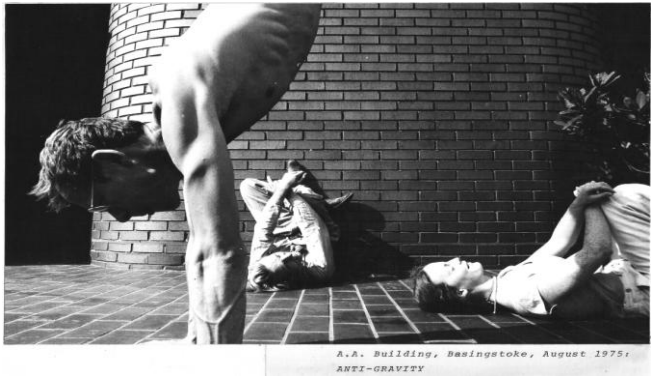


The Theatre of Mistakes Archive
Anti-Gravity Aug 1975, A-A Building, Basingstoke



Gravity
See: *Ascent of the Stediljk*, Julian **Maynard Smith**, **Station House**
Opera



A.A. Building, Basingstoke, August 1975:
ANTI-GRAVITY

Greenall, Mickey (Mikey/Mik) (1948-?)



Greenall in *Preparations for Displacement* Photo: ©Nicholas Bechgaard

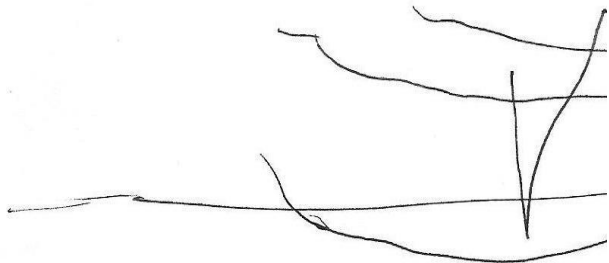
- Gymnasium
- Grids
- Grey Suit Editions
- Greenall, Michael (Mickey/Mike/Mik)
- Gravity
- Gossip
- Goldfish
- Going
- Games
- Fuchs, Alan
- Free Sessions
- Four Artists*
- Fiver Show
- Five Concert Pieces and a Free Session*
- Fire
- Fiona Templeton
- Feminism
- Fantasy

U O I S N F I P



An A-Z of The Ting: Theatre of Mistakes – F & G

Marie-Anne Mancio



2009-09-03

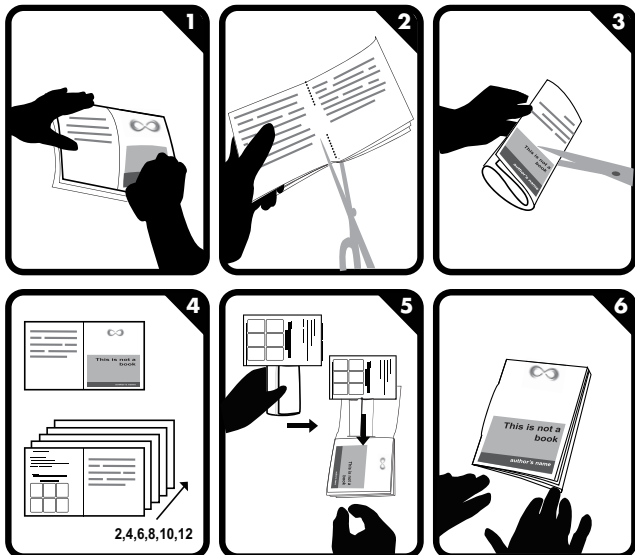
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F-G

Marie-Anne Mancio

Fantasy
A WOMAN CALLED MAYLA WHO WORE A
TRENCH COAT AND HEELS.
At **Purdies** farm in the summer of 1975, The Theatre of Mistakes
created a **Core Group Fantasy Piece**. Its **archive** holds the fantasies
for **Michael Greenall**, **Anthony Howell**, and **Mike Owen**:
FANTASY FOR MIKE OWEN

Wear only clean Y-fronts and wait in bed.
For the duration of the piece:
Keep your body absolutely stiff and straight.
Chew gum.
Smile continuously.
Say at any points: "Please be nasty to me".
"Would anybody like some tea".
Violent obscenities to Miranda.
Apologies.
When given the bag, offer its contents for appreciation.

©The Theatre of Mistakes, The Theatre of Mistakes Archive

Feminism See: **Southern** Green Women's Liberation Group,
Women

Fiona Templeton See: **Templeton**, **Fiona**

Fire
E.g. **Anthony McCall** *Fire Event III* held at 43 Egerton Gardens,
London SW3 on 27th Nov, 1971 (Artwork in The Theatre Of
Mistakes Archive)
See **Reindeer Werk**

most interesting results. out a small specimen edition of some of our of the volumes already in existence and to bring litation underway, we need to obtain duplicates. In order to get action towards pub- documentation plots a brief history of our dev- permits others to perform our work, while our text of a conventional play, this gymnasium is as fully described and as easy to read as the Exhibitions), in which any piece we have done arations for Displacement, The Street, The London Together with the The Performance Books (Prep- rapid dissemination of our work, art and ideas. requires publication—as this would allow a work of concept art. This gymnasium urgently they are: a comprehensive entity and a major be recognised for what we have hopes that to mutual art projects, filling five clearly These range from pure performance exercises collected from contributions to the workshops. of performance exercises which have been written instructions based on the Gymnasium of the company's activities is that of the SOUNDINGS. One of the most important areas

The Theatre of Mistakes Archive
Extract from Statement for Funding Application, nd c1975/6

Musics magazine 109 September 1976

From 'The Gymnasium' by The Ting: Theatre of Mistakes

EXERCISE EXERCISE

Invent an instruction:
 A) to be carried out by one performer
 or B) to be carried out by a specified number of performers
 or C) to be carried out by any number of performer.

The instruction may concern:
 A) the conditions of the performance
 B) the body of the performer(s)
 C) the aural (verbal, musical) aspects of the performance
 D) the time and/or the space in which the performance occurs or any aspect of speed and/or distance
 E) the equipment performer(s) might employ.

The instruction may be a simple action or a complex action broken down into its simplest stages. The instruction may be less than an instruction: the contribution of a piece of equipment, of a floor pattern, of a word to be recited.

The exercise proposed by your instruction(s) may have time values specified when concerned with body values, conditional values when concerned with equipment, aural values when concerned with spatial values or any other combination of values.

Time may be expressed a) adverbially (do this quickly or slowly) b) in terms of the clock (do this for x minutes), c) in terms of action (do this for as long as it might take *you* to do that). Space may also be expressed in various ways.

Exercises may be designed to accommodate the number of people, the abilities of the people, the time, the space and the equipment available on the day of the workshop or performance.

Exercises may be
 a) self contained
 b) adaptable
 c) evolving out of another exercise.

Exercises may require that they occur in isolation; exercises may require the simultaneous performance of another exercise.

Exercises may be headed with a memorable title and/or with a reference number; they may be typed or written clearly and presented in duplicate on copy for a file.

Exercises may be created for particular circumstances that do not require that they be filed. Exercises may be delivered aurally, and they may be forgotten as soon as performed, or sooner.

EXERCISE PERFORMANCE

1) An exercise can be performed by a single performer, by two performers, by a chosen number of performers or by all performers.

2) An exercise can be performed for the duration of the performance or for a certain amount of time during the performance. It can occur once or a number of times.

3) An exercise can be performed anywhere in the performance space or in a certain part of the performance space.

4) One performer may be engaged in performing several exercises simultaneously; several performers may be engaged in performing a single exercise at the same time. One performer may execute several exercises one after another; several performers may execute a variety of exercises at the same time.

5) Certain exercises may be found to be particularly suited to performance in conjunction with other exercises: certain exercises may be found to be particularly suited to performance in conjunction with no other exercise—in general, AURAL exercises are best performed while the performer remains motionless (unless that particular exercise demands motion); BODY exercises are best performed while the performer remains silent (unless that particular exercise demands sound); certain of the EQUIPMENT exercises are designed for the use of a sculptor moving and/or manipulating objects in an ordinary way and under no physical or aural constraint; many of the TIME/SPACE exercises are specifically designed to be performed in conjunction with other exercises, and the MANIFESTATION exercises refer to an over-all consideration of the performance within which many exercises may be employed.

6) All or any aspects of the manner in which an exercise is to be performed (any of the above considerations or any other considerations) may be decided by chance before the performance, as may the decision to include or exclude any particular exercise from a performance.

7) Exercises may be invented, altered, practiced, elaborated upon, simplified or abandoned. The instructions governing any exercise may be adhered to or broken. Exercises may be exchanged during the performance. Exercises may be reversed, repeated or reflected by performers.

8) Progression to a point where an exercise is to begin is in itself an exercise in progressing to the point where that exercise is to begin. Action subsequent to the conclusion of any exercise is in itself an exercise in action subsequent to that exercise.

9) An exercise is not performed in preparation for anything other than the finest execution of itself, and is not chosen to be performed in preparation for anything other than the finest organisation of its inclusion within that performance.

10) The content of a performance is the conjunction of the exercises included in that performance with the performers engaged in the performance of those exercises.

11) The meaning of an exercise rests in its execution. The reason for performing an exercise is simply in case there is a reason.

"The Art of the Axiom in the Art of the Move"
Fiona Templeton, May 1976

Musics magazine September 1976

Program *Five Concert Pieces* (October 1975)

and judge how the game may be progressing. for the very first time—having both to elucidate the rules as they watch the performance as if it were a game watched action into every situation made manifest at the same time depends largely on the audience reading their own interpretation lives at the time of the performance. The "drama" visible drama the performers are involved in is that of their real arena of the action presented to the public—thus the only the possibility of extending their own behaviour into the Rather than acting, the performers use exercises to create as long as a year.

age, and some of its projects are rehearsed for periods and redefined. The company is able to perform in any larger workshops where performance exercises are generated The Theatre of Mistakes is the seven person nucleus of a larger performance art movement "The Ting", which holds reg- will be mounting five concert pieces and a free session at The London Exhibition for three weekends in October.

The Ting: Theatre of Mistakes, a performance art company, Program *Active Circles* (August 1976)

any other.

so extended that no one performer remains within sight or sound of touching each other or when the performers are standing in a line—out performers are standing in a line—out so retracted that all five are The natural conclusion of this game comes about either when the per- more formal.

Greetings may be expected to become more familiar as the circles ex- Program *Two Journeys* (May 1976)

than striving to compete against each other.

the performers work extremely hard to achieve an overall effect rather in such performance "games", result is "transposed for winning. Thus space, number and articulation.

of an over-structure (like a game) concerned with problems of time, chosen at random, sometimes chosen in accordance with the strictures of exercises are performed at the same time or on the same space, sometimes The resultant apex of the work is The Performance—where chosen ex-

framing or presentation costs were a major difficulty to be surmounted when work is priced at such a low price. Artists who used the show as a jumble sale in which to get rid of their less interesting or dated ideas sold nothing at all.

Anthony Howell, July 1976, Theatre of Mistakes Archive

With performances (Mikey Greenall; Theatre of Mistakes) and readings (Anthony Howell, Nick Totten, John Welch, Anthony Barnett) on Friday nights. See also: [Letters](#), [London Calling](#)

Four Artists (1974)

A group show: David Coxhead, Susan Hiller, Anthony Howell, Amikam Toren.

Free Sessions See *Five Concert Pieces* Fuchs, Alan See *Poetry, Wallpaper*

Games

See: Julian Maynard Smith, *One Rule Game*, Fiona Templeton
 "The Theatre of Mistakes is more like playing a game than acting in a play. As in a game, we employ formal rules to extend the intensity of being as we are, rather than attempting to 'be' someone else."
 (Program notes, *Preparations for Displacement*, 1975, The Theatre of Mistakes Archive)

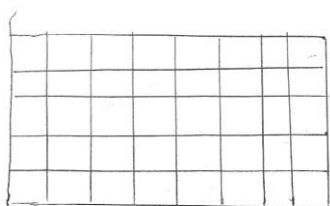
As with any game, instructions are learnt and rules elaborated, but no particular actions are choreographed. Unlike any game, there is no method of winning. The performers may play for and against themselves and for and against each other, each may decide on methods of collaboration or methods of sabotage. Mostly, they perform for the sake of the performance.

Like any great painting, *Pairs' Game* exists in its own terms. Teams playing cricket "play the game" for themselves, yet a good game can attract a good audience. Each watcher of a game of cricket watches in their own terms, some for the result, some for a deckchair in the sun, a pint of lager and white figures strolling across a green.

Program/press release *Pairs Game* (1975/6)

The vocabulary of the grid was part of the art scene, in **New York** at least, from the 1960s onwards, deployed by artists such as Eva

The mass space box calculated by discounting the reader, the metronome and the performer bringing on the items.



Roughly half a mass SPACE BOX marked out with tape as a grid:

The Performance Space:

Grids

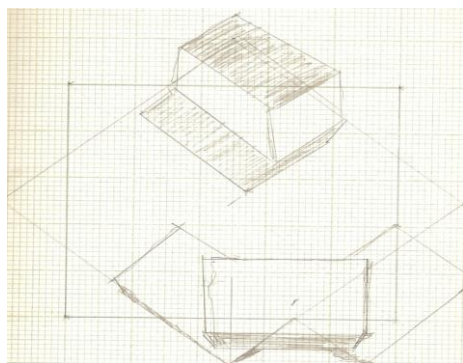
Publishers of *Going* and *Homage to Morandi* (See *Bibliography*) 'magazine' was a video compilation of performance and video art.

Publishing company established by Anthony **Howell**. The

Grey Suit Editions

Greenall died in Manchester several years ago and so is the only member of the Core group(s) apart from Anita **Urqhart** to date not to have been interviewed in the research for this text. A retrospective of Greenall's work is being curated by Hadrian Piggott, Gwendolyn **Leick** and other friends.

Hesse, Ad Reinhardt, Elsworth Kelly, Agnes Martin... Is the grid the antidote to the linear **narrative**? (See *Quilting Bee*).



Page from Notebook of Anthony Howell, The Theatre of Mistakes Archive

This A-Z is also a grid. It comprises 16 books. When lined up in alphabetical order like so:

A	B	C	D
E	F-G	H	I-K
L	M	N-O	P
Q-R	S	T-U	V-Z

and opened to pp25-26, they form a rectangle and a diagram emerges.

Gymnasium

See *Elements of Performance Art, Exercises*

Whilst The Theatre of Mistakes **Archive** holds many loose-leaf drafts and copies of exercises, as of 2009, the entire Gymnasium collection has yet to be found.

Going is the first of The Theatre of Mistakes' works to be wholly rehearsed, **mistakes** incorporated. Beneath bare bulbs, three men and two women (or two men and three women), constantly threaten to leave ("Really, I must go," "I do think I'd better be going now"), yet never actually do. The repetition of text and gestures drawn from the rituals of saying goodbye becomes increasingly violent. Hands slam on a table, a cigarette packet is tossed, performers square up to one another, detain and push away. Phrases are non-committal, casual, petulant, full of rage. Silences are punctuated by swoons and tonal voice choruses that lend gravitas to even the tritest pop **songs**. *Going* is relentless: a structure with a human metronome and no ending. Our satisfaction comes from figuring out its fugal form, recognising the mistakes and the corrections they trigger, and then watching it play out over the five acts, each performer enacting all the other performers. Is there still a narrative if everyone is the same person? Is there still drama if emotions such as anger cannot be attributed to any one 'character' but are performed as part of a formal sequence? (Cf Anthony Howell's novel *Lost Farm* which distils the events of a decade in a single day and sets out not to reveal the inner thoughts of any of its characters). As Templeton says, when *Going* was conceived in pre-Thatcherite Britain, no-one looked like this. Slick-haired and grey-suited, its performers could have belonged to a nameless organisation somewhere on the 'wrong' side of the Berlin wall. They appear locked in a Kafkaesque struggle from which there is no escape,

See also: *Bibliography, Chance, Diagrams, Endings, Rehearsal* and Theater of the New City, **New York**.
combinations and venues including: **Cambridge Poetry Festival** Michael **Greenall**, Miranda **Payne**, Glensy **Johnson** in various
Performed by Anthony **Howell**, Fiona **Templeton**, Peter **Stickland**,
Going (1977)

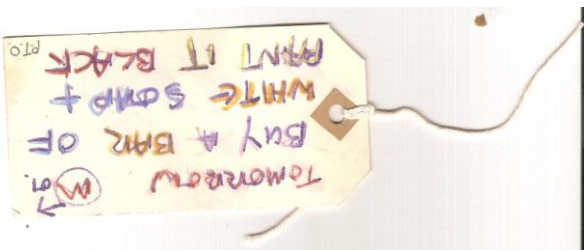


Two Journeys Photo: ©The Theatre of Mistakes

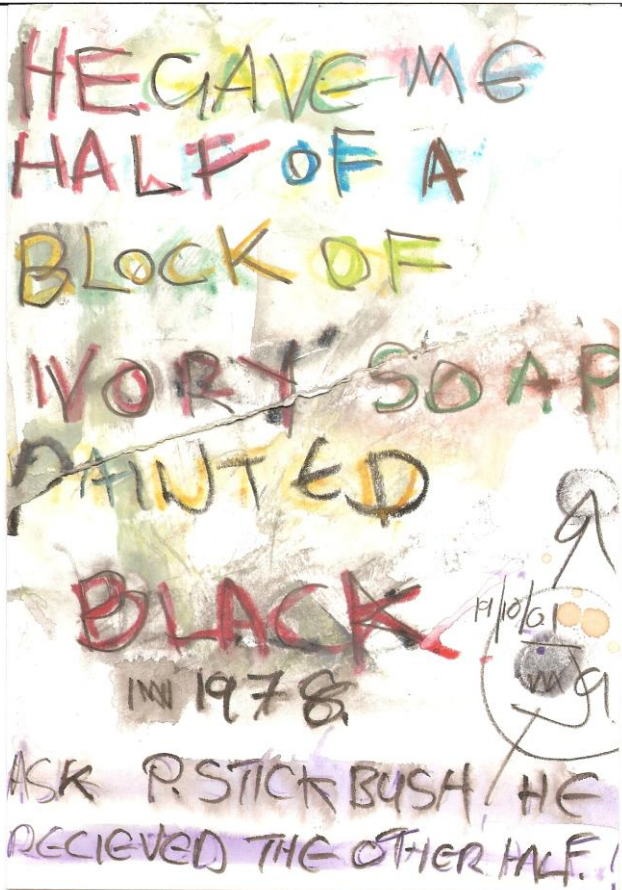
Cf The traditional English parlour game of Blindman's Bluff whose origins can be traced at least as far back as the Middle Ages, re-emerging as a French picturesque pursuit as depicted by Fragonard. Also much enjoyed by the Marquis de Sade.



Above and below: Greenall artwork sent to Anthony Howell in 2001 for *Performations*, work on paper, 12 x 6.1cm, The Theatre of Mistakes Archive



His own practice included illustrations for Anthony Howell's long poem, *The Mekon* (1976), diagrams and other works on paper and, latterly, ceramics.



Greenall artwork sent to Anthony Howell in 2001 for *Performations*, work on paper, 23 x 16.2cm, The Theatre of Mistakes Archive

Extract from Program for Paris Biennale with essential phrases from the text translated into French. The Theatre of Mistakes Archive

20 January 1978

I do think I'd better be going	Bon, je pense qu'il vaut mieux que je parte maintenant
Oh, don't be so silly!	Oh, ne dis pas de bêtises!
Really, I must go.	Non, vraiment, je dois partir.
Ahem.	Hum.
I do have to go now.	Il faut que je parte maintenant.
Are you sure?	Tu es sûr?
Why do you have to go?	Pourquoi dois-tu partir?
If you must, you must.	S'il le faut, il le faut.
'Bye.	Au revoir.
Really.	Oh, vraiment.

A PERFORMANCE

(Jason E Bowman "Accidentally on Purpose, The Ting: The Theatre of Mistakes, Towards A Retrospective" PS15, Zagreb, June 2009)

"*Going* pre-empted the disbandment of the group. A scripted performance involving attempts to leave each participant in following the rules becomes bound to the rest as they weave their identical actions into different moments of the same role."

this core group were united in purpose and investigation. prolonged enquiries into mutually cohered and also the last time what *Waiting for Godot* is to Beckett. It's the work in which their According to Peter Stickland, *Going* is to The Theatre of Mistakes

penned in by the audience on four sides, by a formal conceit. Little wonder that when *Going* was performed in Pittsburgh's Western Penitentiary, prisoners adored it; lifers felt it reflected the futility of repeated applications to the parole board. Post 80s, everyone looks like this, like the face of faceless corporations; of commuters caught in the 9 to 5 treadmill.

The story is that when *Going* toured to New York in '78, performer Greenall sat in the audience on his night off and fell asleep.

Johnson recalls being the first to fall in *Going* at the Pittsburgh Western Penitentiary and how vulnerable she felt lying face down on the floor surrounded by burly prisoners. (Interview: Glenys Johnson: London, 18th Dec, 2008)



Mickey Greenall, Peter Stickland, Anthony Howell and Glenys Johnson in *Going*
Photo ©The Theatre of Mistakes, The Theatre of Mistakes Archive

Whilst less interested in structure than some of the others, he brought his unique creativity to the group, particularly through his visual sensibility and his improvisation skills. Apart from Howell, he was the only performer there from the first Theatre of Mistakes work (*Preparations for Displacement* in 1975) right through to *Homage to Morandi* in 1981. He can be heard on the sound recording of *Going* (see [Bibliography](#)).

(Conversation: Howard Tong, London, Oct 2008)

“Mikey used to sing: *One day my prince will come; one day my rinse will run.*”

inspired Mikey’s *Mud Man* performance. lower floors to avoid being soaked. The garden became one big mud bath and they made helmets out of mud, all of which no roof so when it rained, they were forced to occupy lower and He shared a squat with Howard Tong who recalls the house had

(Conversation: Peter Stickland, London, Nov 2008)

“Mikey was a kind of Hermes character, a free spirit. A great performer-interpreter. Soft, intuitive, impish, flying around, being naughty...”

Mikey Greenall studied and lectured in Fine Art at Maidstone college and became part of the *Core* Group of Ting: The Theatre of Mistakes in 1975 (Signe Lie Howell remembers him as very reliable). He went on to co-create the *Mutuality* signature with Anthony Howell and Fiona Templeton. It was his friendship with Michael Craig Martin that introduced the latter to The Theatre of Mistakes and led to their selection for *Summer Show 5*.

See also: [The Art Room](#), [The Street](#), [Five Concert Pieces](#)



Mikey Greenall

Greenall in the eponymous aviator suit. Photo ©The Theatre of Mistakes, c. 1975

Lindsay Moran and goldfish in *Three Act Piece*, Photo: ©The Theatre of Mistakes, The Theatre of Mistakes Archive



Goldfish

See *Three Act Piece*. No animals were harmed in the making of this performance.

Gossip

“Gossip is only the lack of a worthy memory”
(Elbert Hubbard)

It would make a good novel, Anthony Howell said. The writer going between people who aren’t necessarily in contact, hearing what each one has to say, relaying the memories of one to another, repeating opinion, being privy to multiple perspectives while individuals remain locked in their singular narratives of nostalgia or analysis. In short, the writer as a conduit for gossip.

History is merely gossip (Oscar Wilde)

The process of researching an entity as complex as Ting: The Theatre of Mistakes is well served by the notion of gossip as the subversive strategy of the excluded, as articulated by cultural theorist Irit Rogoff : “Gossip involves exchange not merely, not even mainly, of information, and not solely of understanding, but of point of view” (*Gossip as Testimony - a Postmodern Signature*). Professional relations within The Theatre of Mistakes were enhanced and complicated by interpersonal relationships that created ever-shifting dynamics. Some participants had remained friends; others hadn’t spoken in years. There was dissent, or silences; there was time and a death and a drifting apart. Gossip engages; it creates a mystique around its subjects. It occupies the spaces left by questions. Who threw the script someone else painstakingly typed into the fire? Who was ‘against agreement’? Who fell asleep while sat in the audience? What was the Secrets Piece? (See also: [Unattributed](#))