Whose Performance is it, anyway?


Abstract:

By the 1990s, the feminist contention that gender norms inform the production and reception of art had become widely accepted in academia. Many theatre journalists, however, continued to insist on the possibility of writing about performance from an apolitical, gender-neutral position. This article examines the gendered history of this insistence from the early 1700s to the present, its effects on the production and reception of plays by women, and its implications for theatre scholarship. Focusing on Carolee Schneemann's critique of a masculine bias in art criticism in her performance *Interior Scroll* and the Guerrilla Girls' actions against gender discrimination in the art world, this article examines strategies adopted by female and feminist journalists in Britain and the US to counter women's inequitable status in art journalism and playwriting. By engaging with the gendered binaries mind–body and text–performance, Schneemann and the Guerrilla Girls help clarify how reviewing practices have informed critical thinking about femininity and performance. In doing so, these artists anticipate poststructuralist feminist critiques of visibility and the performing body. Stefka Mihaylova holds a PhD in Theatre Studies from Northwestern University. Her research focuses on performance theory, especially gender and racial aspects of spectatorship in contemporary American and British feminist and radical theatre and performance art.

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