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Hosts and Ghosts: The Question of Authenticity in Site-Specific Performance

In this presentation, I consider the relationship between sites associated with local history and the site-specific performances mapped upon them. It may be argued that, in these cases, the site itself is viewed as 'authentic' and therefore occupies a privileged position as the source for the theatre-makers creating the performance. However, I would like to argue that such performances are contested spaces which problematize this notion of authenticity. The relationship between the site and the theatre-maker is akin to that of parasite and host: the theatre-maker draws upon the site's histories, vision, and perceived social value. These elements are reconfigured by the theatre-maker into a 'reading' of the site which problematizes the question of this space as privileged and authentic. I will be looking at Geraldine Pilgrim's site-specific performance at the Marshall Street Baths in London and Cartoon DeSalvo's *The Sunflower Plot*, an outdoor site-specific performance set in public allotments.