See also: Questions, Unattributed

Treating each interviewee's impressions of their involvement with Theatre of Mistakes – whether as spectator or participant, regardless of the longevity of that experience – with equal importance, The Theatre of Mistakes: an A-Z explores the possible as opposed to the definitive as a valid tool in the creation of a multi-perspectival narrative. As such, it is not exhaustive, is far from complete. Nor does it see completion as a desirable aim. Rather, it hopes to instigate more questions, provoke more memories, more contradictions, rather in the manner of gossip.

Conversations which ranged from precise recollections complete with corroborated dates to vaguer memories which failed to allocate names or sites to moments half-revived, semi-forgotten.

too many glasses of Prosecco in Soho's French House... steps of London's National Gallery, in a yellow house in Oslo, after restaurant, in a small, temporary art space in Shoreditch, on the warehouse on Brick Lane and coffee in a quiet Herne Hill Station House Opera's Mind Out, over dinner in a converted in the bar at the Battersea Arts Centre after a performance of which continued in a studio in Peterborough, in the fronts of cars, the top of the escalators in Liverpool Street Station. Conversations Manhattan's Lower East Side, in the calm of university rooms, at telephone, in an airy tango studio in North London, in a café on - some formal, some social; which began via email, over the Bowman. Conversations held in a variety of venues and situations of complementing the research strategies of curator Jason E nature of the conversations in which I participated for the purpose This text, this A-Z of The Theatre of Mistakes, seeks to reflect the **Empirical** 

#### **Endings**

The rules governing The Theatre of Mistakes' performances meant endings were unpredictable unless operating within previously specified time constraints. In theory, some performances could finish within a few moments of starting (depending on triggers) and Peter Stickland recalls Fiona Templeton's integrity in this matter; she had no qualms in seeing the rule to its conclusion even if it meant the performance was only 3 minutes long. Conversely, there were structures that were deliberately openended, infinite. In the preface to the script of *Going* – the first fully rehearsed 'play' – for instance, various options for endings are suggested.



Going, the endless performance

Then there is the bigger ending. Why did The Theatre of Mistakes disband?

**Exercises** 

Essora Tessorio

Ephemeral

**Englishness** 

**Endings** 

**Empirical** 

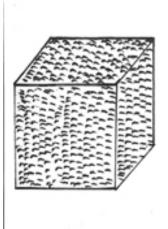
Elements of Performance Art

Eden, Susan

Eden, Andrew

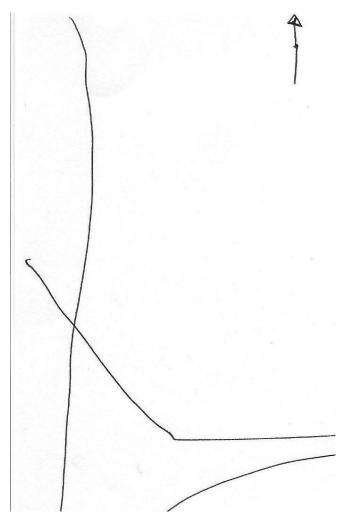
Economics





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

**Marie-Anne Mancio** 



2009-09-03

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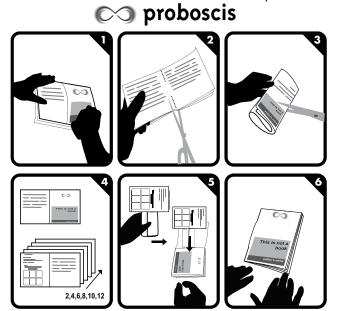


Photo @The Theatre of Mistakes, The Theatre of Mistakes Archive The Ting, early workshop, nd, c.1974



Theatre of Mistakes.

photographed for the publicity information about Ting: The recalls everyone having to change into his aviator suit to be retrieved from donations and army surplus stores. Howard Tong Street (1975) was, literally, on the doorstep. Costumes were told to wear whatever black clothes they owned; and later The Chorale (1974) performed by pregnant "ladies;" performers were Toren's Ballet for Cars; Lie's pregnancy inspired Birth Ballet people drove to Purdies farm were the substance of Amikam back from their travels were deployed as props; the vehicles quotidian. Kilims Signe Lie Howell and Anthony Howell brought funds so it is not surprising its aesthetic developed out of the The Ting's adherence to Minimalism was due in part to lack of See also: Victoria Chick, Funding, Samovar

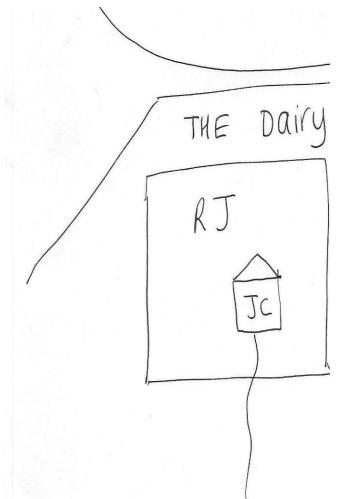
Economics

# The Ting: Theatre of Mistakes

an A-Z



© A. Howell & F. Templeton Elements of Performance Art (1976) as a sculptor to performers that he or she is using as objects. This exercise may be applied by a performer who is moving freely by using equipment that is gradually built. by using equipment that is solid and stable ретготмалсе атеа for a long time e.g. by using a permanently raised part of the by using equipment that is gradually dissuch as holding on to it by using equipment that requires an effort psysuce on such as a ball by using equipment that is difficult to for a short time e.g. by being supported by another performer sncy ss s stick ph naing delicately balanced equipment for a moment at a time e.g. by jumping Use any means of getting off the ground OEF THE GROUND

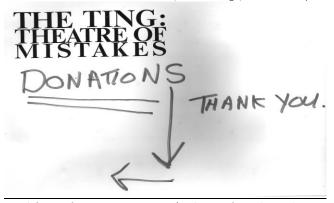


please do, all you can. Please fill the samovar. ing the relevance of our work in more personal terms. of The Arts Council of Great Britain, 105 Piccadilly, WIV OAU, statpetition being circulated or to write to Roy Shaw, Secretary General At the same time, members of the audience are invited to sign the above address. Cash donations are also welcomed, here, now, and at any time at the be bought by those of the public wishing to support us-enquiries ART ROOM, II ASCHAM STREET, LONDON N.W.S., where such artworks may arrists determined to see the company survive are welcomed at THE In order to deal with this emergency, artworks for The Ting, from their way through the door. soon enough to keep the most threatening wolves from forcing ue grant will meet with success, or that it will be forthcoming sirs. There is no guarantee that our application for the revenservices, let alone for any ongoing administration of our affmoney to get home tonight, no money to pay for rents, rates, we have no money to cover the deficit, no money to continue, no gesred towards a large-scale company such as ours. At present icit of over 1900. Fees (if any) for performance art are not shops. The previous year's activities have left us with a defour living expenses while we carry on vital rehearsals and worknot go ahead without adequate funds. We have no money to cover Publication of our first book ELEMENTS OF PERFORMANCE ART can-.(0701 af tour of the Far East and the U.S.A. in 1976). performances at The Stedelijk in Amsterdam in November and negances at The Serpentine Gallery in September and October, three of future bookings at home and abroad (including nine performthe verge of bankruptcy. This is despite a healthy schedule enue grant of £6000, THE TIMC: THEATRE OF MISTAKES teeters on gories are appropriate for our application for one year's rev-While the Arts Council of Great Britain considers which cate-MONEY AWN THE TING

#### Finances were a continual struggle for The Theatre of Mistakes:

Cf Andrew Eden on Box Installation at Purdies farm, August 1974: "Anthony said: would you like to have a field? But there was no possibility of any materials of any kind at all. So it was literally Anthony and me going along to the supermarket and seeing what we could get."

(Interview: Andrew Eden & Susan Bonvin, Peterborough, 24<sup>th</sup> Nov 2008).



Poster left at performance spaces c.1975/6, Theatre of Mistakes Archive

3) Mr Robertson goes on to say..."And they're doing this on your money..." (the general public, the tax payer) "....They have a direct grant from the Arts Council to stage this thing." In fact, we are paid a fee, by The Hayward, for a certain quota of performances, 48 of them, running for the duration of the exhibition. Each performer gets no more that 53 per day spent performing, while a small sum has been paid towards production costs—the four members of the nucleus receiving an extra 51 per day for coping with all preparations, maintenance, rehearsals, daily work-shops and administration. The piece could never have been mounted without subsidy coming directly from the pockets of the nucleus.

Letter dated 16<sup>th</sup> Aug 1977 from Anthony Howell to BBC re treatment of The Theatre of Mistakes in Fyffe Robertson's 'Robbie' which aired the previous night on BBC1 at 8.30pm. See also: Audiences

Letter from Anthony Howell with Application to Arts Council for funding  $20^{th}$  July 1978, The Theatre of Mistakes Archive

L

FURNITURE EXERCISE

Use one (or multiples of one) basic article of furniture within the performance area.

I Use it (them) functionally:e.g. sit on the chair.

2 Use it (them) for space delineation e.g. standing on a rug constitutes immunity from performance laws.

5 Use it (them) for their properties e.g. making a sculpture out of tables.



Exercises ©The Theatre of Mistakes

Any number of people

2) Sit, lie or stand in one position for one hour.

2) Respect one word not more than once every lo minutes.

Nine Units Exercise Triples Metronome, Stick, Chairs Total Drag Far and Near Soliloguy

SPEAKING STONES EXERCISE

#### SLEEPWALKERS

One couple or more.

Each performer stands at the edge of the performance space. Raise arms from sides and walk directly across/along the performance space. When the opposite side is reached, lower your arms, turn round, move one pace along the edge.

Again raise arms from sides and walk across/along performance space. Continue sleepwalking thus. When a corner of the performance space is reached start sleepwalking along the other two edges.





Whenever opposite another performer walk towards each other at the same speed. When you meet (still with hands outstretched in front of you) place hands on each others shoulders. Stand like this for five minutes. Then slowly revolve anti-clockwise once. As you both start to revolve, start making a scarcely audible nois hich gradually grows louder. The noise stops abruptly as soon as the anti-clockwise revolution is completed (i.e. when both performers cease moving). Each step a pace to the left, without dropping arms. Now continue on your way, sleepwalking towards the opposite edge.

Always perform a complete revolution with your partner, ending the revolution in the same position as you began.

Should you come across an obstacle in your sleepwalking, turn at 90 degrees and then continue in the new direction.

© A. Howell & F. Templeton Elements of Performance Art (1976)

While he best work of his lake is most countries in timper, his header of his lakes and in next countries in timper, his header he harbour factories in head work of and in next countries in timper, his header he debut he has a chance to see 10101, our bast work to help he had held to chance to see 10101, our bast work to he had held to be had here to be had been by a his bast of his work to his here he had been in his here he had been and he countries of his work to his here had been and he countries he had been he had he had been he had he had been he had been he had he had been he had been he had he had been he had he had been he had he had

William Howeld: Application for a major Bursony

PRICE LISS.

	ARTIST		TITLE				PRICE (A)	
1.	Edwar	d Meneeley	Star				£150.00	)
2.	н		Time				150.00	\$600.00
3.	**		Ba11				150,00	) for the ) set
4.		**	Line				150.00	}
5.		и;	Drip				150.00	}
6/7.	Susar	Bonvin	Aids to spread focus (Edition of seven sets maximum)				104.00 per set	
8-12.	Marc	Chaimowicz	5 untiti	led works			45.00	(£210.00 fo the set)
13.	Susar	Hiller	Untitled	adhesiv	e lablo	work work	45.00	
14.						"	45.00	
15.					*	н	45.00	
16.		W	*		*	*	50.00	
17.					*		45,00	
18.	Linds	ay Moran	Canvas	Canvas				
19.	п	*	Glove drawing				35,00	
20.		u	Table drawing				25,00	
21.			Carnatio	ons			20,00	
				00000				

20



The ever-contentious relationship between performance and documentation asks whether a death occurs between the ephemeral moment and the permanent record...



Essora Tessorio (17<sup>th</sup> June, 1973 at the Whitechapel)

See also: Venues

Though this event prefigured Ting, the act of Signe Lie Howell reading out Anthony Howell's poetry is indicative of their future collaboration. Victoria Chick recalls it was very well received; the phrase that she still remembers:

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

#### **Exercises**

Fiona Templeton played a major role in editing exercises from the Gymnasium into the book *Elements of Performance Art*. Though exercises are mostly undated, at least a couple – *Sleepwalkers* and *Lightning Spinners* – were performed in October 1974. Others include *Body Aural Couplets* (February-December 1975); *Digital Masks* (February 1975), Dynamic *Camouflage* (June 1975) *Slow Traffic* (June 1975), *Amplification* (July 1975)

## Sleepwalkers

Progress to Reverse or Tidal Drag
Walking Circle Forwards
Joints Exercise/Anatomical Exercise
Three Movements Exercise
Ultimate Rope Trick
Brisk Intervals
Universal/Dinka Jumps in the Circle
Lightning Spinners
Finger Heat Exercise
Sticks
First Conversation Piece
Marionettes Verbal

Extract from notes for Summer Pieces,  $20^m \, \text{June-} 20^m \, \text{July 1975}$ , The Theatre of Mistakes Archive

A poster to be produced with addresses and map references, tracing a journey along the edges of these solids and of chosen latitudes of the sphere. Also a folded sheet to be distributed

Three dimensional shapes drawn by means of map references and addresses in London. Corners, centres apices ranging from the top of the post offlice tower to the deepest point on London's underground, from the Serpentine to the ponds on Hampstead Heath. Where possible, these corners, centres and apices will be indicated in their actual situation. Planes and curves will also ared in their actual situation.

СПВЕ, РҮКАМІВ АИВ SPHERE

#### Wallpaper and took part in Summer Pieces.

Long-time friend of Anthony Howell, artist Andrew Eden was involved in From Where to Where "a verbal and visual event" with him in May 1974 (Hampstead Heath) and was always aware of the activities of The Ting. He was also one of the founder/editors of

Extract from Amanda Welch's review of Cardboard Boxes

The Theatre of Mistakes Archive

It reminded me of those displaced oubes of sky in Magritte's pictures. Extract from Amanda Welch's review of Cardboard Boxes

to see an exact sequence of all white rectangles changing to white and yellow - yellow and blue - blue and white. One step makes all the difference. The chalfy colours seemed both artificial and natural - dusty August sky, colours as though sections of the sky had landed in the field.

### Eden, Andrew

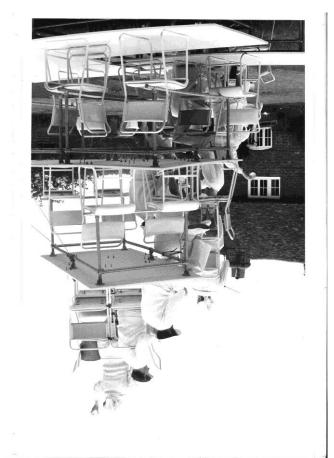


Andrew Eden Cardboard Boxes at Purdies farm, 1974



Photos ©The Theatre of Mistakes, The Theatre of Mistakes Archive

Photo @The Theatre of Mistakes, The Theatre of Mistakes Archive Rehearsal/performance of Waterfall Hartley Wintney, Summer 1977



The Theatre of Mistakes is divided as to their 'Englishness'. For Peter Stickland, their aesthetic can only have grown out of its context - its language, that particular brand of eccentricity, its (comical) approach to physicality that passes for Englishness. For Fiona Templeton, the work transcended that but then perhaps her perspective is informed by her history of practising on both sides of the Atlantic. Either way, it appears The Theatre of Mistakes was best received elsewhere in Europe (cf the artist Alan Charlton, the film maker/artist Peter Greenaway). As Anthony Howell notes, the literary tradition in English theatre made performance art unpopular with critics.

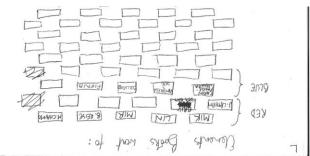
#### **Ephemeral**

Performances, shadows, sunlight, scratches of chalk; Robert Janz walks through New York City streets and along London pavements; Jane Clark films water; Susan Hiller maps dreams...

"It's appropriate now to work on the authentic form of those phenomena that erase themselves, that go through a complete cycle of changes from birth to death [...] I would like my work to exist within the life cycles of the natural things that come into being around us."

Robert Janz in the draft of a Press release by Anthony Howell for Summer Pieces, The Theatre of Mistakes Archive

See also: Documentation, Purdies, and for filmmakers Anthony McCall and Annabel Nicholson's connection to expanded cinema read Lucas Ihlein "Pre-digital New Media Art" RealTime Arts no. 66, April/May, 2005, 26 for a discussion of work from the Seventies.



E Bowman, to re-issue Elements of Performance Art. Though currently out of print, there are plans, instigated by Jason

Mistakes, Towards A Retrospective" PSI15, Zagreb, June 2009) (Jason E Bowman "Accidentally on Purpose, The Ting: The Theatre of

convergent structures." structured via chance allowing for multiple formations and equipment and manifestation with a total of 42 exercises; to be against six elements: conditions, body, aural, time/space, of Mistakes' methods of production are outlined in the publication publication as a hybrid manifesto/manual. The Ting: The Theatre disciplinary activities, it remains an out-of-print seminal performance art be created via instruction and chance with crossedition of 60. Offering a unique insight into how Ting advocated was self-published and distributed by Ting in 1976 in an initial (refined by activities developed via The Gymnasium from 1974-76) "Anthony Howell and Fiona Templeton's Elements of Performance

Elements of Performance Art

Eden, Susan: See Bonvin, Susan



In 1977, he and his wife Susan Bonvin were part of OnSite, a group show at Arnolfini, Bristol, 3<sup>rd</sup> – 29<sup>th</sup> October 1977. The others included several artists who had been present for the August 1974 weekend at Purdies farm: Jane Clark, Susan Hiller, Robert Janz, and Amikam Toren.

Eden and **Bonvin** are currently working collaboratively on a series of paintings.

For a biography of Eden, see his profile at http://www.axisweb.org/seCVFU.aspx?ARTISTID=9438

Further reading: www.susanbonvin-andreweden.co.uk

See also: Bibliography, Economics, Letters, Manifesto, One Rule Game, Ting, View, Union

"Theatre of Mistakes had a very American, New York aesthetic, in one sense. But it had a curious English public school touch to it as well. I was always wearing cricket clothes or something daft – grey suits" (Julian Maynard Smith in www.vizlang.co.uk/readings/Smith)

Active Circles
Cricket whites
Eccentricity (see Deborah Howell)
Hartley Wintney
August bank holidays
The dole

**Englishness** 

of 2009, have not re-performed altogether. publication; all have lectured on The Theatre of Mistakes) but, as Stickland prepared scripts of Going and Homage to Morandi for versions of Waterfall; see Templeton for Coming (with Going); members have resurrected works (Howell did several smaller group fragmented, eventually disbanding in 1981. Individual Orpheus and Hermes, the most being Homage to Morandi), the 3 years (the least 'successful' work of that period probably being Theatre of Mistakes. Despite continuing in some form for a further Payne was still drifting; Stickland was still interested in The Greenall was "exploring the S&M scene" (unattributed); Miranda was at the point of wishing to further her painting; Mickey Templeton stayed on to pursue her own projects; Glenys Johnson toured there in 1978. Anthony Howell wanted to go home; "everything fell apart in New York" (unattributed) after Going There were no mutual, considered decisions as such. It appears



Mickey Greenall, Anthony Howell, and Fiona Templeton in *Going* Photos ©The Theatre of Mistakes



Fiona Templeton, Glenys Johnson, Peter Stickland, Mickey Greenall in Going

method of executing turns whenever you find it necessary to turn. Consider constructing a travelling pattern by employing any consistent Employ triggers to begin, alter or cease your progression. method of progression throughout the periormance. choose one of the methods of travelling thus discovered as your walking carrying a weight with eyes shut etc) of the alteration posibilities (such as walking backwards slowly, the original method of travelling plus a combination of any two (such as walking backwards, walking carrying a weight etc) the original method plus each of the alteration possibilities Perform the original method of travelling Mith Eyes Shut Negotiating Obstacles Carrying a Weight In a Series of Jerks As fast as possible SIGEMBLS Васкиатев As slowly as possible : suotasaggng Choose five possibilities of altering the method of travelling chosen. the centre of the length of the performance space). (e.g. walking the length of the performance space along a line down Perform that method of travelling over that distance along that line centre of the length of the periormance space). space) and a specific line to travel along (such as a line down the Choose a particular distance (such as the length of the performance Decide upon one consistent method of travelling (such as walking).

© A. Howell & F. Templeton Elements of Performance Art (1976)

