

**PERFORMANCE – LIVE ART**

**Primary Actions**

|  
**Stillness**  
**Repetition**  
**Inconsistency**

(Tension/Release)  
(Order/Disorder)  
(Anomaly)

**Stillness**

- A. Stillness as arrest
- B. Stillness as a state
- C. Breaking out of stillness

**B. Zen of Stillness**

A composed state which deepens when one adopts a position which is easy to hold a long time.

Zen position endures

- beginning to the end
- begins before the beginning, ends after audience is gone
- death stillness is a non-zen version of B.

**Arrested Stillness**

Lacan talks about the significance of edges  
how sex is not so much the urge to get inside or the urge to have something within one,  
so much as the desire to oscillate across the threshold established between the inside and  
outside.

entrances are desirable  
lips, anus, labia, slit at the tip of the penis  
eyelid & ear – but not the liver, not the lungs

**C. Breaking out of Stillness**

Breaking out of egg of Zen composure recovering from or lifting up out of the stillness of death or  
exhaustion

**Stillness vs. Stuckness**

Stuckness occurs when arrest is forced or break-out is restrained.

## **Stillness by Restraint**

Handcuffs, Ropes, or physical force of others

Becoming a painting – tableaux

ex. Robert Wilson (Einstein on the Beach)

Gilbert & George (under the arches)

Freud - “uncanny”

German word ‘unheimlich’ or ‘unhomely’

translates as ‘uncanny’

witches fetish creature as her ‘familiar’

familiar vs unfamiliar

everyday people vs. unfamiliar stillness

stillness == frozen (to freeze)

suggests coldness

lake turns to ice

coldness of stone

heat speeds up molecules; while stillness suggests inertia

stillness as sleep or trance

stillness as a painting

stillness as a suspension of theatrical dialogue & plot development

stillness as indicative of coldness

stillness as enduring quality of sculpture

stillness as the uncanniness of automata

especially after the clockwork movement has ceased, or when it suddenly jolts into action or

stillness as a manifestation of sheer physical endurance

## **Stillness as Ground**

Stillness/emptiness continuum

stillness as empty time, into which a performance is to be poured.

Performance ----- stillness

Painter ----- blank canvas

Composer ----- silence

blank canvas and silence can remain in the final work

## **The Stillness Workshop**

### **1. Primary Stillness**

After a clap, there is a silence for some fifteen ‘internal counts.’ Then one performer enters the space and freezes in any position. The stillness of the silence is allowed to deepen. Then a second performer enters the space and freezes in any position. Again the stillness of the silence is allowed to deepen. Subsequent performers enter one at a time, in each case after a deepening interval, and freeze also. When the last performer enters he or she says “I’m the last,” before freezing in turn. The stillness is again allowed to deepen, and then the first performer leaves the space, followed, after a deepening interval, by the second performer, and so on, until the last performer is the only one in the space. After another interval of stillness and silence, he or she also quits the space.

### **2. Stillness Repetitions**

Essentially the same exercise as the one above, only this time each performer entering after the first performer has a choice either to repeat a pose already taken up on the performance space or to adopt a fresh one.

### **3. Sculptures and Armatures**

Performers enter the space one at a time. Each becomes frozen, either as sculptural object, or as a support for another performer. Thus performers may adopt stable positions others may utilize or utilize such stable positions as their supports. Last performer to enter says “I’m the last.” Stillness prevails until any one performer breaks out of stillness, making some regular noise to signify movement while walking around the still arrangements contemplating his or her next freeze. On freezing again, either as armature or as sculpture supported by an armature, he or she ceases making that regular noise, and then any other performer is free to break out of stillness. However, there should only be one performer moving and making a regular noise at any one time. If two break out of stillness at the same time, both freeze and miss that chance to move.

### **4. Dynamic Spasms**

Each performer claps and throws the body into an unpremeditated position. Dynamic tension – pitting one set of muscles against another set – is then exerted until the entire pose starts to vibrate with the tension. This tension is very gradually relaxed and gradually the performer sinks to the floor, eventually finding the most relaxed position possible. The performer then goes into spasm again on the floor, holds the spasm for as long as possible, relaxes again and then allows the relaxed stillness to deepen.

Then the performer quietly gets up and repeats the entire exercise.

## **The Stillness Workshop**

### **5. Stuckness**

Choose the tallest/strongest member of the group. All the others attempt to restrain his/her movements by any means possible – until the movements of that targeted performer are completely stilled.

### **6. Stillness Free Session**

(begin with 1 min of silence)

Improvisation period, utilizing only entrances, freezes and exits, though there may be transitions from one freeze to another – after a pose proves impossible to sustain. Performers should consider the variety of possibilities: Figurative poses (Friezes), dynamic shapes, spasms, constraints, repetition of observed poses, oppositions to observed poses etc...

Stillness should be considered the ground of any subsequent free sessions.

### **7. Stillness as Arrest, Coming to a Halt, Bursting out of Stillness**

Performers divide into two groups. One group keeps walking at one end of the studio. The other group wait and watch. Then one performer in the watching group calls the name of one performer in the walking group. Immediately that performer stops walking and simultaneously turns to lock gazes with the caller. One at a time, each performer in the watching group calls the of the walker – with the same effect.

After having arrested a performer in the walking group, each caller walks forward in silence towards that performer, never taking his/her eyes off the eyes of the performer called. The walk must become slower and slower, so that by the time the caller is very close indeed to the called performer the movement forward is practically imperceptible.

No acknowledgement should occur on making contact – the arrested performer remaining in the arrested position, the caller simply coming to a stop. But after a longish pause, both performers should burst out of their stillness, breaking contact.

## **The Clothing Workshop**

### **1. Travesty, Camouflage, Intimidation**

A day or so before the Clothing Workshop, performers are asked to start collecting/preparing the clothing they are thinking of using during their performance.

On the day of the workshop, they dress in these clothes.

Three of them are then asked to utilize their own clothes and the items worn by the others for the purpose of *travesty*.

When this is achieved, a further three performers are asked to utilize their own clothes and those worn by others for the purpose of *camouflage*.

When this is achieved a further three performers are asked to utilize their own clothes and those worn by others for the purpose of *intimidation*.

The characteristics of the space may come into play during camouflage. Other performers may be used to enhance intimidation.

## **The Repetition Workshop**

### **1. Simple Repetition Analysis**

Performers stand in a circle. Everyone is asked to perform a simple repetition. Each action performed is then analyzed in turn, going round the circle. In most cases it will be discovered that the simple repetition has incorporated its own reversal, though one or two of the performers may have adopted a repetition which involves alternation or a cyclic repetition.

### **2. Four Action Repetition**

Performers are asked to devise a complex repetition involving four actions: one of these actions should incorporate reversal, one should cause the performer to travel, one should be cyclic and one should be an action copied from another performer – the last action can either incorporate reversal or cause the performer to travel or be cyclic.

Once these actions are established, each performer should add language to the actions until each of the four actions chosen is accompanied by a word or a phrase.

### **3. Repeated Repetitions**

After a clap, there is a silence for some fifteen ‘internal counts.’ Then one performer enters the space and repeats any action. This action is allowed to deepen. Then a second performer enters the space and may either instigate a new action – which he or she repeats – or repeat an action already being performed. When the last performer enters, he or she says “I’m the last,” before repeating a new action or repeating an action already being performed. This action is allowed to deepen, and then the first performer leaves the space, followed after a deepening interval, by the second performer, and so on, until the last performer is the only one in the space. After another interval, he or she also quits the space.

### **4. Large and Small Repetitions**

Perform a complex (three or four action) repetition in the smallest possible way. Gradually expand this repetition in terms of scale, size, noise etc. Then as gradually diminish the repetition and finally stop performing.

### **5. The Metronome**

Performers stand in a fairly tight circle. One performer moves into the circle, performs an action and moves out again. He or she repeats this, while the other performers also try to perform repetitive actions in the circle which are synchronized with the initial action of the first performer. Thus a sort of combined repetitive ‘mechanism’ should develop.

## **The Repetition Workshop**

### **6. Mirroring**

Performers stand in pairs, preferably with someone of equal height. They should stand about 3 feet apart from each other and look towards the right. The performer standing on the right now begins to move so slowly no one can see the movement. This movement is copied as simultaneously as possible by the performer on the left. The leading performer should consider that the following performer can only see actions which fall within his or her line of sight and which are not obscured by the body of the leader. The lead may be transferred by a turn to the leader's head towards the following performer. The follower imitates this head turn, and when he or she can no longer see the leader, continues the head-turn towards the left, thus becoming the leader of the action. This exercise can also be performed in a line, with several performers – though only the performers at the beginning or at the end of the line will be able to transfer the lead.

### **7. Time-Delayed Repetitions**

All performers must be able to see each other. The first performer performs, then stands still and watches the others. The second performer copies the action executed by the first performer, then adds an action of his own. The third performer copies the action executed by the first performer, then copies the action executed by the second performer, then adds an action of his own. This process continues until all the performers have completed two or three rounds of accumulated actions.

## **The Workshop in Inconsistency**

### **1. Improvised Inconsistency**

Performers are simply asked to improvise inconsistently. Afterwards the experience is analyzed. How easy is it simply to be inconsistent in performance without recourse to any system or structure?

### **2. Suggestion Strings**

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## **The Workshop on Light**

### **1. Darkness/Daylight Exercise**

The performers hold a free session in the dark. Next they hold a free session outdoors and in daylight.

Then an attempt may be made to perform the darkness free session outdoors and in daylight, and to perform the daylight free-session in the dark.

### **2. Single Light Source**

Performers decide on a single light source – either external to the performance space or intrinsic to it. Each performer places an object – it could be an item of furniture – on the space.

There is no other action, other than placing of such objects, the adjustment of their position or their removal. The presence of each object is allowed to deepen before its position is altered or any other object is added or removed.

### **3. Sculptural Light Exercise**

A performance is created which only uses lights intrinsic to the performance space (no external source of light). No cable-connected electricity should be used. Performers may carry the source of light on their own persons.

### **4. Lighting Free Session**

One performer remains off-stage, adjusting the lights, while the others perform a free session – or each performer adjusts the lights once during a free session.

### **5. Confrontational Lighting**

A performance is devised in which the lights are directed at the audience: that audience may be an audience of one.

### **6. Hidden Audience**

Performers devise a piece which is watched by an audience that cannot be seen. This may require that the performance is watched through a keyhole or through a telescope or via a video monitor.