

Archival Events and Eventful Archives: In-Between Performance and Document

Performance art practice, curatorship and scholarship are currently suffering from an acute case of what Derrida (1994) has evocatively termed 'archive fever': archival projects – from the digitisation of performance documentation and re-enactments of past works to the staging of interventions into existing archives – are proliferating. This archivisation seems at odds with much performance theory of the last decade, which, following Phelan (1994), has defined performance as the always disappearing that by implication eludes what Derrida has identified as the archive's authoritarian quest to place matters under 'house arrest'. Recent re-evaluations of this stance (e.g. Taylor 2003 and Schneider 2001) have emphasized performance's own manner of remaining, but have continued to place performance as the 'repertoire' in opposition to what we may term the 'regnum' of the archive, a regime built on the primacy of visual reproduction.

Whilst acknowledging that performance studies has derived much of its disciplinary momentum from this opposition, this panel takes at its starting point performative practices that occupy a territory in between performance event and archive. The papers will consider how performances document and how archives perform by situating their argument within the framework of three current research projects which each are devoted to the archiving of performance work. The intention is to conceive of a performance archive not as a repository where documents 'repose', but as a transitional space which puts into play performance and its visual traces.

Participants: Paul Clarke, University of Bristol: "Ephemera: Performing the Archive"; Mike Pearson, Aberystwyth University: "Theatre/Archaeology: visualising past performance"; Heike Roms, Aberystwyth University (Convenor): "Repeating Singularity: Archiving Performance Art"