

# **The Performance and Performativity of Violence**

An interdisciplinary conference hosted by The *Performance of the Real* Research Theme  
**The University of Otago, Dunedin, New Zealand, 19-21 June, 2017**

Keynotes:

**Professor Bruce Johnson** (Macquarie University, Australia and University of Turku, Finland)

**Dr Lisa Fitzpatrick** (University of Ulster, Ireland)

While violence has always permeated society, today it is expressed and constructed in an ever-greater variety of ways. Due to globalization and technological advances during the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, performative violence now has an unprecedented range and effect. Jeffrey S. Juris argues that where direct political violence is meant to cause death or injury to human beings, performative violence involves 'symbolic ritual enactments of violent interaction with a predominant emphasis on communication and cultural expression' (2005: 415). Thus, protest violence or terrorist acts are often staged in part with an aim to capture media attention (*ibid*), and may involve further aims such as intimidation and gaining 'compliance from adversaries' (Zech and Kelly 2015: 85). At the same time, the potential for artistically bounded performance to be used in more brutalizing ways, or to depict increasing levels of violence has increased. With this come questions of ethics and spectatorship. The performance and performativity of violence is thus of pressing concern.

This interdisciplinary conference aims to draw together scholars from a wide variety of fields to examine the ethics, politics and nature of representations/orchestrations of violence, as well as what makes the performance and performativity of violence particularly compelling, pervasive and or problematic in the current age.

In addition to conventional paper presentations, we also invite papers on the theme with a performance or creative component.

We encourage papers relating but not limited to the following topics and questions:

- Violence performance and spectatorship
- Performative violence used to serve political or terrorists ends
- Is there an actual cause-effect relationship between performance and violence? Do performances cause violence? Are they an instrument or tool of violence?
- When performance has violent effects, is any form of reparation due to the victims of such violence? If so, who should assume responsibility (users, performers, the creative industries, the mass media)? What are (or should be) the rights of victims of performative assault?
- The performativity of institutional or structural violence
- What are the causes of performance's violent/pacifying effects? How many of these effects are due to the performance's volume, to aesthetic considerations, to content etc.?
- Do different people experience violence in relation to performance differently? If so, how and why?
- How effective is performative violence? Does it achieve its desired results? Does it have unintended and perhaps undesirable consequences?
- Performative violence related to
  - The ethics and politics of representations/stagings
  - Culturally codified or expected performances/behaviours

We welcome abstracts for papers, performances, panels or other presentation formats. Please submit a 300-word abstract of your presentation and a 150-word biography for each presenter by **May 3, 2017**. Please send us your abstract as a Word document, and use your surname as the document title. Please clearly indicate the title of your presentation, as well as your full name (first name, surname) and institutional affiliation (if relevant). Please send your abstracts or any enquiries to the Theme administrator, Massi, at [performance.real@otago.ac.nz](mailto:performance.real@otago.ac.nz). There are a few small travel bursaries available for postgrad students coming from overseas. Please contact the theme administrator for details.

The Performance of the Real is a University of Otago funded interdisciplinary Research Theme. The project is to investigate what it is about representations and performances of the real that make them particularly compelling and pervasive in our current age. At its core is the study of how performance/performativity, in its many cultural, aesthetic, political and social forms and discourses, represents, critiques, stages, and constructs/reconstructs the real, as well as the ethical, social and form-related issues involved in such acts.

**Website:** <http://www.otago.ac.nz/performance-of-the-real>

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