

PROCEEDINGS OF THE PERFORMING SPACE 2023 CONFERENCE

(2026)

PERFORMANCE & SPACE III. PROCEEDINGS OF THE PERFORMING SPACE 2025 CONFERENCE

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Performing Space Association University of the Peloponnese

2026

INTRODUCTION

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doi: [10.12681/ps2023.9988](https://doi.org/10.12681/ps2023.9988)

Performing Space 2025

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Performing Space is a research project that explores the relationship between performance and the built environment, taking into account the different perspectives of disciplines that study human activity and space, such as anthropology, archaeology, architecture, cognitive sciences, economics, geography, law, performance studies, philosophy, sociology, and theatre studies. The project understands 'performance' as "all activity of a given participant on a given occasion which serves to influence in any way any of the other participants" (Goffman, 1956, pp. 8–9). Following this definition, any activity that people carry out with the conscious or (usually) unconscious intention of influencing their social and spatial environment can be considered a form of performance. Catherine Bell (1992) and other authors argue that our performances influence our environment by transforming it; at the same time, the environment influences our behaviours and mental states. The title of this project, *Performing Space*, refers to this circular process of environmental transformation through our performances and the reciprocal influence of the environment on those performances, as well as to the space in which performances take place: the built environment.

The primary objective of *Performing Space* has been to establish a platform for presenting, experimenting with and debating research from different disciplines on performance and its environment. In other words, the project aims to foster an international network dedicated to discussing and disseminating the performative understanding of space, which is essential for both interpreting and shaping our environment. To this end, the project has been developed through international conferences that include academic and artistic research presentations, alongside workshops designed to experiment with methodologies that explore the relationship between space and performance. Since its first edition in Nafplio, Greece, in 2022, *Performing Space* has steadily grown as a collaborative and interdisciplinary community.

The 2025 Edition

The fourth edition of the *Performing Space* project, in the form of the Performing Space 2025 Conference and Workshops, was held once again in Nafplio, Greece, from 4 to 7 July 2025. Building upon the momentum and achievements of previous editions, this iteration further consolidated the project as an international reference point for transdisciplinary research on performance and space, achieving a slight increase in participation compared to 2024.

The 2025 edition featured 81 presentations and three workshops, bringing together participants from 24 countries. On this occasion, the event was organised by the Performing Space Association — formally established in Madrid in 2024 — in collaboration with the Departments of Performing and Digital Arts and Theatre Studies of the University of the Peloponnese. This institutional development marks an important step in the consolidation and long-term sustainability of the project.

Figure 1

Image from The Preferences of the Gods workshop, led by Pablo Berzal Cruz and Alba Balmaseda Domínguez. Performing Space 2025. (Photo by Spyros Kousouris).



The conference was structured into 19 sessions, reflecting both the continuity of existing lines of research and the emergence of new thematic approaches: Body, Time and Space; Theatre and Social Change; Spatial Embodiment; Performative; Environmental Awareness; Changing the Perception of Environment through Performance; The Material as Narrative; Ritual Space; Performance as Research; Multimedia Performance; Social Change through Performance; Spatial Performativity; New Performative Spaces; Other Forms of Presence; and Performance Space.

As a significant innovation, this edition introduced four sessions of Performative Presentations, in which participants were invited to present their research through performative formats, expanding beyond conventional academic communication. These sessions reinforced one of the core principles of the project: that performance is not only an object of study but also a method of research and a mode of knowledge production. By integrating embodied, spatial and experiential forms of presentation, these sessions contributed to bridging theory and practice, fostering a deeper understanding of the relationship between performance and space.

Figure 2

Image from Mediterranean Spacing 2.0 workshop, led by Prof. Dorita Hannah. Performing Space 2025. (Photo by Pablo Berzal Cruz).



The 2025 edition continued to explore key lines of research developed in earlier years, such as spatial performativity, performative space, site-specific practices, and the role of performance as a research and pedagogical tool. At the same time, it expanded its scope towards issues such as environmental awareness, material narratives, and new forms of presence in both physical and mediated environments. The increasing attention to multimedia and hybrid formats reflects the evolving conditions of contemporary spatial experience.

The workshops accompanying the conference once again played a central role, offering participants the opportunity to engage in embodied and site-specific practices, and to experiment collectively with methodologies that explore the relationship between space, perception and performance.

In this edition, three workshops were organised. *The Preferences of the Gods: Spatial Performativity Revealed*, led by Dr. Pablo Berzal Cruz and Dr. Alba Balmaseda Domínguez, explored spatial performativity through embodied and analytical practices aimed at revealing the latent dynamics between human action and environment (Figure 1). *Mediterranean Spacing 2.0: Site-Responsive Actions Exploring Nafplion's Spatiotemporal Performativity*,

led by Prof. Dorita Hannah, continued the exploration of coastal and liminal environments, focusing on site-responsive actions that engage with the temporal and spatial layers of Nafplion (Figure 2). Finally, *Performing Spaces: Narrative Spaces and Scenography*, led by Maria Chaniotaki in collaboration with Eleni Palogou, examined the relationship between narrative, space and scenographic practice, emphasising the performative construction of spatial storytelling.

Figure 3

Images from Performing Spaces workshop, led by Maria Chaniotaki in collaboration with Eleni Palogou. Performing Space 2025. (Photo by Maria Chaniotaki).



Beyond its academic and artistic contributions, Performing Space 2025 further reinforced the sense of an international and interdisciplinary community that has been steadily growing since the first edition in 2022. The continuity between editions — evidenced by the return of participants as well as the incorporation of new contributors — demonstrates the strength and relevance of this collective endeavour. The establishment of the Performing Space Association and the sustained collaboration with academic institutions signal a new phase in the development of the project, ensuring its future growth and impact.

References

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