

**PSi 16 Performing Publics**  
**9–13 June 2010, Toronto, Canada**  
**Organized by York University and the Ontario College of Art & Design**

PSi 16, Performing Publics, will take place in downtown Toronto as part of a collaboration between York University's Faculty of Fine Arts and the Ontario College of Art & Design. The conference will investigate the power of performance to intervene in, reshape, and reinvigorate the public sphere at the beginning of the twenty-first century. We invite proposals that take up notions of "public" in a variety of ways, pointing to the critically generative and fraught aspects of term as it has been adopted within performance studies.

The conference will theorize the relationship between performance, "official" public culture (public culture framed and sanctioned by state and/or corporate institutions), and the production of what Michael Warner calls "counter-publics" (social formations developed in opposition to the discourses and interests of the official public sphere). As such, it will explore the coming together of individuals as a social totality – as a community, nation, organization, etc. – and the enactment of public as a form of social activism, as a means of rehearsing, querying, and producing alternative forms of local and global citizenship. In both contexts, performance has the potential to frame affective and critically nuanced responses to public events, issues and crises and thus to model politically and ethically engaged forms of public life. The conference also seeks to problematize the idea of "publics" as it has been applied to performance by exploring the limitations of this term and the kinds of social exclusions that it often has been used to rationalize.

Guiding questions will include: How are we hailed by various publics, and how does this shape our behaviors and social interactions? How are publics spatially and temporally constituted? In what ways do publics participate in forms of activism, civic engagement, and "poetic world-making" (Warner)? What affects and effects are produced by such utopian interventions? Our discussion of these issues will reflect the vibrant history of urban intervention and "public spacing" movements in Toronto in which artists and activists have worked together to change the shape of our shared local and civic spaces.

Proposals might address (but are not limited to):

- publics and counter-publics
- issues of public space
- performance activism
- performance and civic engagement
- performance and citizenship
- performance as an act of public witness
- performance and public relations
- popular culture and the public sphere
- the audience (live or virtual) as public
- public events: rallies, protests, flash mobs, etc.
- the relationship between the public and the private
- the relationship between space, community, and memory
- the role of gender, sexuality, race, and class in performing publics

- public feelings and affects
- performative utopias and utopian performatives
- site-specific performance and urban intervention

The conference will be staged during Toronto's annual Luminato Festival, and will provide several opportunities for participants to experience and reflect on its dynamic arts programming. Luminato is a multidisciplinary festival that celebrates music, dance, theatre, film, literature, and the visual arts, and showcases the work of local, national, and international artists. As part of its mandate to offer "accidental encounters with art," Luminato is committed to presenting a variety of free events in public spaces. These public art projects run concurrently with exciting performance premieres at venues throughout the city.

### **Paper proposals (Due November 15):**

Proposals for individual papers should include a 250-word abstract and detail any AV requirements. Conference papers are normally allotted 20 minutes.

### **Panel proposals (Due November 15):**

Panel proposals and proposals for other discursive formats (roundtable discussions, position papers, seminars, etc.) should include a 250-word abstract and detail any AV requirements. Panels are normally allotted between 1.5-2 hours. Please provide names, contact information, and affiliations of participants. Please also provide titles of individual papers and identify the chair of the session.

### **Shift proposals (Due November 1):**

Continuing the explorations of P*Si* 15, we welcome proposals for "shifts": innovative presentation formats that push the boundaries of the well-constructed panel. These may include workshops, performative presentations, and interactive events. We welcome shifts that engage with "Performing Publics"—for example, site-specific art projects that activate public space, engage with Toronto's urban landscape, or explore the immediate environs of the conference site. Shift proposals should include a 250-word abstract. Provide names, contact information, and affiliations of participants. Identify the curator(s) and duration, and detail any (minimal) audio-visual support required to realize the project. Please note that shifts and regular panels will receive the same basic level of AV support. There will be a limited number of places for shifts at P*Si* 16 so please be sure to reply by the deadline.

All proposals can be submitted online by filling out the P*Si* 16 "Proposal Form" at: <http://www.psi16.com>

Questions about the conference can be directed to: [info@psi16.com](mailto:info@psi16.com)