

Monday, September 28,2015 at the South Asia Institute at Columbia

A talk by Rustom Bharucha (Jawaharlal Nehru University)

Abstract: “The Aftermath: Reflections on Terror and Performance”

Drawing on his recently published book *Terror and Performance* (Routledge 2014), Rustom Bharucha will probe the modalities and enigmas of the dangerous liaisons between terror and performance. In this lecture, the idea of performance will extend beyond theatre practice to encompass four primary sites of investigation: ‘September 11’, Islamophobia, Truth and Reconciliation in the larger contexts of post-apartheid South Africa and post-genocide Rwanda, and Non-Violence vis-a-vis the political practice and philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi.

Using a dialogic mode of inquiry, he will throw out questions relating to the epistemological differences between ‘terror’ and ‘terrorism’; the ethical considerations in viewing the act of killing as ‘performance’; the efficacy of the Truth and Reconciliation process beyond the aporias of affect; and the ‘violence’ of non-violence. These issues will be contextualized within a spectrum of practices including suicide bombing, lip-sewing, blood-graffiti, and peace activism in diverse locations of the world.

To what extent can performance counter its complicities within the larger narrative of terror? Is non-violence viable in an age of terror? Can justice exist beyond – and against – the law? These are some of the critical questions that will be raised in the lecture, which attempts to provide a reflective framework on the terror of our times from a non-Eurocentric perspective, seeking alternatives to violence and brutality through a renewed understanding of what it means to be human.

Biography

Rustom Bharucha is Professor of Theatre and Performance Studies in the School of Arts and Aesthetics at Jawaharlal Nehru University. A leading interlocutor in the fields of interculturalism, secularism, and oral history, he has written a number of books including *Theatre and the World*, *The Question of Faith*, *In the Name of the Secular*, *The Politics of Cultural Practice*, *Rajasthan: An Oral History*, *Another Asia: Rabindranath Tagore and Okakura Tenshin* and *Terror and Performance*. In recent years, he has worked as a dramaturge for the Tangencya public art project in Durban, South Africa, on the politics of touch; as Project Director for Arna-Jharna: The Desert Museum of Rajasthan on traditional knowledge systems; as Artistic Director of the Inter-Asia Ramayana Festival at the theatre laboratory Adishakti in Pondicherry; and, most recently, as Curator of an international conference on Rethinking Labor and the Creative Economy: Global Performative Perspectives organized jointly by the School of Arts and Aesthetics at JNU and Performance Studies international (PSi).