

## Modern Visuality and 19th-Century Performance (online/Exeter, 31 Aug–3 Sep 21)

Online and/or University of Exeter, Aug 31–Sep 3, 2021

Deadline: May 17, 2021

[theatreandvisualculture19.wordpress.com](https://theatreandvisualculture19.wordpress.com)

Patricia Smyth

### Modern Visuality and Nineteenth-Century Performance

The nineteenth century is associated with the transformation of traditional ways of life, rapid technological advances, radical changes to the environment, and the emergence of new conceptions of subjectivity. Theatre was central to the culture of this period, so how far did it reflect or shape the experience of modernity? The Modernist experiments of the latter part of the century used to take centre stage in discussions about modernity, but how far can the popular, commercial theatrical culture of this period be seen as the locus of an emergent modern aesthetic?

This is the third and final conference of our project investigating nineteenth-century stage spectacle, the viewing practices associated with it, and its relationship to the wider visual culture of this period. With this event, we return to one of our core concerns: to consider nineteenth-century spectacle as a new and experimental form and as both a facet and product of modernity. We welcome ideas for papers on all aspects of the visual culture of theatre, from theatrical ephemera to links with the world of 'high' art, to new spectacular and immersive technologies. We particularly welcome submissions that bring questions of methodology to the fore, offering new contexts through which we may understand the theatrical spectacle of this period.

Possible questions/themes include, but are not limited to:

- How far were increased connections between theatre and visual art in this period rooted in popular (as opposed to elite) culture?
- What attitudes, prejudices, and/or desires were brought to bear in discussions of theatrical spectacle in this period?
- How did the transformation of urban space and other aspects of modernity impact on theatrical spectacle and its reception?
- What is the relationship of theatre and performance to immersive technologies such as the Panorama and the Diorama?
- How can theories of perception and visuality enable us to rethink the nature of theatrical spectacle in this period?
- Popular spectacle continues to be associated with the notion of 'passive viewing' and political inertia. What evidence is there for the agency of spectators in the active construction of meaning?
- How did the spaces of nineteenth-century performance prime spectators for certain types of engagement?

The deadline for proposals is 17 May 2021.

We are hoping that this will be a hybrid conference with the option to present either in person or remotely; however, this will of course be subject to developments this year and we may need to go fully online. Having taken last year's 'Embodied Spectatorship' conference online, we will be including in this event papers originally scheduled for 2020, but which could not be fitted into the online programme. For that reason, we are only able to accept a limited number of new papers in response to this new call.

Given current uncertainty about whether the conference will be hybrid or fully online, we assume that, in submitting a paper, you are committed to taking part in either capacity. Also, since this will be an international event, we expect that all participants will be happy to have the recording of their paper available to delegates for a limited time (password protected).

Keynote speakers:

Michael Gamer, University of Pennsylvania

David Taylor, Oxford University

To read the full call for papers, submit an abstract, join our mailing list, and find out more about the project, please visit our website <https://theatreandvisualculture19.wordpress.com>

This conference is organized by Jim Davis, Kate Holmes, Kate Newey, and Patricia Smyth as part of a three-year AHRC-funded project, 'Theatre and Visual Culture in the Long Nineteenth Century', examining theatre spectacle and spectatorship in this period. The main focus is on Britain, but France provides a comparative study.

For queries, please contact Patricia Smyth, P.M.Smyth@Warwick.ac.uk.

Reference:

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