

CALL FOR PAPERS

CATR Workshop: Energizing the Past through Performance

Conveners:

Roberta Barker (Dalhousie University) and Marlis Schweitzer (York University)

In *Performing Remains: Art and War in Times of Theatrical Reenactment*, Rebecca Schneider challenges traditional notions of linear time. Drawing examples from the experiences of Civil War re-enactors, she calls attention to moments when “times touch” and distinctions between past, present, and future collapse or fold over one another. Schneider is but one of a number of scholars pushing theatre and performance historians to rethink their relationship to the past and to develop new methods for analyzing historical documents and other “matter.” In the Canadian context, scholars such as Jill Carter, Heather Davis-Fisch, and Ric Knowles have foregrounded Indigenous understandings of time and place in their efforts to decolonize linear historical narratives, many of which continue to inform the “imagined communities” that we associate with “Canada.” Alongside these studies, a surge of scholarly interest in historical reenactment at museums, heritage sites, and related institutions has led scholars to think critically about the various ways that performance has been enfolded into public history projects in order to serve larger (sometimes laudable, sometimes questionable) political agendas.

Building on these and other studies, this 90 minute workshop asks: how can performance energize the past and offer new insights into historical events, practices, gestures, and related lived experiences? What can performance disclose about the past that other research methods cannot, and how can historians use performance in tandem with other methods to enrich their understanding of their research subjects? What risks are inherent in performance-based historical inquiry and how can historians address these when undertaking their research?

Workshop structure:

In advance of the workshop, participants will be asked to read a selection of articles/ book chapters assigned by the conveners. This will ensure that everyone has some shared vocabulary for undertaking the work. Workshop participants will then be asked to bring one historical document/ source they’re using in their research, which they would like to explore in/through performance (e.g. photograph, illustration, sheet music, script, letter, newspaper clipping, audio or video recording, etc.). In the first 30 minutes of the workshop, participants will briefly discuss the readings in order to identify various techniques for animating the past through performance. Participants will then have 30 minutes to work with volunteer performers to animate the document/source in some way (e.g. creating a tableau, playing a short scene). In the remaining 30 minutes, participants will discuss their work and identify any major discoveries/ challenges.

How to apply:

We have limited space for this workshop so to secure a spot, please submit a short (100-150 word) statement of interest identifying why you’d like to attend the workshop (e.g. how does it relate to your research? what are you hoping to

discover?) and outlining in 1-2 sentences the kind of material you'd like to bring with you for exploration through performance. Send these statements to **Marlis Schweitzer** (schweit@yorku.ca) and **Roberta Barker** (barkerr@Dal.Ca) by **January 15, 2016**.