

## **SIGNA: Spect-Actorship and the Hyper-Real Environment**

Since 2001, the Danish artistic collaborative SIGNA have produced 30 of the so-called “performance-installations” in eight different countries, much to the acclaim of both critics and audience. The performance-installation is a crossover of theatrical performance and installation art, and it may be compared to environmental theatre as pioneered by Richard Schechner. Most of Schechner’s “Six Axioms of Environmental Theatre” (1968) are applicable to SIGNA’s performance-installations, but at the same time they represent a radicalization in terms of the degree of audience interaction, which Schechner did not foresee. SIGNA’s performance-installations adhere to a “performative realism”, which permeates their every aspect, from the environment’s fully functional living facilities to the actors’ ways of relating to the visitors. By principle audience interaction is not restricted to pre-planned tasks or considered to be the performance’s break down into a social interaction, as in Schechner’s own theatre, no audience interaction is the very structure of the SIGNA performance. The visitors enter an acting environment deliberately designed to blur the phenomenological difference between reality and fiction, and in this hyper-realistic in-between they are left on their own managing the immersive spect-actorship. In the paper, I will discuss some of the ethical problems raised by this type of performance using as my example SIGNA’s latest production *Salò* (Copenhagen 2010), an adaptation of both de Sade’s novel *120 Days of Sodom* (1785) and Pasolini’s film *Salò or the 120 Days of Sodom* (1975).

### About the Author

Kim Skjoldager-Nielsen (b. 1971) holds a MA in theatre studies. He is an affiliated lecturer at the Section of Theatre and Performance Studies, Institute of Arts and Culture Studies, University of Copenhagen. He has also taught Performance Theory at the Department of Performance Design, Roskilde University Centre, as well as worked as a freelance dramaturge and a performer with SIGNA. His fields of research covers live interactive theatre, experimental and performance theatre, ritual, spiritual and religious theatre, performance analysis, dramaturgy, and theatre sociology. He has presented papers at PSi and other international conferences. In connection with SIGNA’s *Salò* he initiated an audience survey and organized a seminar. Selected publications: “Performance and Congregation: Experiential Metaphysics in Hotel Pro Forma’s *Operation: Orfeo* and *jesus\_c\_odd\_size*”, in *Performance Research* 13.3, 2008, “At performe eller ikke at performe? Om interaktivitet i Signas *57 Beds* og *The Black Rose Trick*” (To perform or not to perform? On the interactivity of Signa’s *57 Beds* and *The Black Rose Trick* in: *Peripeti* 6, 2006, and “SIGNA” (a portrait), in *Peripeti* 13, 2010.