

**Art Schools** "British art schools in the **Seventies** were inspirational, their doors always open to visionary misfits and would-be rock stars. Unsurprisingly, it was among art students that **punk** first reared its nightmarish head. Nowadays, after Thatcherite "reforms", genuinely radical students are vastly outnumbered by fee-paying time-servers." (Alix Sharkey, "The Seventies" *Independent* 21 October 1998)

As well as providing The Theatre of Mistakes with audiences, these art colleges were fertile grounds for recruiting performers. **Edinburgh**: 1976 Fiona **Templeton** invited Lindsay **Moran** to join The Theatre of Mistakes; Feb 1977 **Going** performed there **Goldsmiths**: **Three Act Piece** performed in Feb 1976; open rehearsals for *Table Piece* June 1976

"**Hornsey** was an amazing place to be at that time." Pat **Murphy** in response to *Questionnaire*, December 2008

Julian **Maynard** Smith was a student at Hornsey

**Maidstone**: Michael **Greenall** studied then lectured here; Miranda **Payne** was a student as was Howard **Tong** (see *Workshops*)

**Elements of Performance Art** (3 performers) in June 1976

**Slade, University College London**: Glenys **Johnson** studied here from 1974-77; *Two Journeys*, *Pairs Game* performed in May 1976

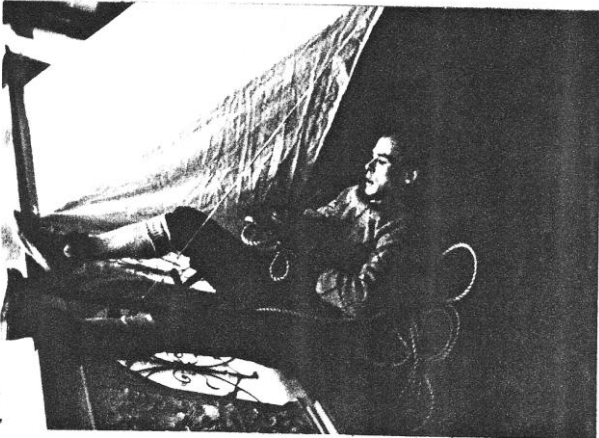
**Southampton**: *Pairs Game*, July 1975

**Winchester**: March 1976 *Elements of Performance Art* (15 performers)

Further reading: John A. Walker "Radical Artists & Art Students versus Management & Bureaucracy during the 1970s," *Journal of Art and Design Education* Vol. 20, no. 2, 2001, 230-237

**Ascent of the Stedelijk** (Stedelijk, Amsterdam, 19<sup>th</sup>-21<sup>st</sup> Nov, 1976)

Like *The Street*, this was a site-specific work that took the museum's **architecture** as its conceptual starting point. The Stedelijk's contemporary art program was an attraction for artists in the 70s, just as it had been for American artists post-1945 who staged their first European exhibitions there.



Ascent of the Stedelijk ©The Theatre of Mistakes

See also: **Disappearances**

**Ascham Street, no. 11, London, NW5**  
Home of Anthony **Howell** and Signe Lie **Howell**. Venue for *The Street* and other **Ting** events.

# A-Z



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

Marie-Anne Mancio

Accidentally on Purpose: The Ting: The Theatre of Mistakes, Towards A Retrospective

Active Circles

Additive

Anita Urquhart

Anthropology

Architecture

Archive of Ting: The Theatre of Mistakes

Art Room

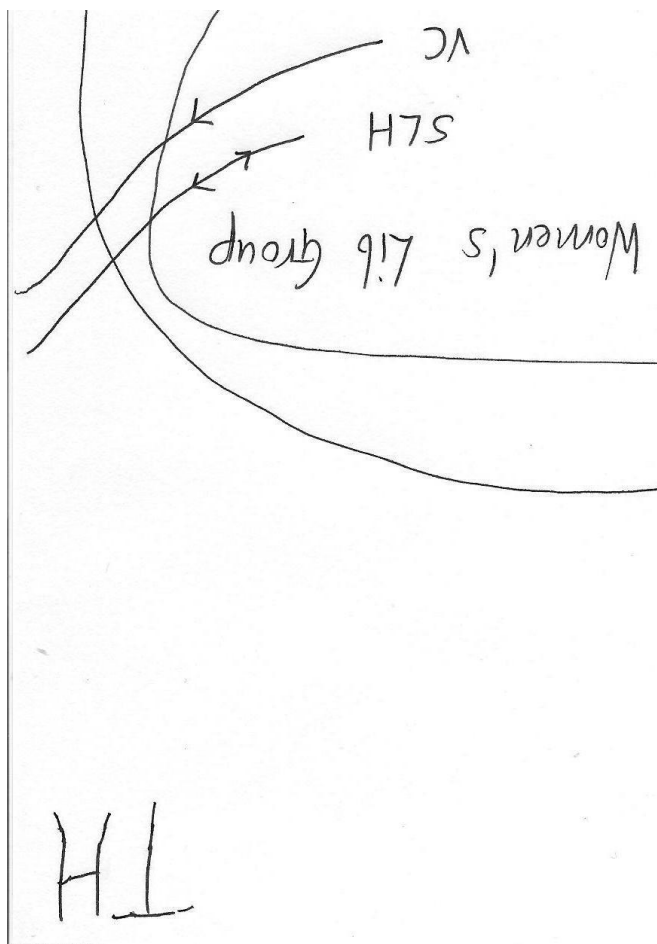
Art Schools

Ascent of the Stedelijk

Ascham Street, no. 11, London, NW5

Audiences

Anti-Gravity



2009-09-03

Published by Proboscis  
C Marie-Anne Mancio & contributors 2009

Part of Proboscis' Diffusion Residency Programme

<http://proboscis.org.uk> | <http://diffusion.org.uk>

[www.bookleteer.com](http://www.bookleteer.com)

made with Diffusion Generator by

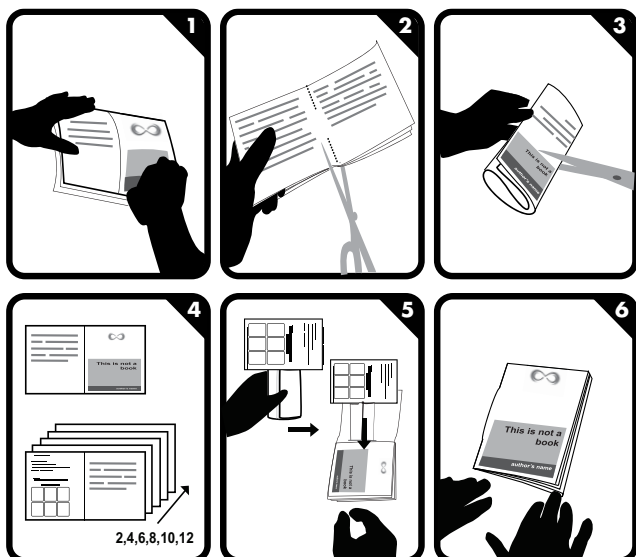


Photo © The Theatre of Mistakes

Below: Outside the cricket pavilion on Hartley Winney village green after performing a "rain dance" – *Active Circles* (see [Englishness](#))



Appears amongst papers for *The Street* (1975) and again in August 1976 when it was performed in [Hartley Winney](#).

### *Active Circles*

See also: [Introduction](#)  
PSI 15 Conference, Zagreb, June 2009  
Unpublished paper by Jason E [Bowman](#) and Marie-Anne [Mancio](#),  
*"Accidentally on Purpose: The Ting: The Theatre of Mistakes, Towards A Retrospective"*

## The Ting: Theatre of Mistakes

an **A-Z**

**A**

Marie-Anne Mancio

*Anti-Gravity* (Sept 1975) see *Gravity*

Welch

See also: *Art Schools, Critics, Preparations for Displacement*, John

*Musics 14* (1977)

(David Cunningham "The Theatre of Mistakes at the Hayward Gallery"

"An office block overlooks the part of the Hayward which the theatre used. When I looked during office hours, there were definitely some people watching"

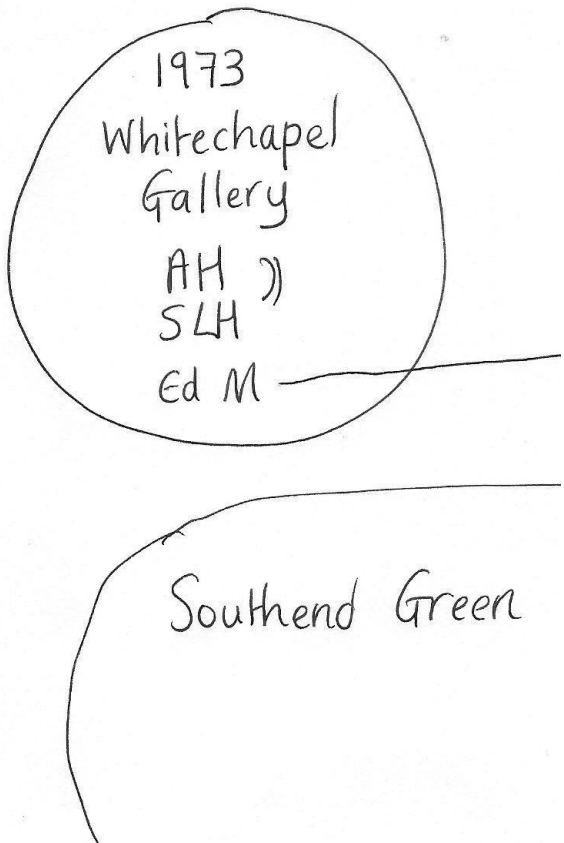
Cunningham notes:

Reviewing *A Waterfall* at the 1977 Hayward Annual, David

actual performance at the private view—he had his back towards us. statement from the roof—a considerable distance away from the reading of the script. For the few minutes he was doing his camera a conventional play that much ahead might not have got beyond a performance due to be put on 12 days from that date—rehearsals for even for a few minutes, was during a private rehearsal for a performance on the whole we have been congratulating. The only time he watched, of spectators is absolutely contradictory to our own evidence—there during any public performances. His opinion of the reaction ure court where the performance was taking place, nor has he been heads. During the private view he did not venture onto the script- Robertson get this opinion from spectators? He was filming from the roof at the time, and could only have seen the tops of their they're sorry for these people." When, how and where did Mr find among these spectators apart from boredom is embarrassment, 4) Further, Mr Robertson states "The only reaction I can

BBC1 at 8.30pm:

Letter in The Theatre of Mistakes Archive dated 16<sup>th</sup> August, 1977 from Anthony *Howell* to the BBC re the treatment of The Theatre of Mistakes in Fyfe Robertson's programme 'Robbie' which aired the previous night on



*Music Box*, Nov 2001)

(Kylie Gann, "Thankless Attempts at a Definition of Minimalism", *New* add notes with each recurrence"

recurring duration would begin with silence and Instruments, Voice, and Organ) or else a certain slowing down existing patterns (Music for Mallet and later Carl Stone's electronic Shing Kee); by Mountains des Panurge, Attica, and Coming Together; way (Music in Fifth; Frederic Rzewski's Les in usually a 1, 1+2, 1+2+3, 1+2+3+4 kind of by adding additional notes or measures or phrases with a basic repeated pattern and add on in one of some minimalist or process music compositions which: "start The Theatre of Mistakes' works and parallels developments in the use of additive and subtractive structures runs throughout

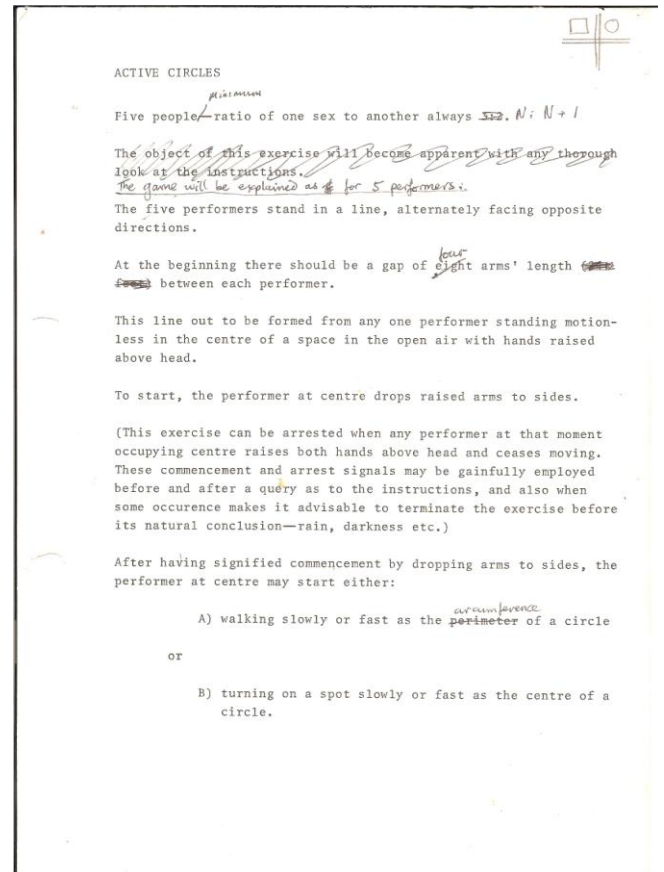
Lindsay *Moran* performs *Solos*. Photo © The Theatre of Mistakes

*SOLOS (SET 1), WITH ACCUMULATING COSTUME RULE*  
Village Green, Hartley Wintheby



*Journeys, Rope of the Mind, Waterfall*, and so on See *Solos (Set 1) with Accumulating Costume Rule, Three Act Piece, Two*

**Additive**



Draft notes for *Active Circles*, nd, The Theatre of Mistakes Archive. Anthony *Howell* went on to perform a version of this work in Australia. See "Lake Goongarrie Becomes A Stage" in *The Kalgoorlie Miner* 10<sup>th</sup> June 1982



Scenes at a Table: Homage to Pietro Longhi, Serpentine (October, 1976)  
Photo ©The Theatre of Mistakes/Caroline Wilkinson



"sixty of them [prisoners] showed up and, literally, sat riveted to their seats throughout the performance. They gave the company a standing ovation at the end, talked with the actors an hour after" (Donna Lange "Prisoners Enjoy London Group" *Tribune Review* 10<sup>th</sup> Dec 1978)

Peter **Stickland**:

For the 1977 Silver Jubilee, The Theatre of Mistakes made a version of *Waterfall* on the village green at **Hartley Wintney**. People threw apple cores....



Press photo: ©Southern Arts Theatre of Mistakes *Waterfall 12*, Hartley Wintney Green, June 1977

Meanwhile, 1970s architecture itself is being reappraised:  
<http://www.c20society.org.uk/docs/campaigns/70s.html>

The mathematically-inspired **structures** of performances, the contributions of architect Peter **Stickland**, the precise **diagrams**, the investigations of spatial practice, the infiltration into public spaces, the creation of micro-spaces through the deployment of **grids** all point to the relevance of an architectural reading of The Theatre of Mistakes' practice. (See also: **Mathematics**, **Unwritten**)

## Architecture

See also: **Unwritten**

Ting would be fertile ground for analysis. against the changing socio-political landscape of 1970s Britain, 'cultish'), complex psychologies, and shifts in collective identity, intricate behavioural patterns (which Jason E **Bowman** considers 2009, none have written on Ting/The Theatre of Mistakes. With its an anthropologist (with a specialism in Assyriology). As of July now both Professors of Anthropology. Dr. Gwendolyn **Leick** is also Early participants of **Ting**, Signe Lie **Howell** and Christina **Toren** are

## Anthropology

Anita **Urqhart**, see **Urqhart**, Anita

## Poetry

See also **Mathematics**, the music of Phillip Glass, Michael **Nyman**,

### ADDITIVE RECITAL

Any number of people—duration one hour

Each reader think of a single sentence, phrase group of words or set of sounds which can be broken down into five equal or unequal units.

Add or subtract your own units (1, 1+2, 1+2+3 etc., or 1+2+3+4+5, 1+2+3+4, 1+2+3 etc.)

Speak alternately allowing a decent pause between each speaker.

After ten minutes try out new combinations and juxtapositions of your units but do not add any new units to your original phrase.

After a further ten minutes add one unit from each of the other readers' phrases to your own and continue adding or subtracting from the combined sum.

In this exercise listening is as important as speaking.

After a further ten minutes add one more unit from each of the other readers' phrases and do not necessarily wait for a silence to recite in.

After a further ten minutes take out your own original units and only speak the two units from each of the other speakers, again allowing a decent pause between each speaker.

After a further ten minutes drop one of each of your two units from each speaker and allow the pauses between speakers to grow longer and longer.

Exercise from loose leaf manuscript of *Preparations for Displacement*, 1975, The Theatre of Mistakes Archive. ©The Theatre of Mistakes

(Sebastian Faulks "Gift of Tongues" *The Sunday Times* 24<sup>th</sup> April 1977)

On Sunday I watched Anthony Howell's Theatre of Mistakes in a piece called "Going" a play built around half a dozen sentences and postures intricately and symmetrically varied. Two burly Americans stormed into the box office afterwards demanding their money back. "I've seen some crap in Cam-bridge but really..." while Benedictine monk and concrete poet, declared it "the finest thing in Europe at the moment". It was that sort of play, that sort of festival.

Photo: Geoff Howard

Southampton Performance Show, July 1975, Performance: Pairs Game.



"I remember in October 1976 a Sunday afternoon performance at the Serpentine gallery by the Ting, Theatre of Mistakes. Enacted in silence, *Scenes at a Table* [*Homage to Pietro Longhi*] at first seemed like a meaningless game controlled by arbitrary rules. Started by an instigator chosen by the throw of a dice, an action was carried out on tiptoe until the discomfort became unbearable. The performer then 'swooned', only to be replaced by another. After a while, though, this mesmerizing exercise began to resemble normal social intercourse, in which people's allotted roles are performed according to agreed roles of conduct – and therefore, to make horrible sense; but other members of the audience didn't see it that way. Located in Hyde Park, at weekends the Serpentine attracts large numbers of casual visitors who rarely go to galleries; that Sunday the audience was impatient. The performers managed to incorporate into the show comments such as 'Silly' and 'What is it supposed to mean?'. Things were brought to an abrupt conclusion, though, by a man rushing onto the set yelling, 'I'm sick of watching you, you pretentious creeps. I suppose you think this is a contribution to theatre?'" (Sarah Kent "Groundswell" in Kerr, Joe; Gibson, Andrew and Seaborne, Mike (eds) *London from Punk to Blair*, Reaktion, 2003, 341-2)

Yet a 1978 performance of *Going* at the Western Pittsburgh Penitentiary with an audience of prisoners was extremely well received:

We very much enjoyed your November 19th performance by the "Theatre of Mistakes. "Going" was a play our men could appreciate on several levels and I was pleased to hear their insightful comments as to how the performance could be related to their lives as prisoners.

I believe you have done a valuable social service to the entire community by exposing this prison community to the human values conveyed in your artform.

Letter from Paul A Rolin, Academy of Prison Arts Co-Ordinator Nov 1978

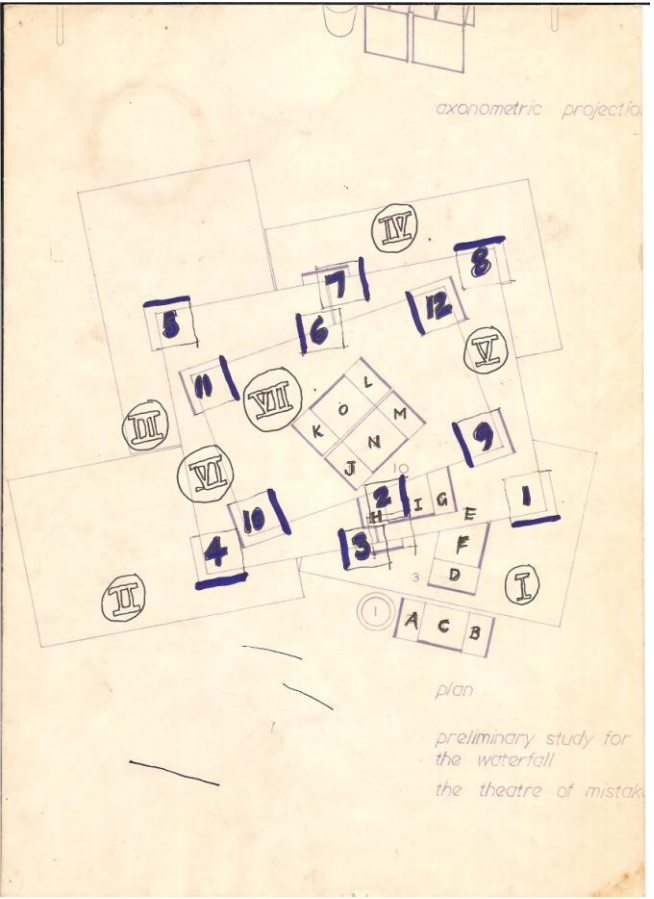
<sup>1</sup> Unlike many of their peers The Ting: The Theatre of Mistakes was conscientious in ensuring their works were documented and records maintained. However, on their disbandment materials were scattered. The majority of the material is in excellent to good condition. Photographic re-prints from negatives of specific works/projects are possible. JE Bowman

See also: **Bibliography**

will form the basis of forthcoming exhibitions. The archive is the property of The Theatre of Mistakes and is currently unavailable for public viewing. It is hoped its contents photographs, manuscripts, **diagrams**, **manifestos**, **notations**, critical writing and original artworks. " (JE Bowman in JE Bowman and M-A Mancio "Accidentally on Purpose: The Ting: The Theatre of Mistakes, Towards A Retrospective" unpublished paper, PSI 15, Zagreb, June 2009)

"From damp lock-ups, filing cabinets, print cabinets and files of negatives held in the homes of multiple photographers, writers and artists to the archives of the Serpentine Gallery (London), Stedelijk Museum (Amsterdam), Paris Biennale, Indiana University (Bloomington), Hayward Gallery (London) Paula Cooper Gallery (New York) and *The Guardian* newspaper, amidst others many others [Marie-Anne] Mancio and [Jason E.] Bowman rescued or exhumed, catalogued and archived thousands of pieces of material including: **correspondence**, publications, scripts, sketchbooks, publicity materials, photographic negatives, videos, Polaroid and other photographs, manuscripts, **diagrams**, **manifestos**, **notations**, critical writing and original artworks."

Archive of The Ting: Theatre of Mistakes



Preliminary Study for *The Waterfall* (1977) by Peter Stickland  
The Theatre of Mistakes Archive



The **Ting dance** at **Purdies** farm in 1974. The audience mostly comprised other artists. Photo ©The Theatre of Mistakes



"We believe in the personal autonomy of each individual's creative act, in the actuality of art as a physical rather than a referential or illustrative experience, and in maintaining a state of constant enquiry into the visibility of the presence of a passive audience in a completely ceremonial situation"

(An early flyer for Ting nd. c.1974, The Theatre of Mistakes Archive)

**Audiences**  
Who saw? Who knew? Who participated?

## "The cows were watching; the horses were watching; Deborah was watching"

(Interview: Victoria Chick, London, 4<sup>th</sup> Nov 2008)

Victoria **Chick** recalls that even before *The Street*, **Anthony Howell** and **Signe Lie Howell** would stage events or exercises outside their house on **Ascham Street**:

"And the reaction was of course complete bafflement and some amusement. No-one hung around very long. It wasn't an area of much traffic either, and so there wasn't much of an audience."

(Interview: London, 4<sup>th</sup> Nov 2008)



Audiences for *The Street* (1975) were also participants  
Photographs ©The Theatre of Mistakes

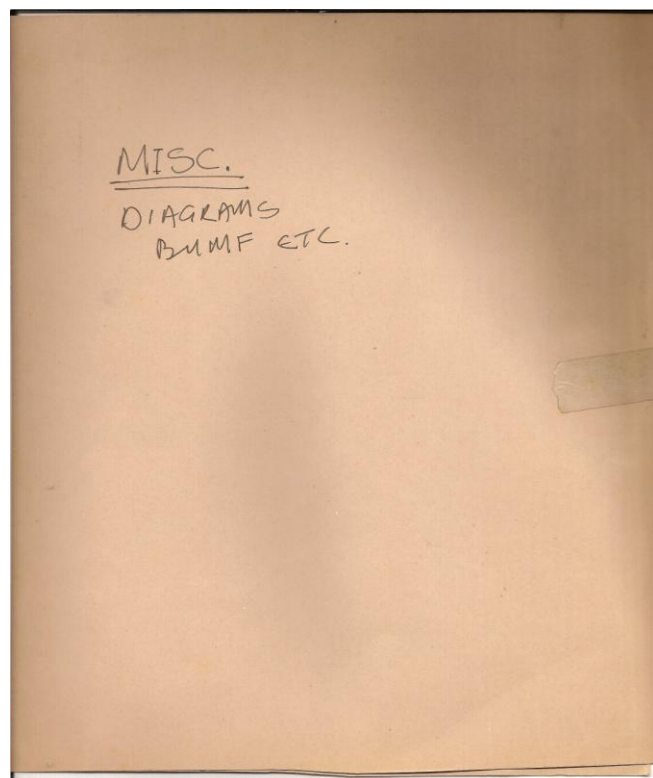
Press release by **Anthony Howell** for The Art Room, nd, c. 1976, The Theatre of Mistakes Archive

The second exhibition was a one person show by **Lindsay Moran**. During this show there were weekly performances and readings at The Art Room on Friday nights. On the first of these evenings, **Reindeer Werk** performed, the following week **David Plante** gave a reading from his latest novel, and on the last Friday **Jackie Lansley** gave a lecture demonstration. The attendance at these events increased as news spread along the Grapevine. This show also sold well.

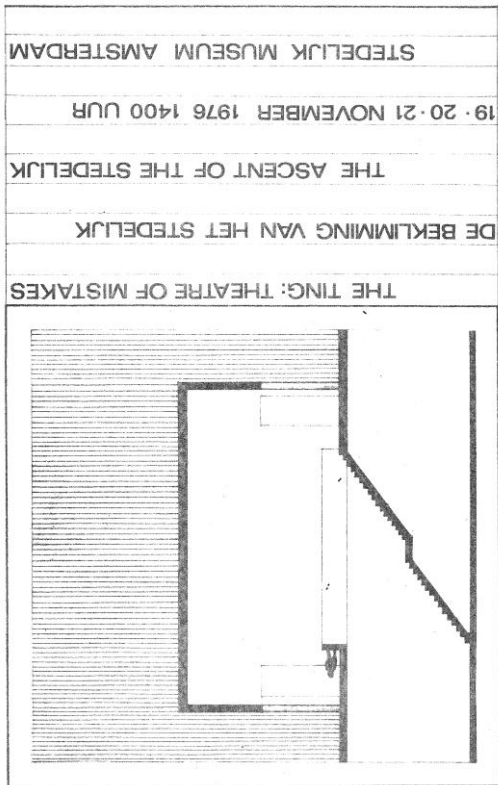
Three exhibitions were mounted: one at The Ananda Centre, 22 Avenue Road, NW8—courtesy of Mr Leslie Hillier—and two at 11 Ascham Street, NWS. There were five artists in the first show: **Susan Bonvin**, **Marc Chaimowicz**, **Susan Hillier**, **Ed Meeneley** and **Lindsay Moran**—these artists having been selected by chance according to the method suggested by the manifesto, from a short list of artists we all admired. At one of the gatherings of those invited to see the exhibition I gave a talk on these five artists. However gauche this may appear, in some ways, it did help to emphasise that looking at art was the reason for the gathering, and it helped to allay the doubts of those who claimed not to understand the work. Prices were low, since the contract ensured that work would sell at the artists' price, and about ten works were sold.

The Art Room was a project inspired by the "MANIFESTO OF MUTUAL ART"—which was distributed among friends, mainly writers, artists and philosophers, in December 1975 by myself, **Michael Greenall**, **Lindsay Moran** and **Fiona Templeton**, who were all working with the Theatre of Mistakes at that time. The manifesto itself evolved out of attempts to resolve differences which the company had encountered while mounting large scale and small scale collaborative art ventures during the earlier part of the year. One conclusion we had come to was that it was easier for artists to sell the work of friends than to sell their own work. The Art Room was set up in order to test this idea, and to provide a sort of clearing house where gallery owners could see the work of artists they might be interested in showing without risking the difficulties of a confrontation with the artist in his or her studio.

**Art Room** (22 Avenue Rd, London NW3/Ascham St)  
See also: **Chance**, **Susan Bonvin**, **Marc Chaimowicz**, **Susan Hillier**, **Manifesto of Mutual Art**, **Ed Meeneley**, **Lindsay Moran**



One of the original folders in which The Theatre of Mistakes Archive was stored. There were several discussions between myself, **Jason E Bowman**, and **Anthony Howell** about the retrograde tendency to fetishise the object, (whether through taking delight in 1970s typeface or wanting to retain every typographical error.) Guilty of this romanticism – admittedly a contradiction for a writer/proof-reader with a pedantic tendency to complain about the misuse of apostrophes and other such aberrations – I remain convinced that the mistake should be preserved.



- Assumption:**  
The Stedelijk Museum has been turned on its side (through 90 degrees).
- Problem:**  
Given this assumption, the balcony on the first floor constitutes a stiff climb: two vertical faces leading up to a narrow horizontal ledge.
- Planning:**  
The Company has prepared diagrams (in plan and in cross-section) by which to decide on their strategy for climbing to this ledge and have collected the equipment necessary for the task. Much of this material will either be employed during the performance or displayed at the time of the performance.
- Performance:**  
Acting within the constraints of anti-gravity (where floors become walls and walls become floors), the company will attempt to scale one face of the balcony, erect a tent on the ledge and leave on the ledge a canister "sealed for posterity" containing mementos of the achievement. They will then descend by the other face of the balcony.
- Reason:**  
The mountaineer Mallory suggested that one attempted to climb a mountain "because it was there". One reason for performing a horizontal climb is so that the audience can watch mountain climbing close up—without becoming mountaineers themselves. The same effect might be achieved in the Himalayas if Mount Everest could be turned on its side.

PRICE LIST.		ARTIST		TITLE		PRICE (A)	
1.	Edward Meneley	Star	Time	150.00	for the set	150.00	5600.00
2.	"	"	Ball	150.00	"	150.00	"
3.	"	"	Line	150.00	"	150.00	"
4.	"	"	Drift	150.00	"	150.00	"
5.	"	"	Aids to spread focus (edition of seven sets maximum)	104.00	per set	104.00	"
6/7.	Susan Bonfin	"	5 untitled works	45.00	(2210.00 for the set)	45.00	"
8-12.	Marc Chaimowicz	"	untitled adhesive table work	45.00	"	45.00	"
13.	Susan Hittler	"	"	45.00	"	45.00	"
14.	"	"	"	45.00	"	45.00	"
15.	"	"	"	45.00	"	45.00	"
16.	"	"	"	50.00	"	50.00	"
17.	"	"	"	45.00	"	45.00	"
18.	Lindsay Moran	"	Canvas	300.00	"	300.00	"
19.	"	"	Glove drawing	35.00	"	35.00	"
20.	"	"	Table drawing	25.00	"	25.00	"
21.	"	"	Carnations	20.00	"	20.00	"

