen

From schoolroom reenactments of the Constitutional Convention to in-Congress readings and Broadway shows, performance comprises a crucial mechanism by which laypeople in the US understand "constitutionality"—the practices, laws, and actions permissible within the US political arena. These performances illustrate that constitutionality is not simply a set of legal procedures and concepts defined by a document, but a cultural field of which legal practices are one pillar. They also clarify how constitutional protections have come to be abrogated in their own name, and urgently call for intervention.

Performing the Political Unknown: A Report on the Student Protest Movement in Serbia 193

Branislav Jakovljević and Danica Pajović

On 1 November 2024, a concrete and steel canopy at a newly reconstructed railway station in the Serbian city of Novi Sad collapsed, instantly killing 14 passersby, with two more succumbing to injuries in the following weeks. Many citizens saw this as the outcome of rampant government corruption and staged silent vigils for the victims. In response to the regime's violent crackdown on a vigil in front of the Faculty of Dramatic Arts in Belgrade, students went into blockade, a protest performance that soon spread to all state universities in the country.

Concerning Books

Twilight of Mass Society: Performance, Behavior, and Social Structure 211

Pannill Camp

Two new titles from leading scholars, in quite different ways, suggest that the era of mass politics has had an enduring effect upon performance in theory and practice.