

Text+Object+Action=Textact

Can text work as the main focus of a performance art
practice?

Peta Lloyd

Degree awarded by Oxford Brookes University

Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of
the award of Doctor of Philosophy

January 2020

Abstract

Text + Object + Action = Textact

Can text work as the main focus of a performance art practice?

This process led research examines ways in which text, particularly the written form, can become the focus of a performative practice. The works, which I have named 'Textacts', investigate ways in which text can be activated, explore which objects can carry text and trial a range of actions through which text materialises. Text is constructed through building letter by letter, displaying pre-written text and alternative text forms and writing with various parts of the body. My chosen texts consist of composed pieces and borrowed individual words, phrases, quotes, a definition and a song. The random text content is designed to place the focus upon the process of the work rather than the subject content of the words, which are then open to interpretation by the viewer. Many of the actions necessitate some form of struggle which introduces an element of precariousness into the work and this, combined with the text content, tends to generate a humorous response. Twenty-three Textacts; nineteen short performances lasting from five to ten minutes and four longer performance presentations lasting from ten to twenty minutes, have been performed in a variety of settings and contexts, including research seminars and conferences, art galleries, pop-up venues, and on the street.

My findings, based on the evaluation of the Textact components, audience response and interest, and relevance of contexts in which the works took place, led me to believe that the Textact is a valid addition to the various types of performance art currently being made. The arts-practice based methodology combining planning, action and reflection allows for ideas to be drafted and refined, enabling the on-going composition, performance and evaluation of

works and would be appropriate as a model for use by others. The Textact focus on struggle induced humour makes the work accessible to a range of audiences. Textact, as a term for text-based performance art could be appropriated to describe similar works. Therefore, as a method of generating performance art using text, the Textact could be of interest and potentially useful to others working and studying within the field such as artists, researchers into arts practices and students.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank everyone who has taught and helped me through the journey, from the first day of the Part-time Foundation Course at Weymouth College in September 2004, to the completion of this thesis.

Special thanks must go to Ray Lee, for his on-going support, not only through the PhD, but also the MA in Contemporary Art. His comments and insights were always most helpful and the Monday Practice Sessions made the process of research sociable as well as interesting. I would also like to thank Veronica Cordova de la Rosa for her invitation to collaborate in the setting up and organisation of the Live Art and Performance Group (LAPER). Through LAPER I met and worked with many interesting performers. I am also particularly grateful to Aya Kasai, founder of the Contemporary Arts Research Unit, (CARU) which provided so many opportunities to show work, in a range of venues, and whose photographs are sprinkled throughout the following pages.

Finally, this journey would not have been possible without the continuing encouragement of Martin Johns. Sadly, Martin is not here to see its completion but he was my biggest supporter and critic, as well as design consultant and the person who always knew how to stick things together.

Contents

| | Page number |
|---|-------------|
| Introduction | 1-6 |
| Section 1 The Textact - components and organisation | 7-14 |
| Section 2 List of Performances | 15-16 |
| Section 3 Text | 17-25 |
| Section 4 Object | 26-33 |
| Section 5 Action | 34-39 |
| Section 6 Textacts | 40-105 |
| Discussion and analysis of sixteen short individual performances, collaborative performances and performances involving audience participation. | |
| Conclusion | 106-116 |
| Bibliography | 117-123 |
| Appendix 1 | 124-133 |
| Textacts using unconventional text types. | |
| Discussion and analysis of three short performances using alternative text types. | |
| Appendix 2 | 134-147 |
| Documentation from two performance/presentation Textacts | |

Table of Illustrations

| Figure | Title | Date | Photographer |
|--------|--|----------------|------------------------------|
| 1-11 | Section 2 – Ways of using text In Performance Art | May 2018 | Ray Lee |
| 12-20 | Section 4 – Action | May 2019 | Annie Wright |
| 21-24 | Cenosillicaphobia | September 2013 | Video still Adrian Pawley |
| 25 | Cenosillicaphobia | January 2019 | Stu Allsopp |
| 26 | Lonely Cup | May 2014 | Aya Kasai |
| 27-29 | Lonely Cup | April 2014 | Lee Riley |
| 30-31 | The Beetle in the Box | April 2014 | Alissar McCreary |
| 32 | The Beetle in the Box | May 2014 | Aya Kasai |
| 33-34 | THINK OR DRINK | February 2014 | Lee Riley |
| 35-37 | THINK WRITE MOVE BOX | May 2014 | Aya Kasai |
| 38 | SPIN | February 2015 | Video still Peta Lloyd |
| 39-41 | FRAGILE | May 2015 | Aya Kasai |
| 42 | REJECT | May 2016 | Stavroula Kounadea |
| 43-44 | Box Series | June 2019 | Peta Lloyd |
| 45-48 | It just is (1) | May 2015 | Aya Kasai |
| 49 | It just is (2) | December 2015 | Stavroula Kounadea |
| 50-54 | It just is (2) | September 2017 | Stu Allsopp |
| 55 | Permanence is Overrated | September 2017 | Aya Kasai |
| 56 | Permanence is Overrated | September 2017 | Stu Allsopp |
| 57-63 | Palladian | June 2016 | Video still Fay Stevens |

| | | | |
|-------|--|----------------|--------------|
| 64-66 | CRASHFLIPWIZZBANGTING | July 2016 | Aya Kasai |
| 67-70 | In our own words | December 2017 | Chris Wright |
| 71-72 | At last a real artwork | February 2017 | Fay Stevens |
| 73-78 | At last a real art work | December 2016 | Annie Wright |
| 79-87 | Sign In | May 2017 | Stu Allsopp |
| 88 | FUCK OFF JUST FUCK OFF | September 2017 | Helen Lloyd |
| 89 | Semaphore Text | September 2017 | Peta Lloyd |
| 90-91 | SOS | September 2017 | Stu Allsopp |
| 92 | Line up and join in | May 2018 | Stu Allsopp |
| 93 | Line up and join in | May 2018 | Helen Lloyd |
| 94-96 | It's really interesting but I don't understand it | December 2016 | Aya Kasai |
| 97-99 | I don't eat bubble-gum but I like the smell | May 2017 | Aya Kasai |

Video Links

| Title | Page |
|---|------|
| Spin | 64 |
| Fragile | 67 |
| Box Series | 72 |
| Line up and join in | 131 |
| It's really interesting but I don't understand it | 135 |
| I don't eat bubble-gum but I like the smell | 141 |

Introduction

My aim, throughout this research, has been to explore how text can be used as the main focus for performance art. This follows an MA practice where I used written, sewn and constructed text as my material, integrated into the making of craft-based objects which carried a social or political message related to news and current events. In order to achieve the aim, I have developed a range of short performances and longer performance presentations that have invited the audience to read both the text and the performative visual imagery, which, when juxtaposed, begin to create alternative meanings. I named the works I produced 'Textacts'; a combination of text, object and action. (see Section 1) I have analysed each 'Textact' in relation to its component parts, evaluated the aims of each work and considered how the series of performances could progress before reaching broader conclusions related to the performance of text.

My primary questions regarding the making of Textacts were:

- How does text work as the main focus of a performative practice?
- Which types of objects can appropriately support the use of text in performance?
- Does the making and using of text affect the types of actions which can be performed in order for text to materialise?

My secondary questions, in which I became more interested as the work progressed and I found audiences and venues enabling me to show the work, were:

- Does the role of the audience change when reading is required in order to fully access the performance?

- How does the context, or the nature of the performance space, affect work which involves text?

My research methodology was a hybrid combination of Action Research and Reflective Practitioner. (see Section 1) I aimed to research my own actions, and understand my practice through an enquiry of the self into the self (McNiff, 2002, p6). The process followed a cyclical plan, action, reflection model. I development twenty-one Textacts, each of which were analysed in relation to the aims of the piece and the component parts of text, object, action, audience reaction and context / performance space. Two performance presentations, Text and Action described my process of working and are presented as Section 3 and Section 5.

In writing up my results, I was keen that the material and its related discussion was described and presented in a straightforward style (McNiff, 2008 p.37), with the documentation of the performances integrated into the body of the thesis. I experimented with ways of doing this before deciding on the format that placed the Textacts centrally within the discussion. Three short Textacts documenting the use of alternative text types are discussed in Appendix 1 and two performance presentations, which took place at conferences designed for researchers and artists from across the UK and Europe, are documented in the Appendix 2.

My findings, summed up in the conclusion, show the way in which text, objects and actions can be used in the making of Textacts. In addition, I discuss the role of the audience as readers of text and how the context and nature of the performance space affects how the audience relates to work involving text. My cyclical methodology places emphasis on both the making of the work and the on-going reflection, both as the work was in progress and

after it had been completed, in order to inform subsequent works. Through this analysis I conclude the Textact can stand beside other and diverse forms of performance art and inform other performers, researchers and students as a potential way of working.

Initially I researched views on how language works, as put forward by linguist Ferdinand de Saussure, (1857-1913). Saussure thought the sign was more than a means of communication, it comprises the basic fabric of culture. In fixing abstract concepts (signified) to material objects (signifiers) the sign system provides structures in which our thoughts occur (Counsell and Wolf, 2001, p4). Saussure argued that language and vision are intimately connected and that the process of differentiation at work in the art of looking occurs with the emergence of language itself. In order for the brain to transfer what is seen into something recognisable, to create a meaning through sight, it relies on learnt assumptions of the characteristics of different things (Thomas, 2000, p5). Looking therefore is always a type of reading, with meanings derived through a combination of text and image which have to be read together in order to make a coherent whole (Kress, 2003, p141). Auslander (1994, p139) considers the relationship between 'text' as something written or spoken and 'performance text' as the entire event, with its ability to become a type of textual playground where nothing is sacrosanct and everything is up for grabs.

By moving language into art, the view of separate text and image disciplines changed. For example, by adding a simple line of text, René Magritte (1898-1967) demonstrated how the power of text and image together can generate new messages and ideas through asking us to consider how labels and images produce meaning, yet cannot fully evoke the experience of the object (Sturken and Cartwright, 2009, p15). Magritte's work was representational but posed verbal contradictions (Gablik, 1970, p25). A number of late twentieth century artists, such as Lawrence Weiner and John Baldessari (1931-2020), made words and language the

subject of their artworks, producing written text as art forms and raising questions about art and/as language; their juxtaposition of text and image revealing the fundamental invisibility of meaning and expression (Beech, 2009, p71). As well as reinforcing a message, they used text to mislead, prompt questions, stimulate or manipulate the imagination (Morley, 2003, p142).

Other twentieth century performance artists also experimented with text as part of their work. Carolee Schneemann (1939-2019), frustrated with an art world fascinated by abstract expressionism and its male painters, constructed and performed 'Up to and Including her limits' from 1973 -1976. Strapped into a tree-surgeons harness she hung from gallery ceilings, stretching to draw on the surrounding walls (Foerschuer and Rivenc, 2018). In some performances of this work words like I'M HUNGRY or OUT OF SINC are intertwined with the marks. In 1975, in what has been described as an essential moment in Performance Art history, Schneemann in her work 'Interior Scroll' (1975), pulled a scroll from her vagina and read it aloud to the audience. During the same period and coining the term 'Happenings' for spontaneous work involving the audience, Allan Kaprow (1927-2006) took his audience through rooms of hand-written text encouraging them to contribute written and verbal components as they progressed. Denoting 'urban text' referencing graffiti, billboards, newspapers and overheard conversations and a lecture he aimed to engage the viewer in a multi-sensory experience that brought the words to life (The Art Story, 2020).

More recent performance artists for whom the focus of their work was the making of text include Bobby Baker's (2000) 'Pull Yourself Together', Guerrilla Girls (2005) 'First of 6 banners for the Venice Biennale', and FREEE (2008) 'Art fairs fan the embers of the avantgarde take over the role of the state protects arts autonomy and spurns commodification for the benefit of the art market'. In these pieces the artists were using text

as slogans, usually displayed with little action, in order to put forward a social or political stance.

Two artists, whose performance work influenced my practice, especially in the early stages, were Hayley Newman and her work 'Kiss Exam' (1999) and Fiona Banner's 'Nude Standing' (2006). Both artists hand wrote text within their performative works. In these examples the text used was describing the action taking place, with Newman describing a kiss whilst being kissed, and Banner writing about, rather than drawing, a nude model. During the course of my research I found a number of young artists who perform their own spoken work scripts, including artists Tammy Reynolds and Jade Montserrat, or who use lip-synching techniques such as Nando Messias. However, I did not find any artists whose overall performance philosophy and methods were based on the making of written text. I therefore felt that this area was ripe for the line of research I wished to pursue.

This report is organised into the following sections. Section 1 discusses the methodology, components and organisation of the Textact. Section 2 lists the pieces I have performed and subsequently discussed throughout the research process, with relevant venues and dates. Section 3 investigates the strategies I have used for performing text. This section is written as the script for a performance presentation. The script is accompanied by images taken during the presentation and also footnotes which give additional information and references to reading which informed my thinking. Section 4 lists objects I have used in my work and discusses relevant issues related to the choice of objects and their role. Section 5 discusses how I have used actions in the performances, again in the form of a performance presentation, where I combined the use of an oral presentation and illustrative actions. Section 6 illustrates and discusses sixteen short Textacts. Appendix 1 documents three Textacts using alternative text types and Appendix 2 documents two additional performance

presentations, which were presented to conference audiences. Findings, relating back to my initial questions, are set out in the conclusion.

Section 1

The Textact – methodology, components and organisation

Methodology

I aimed to produce an on-going and self-reflective practice-based enquiry by developing an understanding of how text worked in Performance Art through the making and assessment of performances. My aim was to learn in and through action and reflection (McNiff, 2013, p.23). The planning involved choosing the text, objects and actions in order to carry out the initial idea. The action was then practiced, initially alone, in order to estimate if I could carry out the action with the materials I had decided to use. If successful the work was shown to a group of researchers who commented on aspects of the work. These comments influenced whether the piece was worthy of developing. My own reflection on the performances happened both at the time of the performance, Reflection in Action, and after the event, Reflection on Action (Schön, 1983, p22). Any necessary revisions and improvements were then implemented before I exhibited the work in public. My reflections and the audiences' reactions and comments then led me to consider the next steps within the series of works.

My initial starting points for the performance content was random. As I began the research I decided that my text would convey nothing more than what I was reading, researching or thinking about at the time; what amused me, interested me or what I thought was appropriate for any material or action I felt drawn to use. Many artists have incorporated randomness as a feature of their work. Jean Arp (1886-1966) played with random compositions by dropping painted pieces of paper onto a surface, whilst his fellow Dadaist Tristan Tzara (1896-1963) used random word associations to evoke a form of poetry free from the restraints of logic and grammar. John Cage (1912-1992) a pioneer of the post war music avant-garde incorporated randomness as a fundamental driving force into his pieces, developing procedures to be iterated over and over again, and which at each stage entered

a new element into the work by chance (Burt, 2014, p84). As the research developed I decided on-going reflection on the random starting points would inform the text, objects and actions of further work.

I aimed to trial draft performances in front of peers and judge from their feedback if the text was readable and had the desired effect, such as humour, and also gauge how viewers might respond to the manipulation of the objects and the actions. I felt the comments and perspectives would encourage self-reflection and be useful as the group became familiar with my on-going working practices (Race, 2001, p6). This stage also allowed for personal 'Reflection in Action' as I carried out the performances. Schön (1983, p.23) refers to this as 'conversations with the situation' through which new ways of thinking can be uncovered. After the trialling and subsequent 'Reflection on Action', I could change and improve the material content and my delivery of the work before presentation to new and unknown audiences. 'Reflection on Action', performed once the action had finished allowed for a restructuring of the experience through memory and any photographic or video documentation taken at the time.

I decided the parameters for success would consist of a combination of on-going self-assessment and audience reaction. As I self-assessed I tried to ensure I was judging what I had done rather than what I had meant to do (Race, 2001, p6). I considered whether I had used the text as planned, and if the actions, using the chosen objects, had worked successfully. I aimed to monitor audience reaction during the process of the work; did the audience watch the piece to completion, did they appear to read the text, did they laugh, if that was the desired intent. I wanted to encourage audience members to look at the objects I had used after the performance and feel free to discuss the work with me. I tried to apply

these criteria to all the works and made judgements about the extent to which they had been met (Bond, 1995, p4).

Text

Howell (1999, p152) discusses how the performance artist may strive to bring about the presence of a word or phrase, citing it for itself as an object made out of language, rather than simply drawing attention to what it signifies. My interest lay in the combination of text presented on and with unusual materials and the polysemic nature of words (Lye, 1993, p2). Dominic Johnson (2015) discusses how the production of meaning depends upon a chemistry between the body of the artist, the materials in play and the audience. To this mix I added a layer of text. I aimed to investigate a process whereby performance art was developed with the making and using of text at its core. Often words and images function in an initially informative manner, however in art works they can also convey mixed messages (Ross, 2014, p.41). I wanted an audience to be surprised, to question or to laugh as the text was juxtaposed with the objects on which they were placed by the performed actions, and the work to evoke a reaction without explaining anything clearly (Anderson, 2008).

Initially I made short performances which focussed on the building, displaying or writing of text. As the work progressed, and I experimented with what I termed the performance presentation format, for a conference style setting and audience, and introduced spoken and read text. Twentieth century artists such as Chris Burden, Robert Morris and Joseph Beuys used 'lecture-performances' to blur the lines separating art from the discourse about art (Milder, 2011, p13). My performances were precisely constructed, rehearsed and designed to inform as well as entertain. The spoken word was used to link the performative actions, perhaps just a word or phrase, or to add brief explanation. Towards the end of the series of

works I experimented with alternative text types, Semaphore and Morse Code and also the instructions for participating in a line dance.

Object

The objects I decided to use were cheap and every-day. This was important as their lifespan, particularly if they were written upon as part of the work, might be only one performance, or even one practice performance. Objects which had a longer lifespan would be enhanced with text that had been sewn or applied in some form. Objects were chosen for their potential ability to hold text or contribute to an interesting action whilst text was being produced. I wanted the objects to be visually interesting in their own right, although my aim was not to produce sculptural objects.

My ability to interact with the chosen materials was crucial to the decision-making process regarding the choice of objects. I spent time investigating how different materials could carry text. I added words and phrases to items of clothing and practiced writing in unusual ways. Galeano discusses his experience of collaborating with objects and opening a dialogue with them (Matuszak, 2014, p103). I wanted the the objects to be transformed by the addition of text and accompanying actions, their transformation being absurd and humorous as the objects were approached in unconventional ways.

Action

My aim was for originality of action and audacity of conception and execution rather than focussing on more traditional bodily focussed actions. I saw writing, making or using text as the important aspect in the process and the action needed to work in its service, giving my

body a job to do and requiring the necessity to struggle. Traditionally performance art is seen as a form that uses the body in order to convey meaning (Heyd, 1991, p69). I aimed to use the body to act out the text in whatever form I felt appropriate.

The actions I devised related to how the text would be displayed on the chosen materials or used within the performances. Many of my actions necessitated some form of physical struggle in order to make, display or use the text. Artists have a history of using struggle in their work for a range of purposes. The works of prominent performance artists such as Vito Acconci, Tehching Hsieh and Marina Abramovic are known for their relatively solitary ordeals. For some artists, such as Kate Gilmore, struggle is their primary subject. Gilmore plays fierce women undergoing messy tasks and sees struggle as a tool for learning and growth, using acts of struggle as a deliberate choice which introduce elements of precariousness and humour into her performances (Deutsch, 2015). My struggle was related to the manipulation of the chosen objects in order to build, display or write text. The struggle was pitted against the objects and the necessity to perform certain predetermined actions. Because of their random and pointless nature, I wanted the actions to provoke a humorous reaction when juxtaposed with the text and objects.

Rutter, (1997) proposes three basic humour theories: The Superiority Theory where people laugh about the misfortunes of others which reflects their own superiority, The Relief Theory where we experience a pleasant sensation when humour replaces negative feelings like pain and sadness and the Incongruity Theory where the cause of laughter is simply the sudden perception of an incongruity. The humour I was aiming for related to the incongruous, where the cause of laughter was the sudden perception of incongruity between a concept and the real object, the laugh being an expression of the incongruity between the

two (Rutter, 1997). I wanted to make the link between the text, object and action incongruous and therefore in some cases humorous.

Duration

The duration of the Textacts fell into two categories. Firstly, short pieces of up to ten minutes and secondly longer performance presentations of up to twenty minutes duration. The timings of the short pieces related to the length of the text and the difficulty of its materialisation. As most of the texts were short; once it had materialised the work was complete. Also, if the actions chosen to display the text were difficult I could only perform them for a brief period of time. The performance presentations, usually performed in front of a seated audience of researchers as a conference presentation, were generally followed by questions and comments.

Audience and Context

According to Ingarden (1893 – 1970) artworks achieve full existence only in someone's reading of them. The work is more than a material thing; it comprises the meaning and experiences generated by our interpretation of that thing (Counsell and Wolf, 2001, p179). I found a varied range of audiences including those interested in performance art, academic researchers and the general public. The works took place in a number of settings: universities, art galleries, empty shops, outdoor spaces and on the street. The variables within the types of audiences and range of contexts made each performance unique.

Marcel Duchamp (1887-1968) highlighted how the spectator brings the work into contact with the external world by deciphering and interpreting it (Lebel, 1959). The short

performances, designed to take place in gallery spaces or at pop-up performance events, attracted audiences with an interest in performance art. The performance presentations were shown to audiences of researchers and academics. This group formed a collective identity for the length of the presentation (Blood, 2014). They were seated and focussed on the action in front of them. The most challenging of contexts were the outdoor spaces where the performances were viewed by members of the public. These needed to be visually interesting in order to generate passing interest.

Collaborations

As a performer it is usual to see your own work only through the filter of documentation. I was keen to collaborate with others and invited Jemima Hall, previously a BA Fine Art student at Oxford Brookes University, to perform the box-flipping Textact, THIS WAY UP, so that I could observe the box in action. Jemima also worked with me on the collaborative piece 'Sign In'. Other friends and researchers took part in the group performances, 'Palladian' 'CRASHFLIPWIZZBANGTING', 'In our own words', and the activation of the 'Box Series'.

Documentation

Auslander (2006, p2) proposes that performance documentation encompasses two categories; the documentary and the theatrical. The documentary provides a record of the performance through which it can be reconstructed and also evidence it actually occurred; it becomes a substitute for the real world. The theatrical is seen as the performed photography as in, for example, the work of Cindy Sherman. The work within this report aims to provide documentary evidence of the process: the planning, making and evaluation of the Textacts. All Textact discussion is accompanied by photographic evidence and six include a video link.

I realised collecting effective documentation would be challenging. I relied heavily on the good will of friends and colleagues to photograph the work within the range of settings in which it took place. I hoped they would capture images which gave a flavour of the work, although the experience of seeing a photograph is clearly different from watching an artist perform (Jones, 1997, p11). Capturing images was sometimes problematic as it relied on the photographer intruding into or cohabiting the performance space. Audience members could obscure the view and the photographer might be unfamiliar with the equipment, if using my camera. The photograph as a record of an ephemeral moment, only conveys what the photographer saw at the time and differs from the experience of others who were present (Woolley, 2014). My choice of images therefore, for each piece, tries to capture something from that performances which is both informative and aesthetic, using the images that were available.

At times I would set up a video camera before the performance started and let it run through the duration of the performance, or someone might offer to record the work for me in this way. I realised that the video performance is very different from a live performance as it has been created for another medium (Oritz, 2012). The video camera when placed on a tripod was usually too far away from the performance space and often audience members stood in front of the camera, obscuring the view. Those walking around the space whilst videoing work tended to produce shaky and disjointed film. Most video documentation was therefore more useful to me in assessing the pieces as opposed to a clear record of the work.

Section 2

Performances

- **'Cenosillicaphobia'** Stammtisch Performance Art Evening, Oxford 2013
- **'The Beetle in the Box'** Oxford Brookes Research Student Conference, May 2014
- **'THINK OR DRINK'** 'Nothing in Art' Oxford 2014
- **'THINK WRITE MOVE BOX'** Arts re:Search, Oxfordshire Art Weeks Oxford 2014
- **'Lonely Cup'** 'Playground' Old Fire Station, Oxford 2014
- **'Lonely Cup'** 'A dialogue on Nothing in Art' Fringe Arts Bath 2014
- **'Spin'** 'Kymmata: The gods for playmates', O3 Gallery, Oxford February 2015
- **'It just is (1)'** Fringe Arts Bath, May 2015
- **'FRAGILE'** 'Disobedient Art', Fringe Arts Bath May 2015
- **'It just is (1)'** 'Playground on Fire', Old Fire Station, Oxford June 2015
- **'FRAGILE'** 'Playground on Fire', Old Fire Station, Oxford June 2015
- **'It just is (2)'** Performance Showcase, Vibrations Art Journal, Old Fire Station, Oxford December 2015
- **'REJECT'** and **'It just is (2)'** 'Live Friday' Playground, Ashmolean, Oxford May 2016
- **'Palladian'** Group performance, 'Colloquy', Fringe Arts Bath, June 2016
- **'CRASHFLIPWIZZBANGTING'** CARU, group performance, Cowley Road Carnival, Oxford, July 2016
- **'REJECT'** Fareham Open, August/ September 2016
- **'THIS WAY UP'** (performed by Jemima Hall) CARU Anniversary Party, OVADA 2016
- **'It's really interesting but I don't understand it'** CARU Arts Research Conference 2016, Oxford Brookes University December 2016
- **'At last a real art work'** Vibrations 3 on-line journal launch, Live Art Development Agency, Hackney Wick, London February 2017
- **'It just is (2)'** Art and Text, 44AD, Bath, February 2017

- **'Sign In'** (with Jemima Hall) Elastic Performance Festival, Oxford Brookes University, May 2017
- **'I don't eat bubblegum but I like the smell'** Research Student Conference, Oxford Brookes University, May 2017
- **'I don't eat bubblegum but I like the smell'** The Bubble, Lapsody 2017, 6th International festival and Conference, Theatre Academy, Helsinki, May 2017
- **'I don't eat bubblegum but I like the smell'** 'As (Every/No)Body', Fringe Arts Bath, June 2017
- **'SOS', 'Fuck Off Just Fuck Off', 'It just is (2)', 'PERMANENCE IS OVERRATED',** Curiosity Carnival, European Researchers' Night, September 2017
- **'In our own words'** Where's the Art, CARU Anniversary Event 2017
- **'Line Up and Join In'** Squash and Stretch Performance Art Festival, LAPER, Oxford Brookes, May 2018
- **'Ways of using text in Performance Art'** Postgraduate Research Student Conference, Oxford Brookes University, May 2018
- **'Line up and join in'** Art Manifest(o)s, Fringe Arts Bath, May 2018
- **'Cenosillicaphobia'** So you think you know what Performance Art is? LAPER, St. Aldates Tavern, Oxford, January 2019
- **'Action'** TDE Postgraduate Research Student Conference, Oxford Brookes University, May 2019
- **'Box Series'** 'InTuition' Arts PhD Showcase, Glass Tank, Oxford Brookes University, June 2019

Section 3

Text

Ways of using text in Performance Art

A performance presentation photographed and discussed at a PhD session in April 2018 and subsequently performed at the Postgraduate Research Student Conference, Oxford Brookes University, May 2018. This presentation was designed to inform the audience about the differing ways I had used text throughout my on-going research.

Key:

Blue - Actions

Red - Text to be read from Big Book

Black - Spoken text

Carry on Big Book. Shuffle across area

overemphasising the weight of the book.

Encourage audience read front cover ¹

PhD Commentary

(a weighty tome)

Text+Body+Action=Textact Chapter 1 - Strategies for using text in performance

(very first draft)

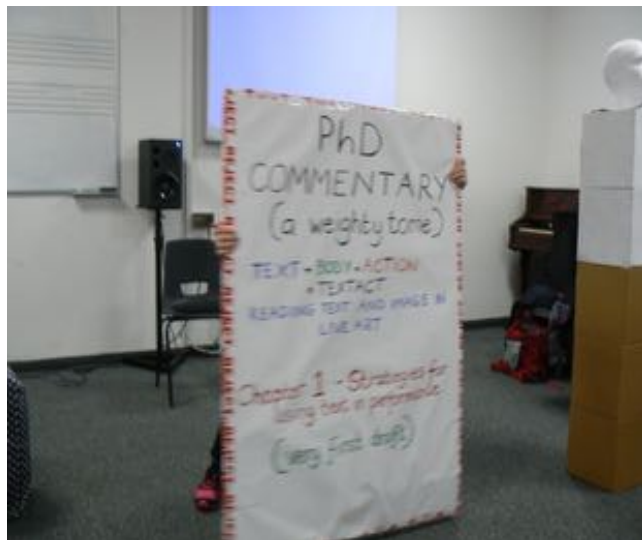


Fig.1

Open book to next page and point to the text, word by word:

¹ The aim of the big book was to set the scene by putting the text into a visual space which enabled the audience to read the words because of their size. The text alluded to the size and 'weight' of the thesis and also announced to those watching what the presentation was about. The book subsequently led the audience through the presentation as the pages were turned.

Reading text tends to be a solo activity, whether in private or public, with surface marks as presentation of thoughts or utterances. For it to make sense it must be interpreted and therefore make sense to the reader (Barthes, 1978, p159). This work was, in both instances, presented to PhD researchers and so relevant to the audience.

A bit of theory. It is important that theory sits appropriately within the spirit of the work.

Pick up skipping rope, from around neck of
head on boxes and start skipping.

SAY: Gunther Kress (2003 p.70) a well-known and eminent linguist, asks if the imagination that rests on word is different to the imagination that rests on image. I have been researching what happens when you use text in performance. This presentation examines some of the ways in which I have used text. Moving on ²



Fig. 2

Put rope down

Return to book

² I aimed to show how meaning can be layered and made accessible to audiences on different levels. The aim of skipping whilst relaying a theoretical point or statement to an audience is not to trivialise the issue in question, but to place the issue in a context relating to my research. Text tends to give an image precision, however by disrupting the weight of the words I aim to show a particular reading or interpretation of the ideas in question. Meanings are often derived through a combination of text and image. The image first looks a certain way and then changes meaning with the addition of text (Barthes, 1978, p33).

SAY: Currently I have been working with four ways of using text.

Show page of book which says:

1. Pre-written text. Which is what you are looking at now.

Take till roll from pocket and move to front of

audience. Unroll paper so that audience can read:

'Pre-written text can be presented on or attached to most things'³



Fig.3

SAY: For example

³ 'Language unfolds in temporal succession whereas images reside in the world of timeless spatiality and simultaneity' (Mitchell, 1980, p3). Time needs to be given to read the words as they are displayed from the till roll. Pre-formed or pre-written text involves showing the text to an audience in some way. Text can be as short as a word or a slogan, which is immediately visible and usually attached to an object, or longer and revealed as part of an action. Text can be written and pre-prepared in any material. Like Kruger, (2014) I think handwritten or hand-made text is more personal and intimate.

Take off jacket to reveal text on the back of T-shirt.

LIKE THIS

SAY: OR

Turn boxes with head around and reveal

LIKE THIS

Sit down. Take off trainers and reveal socks which say

OR THIS

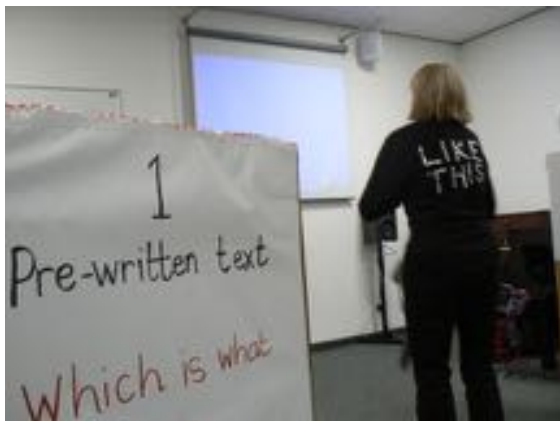


Fig. 4



Fig. 5



Fig. 6

Go back to book.

Turn over page which says:

2. text can be constructed as the action of the performance⁴

Take plastic glasses out of bag.

Go to table and start building glasses on the table which will say:

THIS CAN BE SLOW AND VERY BORING TO WATCH

About half way through take hat out of bag,

with plastic dog and text attached saying

HOW LONG WILL THIS TAKE



Fig. 7

When finished take off hat and place in front of glasses.

⁴ When text is built slowly, letter by letter, I thought the image needed to be readable and legible. Words materialise slowly, even if the resulting text is interesting. In order to give the audience an additional focus I tried to include something obtuse and potentially humorous. In the above performance presentation, the hat, with the attached blow-up plastic dog and comment coming from its mouth saying 'How long will this take', was designed to add humour and keep the audience interested.

Go back to book and open at next page which says:

Text can be written as the performance in differing ways with different materials. ⁵

SAY: For example:

Take black box out of bag. Open and take out black lipstick.

Go to figure. Place black lipstick in mouth.

Put arms around boxes and write on head with mouth:

LIKE THIS

Turn the box around so that the audience can see it.



Fig. 8



Fig. 9

Go to table and take 'oil pastel gloves' out of black box.

Return to figure. Put arms around figure and write on the front

OR THIS

⁵ Handwriting enables the slow creation of words, moving words from the sound world to the world of visual space (Ong, 1982 p.130). The speed of the writing tended to give the audience time to decipher what I attempted to write even if the action made legibility difficult. In this presentation the repetition of the words 'LIKE THIS' was designed to help the audience concentrate on the different ways in which I had constructed texts, without having to think about the content and meaning of the words.



Fig. 10

Return to table and take off gloves.

Go back to book and turn the page which reads:

Text can be made using alternative language systems.

SAY: An example

Put on white coat

Take flags out of long pocket in jacket and semaphore

LIKE THIS ⁶

⁶ The use of Semaphore raised questions about the content of the text as it was clear that no one in any audience where it was performed could read Semaphore.



Fig. 11

SAY: In this presentation I have shown four ways in which I have used text in my research: displaying previously written text, building text with objects, writing, or in the case of Semaphore signing text.

[Pick up book and shuffle off.](#)

Section 4

Object

A list of objects I have used in my performances and discussion relating to their use.

OJBECTS I HAVE USED:

big book (home-made) - skipping rope - hula hoop - 6 polystyrene heads, 4 male, 2 female - boxes, 6 pallet boxes, 30 small cardboard 18 till rolls (3 packs of 6) black long sleeved tee-shirt - embroidered socks, black with yellow embroidery saying OR THIS, - 10 blue balloons - 4 yellow balloons- 2 white cotton sun hats - black velvet covered box (home-made) - black lipstick - black nail varnish - red nail varnish - 2 pairs white silky gloves customised with thimbles and oil pastels - white cotton lab coat with additional long-line pocket for holding flags - semaphore flags made with red and yellow rayon material sewn into flags and attached to dowel with staples - step stool - SOS whistle - large black plastic spider - coloured chinks - 8 rolls brown paper made into bags large enough to cover body - metal paint can - paint brushes, various - A3 thick card, at least 40 sheets - red and orange lipsticks, approximately 10 - red bridal veil, embroidered - masks, 5, various sorts - black sharpie pens - too many to count - red sharpie pens, about 10 - green sharpie pens, about 10 - 6 large clear plastic sheets - black plastic groundsheet - 1 clip frame A2 - 1 pot black nail varnish - black wide elastic 6 metres - 1 lazy Susan - plywood to customise lazy Susan - 1 plastic battery operated clock - 300 clear plastic beer glasses - 2x 50 metre rolls white cartridge paper - 1 pair long red silky gloves - 1 pair red patent high heeled shoes - 40 rolls FRAGILE tape - 20 rolls THIS WAY UP tape - 20 rolls REJECT tape - 50 rolls assorted wide brown, black and white strong tape - scissors, various - 2 x 1 metre long wooden sticks - 1

ball of string -2 x 'Hello' magazines - 1 x pair black glasses frames with no glass – 5 metres thick black elastic - 1 black plastic cup - 1 grey plastic chair - 1 grey and black plastic step stool - 4 metres black silky material - 4 yards red silky material - 1 round mirror with stand - 1 tub white face paint - 1 pair large scissors on ribbon - 2 pairs black socks with chalk attached at toes - 3 x brown Stetson hats – 3 x neck scarves - 5 x tubes assorted glue – assorted cup hooks - 1 x cocktail shaker, 1 x cocktail glass - various lengths of yellow plastic rope and white rope - 1 x grey stretchy cotton jacket - 1 black top hat - 6 metres dowel - 1 x white shirt -2 charity shop black jackets - red HI gloves - black ME T-shirt - pile of toy money - finger stall – 10 pallet boxes – long length blue plastic rope – 1 paint tin can – assorted paint brushes – 1 pair purple medical gloves – 1 pair white medical gloves – 5 rolls wide masking tape – 4 paper coverall suits – 2 tubs white acrylic paint – 2 tubs black acrylic paint – 1 cocktail glass – 1 stainless steel cocktail shaker – 2 packs self-adhesive wall hooks – 1 small pulley – 1 mechanism from which to use pulley – 3 x 12 packs till rolls – 6 red/orange lipsticks – 8 x sheets Perspex – 4 metres calico material - 10 metres white cotton material – 2 balls knitting wool and needles – 1 apple attached to elastic band – 5 metres thick black elastic – 1 pair black glasses frames without the glass

Performance artists' use materials

There is a train of thought that believes performance art is an immaterial practice, although paradoxically most artists use objects and artefacts, which are given a different role to their conventional use in the performance as it takes place (Matuszak, 2014, p103). Many of my performances, particularly the performance presentations have involved a large number of objects. I have thought about how objects are used in relation to how text is displayed on them, how objects holding text are built and how text can be written upon objects. I have tried to see objects in terms of their functional value and ensure every object has a presence (Matusak, 2014, p103).

Cheap and everyday objects

Objects have been found or bought cheaply and some materials have been re-used and re-developed for a variety of pieces. As Pena (no date) says unlike visual artists and sculptors, performance artists don't mind if objects get worn out or destroyed. The objects are there to serve the performance taking place; in my case the materialisation of the text and action of each piece. For example, the till rolls have been used in a number of situations in order to carry prewritten text. They have been wrapped around the body, unrolled to reveal text across a room and used in group performances where repetitive text is read by a number of people as the till roll passes through their hands. They have had the words of other performers written on them and been used in differing ways by six individual performers, whose actions made up a group performance.

Anything is relevant

Through the addition of text, an object can have a different meaning placed upon it. For example, in each performance presentation I have tried to include either spoken or read text, attributable to a relevant researcher or philosopher. As this was presented I included an action which made the reading or speaking difficult through physical activity. To date these objects have been a pink hula hoop and a skipping rope.

The Pallet Box

The pallet box was an important object in performances at the beginning of the research, re-surfacing at the end for In-Tuition, the Arts PhD Showcase held in the Glass Tank at Oxford Brookes University, where eight boxes were performed at the same time by volunteers. The idea for the box as performance object came from 'Wittgenstein's Beetle' a famous thought experiment in his investigation of pain. Wittgenstein thought one cannot feel another person's pain but only infer it from their behaviour and their report of it. He invited readers to imagine a community in which the individuals each have a box containing a 'beetle'. No-one can look into anyone else's box and everyone says they know what a beetle is only by looking at his or her own beetle. The word beetle therefore ceases to have any meaning outside the thing that is in your box and therefore one cannot understand what it is like to be another person, or experience things from another perspective (Floyd, 2006). In the first piece I took the analogy literally and became 'the beetle in the box'. The pallet box influenced actions throughout the work, such as the continuing theme of wrapping and enclosure and the necessity for struggle.

Form and function

I chose objects which, in their used form, appeared sculptural and I assigned a specific function to every object in order for it to assist in the narration of the piece (Howell, 1999, p63). Small cardboard boxes have been stacked without being stuck together in various configurations. They have been built and stuck in order to form tall plinths, which then held a range of polystyrene heads. Some boxes with heads were also painted depending on their role in the performances. The 'oil pastel' gloves, where each finger carried a different colour were constructed using everyday materials; pieces of oil pastels were attached to the gloves using plastic thimbles, cotton and glue. Here, as with many of the other objects I used, both the form and the function of materials changed in the service of the work. Matuszak (2014,

p104) feels objects open a semantic field. Sometimes he searches for poetical transformations, whereas at other times he uses objects because of their functionality.

Spatial conditions and context

Objects can affect the spatial conditions in which the work is taking place by their size or positioning in that space. To some extent using text on the chosen objects becomes an exploration of the materials and their bodiliness (Fritz, 2015). For example, the stacking of plastic glasses necessitated both a clear space and one where the glasses would not be knocked over by people or objects, or blown over by the wind. In order to read the text, there must be space to see either the materialisation of words as they are written or built and an opportunity to decipher the words once they are in place. I tried to choose objects for some of the pieces which specifically related to the space and conditions where the work was taking place. For example, Cenocillicaphobia, which comprised of the stacking of a small pyramid of beer glasses, took place in public houses on both the occasions it was performed.

Unification with the object

Michaela Zimmer (2001, p11) thinks that capturing the feeling of unification with objects, where body and object are working together, can only happen through the photograph. However, once the pallet box was attached to me or I was inside it I felt totally merged with the object. My role, as activator, was to give the boxes new and different meanings through the text that was displayed or made. Similarly, in 'Line up and join in', I became one with the box figures, which were linked to me as the dance took place.

Clothing

The performances 'It just is 1' using a till roll and 'It just is 2' using the Perspex frame moved me into a central and visible role within the work. I became a primary visual object in these pieces, and this in turn raised issues related to dress. Choices of clothing were linked to the

action taking place. Wrapping till roll necessitated an unadorned outline and work with the Perspex frame needed a pocket for carrying writing implements, such as the lipstick. In the performance/presentations I embroidered words onto gloves and t-shirts and used sequins to form words on clothing and hats. In works where clothing became a feature to be read, the self was seen and therefore an important visual object in the performance.

Language as a found object

Nathan Walker (no date) thinks of language as a found object and I agree with him as I too lift, place, observe, cover and reveal words whose origins are not always clear. Language is an economical medium. It is always there to be used and the way it is manipulated can alter the nature of the object. As text is written or placed on an object as part of a piece it can be changed as the work is in progress. The one work text FRAGILE taped over the pallet box stated fragility, whereas the tape strengthened the structure, which allowed the box to be rolled and flipped from the inside.

Using and re-using objects

The FRAGILE pallet box was used on a number of occasions. I liked the idea that it was getting worn out and potentially destroyed and perhaps through that more 'charged and powerful' (Pena, no date). FRAGILE became both faded and dented with use, which seemed to add not only to its feeling of fragility but also the resilience which I wished to create. I added boxes carrying REJECT and THIS WAY UP tape which were used in the same way. The box work depended on how the material was explored in relation to the text placed or written on it and the actions used to activate it. The objects also changed in relation to the context in which they were sited and the audiences around them. I realised that the emergence of a piece, and the way the text was revealed on the object, depended on how the materials were explored and placed.

Lists and sequences of objects

Stuart Sherman (1945-2001) carried all the objects he used in his performances in a suitcase. These performances, which he called 'Spectacles' used small, mass produced objects, set up on a folding table. These he then arranged and rearranged as others might rearrange words in a sentence (Howell, 1999, p62). I often use a large blue and white spotted bag to transport objects. Here the list of objects is imperative for its packing and unpacking both before and during the performance. The bag, like Sherman's case, also makes transportation easier. Works with the till roll and large paper bags were developed as a reaction to the bulk of the pallet box. It was liberating to roll or fold them for transportation before they were used.

Practical object to art object

I aimed to change the nature, use and primary state of the objects I used through what I wrote on them, what text I attach to them, or how I construct text with them. Through the added text and the actions performed I decide how each object changed from practical object to art object (Panofsky, 1955, p12).

Section 5

Action

A performance /presentation shown at the Postgraduate Research Student Conference, Oxford Brookes University, May 2019. This work explores how I used actions in the making of Textacts, through demonstration and linked explanation.

Key: Red - Spoken text

Black - Additional information for written thesis

Green - Description of actions

Text

Today I am going to formally present a chapter of my thesis as it is currently written in its draft form, which relates to the use of Action within my performances and examines some of the ideas underpinning the performative actions I have used throughout my work.

My research has looked at the making of what I call TextActs, which are actions involving the use of text. Basically, I have been examining if and how text can be used in performance art.

Performance art places emphasis on the actions of the artist themselves. It allows you to carry out crazy acts and challenge your own being and raises questions about what you can do and what ideas are able to be realised. (McLean, 2016)

My actions have been related to the making, writing and showing of text. In a time of political turmoil, nationally and internationally, global warming and environmental disasters, many artists have been drawn to react to these issues in their work. In contrast my actions and associated text may seem meaningless. I have worked hard to avoid both familiar and contentious content and I think this has allowed the work to focus on the process and interaction of the components.

The action of any piece therefore has to work in relation to both the text of the

Action

Come into area wearing jacket with text written on it highlighting the main points of the presentation. As I start to speak take off jacket and put on model.



Fig. 12

Take coverall out of the bag and put on.

Write ACTION on coverall.

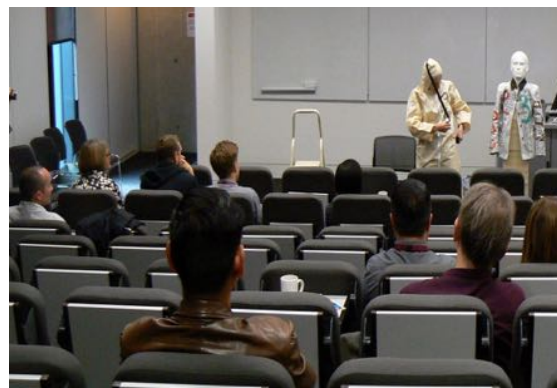


Fig. 13

piece and the objects used in the making and displaying of text, through pulling the objects and the text used together in some way.

Anthony Howell (1999, p72) a revered performer and writer about performance lists three primary actions in performance - stillness, repetition and inconsistency.

Howell sees inconsistency as problematic as if one attempts to perform with no structure and no repetitions this can lead to inertia as one runs out of ideas. He advocates inconsistency and repetition as working together, with repetition underpinning the inconsistency.

When I think about the important elements which are contained in and contribute to my performances I would highlight three:

- firstly, the necessity to PRACTICE.

I need to practice the way in which text is going to materialise and be displayed to an audience. These skills tend to be particular to the work in question. Most of the actions within my performances are planned and rehearsed, whether it seems so or not. Improvisation is the process of adjusting to the occasion while working at a particular activity and of being receptive to what is going on around oneself. (Anderson, 1995) I sometimes need to improvise if things do not go according to plan: for example, a costume or material failure, or if I think a change of plan might improve the work within a particular setting or with a certain audience.

Hold up STILLNESS card and say 1. Hold up 10 REPETITION cards one at a time and say 2. Hold up InCoNsistENcy card and say 3.



Fig.14

Write the word PRACTICE along both arms.



Fig.15

Display to the audience.

Bruce Nauman (1996) a well-known artist and performer, said an awareness of yourself comes from a certain amount of activity and you can't get it from just thinking about yourself, you have to do exercises which gives you a certain kind of awareness that you don't have if you read books.

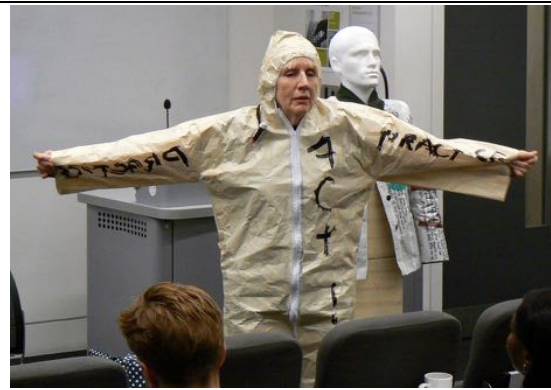


Fig.16

Walk up step ladder. Write 1 on leg. Walk down step ladder. Walk up step ladder. Write 2 on leg. Walk down step ladder. Walk up step ladder. Write 3 on leg. Walk down step ladder. Walk up step ladder. Write 44 on leg. Walk down step ladder.



Fig.17

Marina Abramovic (2010) in the months leading up to her show 'The Artist is Present' in 2010 at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, where she sat still in the gallery for 700 hours as the public took turns to sit opposite her, said that physically and mentally she had to prepare

Take tube of Smarties. Put some in hand and give packet to audience member. Say *Marina would like you to share*. Place Smarties in mouth. Move to chair, sit and meditate whilst chewing.

herself for the feat of endurance. She became a vegetarian and did deep meditation in order to prepare the body and the mind.

Fritz (2015) discusses how performance artists use their bodies in many ways in works that are intentionally short lived. They set up feats of endurance, put themselves in danger and injure themselves. They dress their bodies, manipulate them, and carry out seemingly meaningless tasks in ephemeral gestures of the moment.

The second important element in my work is one of.... STRUGGLE

Usually my struggle is aligned to the materials I use within the work in order to make or display text and involves using the body to manipulate text in some way. The focus on the body in so much performance art has been seen as a consequence of the abandonment of conventional medium. I aim to set up links and contrasts between the text, objects and the actions. I aim for an interplay between the text and action, which Kruger (2014) says can 'open different channels of communication.' Howell (1999, p199) thinks performance can be considered a form of time-based sculpture, as it breaks down the image into those components required to build it.

The third important element is one of..... HUMOUR ...



Fig.18

Stand and attempt to write the work STRUGGLE on the back of the suit.



Fig.19

Which is the audience reaction I often hope to achieve. When performance artist Mel Brimfield pinned her body to a wall with an ironing board, writer Matt Fenton asked 'Are we allowed to laugh?' (Brimfield, 2011, p8), which is something a lot of people may have asked through much of the history of performance.

So, in conclusion my verbal presentation today has been accompanied by a string of actions, which were designed, at best, to link to what I was saying and at worst to keep you awake. Usually on the completion of a presentation you would be asked if you have any questions. But I would like to ask you a question which is What if anything have you learned from this presentation?

Place leg on ladder and write HUMOUR from the bottom to the top of the leg. Continue speaking with leg on ladder.



Fig.20

Section 6

TextActs

This section contains documentation and analysis relating to short individual performances, collaborative performances and a performance involving audience participation. In these Textacts the focus is firmly rooted in the writing, displaying and building of text. The individual aims for each piece are set out, followed by a description of the work which took place. The component analysis then refers back to the aims of the research, examining the use of text, object and action, audience reaction and the context/performance space. Where works were performed more than once, at different times and adapted, reference to changes have been made. The descriptions and discussion is organised in this way in order to give as much information as possible to the reader who had not seen the work performed. Photographic documentation accompanies each Textact.

| Title | Page number |
|------------------------------|--------------------|
| Cenosillicaphobia | 42 |
| Lonely Cup | 47 |
| The Beetle in the Box | 52 |
| Think or Drink | 56 |
| THINK WRITE MOVE BOX | 60 |
| Spin | 64 |
| FRAGILE, REJECT, THIS WAY UP | 67 |
| Box Series | 72 |

| | |
|-------------------------|-----|
| It just is (1) | 75 |
| It just is (2) | 79 |
| Permanence is Overrated | 83 |
| Palladian | 86 |
| CRASHFLIPWIZZBANGTING | 90 |
| In our own words | 94 |
| At last a real art work | 97 |
| Sign In | 102 |



Fig. 21

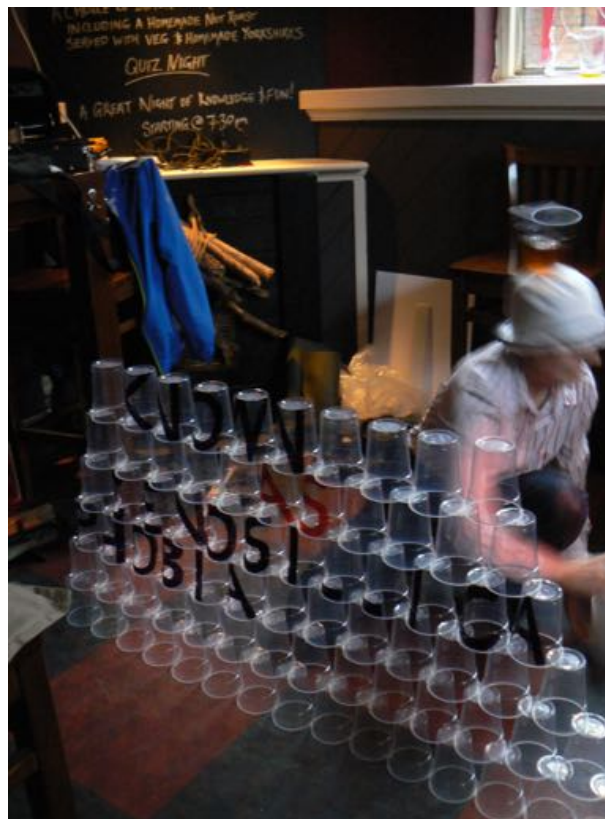


Fig. 22



Fig.23

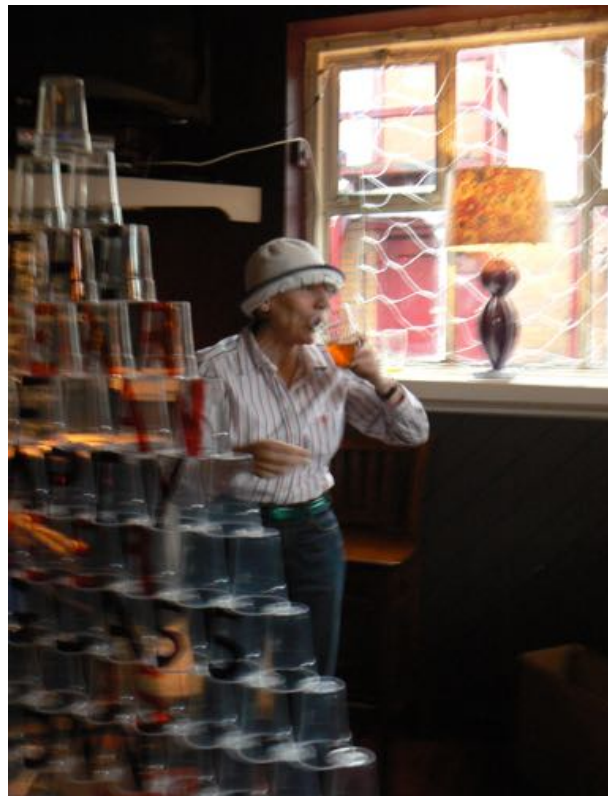


Fig.24

Performed:

- Stammtisch Performance Art Evening, Port Mahon, Oxford, August 2013
- 'So, you think you know what Performance Art is?' LAPER, St. Aldates Tavern, Oxford, January 2019

Text:

THE FEAR OF AN EMPTY BEER GLASS IS KNOWN AS CENOCILLICAPHOBIA

Aims:

- To construct a sentence comprising of individual letters written on plastic beer glasses.
- To build the sentence sequentially, in order to encourage the audience to read the work as it is made.
- To link the sentence, the objects and the context of the public house in the making of a coherent piece of work.

Description of performance:

Glasses were ordered in decreasing rows, from the floor up, until the text was in place. The glass was taken off my head and the beer consumed. The plastic glasses were knocked over. For the St. Aldates performance I used fewer glasses and stacked the glasses on top of the bar in order for the bottom rows of text to be read easily by the audience.

Component description and analysis:

TEXT: I found the definition of Cenosisillicaphobia on-line.⁷ Constructing the text formed the performance. Alternative words were coloured red and black to aid reading and blank

⁷ I randomly searched on-line with phrases such as 'public houses', 'beer drinking' 'pint beer glass'. The definition of Cenosisillicaphobia seemed very appropriate for work in a pub setting. Etchells, Goulsh and Hixon (2014) discusses how the decisions of the artist inform their private process of containment. They make decisions as to what will be and always the work could have been something else.

glasses made the spaces between the words. The meaning of the sentence had a close link to the material on which it was written. All the layers had to be in place before the sentence was fully readable by the audience.

OBJECT: The plastic beer glasses were chosen as an appropriate vehicle for the performance, relating to both the text and the context.⁸ The hat with an attached beer glass, containing beer, added to the tone and humour of the piece from the start. It was conceivable that the beer would spill as the work progressed or the beer glass would become unattached from the hat. The glass in the first performance had been stuck onto the hat with Araldite. In the second performance I wore a top hat with a hole cut into the crown, into which the glass could sit.

ACTION: The glasses were ordered before the event so they could be placed in the correct position, and the repetitive action practiced so as to generate speed and accuracy. I had to concentrate on the correct placing of glasses due to their lightness. The stacking took about ten minutes which seemed an appropriate length of time for audience attention. In the initial performance I thought the hat would come off as I lifted the glass from my head. In the event, as I lifted the glass it came away from the hat, which proved a very satisfactory ending.

AUDIENCE REACTION: The audiences on both occasions watched the performances to the end. Many responded by laughing, both during and at the end of the performance. Several people asked me afterwards about the term Cenocillicaphobia.

CONTEXT / PERFORMANCE SPACE: The public houses were appropriate venues for all aspects of the piece.

⁸ Objects achieve relevance through peoples contact with them and use of them (Pearson and Shanks, 2001, p99). Straight pint glasses are a symbol of the British public house and the beer drinker. Most of the audience had one in their hand as the performance too place, and this added to the relevance of the object and the text which materialised upon them.

Evaluation of aims:

- After practice I successfully built the structure of glasses, making the composed sentence.
- Through the letter by letter placing of the scribed glasses the audience read the work to the end.

Next steps:

- To find an alternative text appropriate for use on beer glasses.
- To use the same material to build a bigger structure.



Fig. 25

Number: 2

Title: Lonely Cup

Date: April 2014



Fig. 26

Performed:

- Playground, Oxford, April 2014
- Fringe Arts Bath, May 2014

Text:

'WE ARE ALL ALONE BORN ALONE DIE ALONE AND WE SHALL ALL SOME DAY LOOK BACK ON OUR LIVES AND SEE IN SPITE OF COMPANY WE WERE ALONE THE WHOLE WAY I DO NOT SAY LONELY BUT ESSENTIALLY AND FINALLY ALONE'⁹

'The Proud Highway': Saga of a Desperate Southern Gentleman 1955-1967 Hunter S. Thompson.

Aims:

- To develop built text, using plastic pint glasses, following 'Cenocillicaphobia'.
- To relate the text to the built object.
- To extend the size of the built structure.
- To engineer a dramatic ending.

Description of performance:

I assembled the structure, one layer at a time from the inside until I could reach no higher. Once completed, I sat in the middle of the structure and slowly loosened a glass from the bottom layer of glasses. As this was removed the structure toppled.

Component description and analysis:

TEXT: I found the quote whilst reading about alcohol abuse following the work Cenocillicaphobia. Constructing the text formed the performance. As with 'Cenocillicaphobia' red and black capital letters were drawn onto plastic beer glasses. When completed the aim was for the text on the tower, with the incarcerated body, to make sense without an awareness of the background context.

OBJECT: 480 plastic beer glasses were stacked upside down forming a circular tower about 2 metres high. The structure was precarious.

⁹ Thompson was an American journalist and writer. Known for his lifelong use of drugs and alcohol he committed suicide by shooting himself in 2005.

ACTION: The glasses were ordered before the building took place. Concentration and dexterity were important as the glasses were light and each glass had to be placed accurately between the two glasses on the row below. From start to finish the structure took about 30 minutes to build. Movement within the tower became difficult as the structure grew. Small and precise actions were required and a rhythm had to be established for visual effect.

10

AUDIENCE REACTION: The 'Playground' event, gave rise to discussion about the quote and material. However, in the Fringe Arts Bath 'pop-up' shop most passers-by looked in for a few minutes before moving on and did not read the text.

CONTEXT / PERFORMANCE SPACE: The very different contexts and spaces in which the work was performed changed the nature of the performance from something to be read to a sculptural spectacle.

Evaluation of aims:

- Although I used the same materials and action, the scale and text component of this piece made it very different from 'Cenocillicaphobia'. ¹¹
- In order to read the text audience members had to walk around the structure. This added to the feeling of isolation and incarceration as I was trapped inside the tower once it had reached a certain height.
- The size of the structure gave the piece a strong visual presence. However, if the text was not read, blank glasses might have had the same effect.

¹⁰ This performance action was an on-going 'simple repetition' as discussed by Howell (1999, p35). However, through the repetition the text unfolded, as with Cenocillicaphobia, and therefore the repetition supplied the performance with a motive, in this case to complete the building of the text.

¹¹ Pearson and Shanks (2001, p99) discuss how objects achieve relevance through people's contact with them and use of them. I realised that the beer glasses did not resonate in the same way in this piece as in Cenocillicaphobia.

- If time had allowed I would have sat in the tower for longer before demolishing it. The ending was dramatic as the glasses fell to the floor.¹²

Next steps:

- To experiment with writing text as the action of the performance.
- To find an unusual object which will carry written text.



Fig. 27

¹² Howell (199, p82) thinks the best surprises are born out of the predictable. As I sat on the floor I gradually removed one of the glasses in the lowest tier. Initially nothing happened and then, slowly at first, the glasses fell to the floor. I felt this ending worked appropriately with the text.



Fig.28



Fig. 29



Fig. 30



Fig. 31

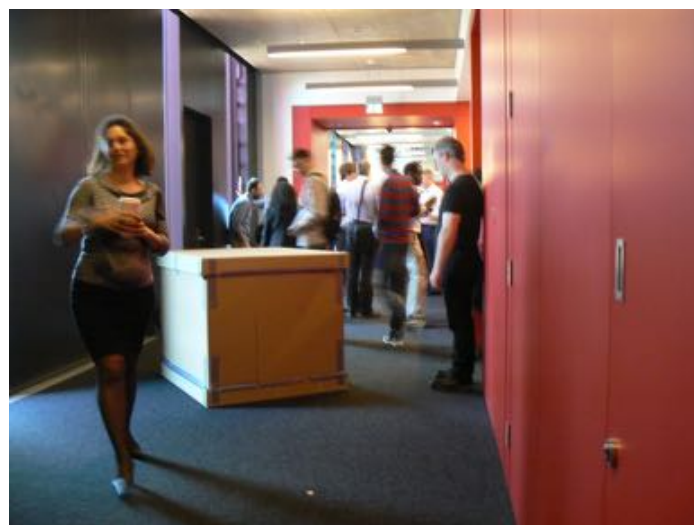


Fig. 32

Performed:

- Research Student Conference, Oxford Brookes, May 2014
- 'In-Tuition' Arts PhD Showcase, Glass Tank, Oxford Brookes University, June 2019
(performed by Annie Wright)

Text 2014:

'Bite off leg. Observe reaction of others. Count and label parts. Record progress. Place toe in mouth. Chew slowly. Describe mastication. Swallow. Regurgitate endlessly. Remove second leg. Ponder implications of amputation. Write up results.'

Text 2019:

'Place toe in mouth. Chew slowly. Describe mastication. Swallow. Ponder implications. Write up results.'

Aims:

- To examine how text can be written in an unusual and visually interesting way.
- To compose a text which relates to the object on which it is written.
- To build on the sculptural impact of the glass tower in 'Lonely Cup'.

Description of performance:

I entered the box before people arrived for the conference and started writing when I heard voices. The text took fifteen minutes to complete. I exited the box and turned it over revealing the attached jacket; which I put on. I lifted the box onto my back and walked into the conference hall, took off the jacket / box and then found a seat. The audience was already seated.

Component description and analysis:

TEXT: Each phrase of the text was written on the box through a different window, cut into the box. In hindsight the seemingly meaningless text was too long and needed to be easier to read.¹³ Before I started writing I was aware of people leaning or placing coffee or their belongings on top of the box and I heard comments wondering what it was and why it was in the corridor. At one point I banged on the inside of the box and startled those standing close by.

OBJECT: A cardboard pallet box was secured with tape in situ. A door, for entry, and small windows to enable arms to protrude and write, were cut into the box. A jacket was attached to the underside of the box. Black sharpie pens were used for the writing. The box provided an intriguing and imposing presence in the corridor.¹⁴

ACTION: My hands protruded through the windows and I struggled to write, unseeing, on the outside of the box. Only my hand and lower arm was visible to the audience. Despite practice, the writing was a difficult action and I saw afterwards that not all of the text was legible. Putting the jacket on was difficult but the box on my back made an interesting profile and a humorous entrance into the lecture theatre.¹⁵

¹³ Usually the reader is not present when the writer writes and the writer is absent when the reader reads (Ong, 2012). I began to realise that in order for an audience to read my writing the text needed to be a manageable length. The text was shortened for the Box Series performance, which made it both easier to write and read.

¹⁴ As I constructed the box in the corridor I became aware of its size and presence in the space. Morris (1993) discussed the awareness of scale as a function of the comparison made between the constant, one's body size and the object. Initially the people in the conference space did not realise there was someone in the box.

¹⁵ Carlson (2004, p84) says one of the characteristics of performance is a reliance on unusual juxtapositions of incongruous and seemingly unrelated images. The whole of this performance from the placing the box in the corridor space to carrying it into the lecture theatre seemed discordant but not inappropriate, to the nature of the conference.

AUDIENCE REACTION: From the documentation I saw that some people stopped to look as they were passing on their way to the conference rooms. Some tried to read the writing. People laughed as I entered the conference room wearing the box.

CONTEXT / PERFORMANCE SPACE: The box, taking up a large proportion of the corridor, provided an unusual distraction.

Evaluation of aims:

- The pallet box was chosen for its size and surface for written text. It was a cheap material and came in three parts, making it was transportable in a car, before assembly in situ.
- I realised that writing in unusual ways holds the possibility of being interesting but needs practice in order to be achieved.
- I thought the ambiguity of the text would be intriguing, but in hindsight, like the text in 'Lonely Cup', it was too ambiguous and too long.

Next Steps:

- To consider the use of shorter and more punchy text.
- To experiment with writing using a different part of the body.
- To find another way of exploiting the sculptural nature of the pallet box.

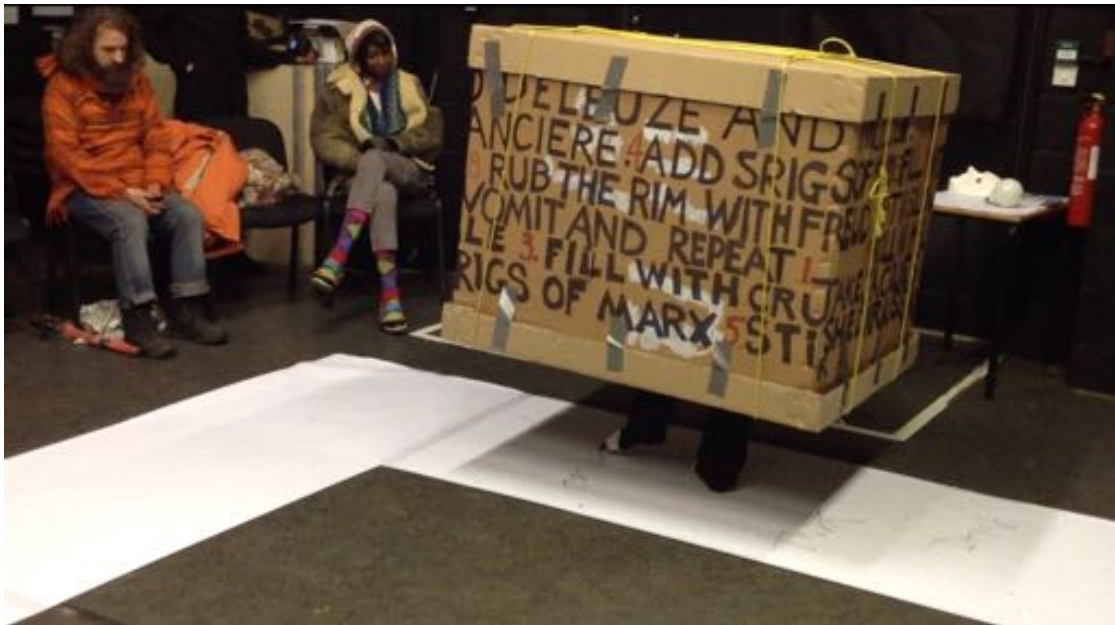


Fig.33



Fig. 34

Performed:

- 'Nothing in Art' Oxford Brookes Drama Studio, February 2014
- 'In-Tuition', Arts PhD showcase, Glass Tank, Oxford Brookes University, June 2019
(performed by Anna Yearwood)

Aims:

- To develop the writing of text in interesting and unusual ways.
- To compose text which relates to the action of the work.
- To experiment with how the pallet box can be manipulated as part of the action.

Text:

On large and small boxes and in place before performance:

1.TAKE JACQUES LACAN. 2. ADD DELEUZE AND MUDDLE. 3. FILL WITH CRUSHED KRAUSS AND TOP WITH RANCIERE. 4. ADD SPRIGGS OF MARX. 5. STIR SLOWLY. 6. DISGARD MARX. 7. SHAKE VIGEROUSLY. 8. RUB THE RIM WITH FREUD. 9. ROLL IN McLUHAN. 10. POUR AND SIP REPETITIVELY. 11. VOMIT AND REPEAT.

On paper: written as part of performance with feet - THINK OR DRINK.

Description of performance:

I entered the box. Once inside I put on socks, which had pens attached to them and placed my feet through the hole in the bottom of the box. I lifted the box with my shoulders and proceeded to walk around the white paper square occasionally writing with my left foot THINK and then my right foot OR DRINK. On approaching the chair, I stopped, lowered the box, took off the socks, climbed out of box and sat on the chair. Once seated I took the cocktail shaker and glass out of the small box, shook the shaker, took off the lid, poured martini into the glass and drank.

Component description and analysis:

TEXT: The text, written on the boxes prior to the event, generally went unread as the audience sat to watch the performance rather than move around the space. The text made

with pens attached to feet was simple and accessible.¹⁶ The two texts were designed to work together and may have done so in different circumstances. In order to read the text on the big box audience members needed to move around the box. I realised, as with 'Lonely Cup', the importance of both the position of the work in relation to the audience and the link between the text and the performance space.

OBJECT: The white paper square taped to the floor, with the box moving around it was visually interesting as were the protruding feet with pens attached. The number of objects made the piece complicated to organise in a short space of time.

ACTION: Getting into the box whilst the audience was present and putting on the socks was difficult. The action of carrying the box whilst inside, with legs protruding, demanded concentration and care, particularly balancing the box whilst trying to write with my feet. Although giving the allusion of heaviness, the pallet box was quite light to lift but difficult to manipulate.¹⁷ I found my way around the room using the paper as a guide. I was able to carry out the actions, but on reflection the performance might have been more effective if I had already been in the box when the audience entered the space.

AUDIENCE REACTION: The audience members were seated throughout the performance and were attentive. Several wanted to discuss the work afterwards and a couple of people walked around the box and after reading the text and understood the text and action link.

CONTEXT / PERFORMANCE SPACE: Chairs were set out in the space and the audience gravitated to them as they arrived. I should have considered the layout of the room in more detail as I would have preferred the audience to walk around the space as the work took

¹⁶ Carlson (2004) says you can't assume the audience is a projection of yourself and will understand the process that has gone on in your head in the making of the work. I realised that the text on the box and its link with the phrases written with my feet was too tenuous.

¹⁷ I saw from the recorded video how the pattern and repetition of the task enabled the form to grow as I moved around the square, adding to the physical properties of the material (Etchells, Goulish, Hixon, 2013).

place. However, the performance was part of a mixed performance evening, the majority of which was suitable for a seated audience.

Evaluation of aims:

- Writing with pens attached to my feet, produced a visually interesting action.
- The text on the box was too long and complicated and the link with the text written by the feet too tenuous.
- Carrying the pallet box in this way produced a visually interesting image.

Next steps:

- To find other ways of carrying the box.
- To develop alternative writing methods.
- To simplify text content.

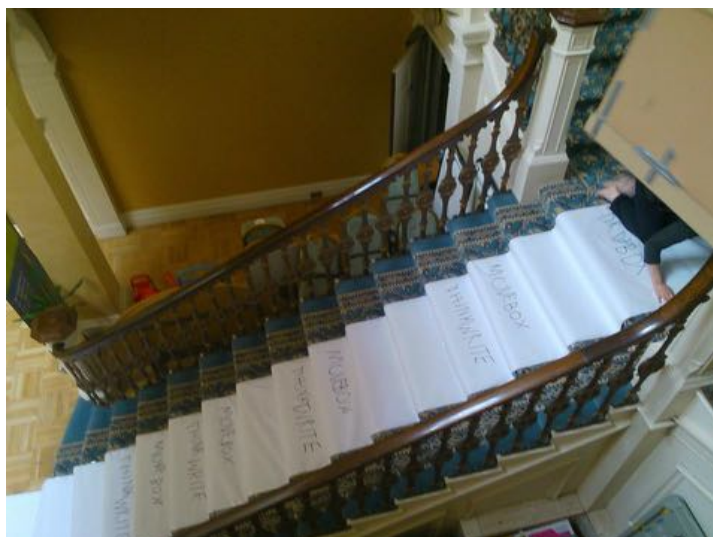
Fig. 35



Fig. 36



Fig. 37



Performed:

- 'Arts Research', Oxfordshire Arts Week, Headington Hill Hall, Oxford 2014
- 'In-Tuition' Arts PhD Showcase, Glass Tank, Oxford Brookes University, June 2019
(Performed by Lee Riley)

Text:

THINK WRITE MOVE BOX

Aims

- To compose a simple and readable text.
- To continue experimentation with alternative methods of writing text.
- To develop the manipulation of the pallet box in conjunction with the physical act of writing.
- To design a visually interesting act involving the combination of physical and mental struggle.

Description of Performance:

I attached a paper runner to the stairs and assembled the box, with a jacket attached, at the bottom of the stairs. I put on the jacket, lifting the box onto my back. I picked up the pens and proceeded to climb the stairs on my hands and knees, stopping at regular intervals to write with both hands simultaneously. On reaching the landing I stopped, took off the jacket, turned the box over, entered the box and closed the door.

Component description and analysis:

TEXT: Simple composed text was written during the performance. The four words THINK WRITE MOVE BOX aimed to reflect the physical and mental struggle taking place. The

writing was placed appropriately on the paper runner attached to the stairs. The text was readable but deteriorated towards the top of the stairs.¹⁸

OBJECT: The body and the box became one object which created a visually interesting image. The plain cardboard box, unadorned with text, was in contrast to the box used in 'Think or Drink' and this kept the visual nature of the object simple and allowed focus to be placed on the action and writing.

ACTION: My body was tested by the actions of carrying the box up the stairs and writing simultaneously. Writing with both hands at the same time took concentration. I had not practiced carrying the box up a flight of stairs, which was much more difficult than on the flat. I realised the importance of rehearsing every part of the action prior to the performance. The stairs dictated the duration of the action.

AUDIENCE REACTION: Once the performance had started and the box was on the stairs, the audience viewed the work from below or on the first floor. Most of the audience observed the work from the first-floor balcony. Comments were related to the difficulty in writing different words at the same time and the spectacle of the box moving up the stairs.

CONTEXT / PERFORMANCE SPACE: The ornate and central staircase in Headington Hall was an ideal location for this work.¹⁹

Evaluation of aims:

- The short text was simple and easy to read.
- I realised that the box held a wide range of possibilities as a focus for action as well as a vehicle for carrying text.
- I developed my writing skills repertoire by writing with both hands at the same time.

¹⁸ Although the text was simple I hoped it might be seen as more complex and illusive in relation to the task (Lye, 1993).

¹⁹ Morris (1993) discusses the idea of the space preceding and generating the work. In this instance the stairs were chosen as the ideal location for the written placement of the text whilst struggling to carry the box to the top of the stairs.

- The combination of the physical and mental struggle made this a very strenuous piece to carry out.

Next steps:

- To continue simplifying text in order to make it more accessible.
- To develop other ways of physically manipulating the box.

<https://vimeo.com/151657514>



Fig. 38

Performed:

- 'Kymatta: the gods for playmates' O3 Gallery, Oxford February 2015
- 'In-Tuition', Arts PhD Showcase, Glass Tank, Oxford Brookes University, June 2019
(performed by Jemima Hall)

Text:

Written text on box:

'ANGULAR MOMENTUM IS A MEASURE OF THE AMOUNT OF ROTATION AN OBJECT HAS TAKING INTO ACCOUNT ITS MASS SHAPE AND SPEED. IT IS A VECTOR QUANTITY THAT REPRESENTS THE PRODUCT OF A BODY'S ROTATIONAL INERTIA AND ROTATIONAL VELOCITY AROUND A PARTICULAR AXIS. FOR A RIGID BODY ROTATING AROUND AN AXIS OF SYMMETRY THE ANGULAR MOMENTUM (L) CAN BE EXPRESSED AS THE PRODUCT OF THE BODY'S MOMENT OF INERTIA (I) AND ITS ANGULAR VELOCITY (W) $L=IW$ '

Spoken text:

Single word 'spin' during the performance, made with iPad recording and voice.

Aims:

- To link text and action.
- To use spoken text as well as written text linked to action.
- To use the box as sculptural object manipulated by the action of the body inside.

Description of Performance:

I entered the box before the audience arrived. I switched on the sound track, began to spin the box and added my voice to the recorded sound. I spun the box at various speeds for approximately 15 minutes before coming to a stop. I exited the box.

Component description and analysis:

TEXT: The written text was stencilled in yellow and orange letters around the box. It shimmered as the box spun. The text was too long, complicated and difficult to read.²⁰ The sound text worked as planned with the recorded and live voice creating a layering effect which proved loud enough for the space. This could have been improved by more layers of recorded sound.

OBJECT: The pallet box was attached to a 'Lazy Susan' which was big enough to kneel on, whilst putting my hand through a hole to the floor in order to make the box spin. The black tape on the floor around the box, was designed to stop the audience coming too close whilst the box was spinning.²¹

²⁰ Recent studies have shown that people do not engage with large amounts of text when using Facebook and also find 'tweets' with pictures more engaging (Stark, 2014). Images speak directly to our emotions and the visual of the spinning box was more accessible to audience members than the text written upon it.

²¹ I realised simplicity of shape does not necessarily equate to simplicity of experience (Morris 1993) and a blank box might have had the same effect.

ACTION: The action was not easy to perform as the momentum of the box tended to cause nausea. I found keeping my eyes open and focussed helped whilst concentrating on making the sound.

AUDIENCE REACTION: Several people liked the way the coloured text on the outside of the box joined into a shimmering colour as the box was spun. I was told the sound was loud enough. One person wondered if the box could be made to spin with a motor rather than a person inside the box.

CONTEXT/PERFORMANCE SPACE: The O3 Gallery was an appropriate setting for the box. The audience stood on the upper level to watch the work. A full programme meant the box was installed at the beginning of the day but had to be removed after the performance.

Evaluation of aims:

- Both texts and action were closely linked. As with previous pieces, 'Lonely Cup' and 'Think or Drink' the longer text on the box was mainly unread as the box was only in situ for the duration of the performance.
- The spoken sound text was an interesting accompaniment to the visual of the box and the action. It could have been improved by additional layering of the voice electronically.
- The box formed an unusual sculptural object in the space.

Next steps:

- To continue finding ways to manipulate the pallet box, using simple text to extend the interest of the object and the action.

Number: 7 Title: FRAGILE

May 2015

Number: 7a Title: REJECT

May 2016

Number: 7b Title: IT JUST IS

November 2016

<https://vimeo.com/151621620>



Fig.39



Fig.40



Fig.41

Performed:**FRAGILE**

- 'Disobedient Art' (Performance and Exhibition) Fringe Arts Bath, May -June 2015
- 'Playground on Fire' Old Fire Station June 2015
- 'In-Tuition' Arts PhD showcase, Glass Tank, Oxford Brookes University, June 2019 (performed by Emma Stevens)

REJECT

- 'Live Friday', Playground, Ashmolean, Oxford 2016
- Fareham Open, (Performance and Exhibition) Fareham, August – September 2016
- 'In-Tuition' Arts PhD showcase, Glass Tank, Oxford Brookes University, June 2019 (performed by Alex Newton)

'THIS WAY UP'

- CARU Anniversary Party, OVADA, Oxford, November 2016 (performed by Jemima Hall)
- 'In-Tuition', Arts PhD Showcase, Glass Tank, Oxford Brookes University, June 2019 (performed by Austin Sherlaw-Johnson)

Text:

7. 'FRAGILE' 7a. 'REJECT' 7b. THIS WAY UP

Aim:

- To juxtapose the use of a one-word/phrase text and action.
- To develop the use of the pallet box as primary object within the work.
- To construct a simple action with visual impact.

As FRAGILE became worn it was necessary to make additional boxes for new performances and venues. This allowed me to trial other tape. The performances worked similarly in the range of locations. Additional descriptive comments and analysis relating to 'REJECT' and "THIS WAY UP' have been added where appropriate.

Description of Performance:

The 'FRAGILE' box was placed alongside other artworks, forming part of the 'Disobedient Art' exhibition. During this time a door, cut into the box, was left open and adults as well as children climbed into the box. I carried out performances on two days during the exhibition. I entered the box when the room was empty, sealed the door and waited for a signal tap on the box before beginning to rock and flip the box around the gallery.²² After approximately ten minutes I cut open the door and crawled out of the box.

Component description and analysis:

TEXT: FRAGILE, REJECT or THIS WAY UP tape, covered the inside and the outside of the boxes. The single word text 'FRAGILE' paradoxically added strength to the structure. The juxtaposition generated discussion. "REJECT" appeared out of place alongside the Greek and Roman sculptures in the Ashmolean Long Gallery. The way in which I applied the 'THIS WAY UP' tape meant the box could never be correctly in place. The text on all the boxes was easy to read.²³

OBJECT: The boxes were dominant within their placements. The tape made the boxes smooth to the touch; people ran their hands over them as they looked. The tape made the cardboard structures robust and also insulated the inside. The open door added intrigue. During the performances the boxes gained animation through their movement but also began to disintegrate.

²² Audience members were unaware I was inside the box and when it started to move and flip I was told the reaction was initially surprise and then humour. Howell (1999, p84) discusses how the inconsistent occurrence is fundamental to both surprise and humour. It introduces a feeling of chaos into situations, with the ensuing release of tension, which is laughter.

²³ There is an idea that the image becomes more powerful if there are no words (Kress and Van Leeuwen, 2003, p27). However, in relation to the boxes covered with tape there was a feeling that the punchy text was an indispensable part of the performance, which commented on the action and the nature of the object.

ACTION: With FRAGILE the rolling and flipping action appeared in direct contrast to the text covering the box. The sound of the boxes hitting the floors was unexpected and added to the impact of the action.²⁴ Moving the boxes in this way was hard work and was made more difficult by the heat inside the sealed structure. The body activating the box remained unseen until it exited at the end of the performance.

AUDIENCE REACTION: There was a lot of interest in how the boxes were activated and a great desire to 'have a go', or crawl inside.

CONTEXT/PERFORMANCE SPACE: The spaces were suitable for the performances. In the Fringe Arts Bath, Oxford Playground and Fareham Open venues, the boxes were able to remain in situ for the duration of the exhibitions.

Evaluation of aims:

- The tapes successfully changed the nature of the boxes.
- The simple texts added both a dimension of confusion and humour.
- The rolling and flipping action, generated from inside the box, was interesting and disruptive.

Next steps:

- To experiment with an alternative found text.
- To develop alternative simple actions.

²⁴ When asked about the relationship of sound to his performance pieces Roi Vaara (no date) said he used the sound that the actions in his pieces created. The sound of the impact of the box as it hit the ground whilst being flipped, particularly in the FaB location, added another dimension to the work and further contrast with the FRAGILE text.



Fig.42

<https://vimeo.com/user47778527/review/375233661/9f3ae4cace>



Fig. 43

Performed: 'In-Tuition' (private view) Glass Tank, Oxford Brookes University, June 2019

The boxes were placed in situ as part of the 'In-Tuition' exhibition.

Text: See documentation regarding individual pieces.

Aim: To perform, with the help of seven volunteer performers, eight box pieces simultaneously for ten minutes.

Performance Description:

Eight boxes (The Beetle in the Box, Think or Drink, THINK WRITE MOVE BOX, FRAGILE, REJECT, THIS WAY UP, Spin, Writing is not easy) plus the small box figure and jacket from Action, (see section 5) were placed in situ. Seven volunteer performers, who had practiced the actions took up their positions. I ensured the boxes were secure before taking my place. On a signal, a whistle was blown and the performance began. Members of the audience were able to walk around the space and watch the different actions. After ten minutes the whistle was blown again to mark the finish.

Component description and analysis:

TEXT: The text across the range of boxes was the same as in the initial performances apart from 'The Beetle in the Box' which was shortened because of the time period available and 'Spin' which did not include the voice or recorded sound from inside the box. The writing produced as part of the performances was clear. The prepared text on FRAGILE, REJECT and THIS WAY UP worked as a trio; the crashing sounds in the various locations made by the flipping and turning of the boxes complimented the repetitive text. Spin and Think or Drink, with their dense text on the outside of the box were in place for the duration of the exhibition, allowing time for observers to read the text.

OBJECT: The boxes were overhauled and several new boxes prepared for the event. The paper was set out where appropriate for the written text.

ACTION: All the volunteers were able to practice the required actions before the event took place. Most of the actions mirrored the initial performances, except THINK WRITE MOVE BOX where Lee Riley wrote the text with right and left hands one word at a time, whereas I had practiced writing two words simultaneously. 'Writing is not easy', not previously shown to an outside audience, was pulled up towards one of the high walk-ways using a wire pulley system and then suspended off the ground for the exhibition.

AUDIENCE REACTION: The audience walked around the space as the action took place looking at individual performances as well as the work as a whole.²⁵ I received many positive comments after the performance.

CONTEXT/PERFORMANCE SPACE: The placing of the boxes, worked well in the long and high space.

Evaluation of aim: I was very pleased to have the opportunity to show the boxes being activated together in one place.²⁶ All the volunteers provided admirable performances, despite very little time to practice.

Next Steps: To find other locations to show the work.



Fig.44

²⁵ Morris (1993) liked the idea of someone moving around a work and experiencing it from different angles. In this instance it gave the audience the opportunity to observe all the performances at close hand.

²⁶ The work was both a repetition of works already performed and something new. The context, large and imposing, gave space for innovation and effected how the work was seen (Auslander, 2018).

Number 9

Title: It just is (1)

May 2015



Fig.45

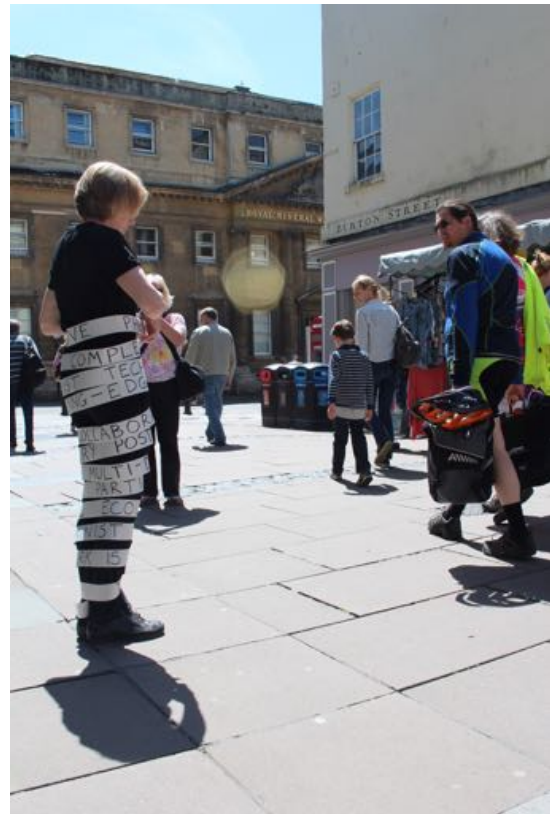


Fig.46



Fig.47



Fig. 48

Performed:

- Fringe Arts Bath May 2015
- Playground on Fire, Old Fire Station, Oxford June 2015

Text:

'This work is not feminist, political, ideological, participatory, post-modern, collaborative, phenomenological, performative, multi-disciplinary, immersive, experimental, cutting edge, good, it just is.'

Aims:

- To develop the use of pre-written text within a performance.
- To experiment with simpler, smaller and more transportable material.
- To compose an action which is suitable for a range of contexts.

Description of Performance:

I took a roll of paper out of my pocket. I gradually wrapped myself in the paper, which was covered in text. When the till roll was used, I slowly turned around allowing the audience to read the text before breaking out of the paper.

Component description and analysis:

TEXT: Composed text which was written with black sharpie pen along one side of the till roll. The text could be interpreted as the reader wished.

OBJECT: One whole paper till roll was used for each performance. I reinforced the paper roll with tape after 'Playground on Fire' as the paper tore when pulled too hard. I dressed in black trousers and top in order for the white paper with text to be the prominent image.²⁷ The material could be used in any location as it was easy to transport and use.

ACTION: The action of unrolling the paper required practice before the event. I worked slowly so that anyone watching could read the text as it was wound around the body. Turning around once the till-roll was in place also allowed for the reading of the text. As I loosened the paper it dropped to the ground and I could step out.

AUDIENCE REACTION: The small gallery audience at Playground on Fire read the text. In the Bath shopping centre passers-by stopped and looked but did not stay long enough to read the words. Although the text was too long for a passing audience, the spectacle encouraged interest.

CONTEXT / PERFORMANCE SPACE: There was a marked difference between working in the indoor and outdoor space.²⁸

²⁷ Howell (1999) discusses how even if the artist thinks they are simply being themselves they are still projecting a persona through their posture, body language and clothing. I wanted my clothing to be functional and appropriate for the task, with the focus on the action I was making.

²⁸ My aim was to gauge an outdoor audiences' reaction (Gardner, 2016). In hindsight I could have been more prominent in the space.

Evaluation of aims:

- The pre-written text was successful when people took time to read it. It was amusing and started a discussion about the nature of the work.
- The material was easy to prepare, transport and use.
- The action was simple but formed an unusual visual effect.
- **Next steps:**
 - To simplify the text and use in another situation.
 - To develop other methods for carrying and writing text which are easy to use and transport.
 - To use the till roll in other situations.



Fig. 49

Performed:

- 'Performance Showcase', Vibrations Art Journal, Old Fire Station, Oxford
December 2015
- 'Live Friday', Playground, Ashmolean, Oxford, May 2016
- 'Curiosity Carnival' European Researchers Night, Oxford September 2017

Text:

'This work is not feminist, political, ecological, multimedia, cutting edge, good. It just it!'

Aims:

- To simplify and reuse the text from 'It just is 1' in a different format.
- To write the text in situ and encourage the audience to read the text as it is written.
- To compose an action which is suited to a range of contexts.

Performance Description:

I carried the frame to the performance area and rested it on the ground whilst taking a lipstick out of my pocket. I opened the lipstick and smeared it around my mouth before putting the lipstick case in my mouth. I picked up the screen and began to write, from right to left and moving the screen up through my hands. When I had finished writing I moved my head to one side and spat out the lipstick. I placed the screen in a position where the text could be read, and walked away.

Component description and analysis:

TEXT: Shortened and reused composed text, following 'It just is 1'. In this instance the viewers read the text as it was written. As with 'It just is 1' the text could be interpreted as the reader wished.²⁹

OBJECT: The frame was made with Perspex sheeting with an attached wooden edging. Initially I used only a Perspex sheet but I did not find this rigid enough as it passed through my hands. I trialled various sizes of frame in order to feel comfortable manipulating the material whilst making the writing legible from a distance. Dress necessitated a pocket for the lipstick, which could be easily removed at the start of the piece. The lipstick needed to be twisted out of its casing then taped to the outer tube to ensure it would not push back into

²⁹ Barthes (1977, p162) discusses how the reader creates meaning from a text. The author does not control its significance and the reading is a performance of the written word by the reader. The audience seemed curious about the meaning of the text until the word 'good' was written, which transferred the piece from potentially something serious to something humorous. This was reinforced with the punchline, 'It just is'.

the case as it was used. A new lipstick was needed on every occasion the work was performed.

ACTION: The action was small and concentrated. It was necessary to practice the formation of letters back to front and also writing with my mouth in order to feel confident. The action of spitting out the used lipstick brought the writing to a suitable conclusion.

AUDIENCE REACTION: People found the climax of the text amusing and commented on the writing skill.³⁰ I was surprised at the size of the crowd who watched the work at Curiosity Carnival and the interest afterwards regarding the activity.³¹

CONTEXT / PERFORMANCE SPACE: The piece was successful in both the indoor and outdoor spaces. People stood close enough to read the writing as it took place. I realised the act of writing and the slow materialisation of words encouraged those watching to wait and see what would emerge.

Evaluation of aims:

- The length of the simplified text was appropriate.
- Writing the text by mouth attracted comments and was visually interesting.
- The work attracted interest and was effective in a range of locations and with a number of different audiences.

Next steps:

- To use this method of making text in other situations.

³⁰ Humour took the pretensions out of the work, particularly in the outdoor setting and informed the public that the work could be enjoyed in a light-hearted way. Otherwise they can be left with a feeling of inadequacy because they do not understand work that may not be intended to have meaning (Mason, 1992).

³¹ Counsell and Wolf (2001, p80) discuss how performance, taking place in social spaces, breaks down the boundaries between art and the public. The public must identify with the experience offered by the live performance but must also be distanced from it.



Fig. 50



Fig. 51



Fig. 52.



Fig. 53



Fig. 54



Fig.55

Performed:

AHA! Performing Art Research, Curiosity Carnival, September 2017

Text:

PERMANENCE IS OVERRATED

Aim:

- To write with water on a pavement surface, the words drying as they are written.
- To use an incongruous text.³²

³² Thousands of anonymous street calligraphers operate daily in Chinese parks and streets. The endless tracing texts, composed of Hanzi, Chinese characters, slowly disappear as the water evaporates. This phenomenon, called Dishu, (earth writing, or practicing ephemeral calligraphy on the ground using clear water as ink) appeared in the beginning of the 1990's in a park in the north of Beijing before spreading to most Chinese cities.

<https://vimeo.com/user47778527/review/381996248/21d5473996>

Description:

On the pavement I drew a frame with water and a paint brush and then inside the frame started writing the phrase 'Permanence is overrated'. As the water began to dry I tried to reapply it so that the text remained visible. Once I had used all the water I sat and watched the words evaporate.³³

Component description and analysis:

TEXT: The text seemed appropriate for the task and the situation. It was short, sharp and readable.

OBJECT: The paint can and paint brush proved a simple and effective way of carrying and using the water. The white lab coat gave the impression of authority. The simple material was easy to use despite the pavement not being completely dry.

ACTION: The task required concentrated and quick action. Making the frame for the writing initially set out the space and also stopped passers-by from walking over that particular piece of pavement. The writing had to be carried out quite quickly so that the whole could be read before it disappeared. The action would have been more interesting had it been sunny, which would have made the text dry quicker than I could write it.

AUDIENCE REACTION: I saw there was interest in the work and latterly several people asked how it came about and liked its simplicity.

CONTEXT /PERFORMANCE SPACE: The text and activity were appropriate for the situation.

³³ Artist Song Dong, whose practice explores notions of perception and the ephemeral nature of existence, has, since 1995, used a calligraphy brush to write daily diary entries in water on a particular block of stone.

www.printmag.com

Evaluation of aim: The task was absorbing and needed speed and precision in positioning the letters in order that they all fitted into the frame. I liked the ephemeral nature of the activity and can understand why it has become so popular.



Fig. 56

Number 12

Title: Palladian

Date: June 2016



Figs. 57-63

Performed:

'Colloquy' Fringe Arts Bath, June 2016

Performed by Al/ice/ex Donaghy, Nimmi Naidoo, Veronica Cordova de la Rosa, Annie Wright, Jenny Wylie and Peta Lloyd at The Circus, Bath.

Part of 'Colloquy', an exhibition curated by Fay Stevens.³⁴

Text:

'I want you to remember me. Will you remember that I existed and that I stood next to you here like this'.

from Norwegian Wood by Haruki Murakami.

Aims:

- To take the given text and make a performance using the quote.
- To construct an object to carry the text which could be used in a group performance.
- To develop an appropriate action which could be carried out, with ease, by unrehearsed performers.

Description of Performance:

I repeatedly wrote the text onto two paper till rolls. With five artists, a circle was created within the trees in the middle of The Circus. The text was read repeatedly for twenty minutes as the words passed through the performers' hands.

³⁴ I was asked to make a performance for the exhibition using a text given to me by Fay Stevens.

Component description and analysis:

TEXT: Using a text chosen by someone else was an interesting challenge. I was not familiar with the work of Murakami and chose not to research the writer but to take the text at face value and work only with these words. I decided the words needed to be repeated in order to give them emphasis and reinforce Murakami's message. The subsequent mixture of voices and paces of reading formed an interesting sound in the location. I wrote the text in different sizes along the roll as I thought this might give the reader the idea of varying the vocal volume of the words. The text was something I would not have chosen to work with, but seemed appropriate for the group and the location.

OBJECT: Having already experimented with till roll in 'It just is 1', I decided this could be an appropriate medium to carry an endless repetition of words. In order for the paper to be made robust I reinforced it with thick black tape. When I arrived at the location I set out the tape in a circle, cut it to an appropriate length and joined the ends together. The piece highlighted the versatility of the till roll as an object with a range of uses in differing contexts.

ACTION: I briefed the group on the required action for the piece. The participants placed themselves at appropriate intervals around the circle and started to read the text as it passed through their hands. In order to finish the performance, I started to gather the paper so that the circle got smaller and smaller and the group came together.

AUDIENCE REACTION: The action was watched by people passing. Some who stopped to listen to the text and others stayed for the duration of the performance. The work in full was observed by about six people. Several of them asked the curator, Fay, if they could join the circle and read the text with the group. This added an interesting dimension to the performance.

CONTEXT / PERFORMANCE SPACE: In consultation with Fay Stevens it was decided The Circus in Bath would be a suitable location in which to carry out the performance.³⁵ The group action was successfully carried out after no rehearsal and in an unknown venue.

Evaluation of aims:

- The text and action worked well in the chosen setting.
- The till roll as the material to carry text was accessible and easy to use, with no previous practice or experience required.
-

Next steps:

- To compose my own text to use in this type of action.
- To try to make a similar work in a different venue.

³⁵ Fay Stevens knowledge of the area was useful in choosing an appropriate venue and I realised how making work for a specific site is appropriate when catering for an outside audience (Gardner, 2016).



Fig.64



Fig.65



Fig.66

Performed:

CARU, Group Performance, Cowley Road Carnival, Oxford. July 2016

Text:

CRASHFLIPWIZZBANGTING

Aims:

- To adapt the text format of '*Palladian*' for use in a busy street carnival setting.
- To use a till roll to carry text.
- To repeat the simple action with volunteers and the public.

Description:

This work closely followed 'Palladian', using the same material, text on reinforced till roll. The aim was to create a suitable text for a carnival in a busy location. Other performers were co-opted on the day.

Component description and analysis:

TEXT: The text was meant to be readily accessible and read with rhythm but the lack of sense and any time to practice made it difficult for the performers to read.

OBJECT: The pre-made circle was too big for the available space. A smaller circle placed in the centre of the road might have been more effective and enabled participants closer proximity. Once it started raining hard the paper got very wet and became unusable.

ACTION: There was no time to brief the volunteer performers and some joined in without knowing what they were meant to do, passing the words through their hands rather than reading them. Given more time the action might have bedded in, but it came to an abrupt ending after about five minutes when it started to rain and everyone tried to find cover.

AUDIENCE REACTION: Some passing public did stop to join in and read the text or watch.

³⁶ Others looked quizzically as they walked along the road.

CONTEXT / PREFORMANCE SPACE: The venue was very crowded and made the initial placing of the work difficult. With better organisation a similar activity could fit into the context of the carnival.

³⁶ I realised here, more so than with Palladian, where the audience was much smaller, that by removing conventional divisions between audience and performer you also remove the unwritten protocols of expectation (Banks, 2016).

Evaluation of aims:

- The setting proved to be too busy and difficult to organise in the time available.
- I had over-estimated the required length for the till roll.
- The text might have worked with practice but I felt it was unsuccessful.

Next steps:

- To find other opportunities to use this material in order to carry a range of texts.

Number: 14

Title: In our own words

December 2017



Figs.67-70

Performed:

'Where's the Art' CARU Anniversary Event, OVADA, Oxford, December 2017

(Group performance by Kesia Decote, Annie Wright, Tess Tallulah, Jenny Wylie, Jemima Hall)

Texts:

Kesia - I am not a cleaner. I am a teacher. I am not a saleswoman. I am a doctor. I am not a nanny. I am a musician. I am black.

Annie - We shall not cease from exploration. And the end of all our exploring will be to arrive where we started. And know the place for the first.

Tess - Strong Kind Beautiful Magical Amazing Precious Unique Special

Jenny - Anyone who speaks or writes knows their words do not express the whole of what is meant.

Jemima - FRAGILE

Peta - Blank paper. Spoken text: There's nothing. Absolutely nothing.

Aim:

- To experiment with organising a group performance where participants compose and perform their own text.

Description of Performance:

I wanted to develop a group performance where participants worked as individuals within the group. Each participant was offered one whole till roll length onto which I wrote a text of their choosing. The roll could be reinforced or left so it could be torn or broken. I wrote the text and gave each participant their roll. They then chose how they would present their words. An order of presenting text and the space for each performer was decided at the venue before the performance.³⁷

³⁷ True collaboration is generally understood as 'co-creating' within an arts practice, with artists working together to achieve a common purpose (Barbour, Ratana, Waititi and Walker, 2007, p50). However as true collaborations take a great deal of time and commitment, with participants sharing the initial conceptualisation of the idea and collaboration throughout the whole process, this piece was a half way measure, with artists having some freedom in relation to their own choice of text and performances.

Component description and analysis:

TEXT: The texts were varied and interesting. Allowing participants to choose their text handed over ownership of the work.

OBJECT: Each performer was allotted a till roll, onto which I scribed their texts. The rolls varied in strength as some were reinforced.

ACTION: Each performer chose how they would perform their text. The simple and varied actions worked well in a group situation.

Evaluation of aim:

- The different displayed words, actions and voices was visually and aurally interesting. Kesia chose to start the performance and this proved particularly suitable as her strong text and delivery set the scene, alluding to the fact that this was a performance by a group of women.

Next steps:

- To build on this piece through the development of another work where participants have a similar autonomy.



Fig. 71



Fig. 72

Performed:

Launch - 'Vibrations 3' on-line journal, Live Art Development Agency, Hackney Wick,
London, February 2017

Text:

'At last a real art work'

Aims:

- To use traditional oil pastels in a non-traditional way.
- To trial a table top action.

Description of Performance:

I sat at a table, opened a black print storage box and took out a piece of card which I stuck to the table. I then took out a smaller box containing a pair of white silky gloves. These had silver foil wrapped around the fingers, hiding thimbles attached to the ends of the fingers from which protruded different coloured oil pastels. I carefully put on the gloves and lifted the foil off with my mouth, displaying the pastels. I began to make the text, drawing letters randomly so it was not clear what I was writing until near the end. Once the text was complete, I took off the gloves and placed them back in their box. I then took a clip frame from the large box, mounted the picture and placed it on a hook on the wall.

Component description and analysis:

TEXT: The text was a 'tongue in cheek' reference to those who prefer their art on paper and walls.³⁸ I drew letters seemingly at random on the paper so that the meaning was not apparent until towards the end of the work.³⁹

OBJECT: The black boxes, which carried the materials, gave a feeling of preciousness. The oil pastel gloves were difficult to construct. I tried various ways to secure the pastels, eventually using thimbles, stuck onto the gloves and attached the oil pastel to them with glue and cotton. Each finger had a piece of silver foil wrapped around it which added to the intrigue. I made two pairs of gloves as the white material was difficult to clean and the gloves were marked by the pastels as they were put on taken and off.

ACTION: I opened the boxes with gravitas and held up the objects so the audience could see. The act of writing with each finger needed to be practiced. As I worked I paused to choose which colour to use next and where to place the marks. I wanted to generate a feeling of randomness, although the design and placing of the letters was preordained. Assembling the finished drawing into a frame, drew the activity to an appropriate ending.

AUDIENCE REACTION: The piece was designed for a small audience who would stand or sit closely to the work taking place. Observers found the action interesting and text amusing.

CONTEXT / PERFORMANCE SPACE: The LADA reading room was an appropriate setting for this piece.

³⁸ I was aware of how language has many levels of meaning and is context sensitive (Lye, 1993). An audience of people interested in performance art and performers themselves would be aware of what I was trying to say with this work.

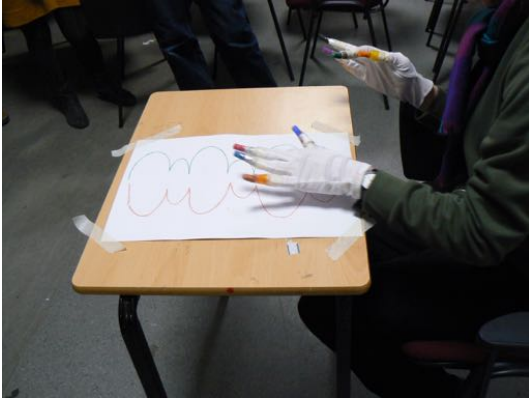
³⁹ Etchells, Goulish and Hixon (2013) discuss how the minute the structure becomes legible the work loses its interest. The ability of the audiences to read and understand the text in its entirety was staggered. By their responses I was aware of when this occurred.

Evaluation of aims:

- The text content acted as the basis for the piece and was appreciated by the audience.
- The gloves transformed a mundane task into something that appeared special. The writing materialised gradually and was legible. There was a fascination with the gloves and someone asked to try one on.
- The material was appropriate both for the task and also the content of the text.

Next Steps:

To develop other 'table top' performances.



Figs.73-78



Fig. 79

Performed:

Elastic Performance Festival, Oxford Brookes University May 2017
(Collaborative performance with Jemima Hall)

Text:

My 'assistant', Jemima Hall, was enclosed in a white paper bag, with ruled lines for attendees' signatures. These became the text for the piece.

Aims:

- To experiment with using text made by the audience.
- To continue to develop collaborations in the making of text.
- To involve the audience in the action of the piece.

Description of Performance:

I sat to one side of the entrance and Jemima stood on the other side wearing a large white paper bag which covered her body and was ruled with lines. As performers and audience members arrived for the day I asked them to sign in using pens which were placed in a black cup on the table and attached to various parts of my suit by long to pieces of elastic. As they pulled the elastic to reach the paper they also pulled my body away from the table or over the table.

Component description and analysis:

TEXT: The text was produced by the audience in the form of their signatures. It was purposefully difficult to reach the paper with the pens and most people found this amusing.⁴⁰

OBJECT: The bag encasing Jemima and the pens attached to my clothing were simple yet effective in generating the participatory performance.

ACTION: Jemima rotated on the spot and occasionally moved to one side, or backwards, in order to make it more difficult for participants to sign their names. People, who had not seen the act in progress, did not initially realise that the pens were attached to my clothing. As they pulled I had to adjust my position. I tried not to leave the chair but to rearrange limbs and body over the table.

AUDIENCE / PERFORMER REACTION: On realising the nature of the task some people appeared rather awkward, whilst others, particularly onlookers, found it amusing and then wanted to have a go.

⁴⁰ Performance artist Roi Vaara (no date) says his live performances are designed to create a common ground with the audience. No special skills or tools are required and anyone can do it which makes the work communicative. The aim of this work was to generated a feeling of inclusion as the audience arrived for the day, and also to highlight that the day was about performance art.

CONTEXT / PERFORMANCE SPACE: The venue was appropriate. The timing was relevant to the activity, which stopped at the beginning of the festival.

Evaluation of aims:

- This was the first time I had tried to involve the audience in making text and despite the fact it only involved writing their own signature, I realised how simple a task needs to be if it is to be carried out without instructions. I will need to bear this in mind when planning future collaborations with the audience.
- The use of a human board to write upon added to the intrigue of the piece which would have been lost if a traditional white board had been used.
- The collaborative action between myself and Jemima added to the humour of the piece, which participants found amusing.

Next steps:

- To find other ways in which the audience might be involved in the work.



Fig. 80



Fig. 81



Fig. 82



Fig. 83



Fig. 84



Fig. 85



Fig. 86



Fig. 87

Conclusion

I have arrived at the following conclusions regarding how text works as a major element in performance art through carrying out twenty-three Textacts: nineteen short performances and four performance presentations. I have described and analysed each piece of work in relation to its components of text, object and action, considered the importance of audience and context in carrying out the works and highlighted critical issues in relation to the making and showing of the work in terms of random text content and the use of both struggle and humour. My conclusions focus on the questions highlighted in the introduction.

How does text work as the main focus of a performative practice?

Initially I was keen that the texts I created were readable by an audience and therefore clear and visible. On evaluating works I realised that I was using three methods to make text: building text letter by letter, displaying previously written text and writing text as the action of the piece. It became clear as the work progressed how text symbols need to go through a decoding step (Stark, 2014) and that the various methods of presenting text called for different ways of reading by the audience. I found that in building text letter by letter, where the building was the action, the text materialised slowly. If the whole text was to be read, the audience had to be patient. I displayed previously written text through a range of actions, where the text needed to be read as it materialised, as part of an un-weaving process (Lye, 1993). The act of writing the text as the action of the performance necessitated the text be read, word by word, as it was written.

Kress (2003, p141) discusses looking at images as a type of reading, and I found in my performances, audiences needed to read both images and text, and this process threw up complications. Early in the research I covered the pallet boxes used in 'Think or Drink' and

'Spin' with too much text, which went unread. I realised I needed to give an audience time to assimilate both the text and the images presented to them, particularly as I hoped the link between the two was not always as simple as it appeared and people can only process one message at a time. I eventually concluded that texts needed to be short and punchy in order for the observer to have time to read the text in its entirety and gain an overview of the text, object and action link.

I took Auslander's (2006) differentiation between 'text' and 'performance text', the latter cited as a 'textual playground', as justification for the use of random text content. I did not control its significance in the reading and at times, such as in the text used in 'The Beetle in the Box', side-stepped any explanation of its content. Often the text, together with objects and actions presented an incongruity which became humorous. However, I rarely felt the text by itself would have provoked the same reaction. The humour came from the juxtaposition of imagery created by the text in conjunction with the objects and actions, which highlighted unexpected relationships and outcomes (Wick Reaves, 2001). The exception to this was the text(s) for 'It just is 2', which I felt could have stood by itself.

The Performance Presentations were scripted and carefully orchestrated. There is some discussion as to whether this process creates a theatrical rather than a visual arts performance (Frank, 2013). Works presented using this format appeared to enable the dissemination of the message, were impactful and created a space for conversations (Milder, 2011, p26). However, the experiments with alternative text types, Morse Code and Semaphore, using texts which were not readable to a public unaware of these language systems, attracted attention and interest but highlighted the fact that language is inherently a collaborative project (Mecalf, 2019). Similarly, the script for 'Line Up and Join In' dictated the action of the dance, although for the most part the audiences and those joining in seemed

unaware of it. They followed my actions, not the words describing the actions. Therefore, the text in these pieces was my main focus, but not that of the audiences.

Which types of objects can appropriately support the use of text in performance?

Although I used many objects over the course of the research I tried to ensure they all worked in the service of the text. I wanted the objects to be seen as interesting in relation to their transformation through the addition of making or displaying text through action (Matusak, 2014, p103). The emergence of a piece therefore, depended on how the materials were explored and placed. I have learned that any material can provide possibilities for work, with the emergence of a piece depending on how it is used (Tuffnell and Crickmay, 1993, p193). Pre-written letters or text, sewn text, or text collaged onto objects could be prepared in advance. Surfaces for texts, written as the performance, needed to be flat which dictated the nature of the objects. I tended to use traditional writing implements, particularly Sharpie pens, but also experimented with lipstick and water and brush. These materials enabled the text to be readable. In hindsight I think my choice of writing implement could have been more adventurous. Any objects therefore which could either carry and display text or be written upon were possible, as long as the material allowed the text to emerge.

Historically the body is essential to performance art practices, with many artists using their bodies as the material. Within the majority of pallet box pieces my body was only partially seen or not seen at all and through the activation of individual works I appeared to become one with the box, the bodily performance becoming entangled with the objects of performance (Kaye, 2018, p278). Although the box seemed to become the prominent feature of these works, the box works depended on how the material was explored in relation to the text and the actions used to activate the text. Photographic documentation tended to give a particular view of the pallet box works as performances are often prone to

reduction in their documentation (Manzella and Watkins, 2011, p29). The struggle in writing with both hands simultaneously as the box was carried up the stairs in 'THINK WRITE MOVE BOX', or writing with feet unseen from inside the box in 'Think or Drink' can only be imagined by the viewer of the photographic image and, because of its size, the box becomes the dominant feature.

The pallet boxes had multiple uses and I could have continued working with them as my primary object as they seemed to accrue meaning through their different states, uses and relationships over time (Pearson and Shanks, 2001, p99). The pallet box FRAGILE remained in-situ during the duration of the 'Disobedient Art' exhibition at Fringe Arts Bath and REJECT became part of the Fareham Open exhibition, together with the video of the performance. This was not my initial intent, however their pre and post-performance life transformed the boxes into sculptural objects within the exhibitions. In these exhibitions the objects were looked at because of their form rather than then their function, being viewed purely aesthetically (Panofsky, 1955, p12). However, their full impact could not be appreciated until the text was activated.

In subsequent works I aimed to move away from the dominance of the object. The pallet boxes were both difficult to transport and construct in situ. My initial idea for using the text written for 'It just is 1' was to write it on the inside of a muslin bag as I moved within the bag. I realised as I trialled this, that although the body moving inside the bag was visually interesting, it was impossible to write the text so it was readable. Failure enables other ways of seeing your work (Obrist, 2010, p12), and I had to rethink my approach. My use of till roll which involved wrapping the text around the body and writing text onto Perspex frame with lipstick, used the materials in the service of the text. The till roll, due to its flexibility of use in

carrying text as well as its ease of transportation was reused as parts of performance presentation works and in group pieces.

Clothing became an area for consideration in the latter pieces as I became more visible. I aimed to make myself the conduit for the message I was making with the text (Gosling, 2019). How I presented myself and the physicality of my body took on a greater significance in works such as 'Sign In', where I wanted the clothing to be an integral part of the performance and 'Line Up and Join In' where I aimed to look the same as the box figures with which I was dancing. My dress therefore serviced the action of individual pieces in the materialisation of the text and the carrying and using of materials I needed within the performances.

Does the making and using of text affect the types of actions which can be performed in order for text to materialise in a visually interesting manner?

My chosen actions were designed to work with the presentation of text on objects. Each action or group of actions were practiced in order to develop a level of proficiency in writing, presenting or displaying the text. My actions tended to be repetition focussed and I learned by repeating and copying (Howell, 1999, p29). The most successful pieces, such as 'Cenosillicaphobia' linked the text, objects and actions into a cohesive whole.

I found the interplay between the object and action, whilst trying to apply text, usually necessitated some form of struggle. Until I started practicing an action I often didn't realise how physically difficult it would be to carry out. Through struggle I learned how to perform

physically difficult tasks. Some struggles involved lifting and carrying actions whilst others necessitated concentration and the use of fine motor skills. In some of the works the struggle transformed what was expected to an unusual test of strength, stamina or dexterity. Gilmore thinks growth happens through her struggles and if you aren't struggling you aren't really learning (Deitsch, 2015). Successfully carrying out difficult physical actions gave me confidence to develop this way of working.

I found the link between the text and the struggle with the objects did subvert the expectations of the audience and realised a humorous response (Eller and Huntsberg, 2017). For example the half full beer glass perched on my head in 'Cenosillicaphobia' added both tension and amusement whilst the pens attached to my clothing for 'Sign In' made both the spectators and the participants laugh. People laughed at the incongruous relationships between the text and imagery which created unexpected relationships and outcomes (Wick Reeves, 2001, p.3).

The group and paired text pieces relied on simple actions to present and display text. Their power and engagement came from the interaction and the shared task or voice in presenting the text. The simplicity of the actions in these pieces allowed the audience to concentrate on the text, whether it was being read as it passed through participants hands as in 'Palladian', or displayed and used in wrapping or unrolling actions in 'In our own words'. By changing the nature of an everyday action and extending an invitation, as in 'Sign In', the audience became involved in the task as performers of text, which then became the performance. Writing their own names, needed no previous practice or rehearsal and the text was understood and clear to other viewers.

Does the role of the audience change if there is a necessity to read a text in order to understand a performance?

‘The most important thing about a work of art is what it evokes in the thoughts and feelings of a spectator’ (Mason, 1992, p.73). Through the experience of trialling texts with peers I realised how significant the role played by the audience member as reader became in the process of gaining meaning and how complex and elusive even a simple text can be. The author writes a text within their own context which relates to issues such as their history, gender, class, aesthetic, cultural and economic situation (Lye, 1993). But everyone viewing a performance comes with their own views, expectations and experiences and the meaning of the work can change depending on who is reading it. Ong (1982) discussed how handwriting slows down thought and speech for the writer as words are locked into a visual field. I realised how the need to read a text changed the nature of observing a performance, as the text had to be decoded by the audience in conjunction with viewing the images created by the objects and the actions.

As I became more aware of the viewers’ attention span I aimed to make text short, readable and closely related to the action taking place, such as the one-word texts FRAGILE and REJECT. This seemed appropriate; as from the reactions I became aware that text was being read and appreciated with the actions. ‘It Just is 2’ and ‘Permanence is Overrated’, texts written as the performance in an outdoor space, both drew audiences who read the work until its completion. The act of writing as the performance in these pieces encouraged the audience to wait and see what would materialise.

How does the context and nature of the performance space affect work which involves text, particularly if the audience is required to read text?

The need to take the context and location into consideration when planning work became clear as the research progressed and I presented performances in a wider range of venues. Each performance within any given context is different (Blood, 2014), and this was enhanced by the changing audiences and also the way I was feeling at the time. I realised, where possible, it was important to organise how the audience was going to view the work so that the text could be read.

The short pieces were performed in gallery spaces, pubs, empty shops and on the street. The indoor space was often difficult to organise, but a standing audience, who could walk around the work seemed to work best. I saw how audience members behaviour seemed to affect one another's reactions (Blood, 2014). This particularly related to their confidence in moving around the work. The 'Box Series' presentation pulled the earlier individual pallet box works together and created a spectacle in a large indoor space. Auslander (2018, p.89) discusses how the context effects how the work is seen. The group performance highlighted the value of both revisiting work in different contexts and putting works together in different ways.

The longer performance presentations were delivered to seated audiences usually in university setting. As the context and audiences were a known factor in the planning and organisation of these pieces, I found them the easiest spaces in which to present work. The organisation of the conferences allowed time for subsequent questions and discussion which helped me to understand how the presentation had been received.

The outdoor spaces were the most challenging. Varra (no date) discusses how his aim as a performer is not to attract public sensation but challenge the way we are looking at things. Textacts performed in the street needed to be visually curious enough to stop passers-by and once stopped they might then participate in closer looking and reading of the work. I found humour was a useful tool when working outside. It took the pretensions out of the work and informed the public that it could be enjoyed in a light-hearted way (Mason, 1992, p176). Gaining the attention of a fluid public gave a sense of satisfaction and made the difficulty around the organisation of the space and the transportation of materials worthwhile.

Contribution to Knowledge

I coined the term Textact to highlight and describe the process of using text as the main focus, stimulus and outcome of performance art. This term has remained a constant in the description of my work and is open to use by others using similar methods of working. In my research I trialled and developed four ways of using text in performance: building text, displaying pre-written text, writing text as the performance and using alternative text types. In order to concentrate on the process of making Textacts my stimulus for text content was random, with no social or political agenda. I now feel that these processes could be used with a wider range of text types and a focussed content agenda. The focus on text as the content and action of a performance practice is an area that may be of interest and use to other researchers working in the field of performance art, performance artists experimenting with their own practice and art students interested in experimenting with text.

I felt the methodology, based around a plan, action, reflection cycle, was appropriate for my style of working with a continuous flow of ideas being implemented through the making of Textacts. Learning through the feedback of peers, when the work was in the development stage was particularly beneficial (Race, 2001 p.22). Their supportive comments were

informed not just by the current work in progress but also by their knowledge of the work over time.

The reflective process not only gave time to the assessment of current work but also stimulated ideas for further Textact compositions. I learned in and through action and reflection (McNiff, 2013, p.23). 'Reflection in Action' allowed for a 'conversation with the situation' (Schön, 1983, p.23), which could lead to a development in the work as it took place. The subsequent 'Reflection after Action' and reconstructing of the experience through memory and also any documentation which had been produced, helped me to understand what had happened and draw lessons from the experience. This self-assessment process, combined with comments from peers and audiences would be a suitable model for other areas of research into aspects of performance art.

Areas for continuing development

Over the course of the research period I realised there were a range of areas which would benefit from further investigation and experimentation. For example, my early insistence on a text being readable meant I concentrated on more traditional writing implements and I now realise I could have experimented with a greater range of non-traditional tools in the making of text. Most Textacts had a very short duration and I think the action of building text could lend itself to longer compositions. The piece 'At last a real art work' showed how the use of small actions using fine motor skills can be interesting and I see this as another area for development. I realised paired and group work add another dimension to a performance, whether working with the same text, as in 'Palladian' or with differing text, as in 'In our own words'. I would like to develop other collaborative partnerships with individuals and groups, particularly building on the idea of shared composition of texts such as in 'In our own words'.

Following the works 'Sign In' and 'Line up and join in' I saw how actions involving audience participation can add another dimension to performance and is another area for future work.

Bibliography

- Anderson, J.E. (1995) *Constraint – Directed Improvisation for Everyday Activities*. PhD Thesis, University of Manitoba, in Bertinetto A. What do we know through Improvisation? Disturbis (2013). Available at: <http://www.academia.edu> (Accessed 10th October 2018).
- Auslander, P. (2018) 'On Repetition', *PAJ A Journal of Performance Art*, 23 (4-5), pp. 88-90.
- Auslander, P. (1994) *Presence and Resistance. Postmodern and Cultural Politics in Contemporary American Performance*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Auslander, P. (2006) 'The Performativity of Performance Documentation', *PAJ A Journal of Performance Art*, 84 pp.1-10.
- Barbour, K. Ratana, D. Waititi, C. and Walker, K. (2007) 'Researching Collaborative Artistic Practice', *Waikato Journal of Education*, 13.
- Banks, M. (2016) 'Art meets Audience: How to Create Unique Immersive Experiences', *The Guardian*, 20 May 2016.
- Barthes, R. (1978) *Image, Music, Text* (translated by Stephen Heath). London: Thames and Hudson.
- Blood, M. (2014) *London Theatre Seminar* Available at: <http://www.geneseo.edu> (Accessed: 20th May 2020)
- Bond, D. (1995) *Enhancing learning through self-assessment*. London: Kogan Page.
- Burt, W.A. (2014) 'John Cage: Crafting Randomness', *Malaysian Music Journal*, 3, (1).
- Beech, D. (2009) *Art and Text*. London: Black Dog Publishing Ltd.
- Brimfield, M. (2011) *This is Performance Art*. London: Black Dog Publishing Ltd.
- Carlson, M. (2004) *Performance. A Critical Introduction*. London: Routledge.

- Charman, H. and Ross, M. (2002) 'Contemporary Art and the Role of Interpretation'. Tate Papers. Available at: <http://tate.org.uk> (Accessed: 26 May 2020)
- Cody, G. and Cheng, M. (2016) *Reading Contemporary Performance: Theatricality Across Genres*. London: Routledge.
- Counsell, C. and Wolf, L. (2001) *Performance Analysis. An Introductory Coursebook*. London: Routledge.
- Deitsch, D. (2015) 'Broken Dishes: Kate Gilmore in conversation with Dina Deitsch', *Open Art Journal* (June 16th 2015) Available at: <http://artjournal.collegeart.org> (Accessed: 20 May 2020).
- Eler, A. and Huntsberger, A. (2017) 'When Great Art Makes You LOL. Is funny art actually funny? The answer as we see it is a rousing chorus of 'it depends''. Available at: <http://www.hyperallergic.com> (Accessed: 3 June 2018)
- Etchells, T, Goulish, M. Hixon, L. (2013) 'Generative Constraints', *Generative Constraints Conference*. Royal Holloway, University of London, 16 November 2013.
- Floyd, R. (2006) 'The Private Language Argument', *Philosophy Now*, (58) Available at: <http://philosophynow.org> (Accessed: 10 May 2016).
- Foerschuer, A. and Rivenc, R. (2018) 'Documenting Carolee Schneemann's Performance Work', *Getty Research Journal*, 10. Available at: <http://journals.uchicago.edu> (Accessed 12 May 2020).
- Frank, R. (2013) 'When form starts talking: On Lecture-Performances', (Translated from German by Helen Ferguson) *Afterall: A Journal of Art, Context and Enquiry*, (33) Available at: <http://afterall.org> (Accessed 1 June 2020).
- Fritz J. (2015) 'Jurgen Fritz', Interview with Fay Stevens, Available at: <http://www.ipabristol.co.uk> (Accessed 10th November 2016)

- Gablik, S. (1970) *Magritte*. London: Thames and Hudson.
- Gardner, L. (2016) 'How performance broke out of the theatre come rain or shine', *The Guardian*, 20th June.
- Gosling, E. (2019) *The Art of Dressing for Performance*. Available at: <http://www.elephant.art> (Accessed 20 May 2020),
- Heyd, T. (1991) 'Understanding Performance Art and Beyond', *British Journal of Aesthetics* 31 (1), pp 68-73. Available at: <http://doi.org/10.1093/bjaesthetics/31.1.68> (Accessed: 14 August 2019).
- Howell, A. (1999) *The Analysis of Performance. A guide to its theory and practice*. (Contemporary Theatre Studies) London: Routledge.
- Jones, A. (1997) 'Presence in Absentia. Experiencing Performance as Documentation' *Art Journal*, 56(4), pp.11-18.
- Kaplan, I. (2017) *How Long Do People Really Spend Looking at Art in Museums?* Available at: <http://www.artsy.net> (Accessed: 8th August 2019)
- Kaye, N. (2018) 'On Objects', *Performance Research. A Journal of the Performing Arts*, 23 (4-5) pp.273-278.
- Kress G. and Van Leeuwen T. (2003) *Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Design*. London: Routledge.
- Kruger, B. (2014) 'Barbara Kruger in conversation with Iwona Blazwick' *Modern Art Oxford*, 30th October.
- Lebel R. (1959) *Marcel Duchamp*. New York: Paragraphic Books.
- Lye J. (1993) 'Contemporary Literary Theory' *Brock Review*, 2 (1) pp.90-106 Available at: <http://journals.library.brocku.ca> (Accessed: 8 January 2018).

McEvelley, T. (2005) *The Triumph of Anti-Art: Conceptual and Performance Art in the Formation of Post Modernism*. New York: McPherson and Company.

McLean, B. (2016) 'Bruce McLean's best photograph: fun with three plinths the Tate forgot to take back' Interview with Bruce McLean. Interviewed by Karin Andreasson for *The Guardian*, 28 April.

McNiff, J. (2013) *Action Research: Principles and Practice*. 3rd edn. London and New York: Routledge.

McNiff, S. (2008) Arts Based Research in Knowles J.G. and Cole A.L. (eds.) *Handbook of the arts in qualitative research: perspectives, methodologies, example and issues*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publication, pp. 29-41.

Manghani, S. (2013) *Image Studies Theory and Practice*. London and New York: Routledge.

Manzella, C. and Watkins, A. (2011) 'Performance Anxiety: Performance Art in the Twenty-First Century', *Art Documentation: Journal of the Art Libraries Society of North America*, 30 (1) pp.28-32.

Marshall, D. (2006) *The Celebrity Culture Reader*. London: Routledge.

Mason, B. (1992) *Street Theatre and other Outdoor Performance*. London and New York: Routledge.

Matuszak, J. (2014) 'Performing with Objects. Andres Galeano in conversation with Joanna Matuszak', *PAJ A Journal of Performance Art*, 108, pp.102-111.

Metcalf, M. (2019) 'Emily Mast's Message in a Bottle', *Frieze Magazine* Available at: <http://frieze.com/article/emily-mast-messages-bottle> (Accessed: 26 May 2020)

Meyer, H. (2009) Audience as Participant in Performance Art Available at: <http://www.qaktok.weebly.com> (Accessed 1 June 2020)

- Milder, P. (2011) 'The Contemporary Lecture-Performance', *PAJ A Journal of Performance Art*, 97, pp.13-27.
- Mitchell, W.J.T. (1980) *The Language of Images*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Morley, S. (2003) *Writing on the Wall. Word and Image in Modern Art*. London: Thames and Hudson.
- Morris, R. (1993) *Continuous Project Altered Daily: The Writings of Robert Morris*. Cambridge Massachusetts: MIT Press.
- Nauman, B. (1996) *Bruce Nauman Interviews 1967-1988*. Amsterdam: Verlag der Kunst.
- Obrist, H.U. (2010) *Marina Abramovic The Conversation Series*. Köln: Walter König.
- O'Hagen, S. (2010) 'Marina Abramovic', Interview with Sean O'Hagen. *The Guardian*, Sunday 3 October 2010.
- Ong, W. (2012) *Orality and Literacy. With additional chapter by John Hartley. (30th Anniversary Edition)* London and New York: Routledge Taylor and Francis Group.
- Ortiz, J. (2012) Can Performance Art be Collected...and Still Maintain its Original Message? Available at: <http://hyperalergic.com> (Accessed: 5 June 2020)
- Panofsky, E. (1995) *Meaning in the Visual Arts*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press
- Pearson, M. and Shanks, M. (2001) *Theatre/Archaeology*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Pena, G. (no date) *In defence of performance art*. Available at: <http://www.pochanostra.com> (Accessed: 26 September 2018)
- Race, P. (2001) *A Briefing on Self, Peer and Group Assessment*. Available at: <http://phil-race.co.uk> (Accessed: 30 May 2020)

Ross, L. (2014) *Language in the Visual Arts. The Interplay of Text and Imagery*. North Carolina: McFarland and Company.

Rutter, J. (1997) *Stand-up as Interaction. Performance and audience in comedy venues*. PhD thesis. University of Salford. Available at <http://www.usir.salford.ac.uk> (Accessed: 10 May 2020).

Schön, D.A. (1983) *The Reflective Practitioner. How Professionals Think in Action*. New York: Basic Books.

Stark, H. (2014) *Which is more important in Design: Image or Text*. Available at: <http://www.sitepoint.com/images-text-important/> (Accessed 27 September 2018).

Stevens, M. *Everything is Illuminated* Available at <http://www.nymag.com> (Accessed 10th May 2019).

Sturken, M. and Cartwright, L. (2009) *Practices of Looking: An Introduction to Visual Culture*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

The Art Story – Modern Art Insights (2020) *Allan Kaprow American Performance Artist and Theoretician* Available at: <http://theartstory.org> (Accessed 4 June 2020)

Thomas, J. (ed.) (2000) *Reading Images. (Readers in Cultural Criticism)* Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave.

Tufnell, M. and Crickmay, C. (1993) *Body Space Image*. London: Routledge Companion.

Vaara, R. (no date) 'The Image of Ourselves. Performance Artist Roi Vaara' Interview with Roi Vaara. Interviewed by Gil Dekel. Available at: <http://poeticminds.co.uk> (Accessed: 10 May 2020)

Walker, N. (no date) 'Nathan Walker in conversation with Bryony White' Interviewed by Bryony White. *FeltActs, An Online Journal for Performance*. Available at: <http://www.feltacts.com/nathan-walker> (Accessed 10 October 2015)

Wick Reaves W. (2001) 'The Art of Humor, the Humor in Art', *American Art*, 15 (2) pp.2-9.

Woolley M.J.H. (2014) 'Documenting Performance Art: Documentation in Practice',
International Journal of Performance Arts and Digital Media, 10 (1) pp.48-66.

Zimmer M. (2001) *Being Apart*. Liverpool: National Museums and Galleries on Merseyside.

Appendix 1

Textacts using Semaphore, Morse Code and the instructions for a dance

Towards the end of the research process I experimented with non-traditional text types, Semaphore and Morse Code, and the composition of an instructional text for the actions of a line dance.

Both Semaphore and Morse Code have been appropriated in art works. In 1981 a group of five women who dubbed themselves 'Sisters of Survival', ordered around nuclear survival and world peace, clothed themselves in rainbow coloured nuns' habits and signalled an SOS for the planet. Emily Mast's work 'Continuous Wave' (2019) at Frieze, Los Angeles, translated visitor's written responses to the question 'what message would you leave the world if you were out at sea?' into Morse Code, which were then sung by three professional singers on the spot (Metcalf, 2019). My aim in using these two language systems was to transmit messages which I presumed people might recognise but not be able to read but which would raise interest and curiosity.

The instructions for the line dance was written in order to give ongoing instructions to audience members who chose to participate in the dance.

| Title | Page Number |
|------------------------|--------------------|
| FUCK OFF JUST FUCK OFF | 125 |
| SOS | 128 |
| Line up and join in | 131 |



Fig. 88

Performed:

- Curiosity Carnival, European Researchers' Night, Oxford, 2017
- Chapter 1 (draft) Ways of using text in performance. Postgraduate Research Student Conference, Oxford Brookes University, May 2018 (part of performance presentation)

Text:

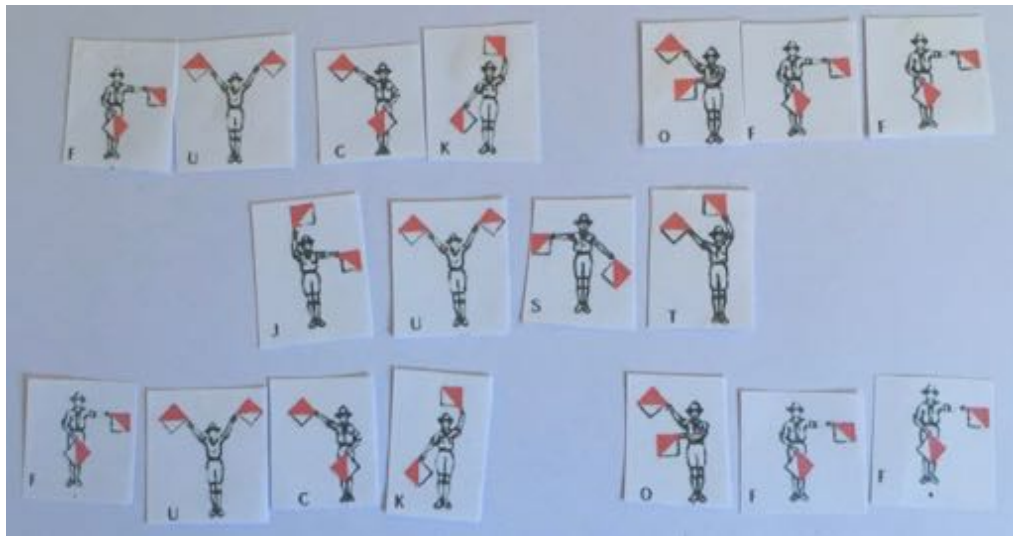


Fig. 89

Aim: To experiment with the alternative language form of Semaphore.⁴¹

Description of Performance: I had made a long pocket in the white lab coat I was wearing which was big enough to hold the flags. I slowly pulled them out of the pocket and semaphored the phrase. For Curiosity Carnival this was performed in the street as a stand-alone piece during the day. I also incorporated the action into two of the performance presentations, making it part of a longer work.

⁴¹ Today semaphore is used for underway replenishment at sea, which is a method of transferring fuels, munitions and stores from one ship to another, emergency communication in daylight or using lighted wands, instead of flags, at night. The album cover for the Beatles 1965 album cover HELP was to have portrayed the four band members spelling HELP in semaphore, but the result was deemed aesthetically unpleasing, and their arms were instead positioned in a meaningless but aesthetically pleasing arrangement. The second series of Monty Python's flying Circus depicted famous stories retold using various communications systems, including Wuthering Heights in Semaphore.
www.en.m.wikipedia.org

Component description and analysis:

TEXT: This was the first of the works using an alternative language system. I did not speak to anyone who could read Semaphore, but many people recognised it. ⁴²

OBJECT: I made two red and yellow flags, attaching the material to two short lengths of wooden doweling. On my initial practice the flags, although sewn around the poles, came loose. In order to stop this happening again, I stapled the material to the poles, which worked well. In order to increase my visible presence,

ACTION: I took the flags out of the pocket very slowly and followed the correct procedure, standing with the flags lowered and crossed, before starting. Despite regular practice I found it difficult to remember the actions for each letter. Ultimately this did not matter as no-one could read semaphore.

AUDIENCE REACTION: On each occasion I performed this piece, I was asked what I was saying. The people I told found it amusing. I chose not to tell others. Several audience members commented on the useful addition of the long pocket in the lab coat.

CONTEXT / PERFORMANCE SPACE: This piece with its minimal materials and simple actions proved versatile in all of the contexts in which it was shown.

Evaluation of Aim:

- This was an interesting experiment highlighting the fact that the action of making the 'text' was interesting without necessarily being understood.

Next steps:

- To experiment with Morse Code.

⁴² I realised Semaphore, a silent yet visible form of communication raises questions about how we communicate with each other.



Fig. 90

Performed: AHA! Performing Art Research, Curiosity Carnival, European Researcher' Night, Oxford, September 2017

Text:

... _ _ ... (SOS - Morse Code Distress Signal)

Aims:

- To experiment with the alternative language form of Morse Code.⁴³
- To link the distress call with a simple and obtuse action

⁴³ There is a general lack of awareness of the uses and meaning of Morse Code. The famous Capitol Records building in Hollywood flashes out H-O-L-L-Y-W-O-O-D in dots and dashes from the top of its tower as an aircraft warning light. In 2013, ahead of the release of Katy Perry's PRISM album, it blinked out K-A-T-Y-P-E-R-R-Y-P-R-I-S-M-O-C-T-O-B-E-R-2-2-N-D-2-0-1-3. In an interview, in Entertainment Tonight, Perry said the message went unnoticed as no one reads Morse Code any more. (7 secret codes and ciphers hidden in music. Phil Hebblethwaite. www.bbc.co.uk Friday 20th October 2013)

Description of Performance:

I placed a plastic spider attached to a roll of string on the road and walked away from it, letting out the string as I approached the designated performance area, where a chair was placed. When I reached the chalked-off space I stood on the chair and started to whistle SOS in Morse Code as I reeled in the spider.

Component description and analysis:

TEXT: The unconventional text was piercing. I was told the whistle could be heard in the next street and attracted attention from passers-by.

OBJECT: I wore a white lab coat as I was aiming for a look which said 'experiment in progress'. The large plastic toy spider was big enough to be pulled along the ground as if it was moving by itself. I stood on a chair in order to increase visibility.

ACTION: Placing the spider and then unreeling the string was more difficult than I expected as people were moving around the street on bicycles, as well as walking. Once standing on the chair, the whistle attracted attention and the action moved between me, whistling and rolling in the string and the spider as it moved towards me.

AUDIENCE REACTION: I was surprised how many people did not recognise the distress call but this did not seem to matter. The spider made people smile and was of particular interest to children.

CONTEXT / PERFORMANCE SPACE: The outdoor research event proved a relevant space for the work.

Evaluation of aims:

- This experiment attracted attention and also raised questions about the nature of a text. I liked the scale of the materials in the outdoor space and wondered if it would have worked so well in an indoor environment.



Fig. 91

<https://vimeo.com/user47778527/review/375748287/f35687130a>



Fig. 92

Performed:

- Squash and Stretch Performance Art Festival, LAPER, Oxford Brooke University, May 2018
- Art Manifest(o)s, Fringe Arts Bath, May 2018

Text:

right touch left touch / right touch left touch / right point right point / step turn together touch /
hitch hitch hitch crossturn / cha cha forward break step / cha cha back break step / boogie
and close / boogie and close

Aims:

- To experiment with the use of a spoken instructional text; the moves for a line dance.
- To develop the involvement of the audience in the action, following 'Sign In'.

Description of Performance:

I stood in the performance area between the box figures and indicated to a volunteer to start the music; 'Good Times' by Alan Jackson. I put my arms through the holes in the top boxes, in order to carry the figures. I started dancing, calling the moves and beckoned to audience members to join in. The dance lasted the duration of the song. As the song finished I pulled my arms out of the boxes and pushed the figures over.

Component description and analysis:

TEXT: I researched the line dance to accompany the song and watched various demonstrations on YouTube. I chose Robert Royston's version (Howcast.com) as a model and wrote the script for the dance linked to his explanation of the moves. I decided to call the moves as I danced, but watching the video it was clear that members of the audience who joined in were watching my moves rather than listening to the instructions.

OBJECT: I planned the height of the boxes to be the same as me. I painted the figures black and white to mirror my jeans and shirt and purchases three cowboy hats and coloured scarves. By linking myself to the box figures, we became one sculptural object, which then performed the dance.

ACTION: Learning the dance took a lot of practice, firstly on my own and then attempting the moves with the boxes on my arms, as they were heavier than expected and hung next to my legs making moving difficult. The dance necessitated turning around and when others joined in there was a tendency for the boxes to get in the way, which proved to be interesting.

AUDIENCE REACTION: I was surprised by how many people were happy to join in at the Squash and Stretch festival.⁴⁴ The action with the boxes caused amusement.

CONTEXT / PERFORMANCE SPACE: The larger venue allowed for participation which was a main aim of the work.

Evaluation of aims:

- Although I called the moves people who took part said they watched and copied the actions rather than following the spoken instructions. A couple just did their own moves to the music. A number of people said how much they enjoyed both taking part and watching.



Fig. 93

⁴⁴ Audience members who decide to join in have to get into the space of the performer and set themselves into the situation of performing themselves (Meyer, 2009).

Appendix 2

Performance Presentation Textacts

These works were performed at conferences focussing on research into performance art, with audiences from universities across the UK and Europe. My works, presented in these contexts, were designed to create a space for conversation and discussion as opposed to being a dissemination of the research findings.

| Title | Page Number |
|---|-------------|
| 'It's really interesting but I don't understand it' | 135 |
| 'I don't eat bubble-gum but I like the smell' | 141 |

Number: 22 Title: 'It's really interesting but I don't understand it' December 2016

<https://vimeo.com/user47778527/review/375718283/29b44db9d2>

Performed:

- CARU Arts Research Conference, Oxford Brookes University, December 2016

Aims:

- To gather and examine comments which were overheard from audience members viewing contemporary art at Fringe Arts Bath in May 2016 and deliver these in a performance presentation format.

Script:

Before the audience entered the space, the figures were placed in a line.

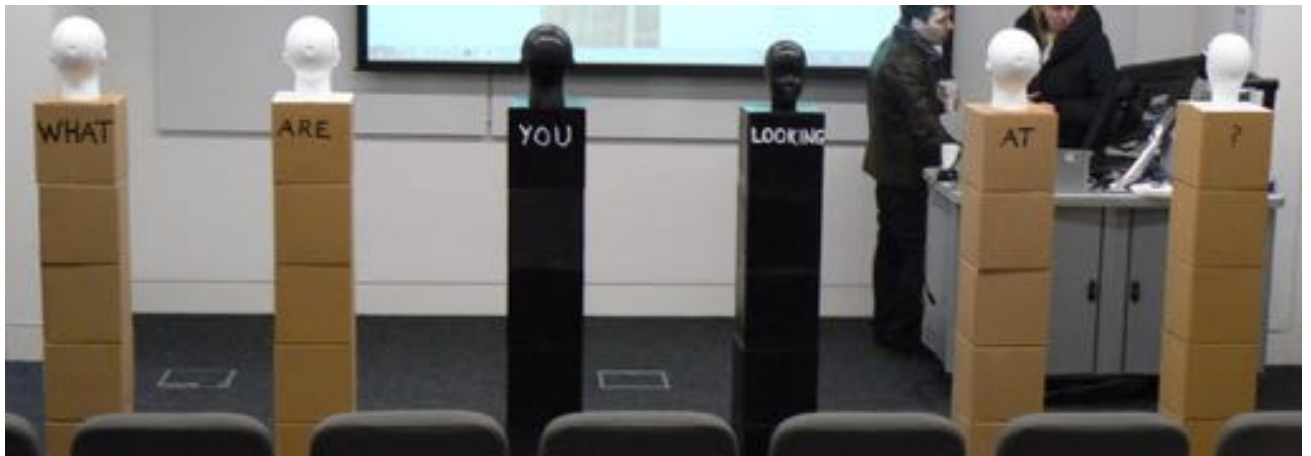


Fig. 94

Say: PREFACE

Take handkerchief out of pocket.

Read from handkerchief:

EXAMINING THE READING OF TEXT AND IMAGE IN PERFORMANCE THROUGH
REFLECTING ON OVERHEARD SPECTATORS COMMENTS WHILST VIEWING
CONTEMPORARY ART. ⁴⁵

Place handkerchief over head of figure 1.

Take **HANDLE WITH CARE** gloves out of pocket and put on. Show **HAN DLE** to audience and then turn over to show **WITH CARE**. Move to space beside figures 1 and 2.

Say: COMMENT 1

Turn first figure to face the audience showing '**Where's the title**'. Stand between figure 1 and 2. Allow audience time to read the words.

Move to space between figure 2 and 3.

Say: COMMENT 2 AND TITLE

Turn figure 2 to face the audience showing text '**It's very interesting but I don't understand it**'. Stand between 2 and 3 and allow audience time to read comment.

Say: AN ANNOTATED READING FROM RANCIERE ON SPECTATORSHIP (2009)

Go to bag. Take hoop and book out of bag and make up hoop. Hold book in hand and start hooping.

Read from sheet in book: The emancipation of the spectator might begin with the realisation that viewing activity transforms and interprets objects and actions. What you see, feel and understand from this presentation is not necessarily what I might be trying to say. For example, you may be wondering 'what is the role of the hoop and how should I interpret this action?' Are you for example, as I am, contemplating the links here with Judith Lanigan, renowned Australian hooper and hula hoop historian, when she performed 'the dying swan', a tragedy with 30 hoops - a fine role model. The boundaries between looking and doing are

⁴⁵ Charman and Ross (2002) highlight the fact that many people have little or no experience in looking at or interpreting art in order to engage with the ideas the artist is trying to display. This work aimed to consider this in a light-hearted way.

indeed blurred. Are you here to view, experience and satisfy the performance concept or do you act as a physical element? Are you looking at us or are we looking at you? On that note I will move on.

Place hoop and book to the side with bag. Take 'artist comments' cards out of bag.

Stand between 3 and 4.

Say: COMMENT 3 Turn around black plinth which reads 'But why do they always wear black?'

Allow time to read.

Say: EXEMPLIFICATION - 5 COMMENTS FROM PRACTICING ARTISTS

Go to bag and take out cards. Show audience cards one by one. Hold them up in order that they can be read and then drop onto the floor.

- 1. Black is the colour of void.**
- 2. Black is slimming.**
- 3. Black creates a shield of otherness and mystery.**
- 4. Black is safe.**
- 5. Black needs less washing.**

Return to figures. Stand between 4 and 5.

Say: COMMENT 4 AND EXEMPLIFICATION

Turn figure around so that the back with white paper on it faces the audience. Pick up Sharpie pen. Hug the figure. With right hand write:

I LIKE A BIT OF TENSION BETWEEN THE CONCEPT AND THE SKILL.

Place top on pen and leave behind figure.

Stand between 4 and 5.

Say: COMMENT 5 Turn around box which says 'It will only take a few minutes to wizz around here'

Take post-it out of pocket and read:

ACCORDING TO A SURVEY AT THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART IN NEW YORK PEOPLE SPEND AN AVERAGE OF 17 SECONDS LOOKING AT A PIECE OF ART WORK WHICH INCLUDES READING THE INFORMATION ABOUT THE WORK.

Crumple up post-it and throw on floor.

Say: AN EXPERIMENT. Go to bag, take clock out and place around neck.

Say: PLEASE VIEW THIS EXHIBIT FOR 17 SECONDS.

Count 1-17 with ticking clock. After 17 seconds

Say: THANK YOU



Fig.95

Place clock on floor in front of figure. Stand to the right-hand side of 6.

Say: COMMENT 6

Turn figure around to show text '**Well, where's the action**'. Stand and let audience read.

Say: EXEMPLIFICATION

Turn towards the figures and push 6 so that all the figures concertina to the floor. Walk off.



Fig. 96

Component description and analysis:

TEXT: The figures which carried the comments to be discussed led the way through the piece. They gave the work a coherence.⁴⁶ Text was used in a variety of ways; reading aloud, pre-written text to be read by the audience and writing text as part of performance.

OBJECT: Although I had previously piled small boxes, this was the first occasion I had added polystyrene heads. The box figures provided an interesting visual image for the audience and I tried to interact with them as the viewers of art works and focus of the work.

⁴⁶ Frank (2013) discusses how the format of the lecture-performance can be seen to hinge on recognition of the conflict in performing, lecturing and exhibiting. The inclusion of spoken text changes the nature of the work from a visual art performance to one where the construction holds and disseminates a message and meaning (Milder, 2011, p27).

ACTION: I reused some actions from previous pieces throughout the work. The climax of the work, where the figures were pushed over, provided an appropriate and unexpected ending.

AUDIENCE REACTION: As artists and researchers the audience understood the points I was making and found them humorous, particularly the 'violent' ending.

CONTEXT/PERFORMANCE SPACE: As the space was familiar to me I was able to organise the presentation to work within its confines.

Evaluation of aims:

- The overheard comments worked well as a starting point for the presentation and provided a structure to the text and visual content.
- The structure of the presentation was simple and coherent.

Next steps:

- To use the knowledge gained from this performance to prepare a presentation based on a given title 'The Bubble', for the Lapsody Conference 2017 in Helsinki.

<https://vimeo.com/user47778527/review/375689389/d7774e6983>



Fig. 97

Performed:

- Research Student Conference, Oxford Brookes University. May 2017
- The Bubble, Lapsody 2017, 6th International Festival and Conference, Theatre Academy, Helsinki, May 2017,
- 'As(Every/No)Body', Fringe Art Bath, June 2017

Aim:

- To write and perform a text related to the 'Lapsody' conference theme, 'The Bubble', based upon celebrity quotes and soundbites.
- To use a range of materials which support and carry text, and could be easily transported.

- To combined new and previously trialled actions in the composition of the presentation.

Description:

Fashion designer Karl Lagerfeld was once overheard saying, 'I don't eat bubble-gum but I like the smell.' For some reason this was seen as worthy of being reported and was the start of my search for mindless quotes from people termed celebrities. This presentation, designed for a seated audience, was based on my findings.

Script:

Walk into space in large paper bag. Stand and let people read **'I am a walking piece of art'**. Turn around and let audience read **'and I won't be happy until I'm as famous as God'**. Turn back and poke arms out of bag revealing red gloves. Hold up hands to make the word **HI**. From the 'eye' opening slit open the bag and step out, showing the text embroidered on the T-shirt which reads **'ME'**. Discard bag to one side.

Read from embroidered gloves: **Great minds discuss ideas. Average minds discuss events. Small minds discuss people. I give you a small-minded presentation based on the hot air in the celebrity bubble.**

SAY: But first what is celebrity?

Peel off gloves. Go to bag and take out hoop. Make it up. Take out copy of Hello magazine with text inside. Open the magazine. Start hooping and reading:

READ: The precise moment a public figure becomes a celebrity occurs at a point at which media interest in their activities is transferred from their public role to their private lives. The celebrity becomes well known for their well-knownness.⁴⁷ The brutal reality of the modern age is that all famous people are treated like celebrities by the mass media whether they are

⁴⁷ Boorstin D.J. (1992) *The Image: A Guide to Pseudo-Events in America*. First Vintage Bookd Edition

great political figures, worthy campaigners, artists 'touched by genius', serial killers or Maureen from Driving School.

Celebrities reveal themselves firstly through the spectacle where the public are shown their worlds by means of specialised mediations such as the 'red carpet' event, high profile advertising, and publicised charity work. They also reveal themselves through the confession, where life is a repertoire of dramas, and the close-up where intimate details of the private self is shared.

We risk being the first people in history to have been able to make their illusion so vivid, so persuasive, so realistic that we love them, we stalk them, we consume them, we worship them, we adore them, we want to be them..... but I digress so now a sequence of celeb musings in no particular order.

(with reference to The Celebrity Culture Reader by P. David Marshall, Routledge, 2006)

Stop hooping and place hoop and magazine by the bag.

SAY: **You can never be too rich...** Take money out of bag. Thumb the money off the pile and throw into the air whilst saying:

**FIVE PRIVATE JETS, PURIFIED AIR, NEW UNDERPANTS EVERY DAY, ELECTRIC
MAGNETIC FIELD READER TO DETECT GHOSTS, SWAROVSKI CRYSTAL BATH,
PERSONAL SKULL OF TYRANOSARUS REX, BABY BODY DOUBLE AND LOOKALIKE
NANNY**

Throw rest of the money up in the air. Stand still for a moment.

Say: **You can never be too thin...**

Go back to bag. Take paper roll out of the bag. Start wrapping till roll tightly around body from hips up. Reveal the words and also say them:

I would go for days without eating. Being size 0 is a career in itself. Nothing tastes as good as being skinny. Luckily, I'm quite self-destructive.

Carry on until the roll is up to shoulders and then start eating the paper, stuffing it into mouth until the words are unclear. Spit out the paper and start unravelling it.



Fig. 98

Say: **But now I try to eat lots of organic food when I can. I eat local food when I can. I eat real food when I can. In fact, I eat at least three days a week.**

Step out of till roll. Pause. SAY: **You can never reveal too much...**

Pick up frame and hold it in front of face. Take lipstick out of pocket and smear around lips.

SAY: **when you are depressed there is always lipstick**

Write on frame: **I take drugs. I want to see heaven before I die.**

Spit out lipstick and put frame down.

SAY: **Finally, you can never be too stylish....**

Take red shoes out of bag and put on. Say: **I can't concentrate in flats**

Take dog jacket out of bag and put on. Say: **If you wear denim on denim it will get you documented.**

Stroke dogs head. Say: **He goes everywhere with me. I could eat him.**

Take brown paper roll out of bag.

Say: **I would like to thank all those people without whom this presentation would not have been possible.** Put feet on the bottom of roll and slowly unravel. Give time for names to be read. Let go of paper roll.

Component description and analysis:

TEXT: The text was constructed using numerous, pointless quotes from celebrities, or articles about their behaviour. These tended to relate to what they did with their money, what they did with their bodies and how they preserved themselves. I tried to keep the text as simple as possible and also relatable to an audience who might not be aware of celebrity behaviour in any detail. The format, 'You can never...' aimed to break up the piece into its own soundbites, giving the presentation a simple structure.

OBJECT: I had to carefully consider how the text and objects would work together in order to transport them to Helsinki in a suitcase.

ACTION: The actions were a mixture of new ideas and some actions repeated from previous performances. I tried to keep them as simple as possible as the piece was text heavy. In a lot of the actions the materials ended up on the floor. This was deliberate and related to the 'throw away culture'.

AUDIENCE REACTION: Audiences appeared to understand the text and laughed at references to the use of money, food and appearance. ⁴⁸

CONTEXT / PERFORMANCE SPACE: The work was designed for a seated conference audience and worked well in that setting.

Evaluation of aims:

- The materials were easy to transport and worked with the planned actions.
- The actions were simple but I should have taken longer in their presentation, giving the audience longer to read the presented text.

⁴⁸ Responses are informed by 'connotational baggage' (Charman and Ross, 2002) that are brought by the viewer to the artwork. I hoped the European audience at the Finnish conference would have a similar view of celebrity, which they did.



Fig.99