

Editorial

In May 2008, a group of postgraduates organised a one-day conference, 'Objects of Engagement,' and this issue of *Platform* takes the same title, aiming to continue and develop ideas which were raised on the day. The issue opens with a critical response to the conference from some of its organisers, which provides a sense of the content and scope of the event, and reflections on the discourses and perspectives which it opened up. As the title suggests, 'Objects of Engagement' seeks to shed light to the different ways in which contemporary performance practice challenges and re-awakens audience perception by placing emphasis on the object's importance in the theatrical realm. The six articles in this issue propose diverse and original ways to probe different modes of audience engagement with objects, and pose questions about the object's status in various performance practices.

Bernadette Cronin's practice-based paper reflects on the development of *The Cabinet of Curiosities*, a work-in-progress which removes a host of objects from their quotidian contexts, and places them at the centre of the performance. As well as documenting the piece's genesis and evolution, it reflects on the ways in which objects in performance create stories, associations, and multiply meaning, becoming 'curious' compositions. Diego Pellecchia's paper revolves around the function of a very specific object: the fan of Noh theatre. By closely examining the fan's different uses and possible ways of interacting with the performer and the audience in Japanese Noh, Pellecchia vividly discusses how a single object can liberate meaning and ultimately become an object of encounter for both actors and audiences.

Mark Flisher's article uses his experience in *Opportunity Costs* as a framework for thinking about and critically approaching the object's relationship with the audience and performer. Considering the ways in which interactive performance might mobilise different kinds of engagement from both the audience and the performer, Flisher's piece aims to theorise the ways in which the object can be used to reconfigure the audience as 'participant,' and the performer as 'facilitator.' In 'Seeing through the Wall: Objectification between Resistance and Acceptance,' Nesreen Hussein seeks to address how the body in performance can challenge its reified status. Drawing from the field of visual arts and specifically from the work of Yael Davids, this paper utilises phenomenology and psychoanalysis in order to demonstrate how Davids' groundbreaking work disrupts fixed boundaries between activity and passivity, subjects and objects, performers and audience.

Jenny Lawson's practice-based piece puts forward the question of the performer's physical engagement with objects. Lawson discusses the complex relationships related to women, food and consumption that haunt female domestic roles and ultimately explores ways of re-appropriating and disturbing cultural practices through her own performance practice. In the issue's final paper, Amanda Sue Konkle considers the phenomenon of the Marilyn Monroe impersonator in contemporary America. Using Diana Taylor's concepts of 'archive' and 'repertoire,' as well as interview material with a range of Monroe impersonators, Konkle demonstrates how the image of Monroe has been rendered safely desirable and non-threateningly sexual.

We are pleased to be able to publish such a range and diversity of papers in this issue. We're also particularly pleased that so many of these articles offer practice-based perspectives which explore how current researchers in the field intervene in theatre practice by offering new methodological discourses to approach contemporary theatre and performance. This issue also sees a new development for

Platform, a 'Performance Response' section. These pieces, which we hope to continue publishing in future issues, are not reviews but critical, analytical reflections which offer the reader a specific and academic response to a particular performance. James Reynolds' piece concludes this issue, and is an eloquent consideration of Robert Lepage's most recent work, *Lipsynch*, which assesses the effects of the piece's 'museum pace' and thematic connections and consolidations.

As ever, the editors would like to thank the Department of Drama and Theatre at Royal Holloway, University of Minnesota Press, University of Toronto Press and Palgrave. Our thanks also go to all of the peer and academic reviewers for their invaluable contributions to this issue, and continuing support for *Platform*.

Rachel Clements and Marissia Fragou
(Issue Editors)