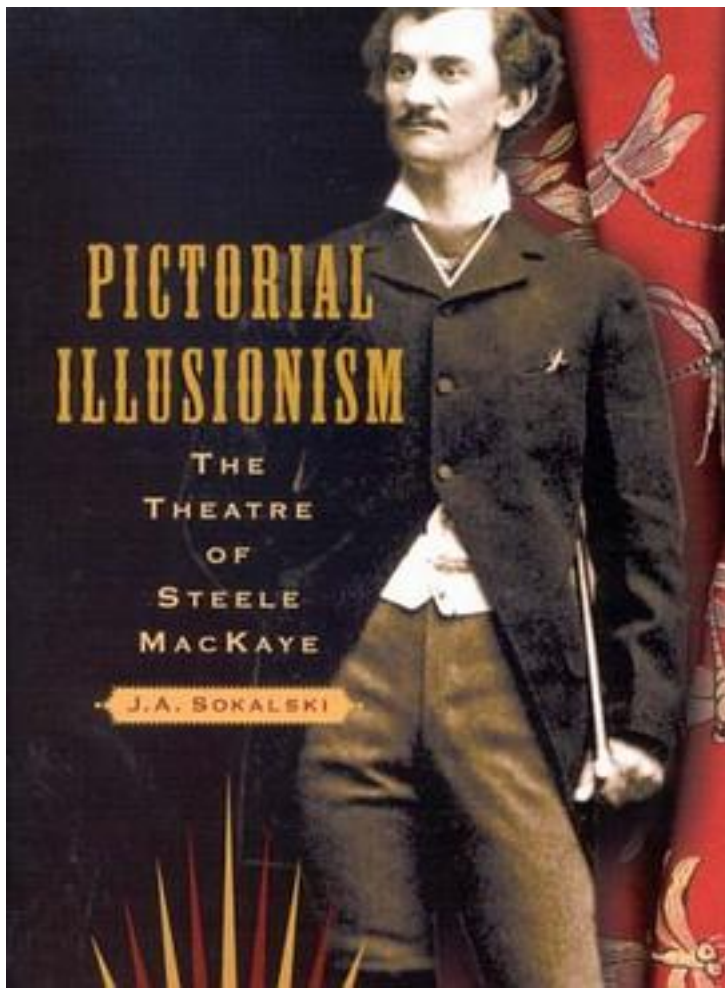


Pictorial Illusionism



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Steele MacKaye (1842-1894) was a major North American theatre artist - a director, actor, inventor, painter, theorist, and writer - best known for advancing a unified vision

of pictorial illusionism, the central aesthetic of late nineteenth-century drama, by transforming grand theatres into jewel-boxes for gilded society. Pictorial Illusionism is the first full-length critical study of MacKaye's life's work. Drawing together a wealth of primary sources, J.A. Sokalski examines the aims, inventions, and methods of the pictorial style that defined MacKaye's art. Sokalski shows how MacKaye's famous Madison Square Theatre, which featured a double stage reminiscent of an elevator, created whirling pictorial illusions for fashionable New York. He argues that MacKaye's infamous failure, the colossal Spectatorium theatre for the 1883 Chicago World's Fair, was the most complete realization of this illusionary aesthetic. Sokalski also explores MacKaye's influence on Buffalo Bill Cody and how civil war cycloramas expanded his concept of pictorial space. Sokalski fully documents late nineteenth-century stage practices, arguing for a greater recognition of the significance of pictorial illusionism in American theatre.

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