

CALL FOR PROPOSALS

According to the *OED* 'In Extremis' means 'on the point of death [or] in extreme circumstances; at the point of extreme hardship or suffering' (*OED* 2023). So, what does it mean then to call for papers for an issue of *Performance Research* with this title? If 'In Extremis' is an end point, or a point of no return, what role might performance or artistic work play in thinking through this situation, accepting it or indeed rendering it artistically?

In some respects, we could argue that 'In Extremis' is about art's obsession with end times, with the ongoing negotiation that takes place between the impossibility of representing them and the incessant desire to keep trying.

If we think of performance in terms of this notion we might conjure Dante's *Inferno*, Artaud's Theatre of Cruelty, Beckett's *The Unnamable* (*L'Innommable*), the work of Raffaello Sanzio and Romeo Castellucci or the best of Greek tragedy, for example. We might imagine dismembered bodies, bodily fluids, torture, pain, loss and fiery excess. If, however, we read 'In Extremis' as at the point of 'extreme hardship or suffering' rather than the point of 'death' how do acts of performance and art practice more broadly assist us in understanding these scenarios? Might performance 'in extremis' advance and propose new solutions to the status quo or radically disrupt its apparent inevitability? For Edward Casey, a faint hope rests in the necessity of shared responsibility. He explains:

The contemporary world remains very much on the edge – above all, on the edge of its own destruction: if not by nuclear fission, then from rising oceans and the other effects of climate change. No one can pretend to know of easy ways to remove us from the precarity that has become our common lot. But we can at least think together, indeed we *must* think together, in order to reflect more fully on the fateful circumstances in which all humans, in fact all species of living being, now find themselves. (Casey 2017: 366)

So how might 'think(ing) together' creatively be better imagined or realized through the medium of performance, to respond to the myriad extremes that surround and engulf? If we consider that performance plays a role in proactively increasing public awareness of dangerously encroaching

Lyndell Brown and Charles Green, *The last cool skies*, 2022, oil on linen, 100 x 100 cms. Courtesy ARC One Gallery, Melbourne.



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IN EXTREMIS

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edges, how might it rehearse redress? Can we count on performance to be flagrant and partisan, able to affect change? If we envisage performance 'in extremis', might it be a way to disrupt Casey's predictions? Is this already happening? If so, what artists and companies are disrupting, intervening and illuminating proposed scenarios? How are edges manipulated, challenged or subverted? What is the impact of this on audiences, and even on society?

Since we are in the midst of 'slow violence' (Nixon 2011) from multiple sources, what are the artistic practices that build resilience in the biosphere? And who is the 'we' that will do this? More specifically, when, where and by whom do the creative arts play a role, for better or worse, effective or not, in foreshadowing futures and building resilience in communities and cultures. Indeed, it could even be argued that competing catastrophes have already made the paradigm of avant-garde resistance obsolescent.

Many, including novelist Amitav Ghosh, are arguing that imagining utopic and dystopic futures is sheer indulgence. While Rob Nixon understands 'slow violence' in terms of climate and environmental change, other extremes are competing with this reality. There are many forces of doom to select from, rail against and worry about. The list is long and includes, but is not limited to, famine, civil wars, the rise of artificial intelligence (AI), climate catastrophe and extreme weather, fascist politics, the 1 per cent's agglomeration of yet more wealth, the pervasive power of technology to surveil, cybercrime, nuclear war, as well as future and present pandemics. What kinds of artwork are being produced to animate, resist, consider and negotiate these forces? Ghosh has long been considering these issues, and he writes,

We are teetering on the edge of a new era in which many of our past habits of thought and practice have become blinders which prevent us from perceiving the realities of our present situation. Writers, artists and thinkers everywhere are still struggling to find the concepts and ideas that will make it possible to engage with the unprecedented events of this new era. (Ghosh 2019)

This issue of *Performance Research* challenges us to consider what practices, performances and other creative acts stand out in mobilizing extreme techniques, forms and modes, or alternatively, what forms are generating art that responds to external extremes, or the inevitability of end times, in productive and inspiring ways. Does their resonance reside in drawing attention to the status quo or in attempting to destroy it or rejecting it? Performance has a role to play in illuminating in graphic and truly disturbing ways the new world we are entering. It might also have a responsibility to undermine doom scenarios and to trouble them by demanding political action and calling for change.

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We welcome submissions in the form of essays, manifestos and artists' pages, from artists, art workers and scholars of performance and art history, but also scholars from sociology, philosophy, politics and law, the sciences, cultural studies, astrology and other disciplines. We are interested in submissions about performance and, in this issue, about art. We want to consider the concept of extremes both within and beyond performance spaces. How do we understand, live with, react to and interrogate extremes? What artists are leading the way? What artistic practices might be imagined seeing the possibilities in extremes, to productively prepare for them?

Contributions might consider questions such as:

- Where, when and why have artists and companies pushed their art to the extreme in terms of form, and to what end?
- What art now truly engages productively with catastrophic extremity either within or beyond the performance or exhibition space?
- Is AI threatening the existence of artistic practice and the idea of a company, a collective or community of practitioners, for example?
- Is the continued attempt to represent end times futile?
- Is embracing extremes a sustainable way to proceed in practically or ethically producing work?
- Is there a role for performance in preparing society for the point of no return? If so, what examples might be found?
- What extremes have been successfully negotiated through performance or art in the past?
- What new work might be imagined or planned that can intervene in productive ways in this scenario?
- Does this catastrophic world demand radical new ways of thinking about the value of performance?

Please send an abstract (250–300 words) with a short bio (100–120 words).

All proposals, submissions and general enquiries should be sent direct to Performance Research at: info@performance-research.org

Issue-related enquiries should be directed to the issue editors via: h.grehan@murdoch.edu.au

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References

Casey, Edward (2017) *The World on Edge*, Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.

Ghosh, Amitav (2019) 'Asian perspectives on climate change',

www.amitavghosh.com/docs/TGD/Asian_Perspectives_on_Climate_Change.pdf, accessed 25 August 2023.

Nixon, Rob (2011) *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of The Poor*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Oxford English Dictionary (2023) 'in extremis, adv.', www.oed.com/view/Entry/53032205?redirectedFrom=In+Extremis#eid, accessed 25 August 2023.

GUIDELINES FOR SUBMISSIONS

- Before submitting a proposal, we encourage you to visit our website – www.performance-research.org – and familiarize yourself with the journal.
- As well as substantial essays, interviews and documentation we welcome proposals using visual, graphic and photographic forms, including photo essays and original artwork which extends the possibilities for the visual page
- Proposals should be created in Word – this can be standard Microsoft Word .doc or .docx via alternative word processing packages. Proposals should not be sent as PDFs unless they contain complex designs re artist pages.
- The text for proposals should not exceed one page, circa 500 words.
- A short 100-word author bio should be included at the end of the proposal text.
- Submission of images and other visual material is welcome provided that there is a maximum of five images. If practical, images should be included on additional pages within the Word document.
- Proposals should be sent by email to info@performance-research.org.
- Please include your surname in the file name of the document you send.
- Please include the issue title and number in the subject line of your email.
- Submission of a proposal will be taken to imply that it presents original, unpublished work not under consideration for publication elsewhere.
- If your proposal is accepted, you will be invited to submit an article in first draft by the deadline indicated below. On final acceptance of a completed article, you will be asked to sign an author agreement in order for your work to be published in *Performance Research*.
- Due the large number of submissions we receive, we are unable to provide feedback on declined proposals.

Schedule for this issue:

- Proposals: November 2023
- Decisions: December 2023
- First drafts: February 2024
- Final drafts: May 2024
- Publication: September 2024

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