

**MEMORIA
PERFORMANCE
E SCENE DEL
CONFLITTO**

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SEMINARIO

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Staging Difficult Pasts

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ore 14.30**

COLLEGAMENTO ON LINE



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Michał Kobiąłka is Professor of Theatre in the Department of Theatre Arts & Dance at the University of Minnesota. He has published over 100 articles, essays and reviews on medieval, eighteenth-century and contemporary European theatre, as well as theatre historiography.

He is the author of two books on Tadeusz Kantor's theatre, *A Journey Through Other Spaces: Essays and Manifestos, 1944-1990* [University of California Press, 1993] and *Further on, Nothing: Tadeusz Kantor's Theatre* (University of Minnesota Press, 2009). His book on the early medieval drama and theatre, *This Is My Body: Representational Practices in the Early Middle Ages* (University of Michigan Press, 1999) received the 2000 ATHE Annual Research Award for Outstanding Book in Theatre Practice and Pedagogy. He is the editor of *Of Borders and Thresholds: Theatre History, Practice, and Theory* (University of Minnesota Press, 1999), a co-editor (with Barbara Hanawalt) of *Medieval Practices of Space* (University of Minnesota Press, 2000), a co-editor (with Rosemarie Bank) of *Theatre/Performance Historiography: Time, Space, Matter* (Palgrave, 2015), co-editor (with Natalia Zarzecka) of *Tadeusz Kantor's Memory: Other Pasts, Other Futures* (Polish Theatre Perspectives Press, 2018), a co-editor (with Katarzyna Fazan and Bryce Lease) of *A History of Polish Theatre* (Cambridge University Press, 2022; the book received the honorary mention for the 2023 Anna M. Cienciala Best Edited Book Award/PIASA), and a co-editor (with Maria M. Delgado and Bryce Lease) of a collection of essays, *Staging Difficult Pasts: Transnational Memory, Theatres, and Museums* (Routledge 2024).

The Meaning of Working Through the Past: Of Collateral Archives and Awkward Objects

Recent contestations of the archive ask for a practice that exhibits the mediality of the archive—that is to say, an exploration of how the archive has been crafted by a certain experience of time, space, and matter, which are implicit in it, conditions it, and thereby has to be elucidated. On the one hand the encounter with the objects housed in the archive resonates with Walter Benjamin's observation that "the world is present, and indeed ordered, in each of his objects". On the other hand, the encounter with the objects housed in the archive reveals their organization in the form of temporal layers, which have different origins and duration, move at different speeds, have different non-synchronous and asymmetrical depths; as well as their organization in the form of spatial layers, bringing forth contradictions in/within space of their representation (the past) and contradictions of/between spaces of their representation (the past and the present).

To substantiate this theoretical discussion, this talk will look at the exhibition, "Awkward Objects of Genocide," opened at the Ethnographic Museum in Krakow in December 2018. It showcased how local, "naïve" artists in Poland attempted to represent the events they witnessed during World War II. The objects on display in the Museum, such as for example, a representation of Jewish suffering via symbolic (Catholic) idiom of Pieta or a Nazi crematorium recalling a nativity crèche, not only expanded the field of Holocaust memory studies to include "minor," "peripheral," or "awkward" objects, but also contributed to larger debates about "difficult heritage" or "difficult past."

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