

Applying Theatre to Environmental Issues

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Environmental Affairs Symposium

Presentation Outline

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Definition of Applied Theatre

“Applied theatre is a broad umbrella term, developed in the 1990s to describe a wide range of participatory, non-traditional theatre practices... usually conducted in spaces not designed for theatre, with and for populations that would not typically constitute mainstream audiences (Jackson and Vine 2013).”

**What does scientific research
usually do?**

“It is this belief that we [educators] are necessary, that we can offer something which is, by definition, irreplaceable, that creates the crisis of engagement...If we could see that we are not necessary, then we might be able to form more useful human and political relations based on genuine dialogue (Balfour 2005).”

**How can we make theatre that
explores environmental
transformation?**

“Before a rich green dramaturgy can emerge, playwrights must educate themselves about ecological issues, and particularly about the ecology of their own places so that their work can grow from a personal relatedness to the land.” (May 2005)

“Green dramaturgy asks us to reconstitute the world... in such a way that the very boundaries between nature and culture, self and other, begin to dissolve... Thus, theater emerges not only as a means by which to investigate the long-standing humanist question “who are we?” but also the urgent ecological question “**where are we?**”.”(May 2005)

“When we write about the experiences of a group to which we do not belong, we should think about the ethics of our action, considering whether or not our work will be used to reinforce and perpetuate domination... The land is already inscribed with master narratives that silence some while privileging others (May 2005).”

Case Study #1

Artists/scholars go to Cove Park, Scotland



Source: <http://covepark.org/category/visual-art>

“The direct address of the thematic was substituted by an attentiveness to the surroundings and each other. Indeed, ‘it was this quality of attention that seemed crucial in moving us from discussing issues in the abstract, and towards an awareness of environment that was grounded in the experiential (Heddon and Mackey 2012).”

“The experiential demands a being ‘in’ place, rather than presuming to stand outside of or above it (Heddon and Mackey 2012).”

“If the grand narratives of environmental change –particularly those of apocalypse and tipping points –induce denial or paralysis, what might an encounter with the small make possible? (Heddon and Mackey 2012).”

Case Study #2

Detroit's *Ruinscapes*



Photograph by Yves Marchand and Romain Meffre

“... by being here, can we attempt to ‘grow into the world’ in such a way that this world can (at least) be invited to continue to ‘grow into us’? (Anderson 2012).”

“... the university theatre students who are part of the cast know that we are making a play about the return of wild animals to the city of Detroit. There is more space for the animals now that so many humans have left (Anderson 2012).”

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