

Sami Henrik Haapala:

Creators of Given Worlds (2018)

Actor, participant and co-created meaning in participatory and immersive performances

Abstract

My research concluding at a Doctor of Arts (Theatre) degree aims to expand acting technique to correspond to the needs of performances activating spectators in new ways. Performances activating members of audience in new ways have become commonplace internationally. This has given rise to a need for the actor to be able to work in new kinds of performance contexts in addition to the traditional proscenium arch setting. The research answers to the need to map out the acting methods used especially in participatory and immersive performances.

By participatory I mean in this context performances in which the participants take explicitly part in the performance. By immersive I mean in this context performances where the spectator is situated at the center of the performance, but not necessarily as an active agent.

Participatory and immersive performances give the audience a new kind of sense of meaning. They open a way for the audience to participate in the process of creating meaning in a work of art in a corporeal, intimate and personal way. In the context of this research I see this to also have impact on the societal level. By creating new varieties of interaction participatory performances create new means of relating to each other in a polyphonic society. They may open more meaningful ways of relating in a society which at the moment enables passivity and neglect. Despite this potential societal impact the main aim of the research is to extend the possibilities of art.

The research is accomplished by combining current research and current methods with my own artistic practice. The research has a critical view on acting. At the same time it maps out, conceptualizes and creates suggestions for new theory and practice for acting. The research consists of three artistic parts and a reflective part in the form of a participatory multimedia thesis that will be published online in English.