

IAF SPACE EDUCATION AND OUTREACH SYMPOSIUM (E1)  
Space for All: Decolonial Practices in Space (2)

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TOWARDS DECOLONIAL SPACE PERFORMANCE: METHODOLOGIES FROM THEATRE AND  
PERFORMANCE STUDIES

**Abstract**

As with other disciplines in the arts, humanities, and social sciences, theatre and performance studies have welcomed a considerable increase in our scholarly focus on decolonial theory and praxis. Arguments put forward by Sruti Bala (2017), Stephanie Teves (2018), and Nesreen Hussein (2022), among others, have indicated the need to revise the discipline at a methodological level to account for decolonial gestures present in dance, theatre, and performance practice and theory, and that call for the interrogation of colonial epistemes as expressed in and through performance. Key to these arguments is the emphasis on thinking performance broadly (i.e., both as an artistic object and as a methodological framework) to appreciate the politics of land/country when expressed by artists and cultural practitioners. In this presentation, I will introduce these debates to the IAF community and extend them to suggest that critical notions in theatre and performance studies, such as “the repertoire,” “scenarios,” and “embodiment,” may lend mileage to space studies to address the decolonial gestures performed by artists and cultural practitioners who, while may not readily appear legible as members of the naturally exclusive “cosmic elites” (Dickens Ormrod, 2016), nevertheless challenge the very notion of “outer space” in their work. Examples will include Mexican queer performance artist Lukas Avendaño, Indonesian artist Venza Christ, the 2019 Puerto Rico protests, and land acknowledgments performed at the University of California Los Angeles, USA. In doing so, the presentation will argue that central to the pursuit of decolonial praxes concerning outer space is the upsetting of the epistemological and disciplinary boundaries that define who gets to be in the “inner” space of space flight.

References • Bala, S. “Decolonising Theatre and Performance Studies: Tales from the classroom.” *Tijdschrift voor Genderstudies*, 20(3), 2017, p. 333-345.

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