

**PRESS RELEASE
START**

**Department of Visual Cultures
Goldsmiths, University of London**

**Drama, Theatre and Performance
Roehampton University, London**

Live Art Development Agency, London

jointly announce

Performance Matters

www.thisisperformancematters.co.uk

Performance Matters is a three-year creative research project starting in April 2009, funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC).

Bringing together artists, curators and academics to investigate the cultural value of performance, the project is a collaboration between Goldsmiths, University of London, Roehampton University and the Live Art Development Agency.

Performance Matters is co-directed by Dr. Gavin Butt of the Department of Visual Cultures, Goldsmiths, Prof. Adrian Heathfield of Drama, Theatre and Performance, Roehampton and Lois Keidan of the Live Art Development Agency.

Performance Matters seeks to explore the contemporary values associated with performance at a time when it has increased resonance as a cultural phenomenon, and as a concept and metaphor in critical discourse. Profound shifts in the cultural status and presence of performance have recently been manifested through a number of related phenomena including the museological, archival and curatorial assimilation of live art; an increased profile of performance aesthetics within visual arts, theatre and contemporary dance practice; a 'performative turn' in critical theory and cultural studies; and a re-evaluation of performance phenomena that have hitherto been excluded by, or marginalised within, critical consideration.

Against the backdrop of the contemporary institutional, theoretical and market embrace of performance, the project asks whether performance is now being taken seriously in culture more broadly, how it has come to be affirmed, and how it may possess the potential to refashion the very ways in which we perform the ascription of value.

Convened between departments of Visual Culture and Drama, Theatre and Performance, the investigation will move between different academic traditions, as well as crossing the educational and cultural sectors, with the active partnership of the Live Art Development Agency, working as co-curators in key public venues.

Performance Matters will move through three themed years of interlinked research activities. In its first year, working under the title *Performing Idea*, it will investigate the shifting relations between performance practice and discourse, event and writing, by staging critical and creative exchanges between leading international figures in the performance studies field. In its second year, under the title *Trashing Performance*, marginal and degraded performance practices will be explored in order to produce critical and cultural innovations through non-institutional manifestations and informal disseminations. The final year of the project, framed under the theme *Potentials of Performance*, will culminate its processes in the creation of a book that will focus on questions of performance affect, political and cultural possibility.

Performance Matters will lead to a series of commissioned dialogue works between renowned academics and artists; two public international symposia in leading arts venues; two new PhD studentships and an exciting series of practice-based workshops between early-career artists and leading academic and artistic figures. The legacy and critical impact of these processes will be ensured through a substantial and broadly disseminated publication.

The project and its processes will be of interest to an array of scholars, artists, curators, cultural workers and audiences across the fields of visual art, performance, theatre and dance. By addressing, and reaching, such a diverse and broad audience in this manner, *Performance Matters* seeks to generate a new field of possibilities for research on, and as, contemporary performance; one which will find further fruit in the future practices of new generations of artists, performers and theorists.

For further information on *Performance Matters* contact info@thisisperformancematters.co.uk

Each year the AHRC provides funding from the Government to support research and postgraduate study in the arts and humanities, from archaeology and English literature to design and dance. Only applications of the highest quality and excellence are funded and the range of research supported by this investment of public funds not only provides social and cultural benefits but also contributes to the economic success of the UK. For further information on the AHRC, please see our website www.ahrc.ac.uk

Gavin Butt is the author of numerous books and essays on performance, queer culture and visual art. He is Senior Lecturer in Visual Cultures at Goldsmiths University of London. For further information see: www.goldsmiths.ac.uk/visual-cultures/g-butt.php

Adrian Heathfield has written extensively on contemporary performance and live art. He is Professor of Performance and Visual Culture at Roehampton University, London. For further information see: www.adrianheathfield.net

Lois Keidan is a former director of live art at Institute of Contemporary Arts London and regularly presents talks about Live Art in UK and internationally. She is Co-founder and Director of the Live Art Development Agency. For Further information see: www.thisisliveart.co.uk



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