

When The Ting: Theatre of Mistakes comes together to mount a production of Scenes at a Table sufficient rehearsal time must be allowed for each of the five performers in the piece to have the chance to be the instigator of the action, coming to terms with the repercussions of what he or she may do, and learning what accidents are likely to occur when the other performers attempt to repeat these initial actions. Thus Scenes at a Table could be considered as if it were five pieces in one, or as if it were as many pieces as there are performances; each a consequence of the present—for no lines or steps are learnt prior to any performance. The company may mount a single performance in five acts, or mount five single performances. And since each act is timed by a performer working along the edges of the space (The Metronome) an act can be set to last a few minutes or a few hours—depending upon the speed of this metronomic performer.

But throughout the piece there is a conflict between freedom and adherence to rules. For the first performer in any act exists only as a memory for subsequent performers: intent on repeating the earlier actions of that initial performer, they attempt to ignore the instigator's present existence, only observing him or her in order to repeat that performer's actions later. Should any recognise that instigator's existence in the present, because of some breakdown in their observation or repetition of the actions set up, they are in turn ignored by all the other performers. But now, having broken the rules

SCENES AT A TABLE
Homage to Pietro Longhi

See also: Audiences, Overdue, Serpentine Summer Show
Homage to Pietro Longhi (1976)

anyway, the performer who has thus recognised the instigator is also free to perform any sort of action, and this may also have to be strictly repeated by a subsequent performer.

While a fugue-like construction governs the outline of the piece, Scenes at a Table has its particular modifications and oddities which aid, abet and in some instances even contradict 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 metronome in the final scenes of each act, each act presents the performance from a different angle, while songs accumulate towards the end of each act and so on. Peculiarities such as these, and all the strategies available and accidents likely to occur, are impossible to enumerate without the text of the performance instructions.

Scenes at a Table is dedicated to the painter Pietro Longhi (1702-1785), whose many variations on a single theme or a single posture, reappearing in dozens of his works, have been a source of inspiration to the company during the year. A number of the ideas exercised by the performers have been derived either from Longhi's use of similar angles in figure drawing or from his employment of eye glances as a geometry by which to establish the focal centre of a picture. Originally, several of Longhi's paintings were inspired by scenes at tables in the performances of 18th century Venice.

The Ting: Theatre of Mistakes first started working on Scenes at a Table in summer 1975. A version of one act of the piece was presented at the University of East Anglia in June this year. The performances at the Serpentine Gallery mark the first time that each performer in the piece has been afforded the opportunity to instigate an act.

Summer 1976

Howell, Signe

Howell, Deborah

Howell, Anthony

Howard Tong

Horses

Hornsey

Hour Book

Homage to Pietro Longhi

Homage to Morandi

Hockney, David

Hillier, Susan

Heights, Slides and Collisions

Head Turns

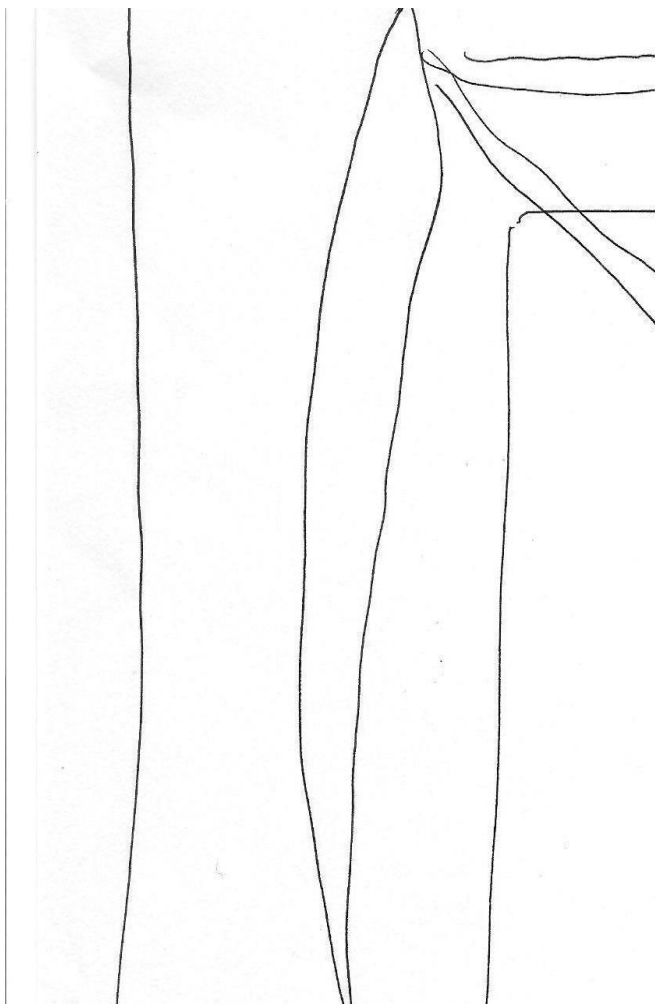
Hayward Annual

Hartley Wintney, Hazley Heath, Hampshire



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

Marie-Anne Mancio



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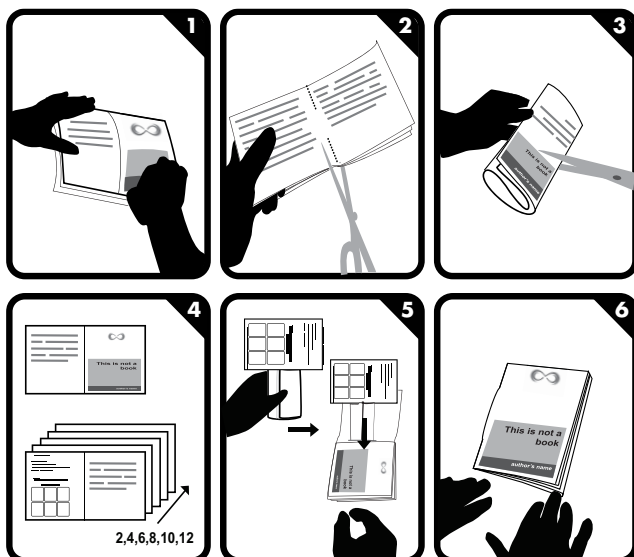
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For a history of the village and surrounding attractions, see
<http://www.hartleywinthea.org.uk/>

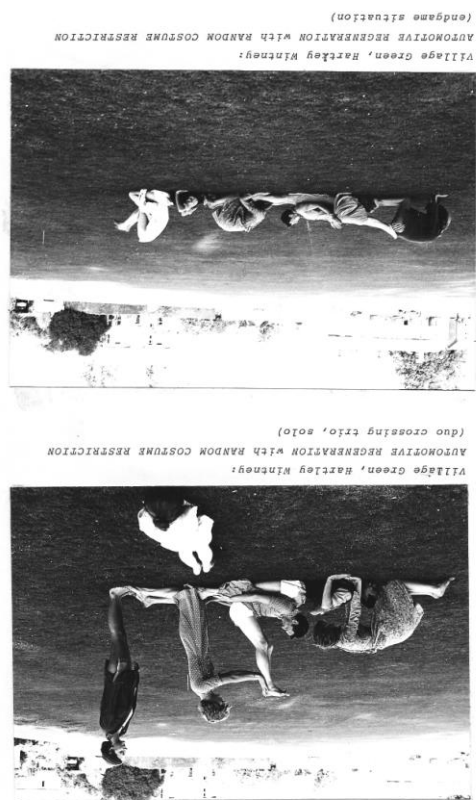
Hartley Winthea, Hazley Heath, Hampshire
Location of Deborah Howel's farm, **Purdies** and site of several
performances including **Heights**, **Slides and Collisions**, **Active**
Circles, and **Waterfall**.

The Ting: Theatre of Mistakes

an **A-Z**

H

Marie-Anne Mancio



The Cricketers Pub, Hartley Wintney ©Trevor Saunders

"I remember it being rather hostile... from the locals..."

(Interview: Lindsay Moran, London, 6th Nov, 2008)



Photo ©The Theatre of Mistakes, The Theatre of Mistakes Archive

they wanted to create. Even prior to this, Signe collaborated with Howell in early performances and poetry readings (see *Essora Tessorio*) and introduced him to her artistic circle and to the concept of the *Ting*. She also recruited participants, inspired *Birth Ballet* Chore in 1974, and instigated *Quilting Bee*. She recalls the fluidity of those days when there was a culture of people dropping in on one another at *Ascham* Street and at the *Dairy*. Fergus Early and his then girlfriend Jacky Lansley were around; also Michael *Nyman*, John Sharkey, Mike McKinnon, Andrew Eden and Susan *Bonvin*. She also recalls drawing endless *diagrams* mapping people's movements.

(Conversations: Signe Howell, Oslo, 13-14 October, 2008)

Peter Stickand: "Signe influenced [The Ting] in a great, mythic, almost spiritual way, a kind of coming together."

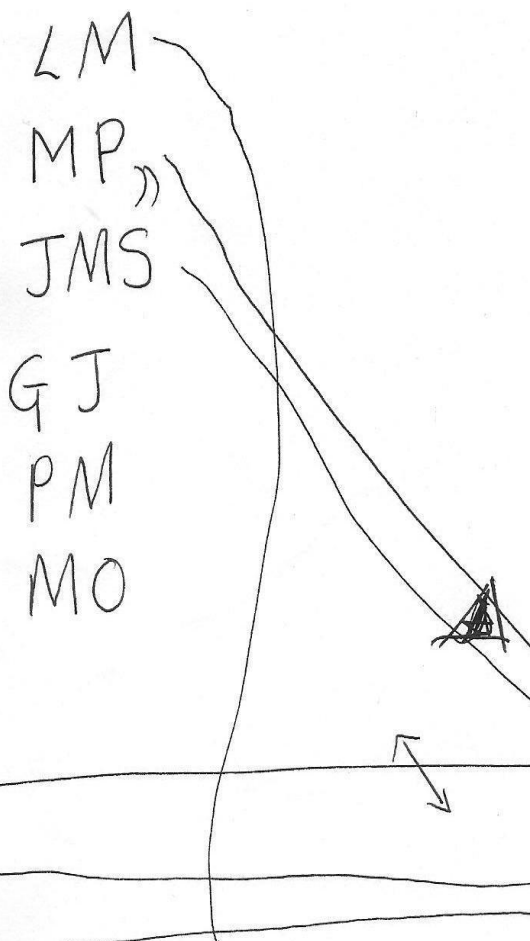
Vicki Chick: "She was incredibly smart and she had this beautiful voice."

Susan Hillier: "Signe should be contacted. It seemed there was no knowledge of her contribution nor any accurate history of early Ting"

Signe Howell is now Professor of *Anthropology* at Oslo University and author of several books including *The Ethnographies of Moralities* and *The Kinning of Foreigners*.

See also: *Unwritten, Women*

Read: Anthony Howell's *Oslo* Calder and Boyars, 1975



Interview: Andrew Eden & Susan Bonvin, Peterborough, 24th Nov 2008:
 SB: There was a performance with candles and they were floating across the pool and Deborah, Anthony's mother, decided that she would dive in. No-one really knew why. She did a great big belly flop and all the water came out
 AE: And all the candles went out

Howard Tong and Deborah Howell in *Preparations for Displacement* (1975)
 Photo: ©The Theatre of Mistakes, The Theatre of Mistakes Archive

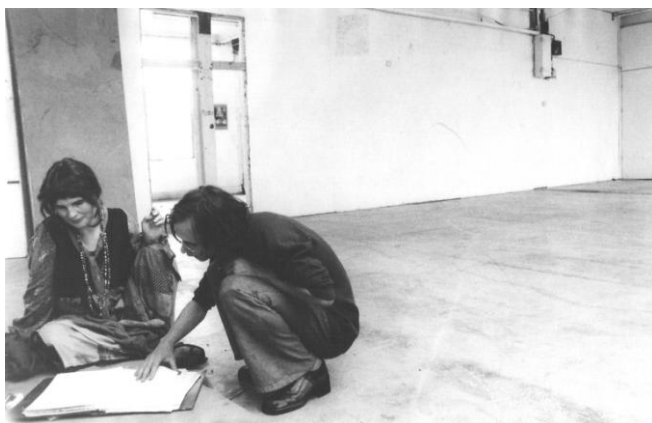


Howell, Deborah
 See also: *Audiences, Purities*,
 Formidable; first female veterinary student in the UK; performed in early Ting works at the London Film-Makers Co-Op and at Michael McKinnon's studio dressed in full hunting gear....

"She was really supportive; she was in the front seat of every performance."

(Interview: Lindsay Moran, London, 6th Nov, 2008)

Howell, Signe Lie



Signe Howell and Anthony Howell at the Dairy? nd
 Photo: ©The Theatre of Mistakes, The Theatre of Mistakes Archive

Andrew **Eden**:

"The roots of The Ting are Anthony and Signe"

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

Norwegian Signe Lie met Anthony **Howell** in late 1968, marrying him in 1972. She spent an extended vacation with him Dec. 73-Jan 74 in the U.S. where he was writer-in-residence in Iowa. During this time they saw Robert Wilson perform *The Life and Times of Joseph Stalin* (see robertwilson.com for images) at the Brooklyn Academy of Music Opera House and discussed the kind of work

A *Waterfall* at Hayward Annual, 1977
 Photo: ©Giles Thomas



Hayward Annual (1977)

The Theatre of Mistakes were the performance element, occupying the Sculpture Court with *Waterfall*. (See *Audiences, Critics*)

Composition

The following lists the artists who will be participating and in which part of the Annual their work will be shown. At this stage it is not quite certain in which part Henry Moore will show and whether Michael Sandie will be able to participate.

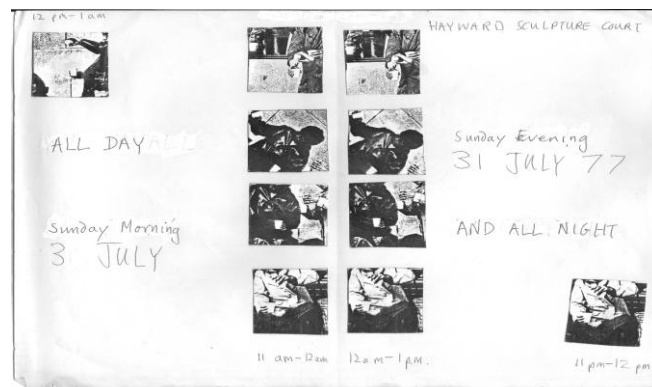
First Part

Frank Auerbach
 Anthony Caro
 Patrick Caulfield
 Bernard Cohen
 Hamish Fulton
 Nigel Hall
 John Hoyland
 Allen Jones
 John Latham
 Kim Lim
 Kenneth Martin
 Keith Milow
 Nicholas Monro
 Peter Phillips
 William Turnbull

Second Part

Peter Blake
 Stuart Brisley
 Stephen Buckley
 Victor Burgin
 Michael Craig-Martin
 Robyn Denny
 Barry Flanagan
 Theatre of Mistakes
 Anthony Hill
 John Hilliard
 David Hookney
 Howard Hodgkin
 R. B. Kitaj
 Bob Law
 Eduardo Paolozzi

Letter from the Hayward to exhibitors, January 1977, The Theatre of Mistakes Archive



Draft for Flyer, The Theatre of Mistakes Archive

Andrew Eden and Anthony McCall have both alluded to Howell's teaching and mentoring abilities as part of the legacy of The Theatre of Mistakes.

Interview: Andrew Eden & Susan Bonvin, Peterborough, 24th Nov 2008; (interview: Anthony McCall, Jason E Bowman, London, 26th Sept 2008)

Anthony Howell c.1973/4 Photo: ©The Theatre of Mistakes, The Theatre of Mistakes Archive



THE TABLE MOVE (Studies for Objects): This is a series of studies in functional choreography, based on day to day actions rather than on some vocabulary of esoteric steps. Here are no "arabesques" or "contractions" but a sequence of ordinary actions which have become so familiar they generate their own "enchainements". The piece is a sort of instrument which allows many melodies; a spiraling cubism of actions seen from all sides—a sort of galaxy of known orbits. These spheres of functional movement revolve around each other, and in so doing generate a poetry drawn from the complexities to be found in our most familiar expressions of thanks and apology—expressions as usual as the actions themselves.

Theatre of Mistakes Program for Jeannette Cochrane Theatre, March 1981

MY FANTASY

Choose to perform none or one of the following:

- 1) An already existing physical exercise or an already existing verbal exercise from any of the books for the length of my fantasy.
- 2) Continuous ~~freeze~~ freeze for the length of my fantasy.
- 3) Begin with ordinary actions at an ordinary pace slowing down to absolute stillness by the end of my fantasy.
- 4) Have a free session (accepting trigger necessities) for the length of my fantasy.
- 5) Perform any thing you have done in any previous performance for the length of my fantasy—but perform whatever it is backwards.
- 6) Crawl around energetically for the length of my fantasy, pausing only to turn round and smile.
- 7) Repeat as exactly as possible my own actions during the length of the ~~group's~~ group's fantasy about me (accepting trigger necessities) for the length of my fantasy.

DO NOT DISCUSS YOUR CHOICE WITH ANYONE ELSE.

Whether you choose to perform any of these possibilities or not, I would like all performers to obey the following trigger necessities:

- A) All performers should remain within the green losenge between stables and barn for the length of my fantasy.
- B) If you trip over a wire or touch or are touched by a wire at any time during my fantasy, Jerk your whole body once then remain moving for the rest of the performance—while never allowing your ~~body~~ back to lose contact with the floor.
- C) If touched by me at any time during my fantasy remain in a continuous freeze for rest of the performance employing only DYNAMIC TENSION for the face or DYNAMIC TENSION without actually moving any part of the body. Only break this freeze if forced to obey trigger B (above).

Group Fantasy Piece: Anthony Howell, nd, c.1975
©The Theatre of Mistakes, The Theatre of Mistakes Archive

Head Turns (Ascham Street, 1975-6)



Howell, Stickland, Templeton, Greenall perform Head Turns

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



Heights, Slides and Collisions (Hartley Winthey, August 1975)

HEIGHT SLIDES WITH COLLISIONS

A performance square (with sides calculated by employing HEEL TOE MEASURING) is marked out with a further line drawn from the midpoint of one of the sides into the centre—this is the Queue Line. Two seats are placed in the corners of this square opposite the side from which the Queue Line has been drawn.

Queue line

performers standing along

shortest

tallest

Chair

To start: Performers stand heel to toe (but with feet together) along the Queue line: they stand facing the centre in order of height in a Height Slide from the shortest performer at the centre to the tallest performer at the junction with the side. One at a time, performers begin working in the square, starting with the shortest performer. When one performer starts by abandoning the centre, the next in the queue moves up a space to occupy the centre. Performers always move along this line (and any of the lines which compose the performance space) one foot at a time, heel to toe along the line at each step, hands and arms by sides, heads down, chins against chests. This entry takes the form of one performer slightly pushing the one ahead. Thus the tallest performer in the first Height Slide, having no one to push him or her off centre, remains frozen until another performer comes along the Queue line behind (as will be explained later in the game).

Instructions for Performance @The Theatre of Mistakes, The Theatre of Mistakes Archive
See also: Five Concert Pieces and a Free Session, London Exhibition,

Hornsey See Art Schools
Horses
 See **Purdis**. Susan **Hiller** had a nasty fall from one, Howard **Tong** recalls Anthony **Howell** riding pregnant ones, and Howell has since created a work in St Petersburg for some (See: <http://www.anthonhowell.org/perf9.htm>)

The *Hour Book* remains unpublished despite George Mattingly of something Else Press saying, "THE HOUR BOOK is incredibly entertaining. I like the idea very much" (Letter to AH, 5th December, 1973). The poet Bill Shepherd (latterly a collaborator with Anthony Howell on *Statius: Silvae, a selection*, Anvil Press, 2007) allegedly paid for his with a washing machine.

Extract from the *Hour Book* ©Anthony Howell

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 and behind thorough uphilt though

See also: **Choice by Chance**, **Fiver Show**
Hour Book

Howard Tong See **Tong**, Howard

Howell, Anthony (b.1945)

See also: *Bibliography*, *Birth Ballet Chorale*, *Five Concert Pieces*, *Going*, *Homage to Morandi*, *Homage to Pietro Longhi*, *Preparations for Displacement*, *The Street*

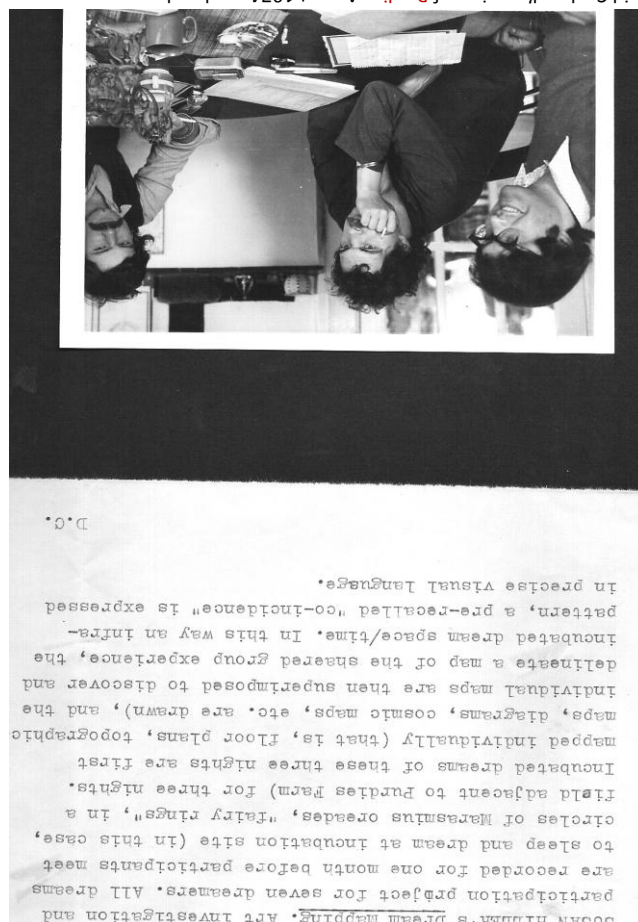
Poet and former Royal **Ballet** dancer Anthony Howell is always the protagonist of narratives of The Ting: Theatre of Mistakes. Described as: Brilliant; disciplined (see **notation** of *The Waterfall*); dictatorial; a generous mentor; a man who wrote impassioned letters (see *Rape of the Mind*); spatially aware; obsessive (see *Orpheus and Hermes*), a tireless documenter, depending on whose narrative you choose.

He was inspired by his partners: his wife Signe Lie **Howell** introduced him to the myth of **Ting**; he co-wrote *Elements of Performance Art* with Fiona **Templeton**, created the role of the girl in *Orpheus and Hermes* for Miranda **Payne**, borrowed Gwendolyn **Leick** as the model for Monica in his novel *Lost Farm*...

A prolific writer, he has issued many critically acclaimed editions of poetry (*Oslo*, *Dancers in Daylight*), critical essays on artists, and *The Analysis of Performance Art: A Guide to its Theory and Practice*, Routledge, 1999. Other works include: *The Company of Others* (a novel based on the **dance** world. The original manuscript allowed the reader to choose where to read next), and *Oblivion*. Following the dispersal of The Theatre of Mistakes, he took solo works such as *The Table Move* to Australia. After a stint in Argentina, Howell is currently engaged in the controversial act of choreographing and dancing tango to classical music.

(See <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KzPKv8ZtdbQ>)

David Coxhead's review of *Purdis* August 1974 weekend,
 The Theatre of Mistakes Archive



Hiller, Susan (1940-)

Artist, friend to Signe Lie **Howell**; see www.susanhiller.org

"I wasn't a participant although I did take part informally in a couple of **Ting** events, and Ting members also took part in large-scale events of mine around the same time. **Wallpaper** magazine was ongoing during the same period, and David **Coxhead** and I were closely involved with it; Anthony **Howell** had the tendency to blur the boundaries between the magazine and Ting, so there was often a productive as well as annoying confusion of memberships in his mind.... It would be historically inaccurate to say that either David or I were ever a member of Ting; we didn't attend their meetings or take part except sporadically in events. You need to bear in mind that the early 1970's were a fruitful period for event-based works and there were numerous collaborations of all kinds, usually temporary and brief."

(Susan Hiller, email to M **Mancio**, 21st October 2008)

See also: **Art Room**, **Horses**, **Women**

Hockney, David See **Moran**, Lindsay

Homage to Morandi (1979)

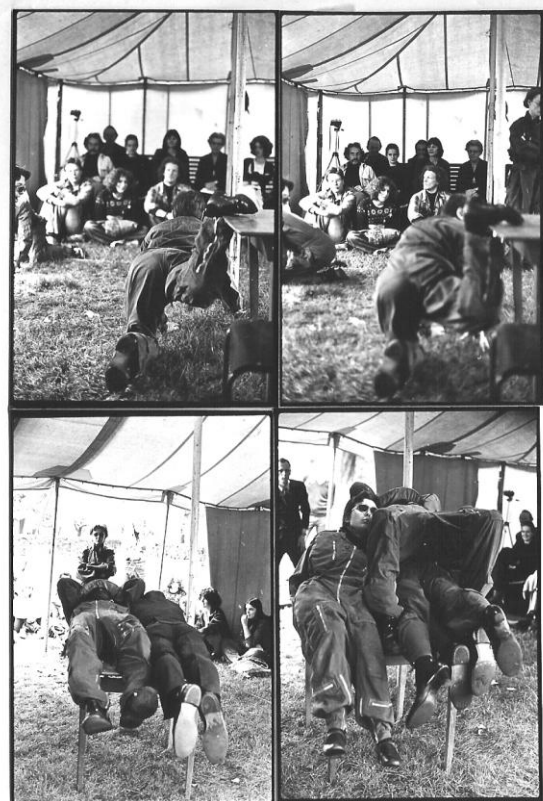
See also: *Bibliography*, *Critics*, Michael **Greenall**, **Mistakes**, Ray Smith (**Photographers**)

Theatre of Mistakes Program for Jeanetta Cochrane Theatre, March 1981:

HOMAGE TO MORANDI: This play treats the proscenium arch as the frame of a picture. The performers begin by arranging furniture in "still lives" inspired by the metaphysical painter Giorgio Morandi and his arrangements of jugs and small objects. The stage is divided into two rooms, and the performance into two parts—first "Metaphysical Furniture", then "The Ghost of a Reason". Items of furniture are not used as "props" but as partners in the work—the manipulated and the manipulators becoming interchangeable. Performers arrange and are arranged in turn. They seem part of the set, step out of it, alter it and then step back in again. The wardrobes, suitcases and chairs take on passionate characteristics while the performers become furniture and background. **MORANDI** is a work of oppositions, animate with inanimate, the figurative with the abstract, life with art.

Detail of 'The Fortune-Teller at Venice' by Pietro Longhi reproduced by courtesy of The National Gallery, London.
Arts Council, Serpentine Gallery, Kensington Gardens, W2

HOMAGE TO PIETRO LONGHI
PERFORMANCES
SATURDAYS AND SUNDAYS 3pm - 6pm,
25 SEPTEMBER TO 17 OCTOBER



Scenes at a Table: Homage to Pietro Longhi at the Serpentine
Photos: ©Caroline Wilkinson

Act 4, scene 4:

Chair:
(Gets up, goes through the gap, and places himself in his back to the audience, in corner A)
Vacant.

Suitcase:
Dome over!
Will no one take this weight off my shoulders?
(Stretching out his left hand—to signify his open door)
(He then takes up disrupted suitcase position, falling straight forwards into it as usual—Illustration 7.)
Suitcase:
How about a mood of excitement?
(The Suitcase opens the suitcase and places it back on its right elbow—his right hand remaining behind his head.)
Id transgresses the hypothetical "wall"—the suitcase is mainly supported by the Wardrobe's right hand, together with his right elbow—his right hand remaining behind his head.)
Do you think so?
(Pulling down the suitcase with his right hand at the same time as he gives the Chair a swipe with his left hand, knocking the Chair against the Wardrobe)
Suitcase:
(Pulling down the suitcase with his right hand at the same time as he gives the Chair a swipe with his left hand, knocking the Chair against the Wardrobe)
Do you think so?

Anthony Howell, Julian Maynard Smith and Peter Stickland in *Homage to Morandi* (1980) Photo: ©Bob Dantzig

