

2009-09-03

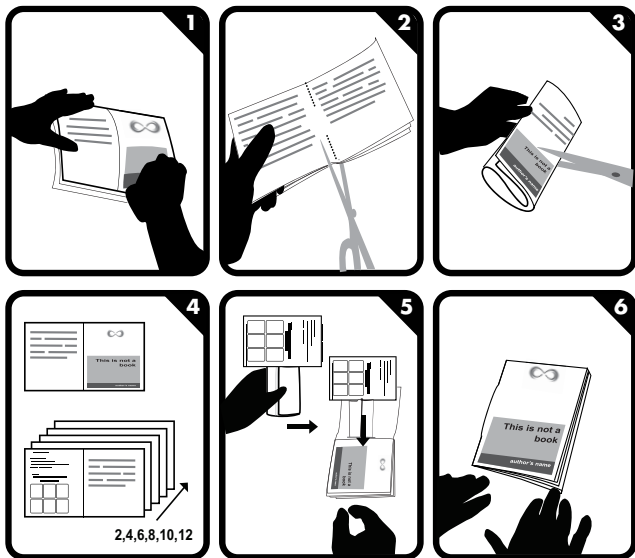
Published by Proboscis
C Marie-Anne Mancio & contributors 2009

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Below: Outside the cricket pavilion on Hartley Wintney 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 Wintney](#).

Active Circles

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Unpublished paper by Jason E [Bowman](#) and Marie-Anne [Mancio](#),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

The Ting: Theatre of Mistakes

an **A-Z**

A

Marie-Anne Mancio

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

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

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"

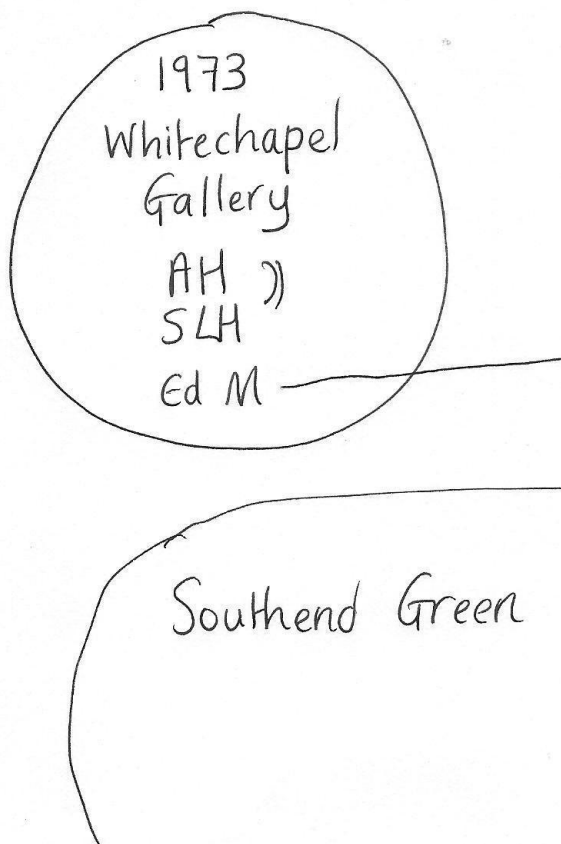
Cunningham notes:

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

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

BBC1 at 8.30pm:

Letter in The Theatre of Mistakes Archive dated 16th 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 Moutons des Pannurges, Attica, and Coming Together; way (Music in Fifties; 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 two ways. Either the pattern would be lengthened

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 Winthrop



Journeys, Rape of the Mind, Waterfall, and so on

See *Solos (Set 1) with Accumulating Costume Rule, Three Act Piece, Two*

Additive

ACTIVE CIRCLES

Five people ^{per person} ratio of one sex to another always 5:2. $N: N+1$

The object of this exercise will become apparent with any thorough look at the instructions. The game will be explained as for 5 performers.

The five performers stand in a line, alternately facing opposite directions.

At the beginning there should be a gap of ^{four} ~~eight~~ arms' length ~~four~~ between each performer.

This line out to be formed from any one performer standing motionless in the centre of a space in the open air with hands raised above head.

To start, the performer at centre drops raised arms to sides.

(This exercise can be arrested when any performer at that moment occupying centre raises both hands above head and ceases moving. These commencement and arrest signals may be gainfully employed before and after a query as to the instructions, and also when some occurrence makes it advisable to terminate the exercise before its natural conclusion—rain, darkness etc.)

After having signified commencement by dropping arms to sides, the performer at centre may start either:

A) walking slowly or fast as the ^{circumference} ~~perimeter~~ of a circle

or

B) turning on a spot slowly or fast as the centre of a circle.

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* 10th June 1982



"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* 10th 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**

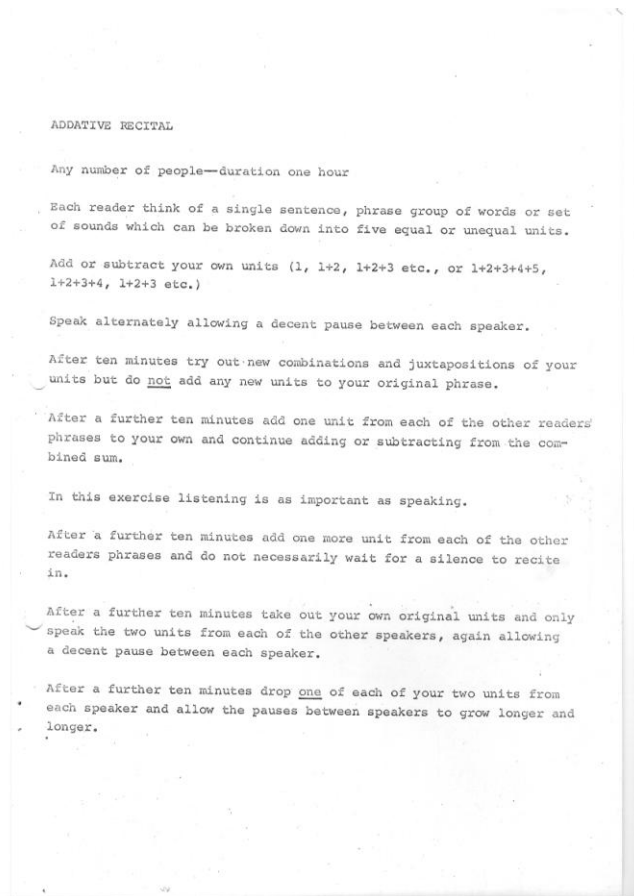
Ting would be fertile ground for analysis. against the changing socio-political landscape of 1970s Britain, 'cutish'), complex psychologies, and shifts in collective identity, intricate behavioural patterns (which Jason E **Bowman** considers 2009, none have written on Ting/The Theatre of Mistakes. With 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 Urquhart, see **Urquhart**, Anita

Poetry

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



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

¹ 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

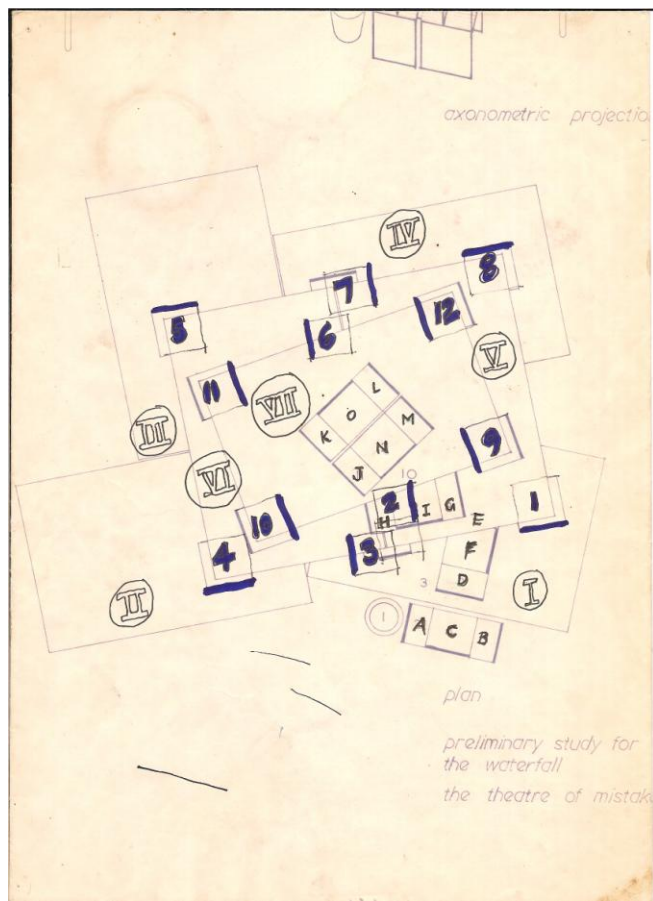
See also: **Bibliography**

The archive is the property of The Theatre of Mistakes and is currently unavailable for public viewing. It is hoped its contents will form the basis of forthcoming exhibitions.

(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**, **notions**, 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

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 Cambridge but really..." while the next person to come in, a 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

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)

Who saw? Who knew? Who participated?

Audiences

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

(Interview: Victoria Chick, London, 4th 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, 4th 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 Work performed, the following week David Plante gave a reading from his latest novel, and on the last Friday Jackie Lansley gave a lecture demonstrating the attendance at these events increased as news spread along the grapevine. This show also sold well.

were sold.

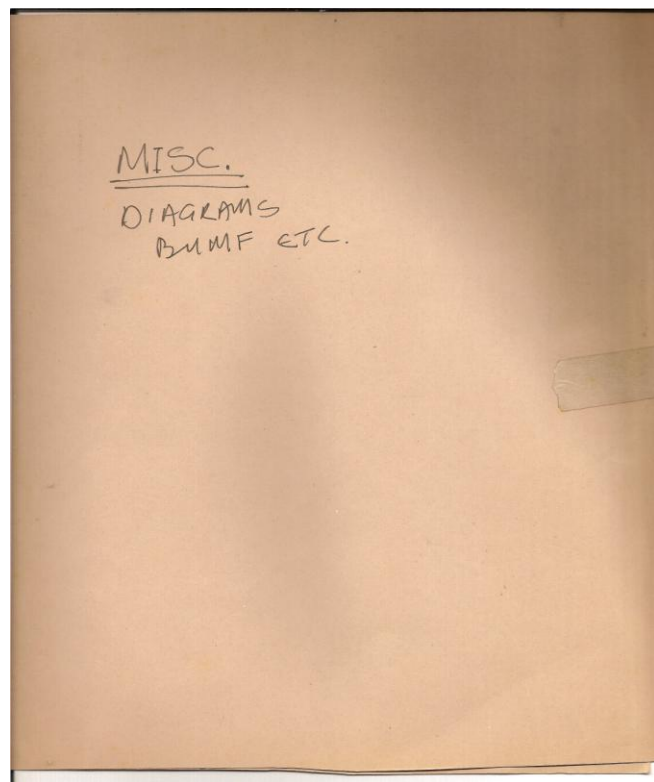
not to understand the work. Prices were low, since the contract ensured that work would sell at the artists' price, and about ten works the gathering, and it helped to allay the doubts of those who claimed a talk on these five artists. However gauche this may appear, in some At one of the gatherings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

frontation with the artist in his or her studio.

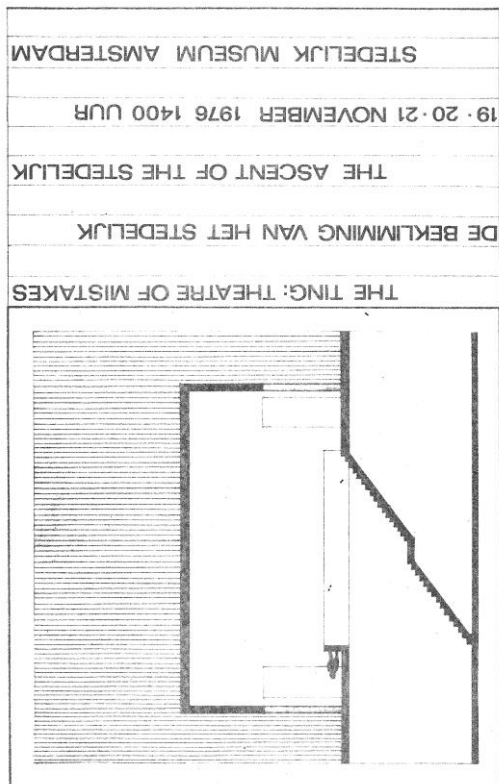
interested in showing without risking the difficulties of a con- where gallery owners could see the work of artists they might be order to test this idea, and to provide a sort of clearing house had come to was that it was easier for artists to sell the work of friends than to sell their own work. The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

See also: **Chance**, Susan Bonvin, Marc Chaumowicz, Susan Hillier, **Manifesto of Mutual Art**, Ed Meeneley, Lindsay Moran

Art Room (22 Avenue Rd, London NW3/Ascham St)



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.



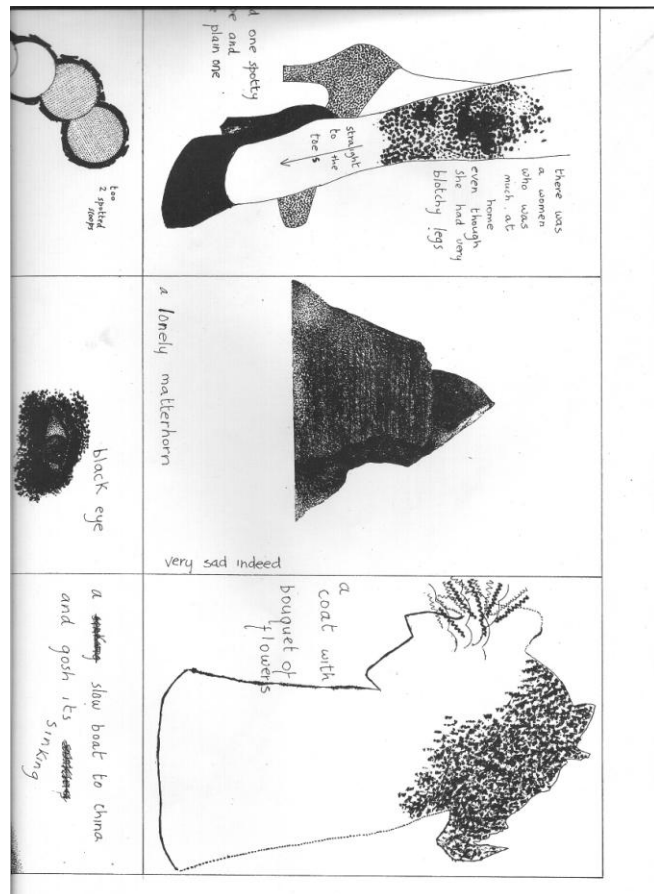
Assumption: The Stedelijk Museum has been turned on its side (through 90 degrees).

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.



Section of poster for Lindsay Moran's solo show at the Art Room *Some Matterhorns*, The Theatre of Mistakes Archive

PRICE LIST

ARTIST	TITLE	PRICE (A)
1. Edward Menealey	Star	£150.00
2. "	Time	150.00
3. "	Ball	150.00
4. "	Line	150.00
5. "	Drift	150.00
6/7. Susan Bonvin	Aids to spread focus (edition of seven sets maximum)	104.00 per set
8-12. Marc Chaimowicz	5 untitled works	45.00 (£210.00 for the set)
13. Susan Hillier	Untitled adhesive table work	45.00
14. "	"	45.00
15. "	"	45.00
16. "	"	50.00
17. "	"	45.00
18. Lindsay Moran	Canvas	300.00
19. "	Glove drawing	35.00
20. "	Table drawing	25.00
21. "	Carnations	20.00

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