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(Manifestoes for a Theatre of Matter)

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requirements for a degree of Masters in Design
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By Sam Trubridge

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Abstract

This thesis revisits the manifestos of Twentieth Century theatre makers in order to establish a manifesto for performance design in the Twenty-First Century. It proposes that a material theatre is necessary in order to re-sensitise its audience and counter the ‘de-realisation’ that has infected and desensitised popular notions of war and global trauma. At the beginning of this new century there are new crises to mirror those that Antonin Artaud, Tadeusz Kantor, Peter Brook, and Jerzy Grotowski responded to in their own theatre and writings. With reference to the work of these artists this manifesto will construct an argument and rationale for ‘The Theatre of Matter’: a visual and spatial language for performance that affirms and implicates the material bodies of audience, performer, and space. By this design performance can become a complicit setting: the place of cruelty, ritual, realisation, and restoration that Helene Cixous calls “the place of crime and place of pardon” (Drain, 1995, p.340). Research through two realised productions of ‘The Restaurant of Many Orders’, reflection upon these productions, and conceptual drawings will make it possible to challenge and review the manifesto; thus setting it into motion within a practical framework.

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Charles and Elizabeth at the printery, Massey
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