

The Theatre of Death - The Uncanny in Mimesis: Tadeusz Kantor, Aby Warburg, and an Iconology of the Actor (Performance Philosophy)

Mischa Twitchin

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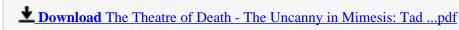
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This book is concerned with such questions as the following: What is the life of the past in the present? How might "the theatre of death" and "the uncanny in mimesis" allow us to conceive of the afterlife of a supposedly ephemeral art practice? How might a theatrical iconology engage with such fundamental social relations as those between the living and the dead?

Distinct from the dominant expectation that actors should appear life-like onstage, why is it that some theatre artists – from Craig to Castellucci – have conceived of the actor in the image of the dead? Furthermore, how might an iconology of the actor allow us to imagine the afterlife of an apparently ephemeral art practice? This book explores such questions through the implications of the twofold analogy proposed in its very title: as theatre is to the uncanny, so death is to mimesis; and as theatre is to mimesis, so death is to the uncanny.

Walter Benjamin once observed that: "The point at issue in the theatre today can be more accurately defined in relation to the stage than to the play. It concerns the filling-in of the orchestra pit. The abyss which separates the actors from the audience like the dead from the living..." If the relation between the living and the dead can be thought of in terms of an analogy with ancient theatre, how might avant-garde theatre be thought of in terms of this same relation "today"?



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