

Below: Greenall, Stickland, Howell, and Johnson in *Going*



Strategies

Fiona **Templeton**'s father designed crossword puzzles. Describing Templeton's performance *You: The City*, Peter **Stickland** said, "Fiona's wonderful about strategies and words to contain them. [*You: The City*] It's a very simple structure.... Normally there's a stage and a big group of people, [here] there's a big group of performers and just one person. You reverse it. It's against agreement again. If this is the hypothesis, this is the alternative." (Interview: Chelsea School of Art, London, June 08)

The Street (Ascham Street, NW3, July, 1975)

See also: **Audiences**, **Diagrams**

With **Choice** by Chance (a conceptual presence from the inception of **The Ting**) as the preferred method of determining roles, Pat **Murphy**, Fiona **Templeton** and Mickey **Greenall** were selected to

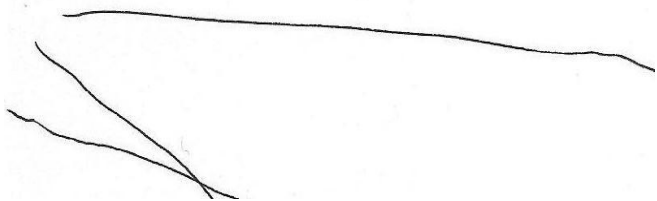
- Systems
- Swoons
- Summer Show 5
- Summer Pieces
- Subtractive
- Structures
- The Street
- Strategies
- Stickland, Peter
- Station House Opera
- Southern Green Women's Liberation group
- Soundings
- Songs
- Some Matterhorns
- Solution
- Solos
- Smoking
- Silver
- Signe Lie Howell
- Sherman, Stuart
- Seventies
- Serpentine
- Secrets
- Sculpture
- Science Fiction
- Schneeman, Carolee
- Scenes at a Table
- Scope: A Labour of Love
- Samovar
- Sabotage

DIFFUSION



An A-Z of The Ting: Theatre of Mistakes – S

Marie-Anne Mancio



2009-09-03

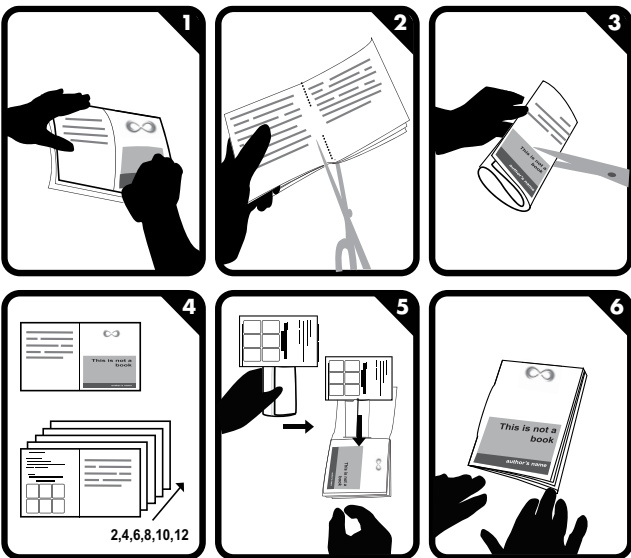
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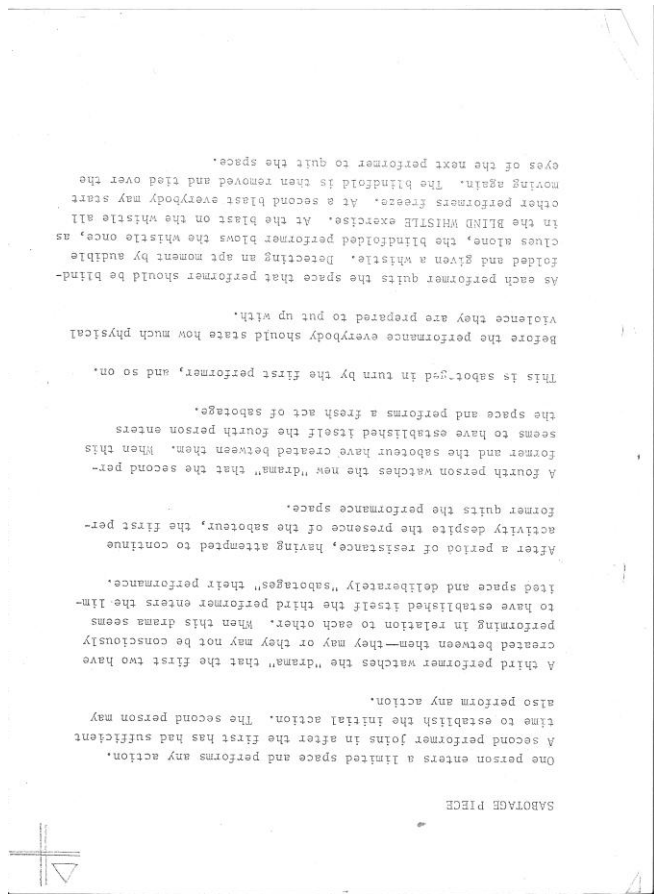
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Sabotage Piece (Southampton Performance Show, July 1975)

The Ting: Theatre of Mistakes

an **A-Z**

S

Marie-Anne Mancio

The Waterfall:

An empty pail and a full one stand next to each other on the ground. An hour chimes and an hour is counted out by the transference of water from one pail to the other, its end marked by a cascade back into the original pail. There is only one performer, scooping the water out of the pail with one cup, pouring it into another cup and then pouring it into the other pail. Twenty counts for each action, sixty cupfuls of water in the full pail. This is the lowest waterfall.

There are twentyfour different waterfalls. The time at which the performance takes place gets later through the week, then starts in day by day.

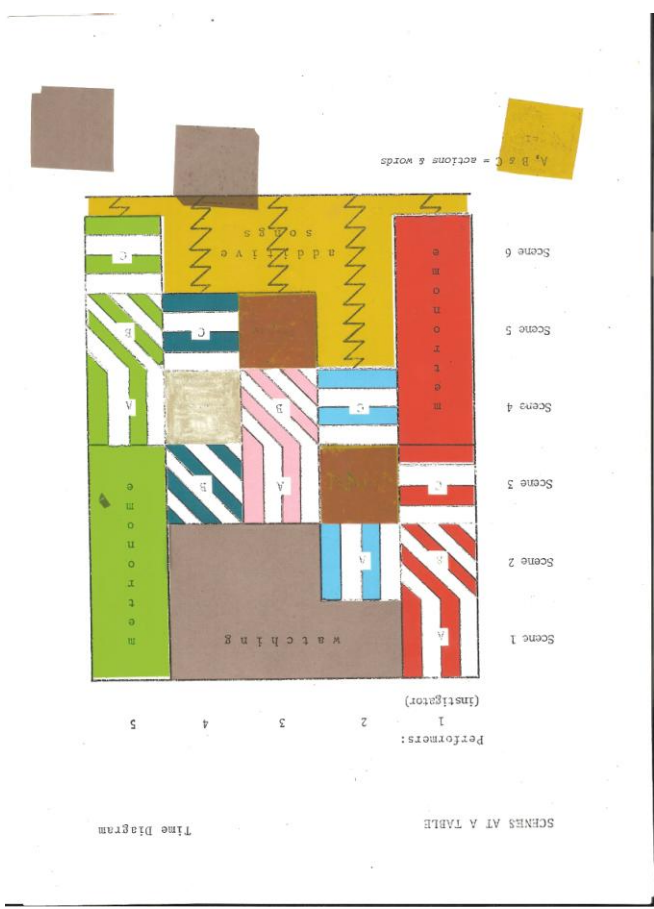
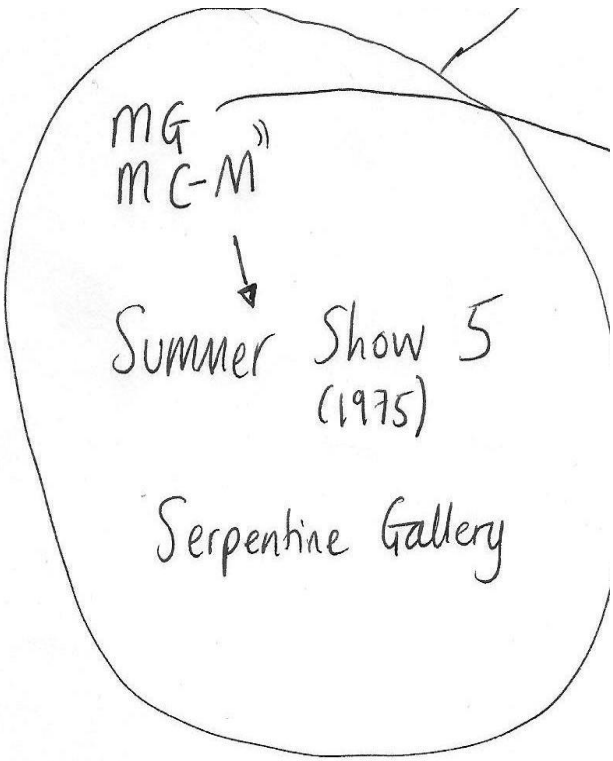
There are two pails, a number of cups, tables and chairs, and a number of performers—the force behind the fall: one performer and the lowest waterfall, two performers and a higher one, three performers and an even higher waterfall, four performers and a waterfall higher still. So it goes until there are twelve performers, pouring out and catching up the water as it travels from cup to cup, at last reaching the higher pail, where it goes to make up the highest waterfall of all.

Does an hour counted pass like an hour timed by the clock? How much bigger is a table than a chair? Can height be arranged so as to permit a vertical fall from top to bottom? Will spillage compensate for extra hands? The water rises gradually, accumulating at the top of a mountain of tables and chairs—suddenly to fall back to its emptied source at the end of an hour.

When the waterfall has reached its peak a performer is subtracted and the lower pail is raised, giving twelve of the highest waterfalls and employing progressively fewer performers until an empty pail and a full one stand ready next to each other on two chairs on top of more chairs placed on a table balanced on several more chairs placed on two tables balanced on still more chairs placed on top of four more tables.

Having ascended and increased, and then having remained at its highest while diminishing, the waterfall continues at its highest while it increases again so that it may descend and diminish as it begun on the last day of the exhibition.

Twentyfour waterfalls: fortyeight performances.



Samovar See **Economics**

Scape: A Labour of Love
 The text for *Birth Ballet Chorale*.

Scenes at a Table (London Calling, July 1976)
 See also: **Audiences**, *Homage to Pietro Longhi*, Michael **Craig-Martin**, *Serpentine*, *Summer Show 5*

Schneeman, Carolee (1939-)
 American multidisciplinary artist famous for her 1975 performance *Interior Scroll* (see www.caroleeschneemann.com). In 1974, she performed *Up To And Including Her Limits* at the **London Film Makers Co-op** and **Artists Meeting Place** (**venues**). **Signe Lie Howell** recalls seeing Schneemann's work; despite sharing its feminist ideology, she wanted an aesthetic less focused on body art. See also: **Anthony McCall** who photographed her performances.

Science Fiction
 Howard **Tong** was a fan of science fiction author Samuel R. Delany.

Sculpture
 [Gilbert and] **George**: "We were taught at St. Martin's that sculpture was like dentistry." ("Naked Human Artists: Wolf Jahn talks to Gilbert & George", *Tate Etc.* Issue 9, Spring 2007)
 Despite **art schools** flourishing in the UK, students such as **Miranda Payne** (at Maidstone) found themselves struggling with the rigidity of their departments. Performance offered a different approach away from the machismo of **Anthony Caro**-style welding or the minimalist approaches of **Judd** or **Flavin**.
 1973: Michael **Craig-Martin** *An Oak Tree*
 1975: Tate buys **Carl Andre's** *Equivalent VIII* "the bricks"

Secrets

SECRETS PIECE

Ask Fiona.

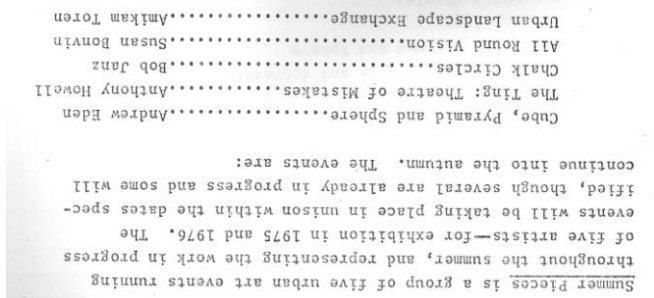


See also: **Audiences, Bibliography, Critics, Amikam Toren**
The Theatre of Mistakes performed *Homage to Pietro Longhi* at the Serpentine in 1976 at Michael Craig-Martin's invitation.

Summer Show 5

See: *Wallpaper*

Press release, 1975, The Theatre of Mistakes Archive



Summer Pieces

Swoons

A literary description of fainting...

Part of the movement vocabulary, post-trigger, in *Going* and earlier in *Scenes at a Table: Homage to Pietro Longhi*.

Longhi

dict the structure. Repetition is made more difficult by being performed on tiptoe, and swoons result as a consequence of standing on tiptoe for extended periods; instigator becomes

Program Notes for *Scenes at a Table: Homage to Pietro Longhi*, 1976
The Theatre of Mistakes Archive

Systems

Fiona Templeton believes Anthony Howell's interest was in systems whereas hers was in games.

(Conversation: Manhattan, 12th Sept, 2008)

Waterfall is the ultimate example of this.

Andrew Eden concurs, suggesting that in 1974, "People were very excited by what I suppose had been happening in New York about three years before so, for instance, Anthony McCall's piece...

Looking at the first issue [of *Wallpaper*] nearly every work in here is all kind of systems-based."

(Interview: Eden and Susan Bonvin, Peterborough, 24th Nov, 2008)

Further reading:
Moore-Gilbert, Bart *Art in the Seventies: Cultural Closure* Routledge, 1994
See also: **Bibliography, New York**

"An amazing time politically and culturally. For me, I was coming into contact with what was already an avant-garde tradition with screenings of Maya Deren and Stan Brakhage at the London Film Makers Co-op. There was also Robert Jantz's sculpture, Jane Clark's water and landscape films. In performance there was Robert Wilson and Mabou Mines. Twyla Tharp's company visited London in the summer of 74 and performed at the Place and the Roundhouse. Phillip Glass was an important mentor and influence. There was also Robert Ashley, Joan Jonas, Simone Forti, Trisha Brown, Yvonne Rainer, Bruce McLean and the Pose Band, David Medalla, Marc Chamowicz etc. It was also the period in which Laura Mulvey wrote "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema."

Pat Murphy:

By the mid-70s, community arts had become institutionalised and so there was a new professionalism about them. (Performance Dec/Jan 1980, issue 4 editorial)

discoveries"
The seventies were a time for enactment of these discoveries"
Rob La Frenais: "If the sixties were a period of discovery, David Bowie...."
Space Hoppers Freddie Laker IFA bombings Nylon

Serpentine

See also: **Audiences, Michael Craig-Martin, Scenes at a Table, Summer Show 5, Venues**

Seventies



Purdies farm, early 70s, Photo ©The Theatre of Mistakes

Decimalisation Industrial antagonism Miners Strike 1973-4 Poverty Arab oil embargo post-Arab-Israeli War. 3 Day working week Changing nappies by candlelight Bay City Rollers The Winter of Discontent Fondue sets Flares Prime Minister Edward Heath (Conservative) loses 1974 election to Harold Wilson (Labour) Brown rice Jumbo jets Squatting 1976 James Callaghan (Labour) takes over Heat wave Co-ops High Unemployment Flowery Shirts Inflation Nadia Comaneci Silver Jubilee Unrest Ford Cortinas 1977 Pompidou Centre Death of Elvis 1979 Margaret Thatcher Prime Minister

DRESS REHEARSAL: Basic AMPLIFICATION soundings

Sh Norman Who's I don't know
 Shut up not closing time bye night right I've got
 ears you know What are you doing they Fiona Robert
 I can see your head Can we talk while we everyone who's
 standing on the floor when the windows come down It's too
 late fall down up windows won't be long I'm not
 Come back to the mind good doggie hey-ho.

Norman See you in the morning What are you doing Slowly
 Shut up Robert I can see your head you what they get
 up everyone Whom which what do you know how to plant
 cabbages see where going It was a mistake I
 don't care what is on the next menu you have to get up
 slowly do you know what happened to her It's too late.

Stop it They're splitting at me stop it shout out
 whatever hears as well yes goodbye who said
 that hello vicious when he said get knotted get up
 very slowly I don't want to go next Miranda Get off
 Rubbish come on then you'll deal with the people who come
 into the room you're not supposed to It's terrible It's
 got to go round like that look at this then It's good
 It's too fast so nice I lost my chalk no student
 What am I doing I hate you that's ideas Norman
 And into amplification I've got ears you know won't be long
 dear Norman bye Norman Not closing time I've got
 ears you know Brass knobs shut up might night shh
 Fiona Can we talk while we Robert I can see your head
 windows everyone who's on the floor get up slowly It's
 too late we're gonna get Fall down are you talking
 I'm not Norman good doggie Got to do fast runs ouch.

Structures

Structure was one of the major preoccupations of The Theatre of Mistakes. For Anthony **Howell**, this was primarily spatial and probably influenced by his training as a **ballet** dancer.

Interview: Peter Stickland, Marie-Anne Mancio, London, June 08:

MM: It's interesting how he subverted the space...in the ballet, the *corps de ballet* are at the back

PS: Yes absolutely. And ballet's dynamic, spatially. So the same structures are going through it. In *Elements* there are prop exercises, movement exercises... all chosen from a spatial dynamic, the verbal ones are chosen from a verbal dynamic [allowing us to be] very dynamic in the space without any reason to be dynamic. And this thing I was saying before about structure. It was what we agreed. We didn't agree on any narrative, on any scenario, on any character play. We only agreed that that was a good structure, and that's what we did collaboratively. That's a huge amount of stuff to share, 'cos nobody had it, could talk about it, define it."

See also: **Additive, Music**

Subtractive See **Additive**

Also: **Systems, Waterfall**

A mass space box is marked out for the number of performers in any group or at any performance gathering.

One performer creates solos for all the other performers out of exercises already created or designed specifically for a particular performer. When the solos are created mutually compatible triggers are given to each performer.

After the performance each of those involved in it either:
 a) creates solos for all the other performers or
 b) swap their solos with each other.

Pairs of performers creating solos for each other or exchanging solos with each other may keep their results hidden from the others (as far as possible) until they are revealed at the next performance of the solo piece—but each pair should always elucidate their original triggers when they confer together, or elucidate the triggers they are using at the time of the conference together.

Performers cognisant of the same solo may share it to create duets, trios etc.

This piece could be used as or in conjunction with THE SABOTAGE PIECE, in which case performers might either cease to exchange triggers or invent fictitious ones while conferring together.

SOLO PIECE/EXERCISE SPACE & REHEARSAL

Solos: (Aug 1975, **Hartley** Winthey etc.) Also: (Set 1) with *Accumulating Costume Rule, Ninth Method, Table Moves*.

(Interview: Andrew Eden & Susan Bonvin, Peterborough, 24th Nov 2008)

As far as Andrew **Eden** recalls, Anthony **McCall** decided to give up smoking cigarettes in the early 70s and to start taking 20 photographs a day instead as it cost the same.

Sherman, Stuart (1945-2001)

Performance artist, video/film-maker, writer. Friend to and influence on The Theatre of Mistakes. Fiona **Templeton** and Michael **Greenall** performed in his work.

For an article on Sherman, see:

Kenneth Bernard, "The 'Queerest' Conclusions: The Theater of Stuart Sherman" *American Drama*, Summer 2005

and:

Interview between Peter **Stickland** and Robin Deacon at Camden Arts Centre, June 2006 (www.robindeacon.com)

Stickland's novel *Loving* also describes Sherman in performance.

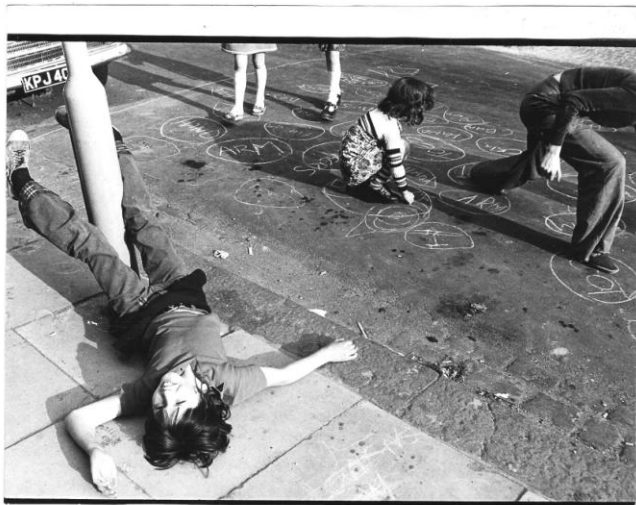
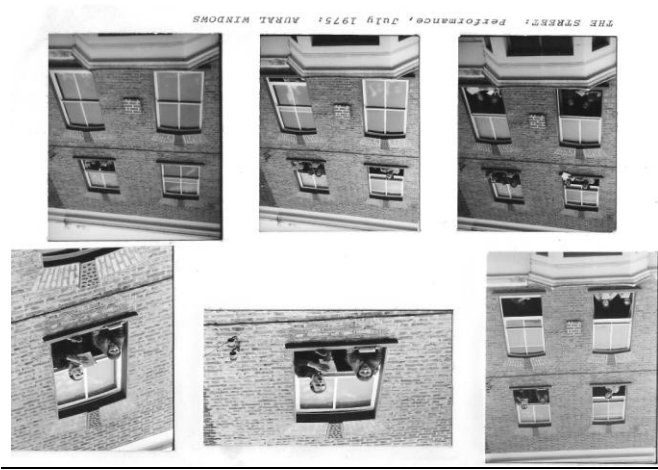
Signe Lie Howell see **Howell, Signe Lie**

Silver



Purdies farm, nd

Photo ©The Theatre of Mistakes



Early Rehearsal exploring ANATOMICAL CIRCLES and ANTI-GRAVITY



CIRCULATION performer rising from PROGRESSION into JOINTS EXERCISE.

Photos: ©The Theatre of Mistakes
The Theatre of Mistakes Archive

Peter Stickland studied at the Architectural Association in the 1970s. He joined The Theatre of Mistakes in April 1976 (not long before Lindsay Moran left), performing in works such as *Homage to Pietre Longhi*, *Two Journeys*, *Ascent of the Stedelijk*, *Going*, *Homage to Morandi*. His drawings for the group – which range from wall charts for the performers in *Waterfall*, set constructions, illustrations for *Homage to Morandi* (reproduced in the script published in 2006 by *Greysuit* editions) – act as notations and artworks in their own right. In 1982, he and Fiona Templeton devised and performed *Against Agreement* in New York. The title was inspired by the way Anthony Howell had introduced them to someone (“This is Peter, he’s for agreement, this is Fiona, she’s against agreement.”) The work was reviewed in the December 7th *Village Voice*:

Station House Opera
Performance company formed in 1980, known for its large-scale, architectural performances which have made use of flying. Read: <http://www.stationhouseopera.com/about/4/> for its history. See Julian Maynard Smith and Miranda Payne. Peter Stickland is on their Board of Trustees. Current projects include a tour of *Mind Out* and, on the 26th July 2009, the topping of a giant path of concrete dominoes, 15km long, snaking between the 5 host boroughs of the 2012 London Olympics and Paralympics. Read: *A Split Second of Paradise*, Station House Opera, 2008.

“We weren’t in the Southend Green Women’s Group for nothing [...] It did meet in the flat [at *Ascham* Street, Kentish town, where Anthony Howell and Signe Lie lived]. I’m sure that’s how I first met Anthony. I first got roped into poetry readings, reading Anthony’s poetry.” (Interview: UCL, London, Nov 4th 2008)

Solution (see **Mistakes** for problem)

Both *Preparations for Displacement* and *The Street* date to 1975 (the year Fiona Templeton joined The Theatre of Mistakes), not 1974 as stated. See the poster for the **Cambridge** Poetry Festival and programs for *The Street* for corroboration.

Some Matterhorns See Lindsay Moran

Songs See *Homage to Pietre Longhi*, *Going*, *Music*, *Scenes at a Table*, *The Street*

The Soundings

See: **Documentation**, **Roles**

“are one of the most important areas of our activities and urgently requires publication – as this would allow a rapid dissemination of our work, art and ideas.”¹

Southend Green Women’s Liberation group

See also: **Feminism**, **Women**

Anthony Howell’s then wife and collaborator, Signe Lie Howell, was a member and through this she recruited friend and economist Vicky Chick:

¹ Notes from a funding application to the Arts Council of England, Anthony Howell, 1977.

(interview: Nov 4th 2008, UCL, London)
audience.”

an area of much traffic either and so there wasn't much of an and some amusement. No-one hung around very long. It wasn't of positions. And the reaction was of course complete bafflement as if it were chairs and lay down and put their legs up...these sorts themselves on the bonnet of a car [...] A few people used the wall [Stones]. And people would drive down and someone would flip that is extremely difficult. Really, very, very difficult [see **Speaking** stock still at performance tension on the pavement for an hour.

Vicki Chick described it: "One person was designated to stand camouflaged children, a skip, dustbins, even an ice cream van. actions below; people mirrored one another's actions; there were conversation; windows were opened and closed triggered by street; there was a chorus derived from snippets of overheard living rooms – sofas, rugs, televisions – were re-located to the are completely stationary." The work was complex: residents' participant instructions like "Do not overtake anyone unless they performance and audience areas and gives the potential rehearsal. The diagram in the program differentiates between the The event performance involved 60 people and ten weeks of show; performer in rehearsals."

Audience in rehearsals; performer in the show; audience at the attendance is welcome in any of the following capacities: Mistakes becomes ASCHAM STREET, KENTISH TOWN. Everyone's performance to discover how a section of The Ting: Theatre of will be held here between the same hours every Sunday up to the Sunday the 13th of July, a section of Ascham Street in Kentish Posters for *The Street* inform that "Between 7pm and 10pm, on devise a work (*The Street*). The die also chose Templeton as its director.



Program for *The Street*, The Theatre of Mistakes Archive

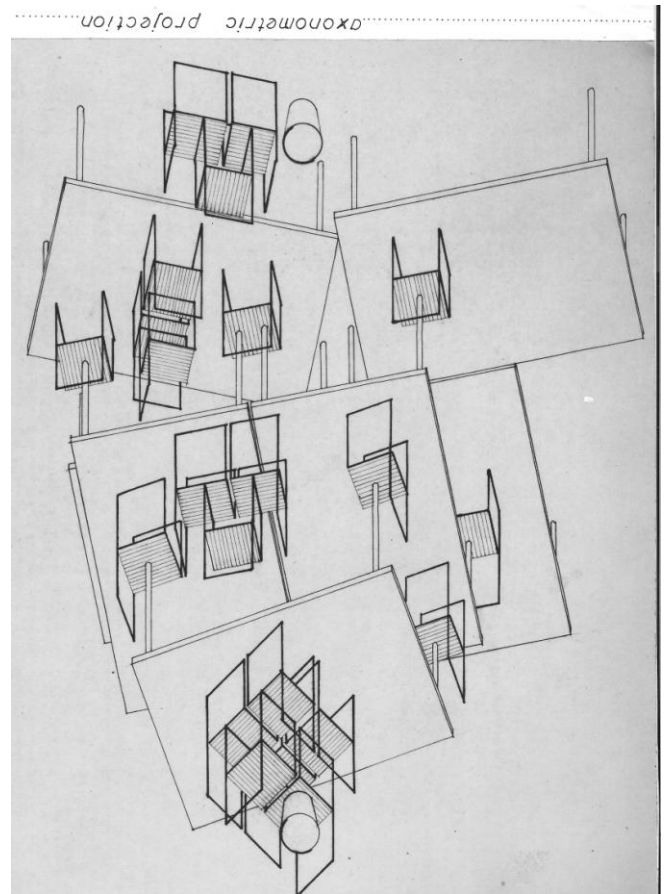
"It was like a studio session, but with the oddness of having an audience. I remember Anthony [Howell] including their hostile remarks as part of the text he was reading."
(Pat Murphy in response to **Questionnaire**, December 2008)

Each reader chooses two remarks each—these may be remarks generated by a previous verbal exercise.

Readers recite their lines alternately, creating their first six remark verse.

Shuffle the six lines to create the second verse, starting with the last line of the first verse followed by the first line of the first verse—ABCDEF, FAEBDC, CFDABE etc—thus generating five new verses.

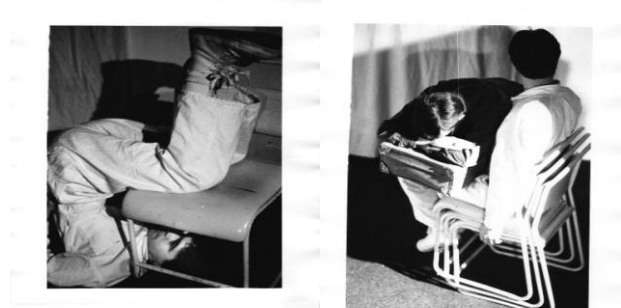
Readers recite any of these verses additively (1, 1+2 etc), choosing to perform alternate solos and duets. Any reader who identifies the first line of a verse another reader is reciting may form a duet by reciting that verse in unison with the reader who started that verse.



"As Stickland and Templeton played out their verbal duel, the distance between them was peopled by "a scenic metronome drunk" and "a rhythmic metronome barmaid" as well as by a chorus of three men and three women who sang, argued, climbed up on the bar and fell off it, and looked like punk extras in a film noir in shades of white, gray, and red."

(Sally Banes *Subversive Expectations* University of Michigan Press, 1988, 145)

Now a Course Director at Chelsea College of Art and Design, and founder of 77books (a new press for literary fiction and artists' books), Stickland's explorations for the possibilities of narrative have moved from architecture to design to fiction. His novels include: *Dido and Aeneas* (about the collaboration between Henry Purcell and Nahum Tate in the creation of England's first opera); *Loving* (the love story of performer Jack and writer Adelia); and *Mairi's Wedding* (which draws on the writings of Scottish author Neil Munro). The chapter "Guilty" in *Loving* refers to The Theatre of Mistakes *First Conversation Piece* and "Partners" describes a **workshop**.



Peter Stickland in *Homage to Morandi* Photos: ©Niamh Ferguson?/The Theatre of Mistakes, The Theatre of Mistakes Archive