

Aliens in Space: Reflections on an Applied Theatre Project in a Medium Secure Hospital

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Abstract : This paper will consider the ways in which varied notions of Space played a central role in a 12-week drama project with patients in a Medium Secure Hospital in the UK. In the project, the patients devised and performed a series of sketches, inspired by Science Fiction films, which echoed their own experience of alienation. During the project, the familiar and rigorously regulated Activity Room became a site of imagination, adventure and laughter; transforming the atmosphere of the hospital and allowing the patients to be transported to another space entirely. A space that was as much in their heads as in the physical domain. It will be argued that, although work created in an institution such as a Medium Secure Hospital is infused with hegemonic associations and meanings, the starting point for such work should be to seek an empty space in which the participants can allow their imaginations to be released. This work sits within a range of contexts and will be consciously interdisciplinary. It will draw from Human Geography and Criminology, as well as Performance and Applied Theatre Literature. It is hoped that this paper will build upon the literature that relates to the very particular environment of Secure Hospitals and to provide a starting point for further practical exploration.

Keywords : criminal justice, mental health, science fiction films, space and place

Conference Title : ICATS 2017 : International Conference on Applied Theatre Studies

Conference Location : Zurich, Switzerland

Conference Dates : April 20-21, 2017