

abstract:

Ec scenography in the global classroom: creating sustainable worlds for theatre through international collaboration

This presentation shares the process of and subsequent impact of embedding ec scenographic thinking into the education of tertiary theatre students. As part of a Global Networked Learning initiative between York University (Canada), Griffith University (Australia) and Queensland University of Technology (Australia), twenty-five university students were trained in sustainable, ecologically conscious approaches to designing for live performance across 2021/22. Students were guided by professional designers and educators in scenography, sustainability and technology, working in partnership with the 2021 Climate Change Theatre Action (CCTA) project to produce seed design concepts for new climate plays for exhibition at the World Stage Design Festival in Calgary in August 2022.

As ec scenographers, we are deeply committed to reducing the environmental harm of our field, both in professional and academic settings. By encapsulating the “integration of an ecological ethic with performance design”, ec scenography calls for “new approach to theatre production that overturns traditional production models” (Beer 2021 pp. 4, 18). Building on this call, our project sought to overturn traditional models of design training also by employing the three cornerstones of ec scenographic practice—co-creation, celebration and circulation—in a higher education context. This presentation will detail our pedagogical approach while sharing the outcomes of adopting an ecological ethic within the training of the next generation of designers.

bios:

Tessa Rixon is a practitioner-researcher in intermedial performance, digital scenography & Australian performance design. As Lecturer in Scenography at Queensland University of Technology, Tessa's work promotes new modes of integrating established and emergent technologies into live performance; exploring the potentiality of authenticity within digital scenography; and showcasing Australian performance design practice and histories. Her latest research explores the impact of the pandemic on digital pedagogies within the creative arts, and the role of technology within ec scenography.

Dr Tanja Beer is an ecological designer, community artist and Senior Lecturer in Design at the Queensland College of Art, Griffith University, Australia. With more than 20 years professional experience, Tanja has created over 70 designs for a variety of theatre companies, events, exhibitions and festivals in Australia and overseas.

Dr Ian Garrett is designer, producer, educator, and researcher in the field of sustainability in arts and culture. He is Associate Professor of Ecological Design for Performance at York University, director of the Centre for Sustainable Practice in the Arts and Producer for Toasterlab, a mixed reality performance collective.