



Special thanks are due to our partners in the “Show Me the World” section: Tilmann Broszat, director of SPIELART Festival, and Sigrid Gareis, the conference codirector and this section’s guest coeditor, as well as to Wenzel Bilger from Goethe-Institut New York. “Show Me the World” was a project of the SPIELART Festival and the Goethe Institutes in Bogotá, Cairo, Lagos, Munich, New York, São Paulo, and Singapore, as well as the NRW KULTURSEKRETARIAT, the Impulse Theater Festival, Theaterwissenschaft München, the Rignlokschuppen Ruhr, and the Kulturreferat der Landshauptstadt München.

Up Front

CURATING CRISIS

Tom Sellar

This is the second of two issues *Theater* is devoting to the curation of performance, a highly contested field whose current redefinition holds major implications for theater, dance, and other live forms. Our first issue (*Theater* 44, no. 2, 2014) explored the historical precedents for institutional and independent curators specializing in these forms and looked at why the new nomenclature matters at a moment when forms have converged and why the limitations of producing and presenting structures have become apparent.

This issue of *Theater* continues that conversation with an additional set of interviews with practitioners—such as Boris Charmatz, who redesignated his national dance center in France a “dancing museum”—whose initiatives have opened up new possibilities in the cultural arena. But it also attempts to open the discussion to broader contexts and more socially applied curation: for instance, Thomas F. DeFrantz, in his opening essay, calls for a cultivation of community and a recentering around minoritarian forms, a shift that would embody a new ethics and reflect new American demographic and cultural realities.

In the special section, “Show Me the World,” we present three essays adapted and expanded from the 2015 Munich convening of the same name. Held at the Haus der Kunst and under the auspices of the biannual SPIELART Festival, the convening sought to address questions about transnationalism in curating. With enviable resources and infrastructures, European cultural institutions dominate the globe’s artistic sector—along with their curators and their preferences and political priorities. How can curation of performance be reimagined to reflect a postcolonial present and future? The essays in this section use theory to stake out new, perhaps more fertile ground for performance, looking to South Africa, Brazil, and elsewhere for an uncolonized and reawakened political imagination. Initiatives such as Shared Spaces—a network of artists, curators, and other professionals founded in 2013, convened in Kinshasa, Ramallah, Zurich, and Durban—have attempted to bridge continental divides. “Show Me the World” looks more analytically at the discourses embedded in curatorial perspectives. The initiative’s transnational emphasis suggests something hopeful: an expanded context and widened inquiry for live performance as it makes its way out of theaters and galleries. To address the social, economic, and environmental crises besetting the world today, which know no borders, curators will need to reimagine their practices accordingly.

Students stand on top of the base that once held the statue of Cecil John Rhodes, Cape Town, 2015.
Photo: Roger Sedres /Alamy