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Introduction:

Performances of Resistance/Resisting Performance

When I first came across Jodi Dean's brief discussion about art in her book *The Communist Horizon* I was both excited and enervated. I wanted to shout 'go away, you are wrong' but at the same time I had an unsettling sense that there was (potentially) some truth in her observations. Dean argues that the aesthetic focus

disconnects politics from the organized struggle of working people, making politics into what spectators see. Artistic products, whether actual commodities or commodified experiences, thereby buttress capital as they circulate political affects while displacing political struggles from the streets to the galleries. Spectators can pay (or donate) to feel radical without having to get their hands dirty. The dominant class retains its position and the contradiction between this class and the rest of us doesn't make itself felt as such. (Dean, 2012: 13–14)

Of course the truth of the matter is contingent—it depends on what kind of art we are talking about, where we are situated (geographically, politically and culturally) and how we as spectators, viewers, participants or consumers choose to respond in each situation. So after a great deal of somewhat agitated thinking I decided that instead of shouting the best way to think through Dean's provocation was to utilise these ideas as the basis for a Call for Papers for *Performance Paradigm*. I reasoned that as this would be our 10th anniversary issue what better way to celebrate this milestone than to invite scholars and artists to think about and respond to Dean's challenge to the value of art in the 21st century.

The CFP generated a lot of intense discussion amongst respondents with copies of the book being devoured, dismissed and at times hurled across rooms (Rae). Despite or perhaps because of all of this agitation I believe that we need books and provocations like this one because they afford us the space to think about what art might be and might do in an era of increasing control, censorship, cut backs and cuts to funding. In the end I was delighted that the respondents to the CFP took up Dean's challenge and created beautiful and thoughtful essays, interviews, and philosophical and critical considerations of and responses to the topic. The depth of thinking contained in this volume is breathtaking. Perspectives vary and through the combination of these different modes of writing and different registers of response we can actually take Dean's (albeit brief) challenge seriously so that complexity is returned to the key questions she is asking about what our societies value and do not, about relationships between advanced capitalism and cultural production, about process versus product and by extension about theatre, performance

and art more broadly and its role in fostering *communitas*, in unsettling assumptions and in asking us to think and think again. It was with great joy that I read the contributions contained here because ultimately each one of them demands that we engage in depth with some of the key questions that we face about the role and value of art and its relationship to the concept of resistance and for me at least this is a crucial.

Aside from briefly reflecting on the very important contributions to the theme this issue holds I must also use this introduction to thank our outgoing book reviews editor Kate Rossmannith from Macquarie University for her careful and diligent stewardship of the Book Reviews section of the journal for the past few years. Thank you Kate and we wish you well with the next phase of your career. I would also like to welcome our incoming Book Reviews editor Emma Willis from the University of Auckland. It is wonderful to have you joining the team Emma. And finally I would like to say that we are incredibly lucky to have the very talented Caroline Wake joining the editorial team. Caroline's skills and attention to detail are unsurpassed and the 'new look' *Performance Paradigm* is a tribute to her style and flair. So thank you Caroline.

In the CFP I stated the following 'perhaps Dean is right and we should all go home' and I am very happy to report that the contributions to this issue not only suggest that we don't go home they actually insist that we stick around and keep talking, thinking, making and responding to works of art because as the work here attests it has a key role to play in *returning* value and meaning—in many different ways—to our lives.

Works Cited

Dean, Jodi. *The Communist Horizon* (London: Verso, 2012)