

Notes after attending rehearsals of *The Street* (1975). Letter to Anthony Howell, 14<sup>th</sup> June 1975, The Theatre of Mistakes Archive

Reedy, Carlyle (1938-)

Reedy is an experimental poet and performance artist who moved to the UK from the U.S. in 1964 and was involved in an exhibition organised by Circles with Pat **Murphy**, Annabel **Nicholson**, Jane **Clark**, Susan **Hiller**.

See: **London Film Makers Co-op**, **Poetry**

## Rehearsal

### London Exhibition

Everything, including the Ting & Free Session to be rehearsed at least twice

Table piece to be rehearsed Ascham St 5 times.

Bob Janz to be employed to create barriers at some point - free session or solos or Ting or even table piece.

Extract from the notebooks of Anthony Howell, nd, The Theatre of Mistakes Archive

By **Five Concert Pieces and a Free Session** at the 1975 **London Exhibition**, The Ting: Theatre of Mistakes claimed "some of its projects are rehearsed for periods as long as a year."

**Going** was 'fully rehearsed' complete with mistakes.

## Reindeer Werk (1972-80)

Performance art duo Thom Puckey and Dirk Larsen who performed at the **Art Room**; influenced Howard **Tong**. Puckey describes their work as "pure, non-theatre based performance art" (see [www.thompuckey.com/index.php?/works/1973---1981-the-reindeer-werk-period](http://www.thompuckey.com/index.php?/works/1973---1981-the-reindeer-werk-period) for chronology and images)

15 Tong recalls a performance in which Genesis P.Orridge [see

Robert Janz

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Reedy, Carlyle

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Rain Dance

Rabbit

Quotidian

Quitting Bee

Questionnaire

Question (Curator's)

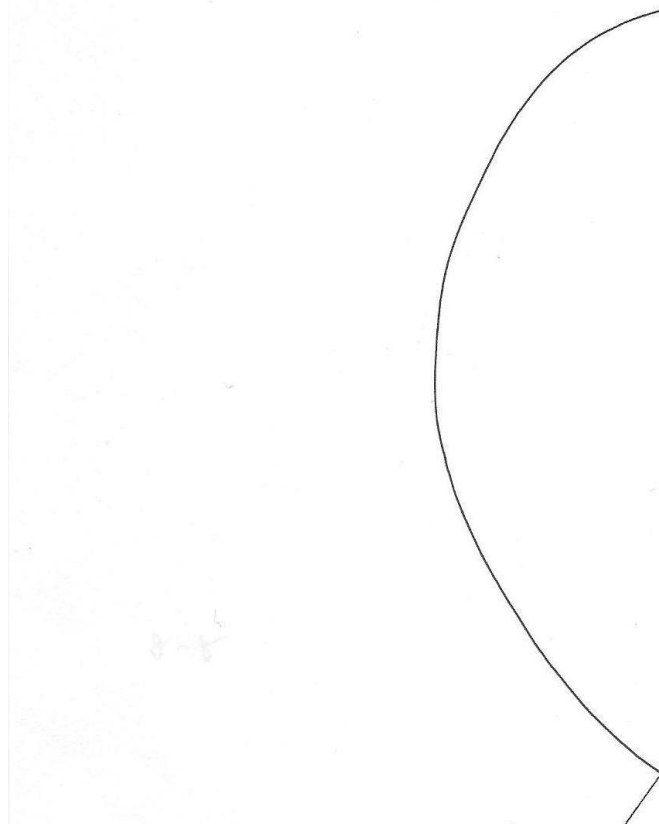
Question (Writer's)

Quarrels



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

Marie-Anne Mancio



2009-09-03

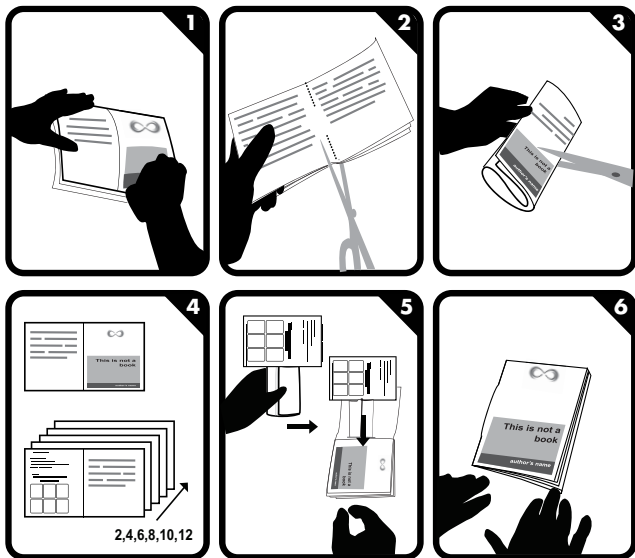
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2,4,6,8,10,12

Although habit implies reading should begin at A, there is no more reason to start there than at XZ. In fact, for the reader in possession of the entire set, a variety of reading patterns might be suggested. For example:

for those seeking a basic introduction to Ting: The Theatre of Mistakes:

Begin with a contextualising **Seventies**, followed by the **Introduction** for curator Jason E Bowman's essay: **Chronology**, **Core Group**, then move on to the performances: **Preparations for**

Question (Writer's):  
The format of the A-Z allows for unexpected entries to be placed in proximity. (Any comedy value derived from this is not always unintentional).

## Why an A-Z?

All the interviewees have attested to the sometimes volatile nature of interactions within The Theatre of Mistakes that resulted in various periods of estrangement between members. Notwithstanding, the idea of opposition was incorporated into works.

Notes from unpublished notebook of Anthony Howell, nd, c. 1974, The Theatre of Mistakes Archive

10 We need to be personally tactful - come to some depth knowledge and presence of each other's heavier attitudes or feelings however quirky they may seem, however easily we may be able to criticise these quirks. Quarrels also.

Quarrels

## The Ting: Theatre of Mistakes

an **A-Z**

# Q-R

Marie-Anne Mancio

How and when did you first hear of **Ting** and become involved with them?  
 Who do you think of as integral to The Theatre of Mistakes and could you describe their main contribution?  
 Group dynamics of Ting – who – if anyone – instigated what; what was the creative process; how were decisions taken; how did performances evolve?  
 How would you describe the nature of your involvement?  
 What do you see as the inception of Ting? Was it a session/conversation/performance?  
 And the end?  
 What was your background?  
 What was your prime contribution to Ting?  
 What do you think Ting contributed to your evolving practice?

### Questionnaire

Jason E Bowman -  
**Question (Curator's):**  
 "So how does the curator develop a methodology for decision-making with regard to an exhibition's content, particularly if the group has disbanded and the starting point is a collection of **ephemera**, **documentation**, and **artworks**?"

absence of performer Michael **Greenall**. There is always at least one letter missing. The only entry under 'Y' is you. Sometimes questions posed in one letter begin to be answered in another (see **Mistakes** and **Solution**). And some questions – some whos, wheres, whys – are not answered at all. Some entries (see **Roles**) are little more than photo essays which require the viewer to draw their own conclusions.

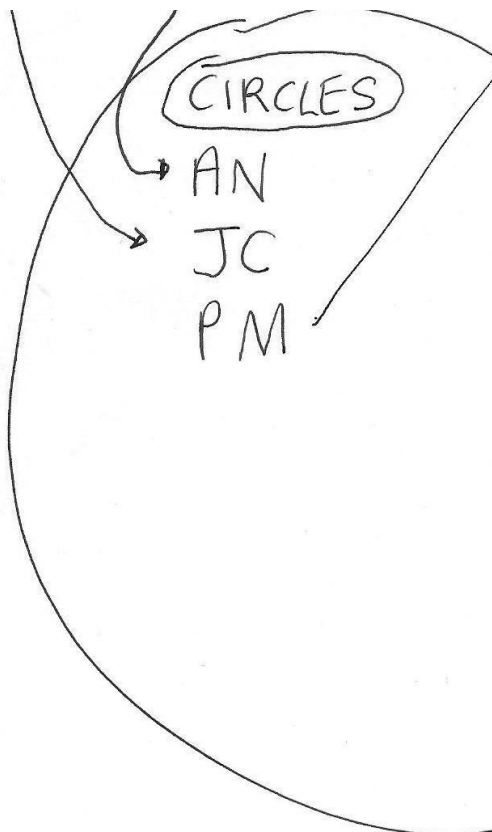
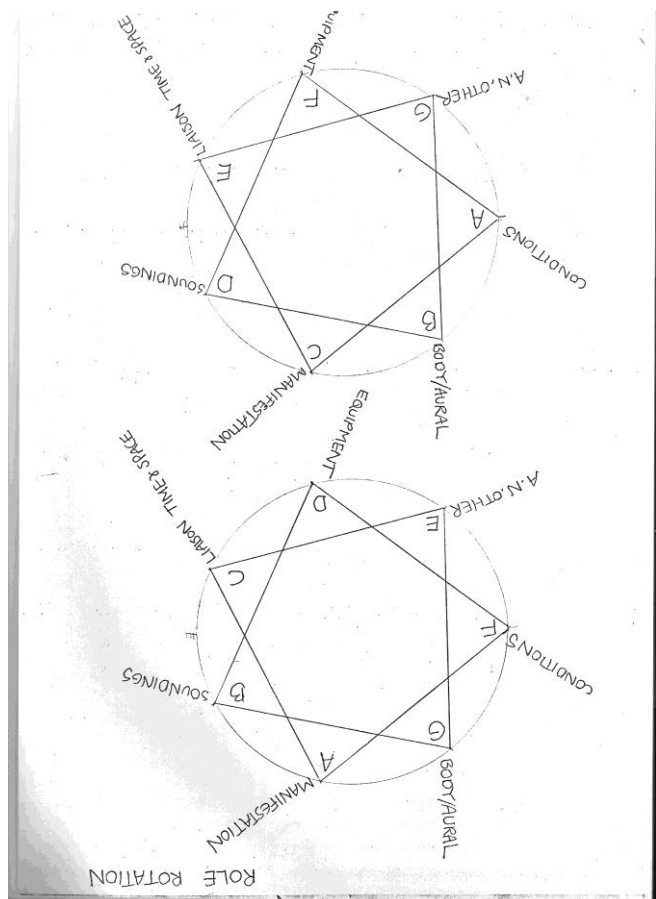
*Displacement, The **Street**, **Homage** to Pietro Longhi, **Going**, **Rape** of the Mind, **Orpheus** and **Hermes**, and **Homage** to Morandi, for those interested in the relationship to dance:*

**Ballet, Dance, Diagrams, Conceptualism, Seventies**

Or one could begin with **Chance**, then throw 3 dice to dictate which book to read next (A=1, B=2, C=3, D=4, E=5, F=6, G=7, H=8, I-K=9, L=10, M=11, N-O=12, P=13, Q-R=14, S=15, T-U=16, V-Z=17) and 4 dice to determine the page number; and so on.

The decision to cross-reference across the 16 books often results in the replication of information: something reflected in The Theatre of Mistakes **Archive**. Before attempting to catalogue the latter, I consulted archivist Jan Booth (Archives and Records Manager, Kings College, London) who urged me to resist the academic propensity to order. I began instead to relish the fact the same diagram, for instance, appeared in several contexts (on the back of a program; as part of a funding application...) and to appreciate how my readings of it shifted accordingly. Suddenly links and overlaps become clearer, the depth of social and professional relationships revealed.

Contrary to perceptions of the A-Z as a closed set, the circuituous nature of this one means it is always open-ended, never complete. With its potentially irritating instruction to "See also:" each entry attempts to entice the reader to continue their search. Since further reading inevitably entails additional "See also"s (which may ask the reader to read on or even to return to their start point) it becomes apparent this is a narrative without conclusion. (See also: **Gossip**) This way of reading reflects the entangled nature of The Ting: Theatre of Mistakes and the fact that some lacunae in the fabric can never be mended in the





Page from The Theatre of Mistakes Archive, nd, c. Summer 1975  
delineating the various roles within the group, changeable and  
determined by chance

Roles - craft 1	Accounting, Estimates (cash), Contracts, Horses & Mistakes, Correspondence, Conscience	Soundings: Documentation - Recordings, Photographs, Non-Ref. Pieces, Artwork	Conditions: Reduction, Housekeeping, Medicine, Cooking, Odd Jobs, Keeping us all specially happy	Equipment: Hops, Ting Rings, Costumes, Shopping, Hustle of same.	Boot/Ankle: Workouts, Performance, Rehearsal Workshops, Ting Exercises, Book	Time Space: Planning, Relaxation, Deadlines Meetings, Time Estimates, Place, Venue, Seeking Accommodation, & going out for the group.	A.N. Other: Rest, Romance, Personal Necessities, Recreation, Drinks & Drugs, Long & short-term needs that are personal.	Manifestations: P.R. Friends, The Ting, Front Job, The Show, Performance & Exhibition, Emergencies, Reviews, Ting in the Kitchen
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Purdies Farm, Hartley Wintney:  
ROLE-SWAPPING GAME

Amikam Toren recalls *Quilting Bee* differently, saying he walked into a silent room and the women in there all looked up from their quilt making. "That's who she means by everyone," he says, drily. "All the women." And he felt himself unwelcome.  
(Conversations: London, November 2008)

Signe Howell remembers having to urge everyone to finish it but that she grew tired of it in the end.  
(Conversations: Oslo, 13<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> October 2008)

"I did a few squares. I'm terrible with a needle."  
(Interview: Victoria Chick, London, 4<sup>th</sup> Nov 2008)

Notwithstanding the American bias of Lippard's analysis, she is correct to note the quilt has multiple centres of interest. Cf *Grids*

(32)  
diversity within monotony of women's routines"  
betraying "uniformity and disjunction", "the culture"; a "quilt is a diary of touch"  
metaphor for women's lives, for women's  
1970, the quilt has become the prime visual  
"Since the new wave of feminist art began around  
Knopf, 1983, 32-43) Lucy R. Lippard writes:  
(in *The Artist and the Quilt*. Ed. Charlotte Robinson. New York:  
**Purdies Farm**. In "Up, Down, and Across: A New Frame for Quilts,"  
Signe Lie Howell initiated this artwork at a weekend of events at

#### *Quilting Bee* (1974)

More generally, how do you remember the cultural landscape of the **Seventies**? What other artists influenced you/ were you in proximity with/ witnessed your work?  
How would you contextualise Ting in relation to **conceptualism**/post-Minimalism/systemic art/performance? Were you conscious of belonging at any point?  
How did economic considerations impact (on the aesthetic of the work/ on your decision to join/leave?)  
Were you involved in the **documentation** process? If so, did you see it as relevant?  
**Purdies Farm** – describe it. What do you associate with it?  
Describe a typical day there. What performances do you remember seeing there? What was its function for you?  
Role of **women** in the collective – in retrospect was there any differentiation?  
To what extent did personal relationships inform the work?  
Of the **Roles**, which did you enjoy?  
Which works impacted on you particularly as a performer/observer?  
How was Ting perceived by its audiences and who were they?  
What levels and forms/models of participation could you identify?  
The mistake: what do you perceive to be the function of the mistake?  
What were the limitations or failures of Ting?  
In retrospect, what was its legacy in art historical terms?

*The above questionnaire was devised by Jason E Bowman and Marie-Anne Mancio as a basis for questioning participants and observers of The Ting: Theatre of Mistakes in conversations. (2008-ongoing). However, interviewees were encouraged to reconfigure and digress. See: Gossip.*

Later works such as *Going* also draw on ritual (in this instance, the rituals of leave-taking), but by now the group's performance language is so formalised that any notion of the mystical or dreamlike that may have been present in events at Purdies has disappeared, to be replaced by structure as the over-riding concern.

14 More domestic and interior games and ritual seasons

15 Hatred of the very ritual, avoidance of representation or general art problems, not necessarily avoidance of narrative or signification — but an expression of my being rather than an acting of somebody else's.

Further reading: 'Performance Art and Ritual: Bodies in Performance' Erika Fischer-Lichte *Theatre Research International* 22(1) 1997:22-37.

And for a more general consideration of ritual: *On Ritual*  
Performance Research, no.3, Winter 1998

**Robert Janz, See Janz, Robert**

## Roles

ROLES—Autumn 1975

Longer term (approx three months max or minimum of 7 shows which are self-contained and larger shows in that period):

Manifestation. *Anthony Howell*.....  
Soundings. *Mickey Greenall*.....  
Liaison Time & Space. *Fiona Fowke*.....  
Equipment. *M. B. Paine*.....  
A.N. OTHER. *M. B. Paine*.....  
Conditions. *Mickey Greenall*.....  
Body/aural. *Anthony Howell*.....

Longer term roles for the following period to be decided unanimously.  
No person should have the same role more than twice in succession.

Notes from The Theatre of Mistakes Archive

Rabbit (random memory courtesy of Fiona Templeton)  
Anthony Howell dressed as a silver rabbit.

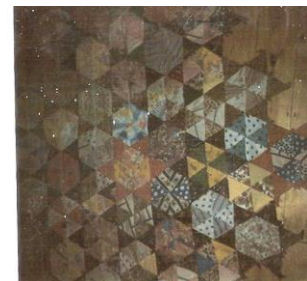
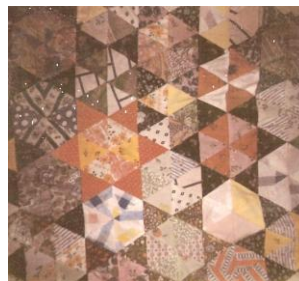
The quotidian is also apparent in The Ting: Theatre of Mistakes, use of movement which did not require trained dancers but drew instead on everyday movements; text – with the exception of *Orpheus and Hermes*; the ‘costumes’ and ‘props’

Vermeer *The Maid Servant* c.1658



Anthony **Howell** has compared *Waterfall* to the paintings of Vermeer where the simplest gesture of a woman holding a pitcher of milk becomes transformed.

Quotidian



*Quilting Bee* Signe Lie [Howell] Photos: ©The Theatre of Mistakes, The Theatre of Mistakes Archive



The quilt was not 'completed' – though perhaps completion was never the point - but has been perfectly preserved and is in the possession of Prof. Signe Lie Howell, Oslo. The above polaroids, dating to 1974, do not do its colour justice.

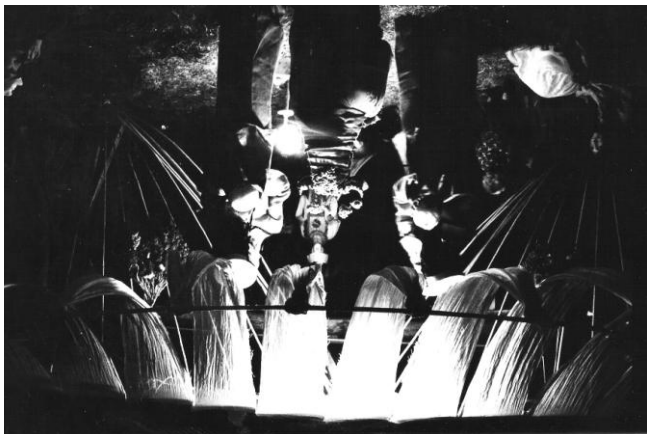


Expectation rises with the moon. Masks, moving sounds: flute, drumming, shimmering rhythms on hubcap cymbals, steel barrel drums. By taper, a conglomeration of ritual, reverberations of Moh. The priest dances with horned discards. Long preparation for initiation, snowdrifts in with black. Quiet warm smiles. Gradual clearing of cluttered barn, arranging spaces and shadows. Marshrooms from forest are gathered. Albrecht, tapere, velle come into focus. Late-winter afternoon. "Come - let's get more ferns."

and OH YUOK poured over with sacred glue. Plesh is eaten in form of mushroom putballs.

(Unpublished review labelled 'Janz', August 1974, The Theatre of Mistakes Archive)

Victor Turner, who studied what was then Rhodesia's Ndembu tribe (1950-2; and again in 1953-4), defines ritual thus:



See also: Susan Hillier, Signe Lie Howell, Anthony McCall

#### Ritual

"a stereotyped sequence of activities involving gestures, words, and objects,[e.g. masks] performed in a sequestered place, and designed to influence preternatural entities or forces on behalf of the actors' goals and interests"

(V. Turner 'Symbols in African Ritual' in JLDolgin, DS Kemnitzer and DM Schneider (eds) *Symbolic Anthropology: A reader in the study of symbols and meanings*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1977, 183)

Turner alluded to the transformative power of rituals, wherein symbols (which comprised, for him, objects, activities, words, relationships, events, gestures, or spatial units) with a multiplicity of significances were manipulated in order to unite individuals within the social order or to fulfil psychological needs. Ritual then, as a form of social drama. Turner influenced Richard Schechner (see *By Means of Performance: Intercultural Studies of Theatre and Ritual* which Schechner edited along with Willa Appel, University of Cambridge, 1990), as did Allan Kaprow's *The Seven Qualities of Happenings* (1966). Schechner sees ritual as belonging with theatre, play, games, and sport. These activities are linked by – amongst other things – their attitude to time and their adherence to rules. He asserts:

"performing onstage, performing in special social situations (public ceremonies, for example), and performing in everyday life are a continuum"

(*Performance Studies: An Introduction*, Routledge 2002, 116).

cf Erving Goffmann *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, 1959.

The influence of ritual in performance art can be seen in Beuys' exploration of shamanism and his non-verbal actions; the exorcisms of Hermann Nitsch; Marina Abramovic's durational works, Ron Athey's mutilations, and so on. Evidence of an interest in ritual occurs in the early practice of The Theatre of Mistakes, particularly in activities around the Ting and Purdies farm (Susan



The Rape of the Mind: The Psychology of Thought Control, *Menticide and Brainwashing* by Jooat A. M. Meerloo, MD, (an instructor in psychiatry at Columbia University) was last published in 1956 and explored concepts such as techniques of individual and mass submission – forced confessions, brainwashing, advertising, propaganda, fear etc. It cites U.S. Marine Colonel Frank H. Schwable who was captured by Chinese Communists during the Korean War. Schwable confessed under duress to participating in biological warfare. He later repudiated this, claiming: "The words were mine but the thoughts were theirs."

#### Rape of the Mind (1978)

#### Rain Dance

See *Active Circles*, *Englishness*

*The News*, September 1976

## Bizarre dance brings rain –as forecast!

RAIN fell just 12 hours after the end of a bizarre "rain dance" on a village green.

Members of the Ting Theatre of Mistakes, a modern art company, carried out an eight-hour dance marathon at Hartley Wintney to bring rain.

Although a spokesman for the group said he was not too certain of success the next morning rain fell on the tinder dry countryside.

The company, which performs all over the country at festivals and art galleries, carried out the marathon dance as part of normal rehearsals.

Group spokesman Pete Stickland told the "News": "Some people may think we're odd. They don't understand it."

"We put together movements similar to those performed by Druids in the early times. Many people come to watch us."

Mr. Stickland said that last Thursday's rain dance was a

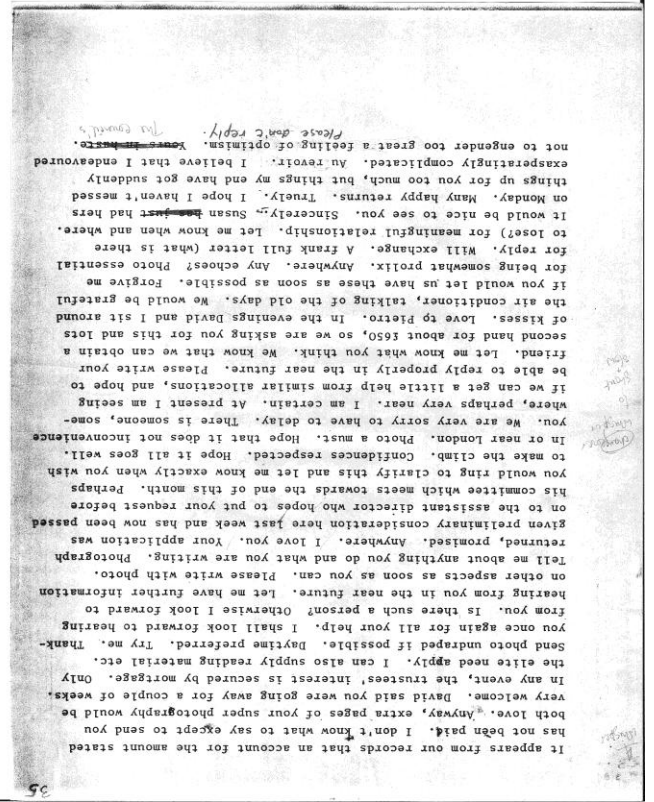
"one-off thing" in a bid to end the drought.

The group of four men and three girls aged between 24 and 30 live at a farm at Hazeley Heath.

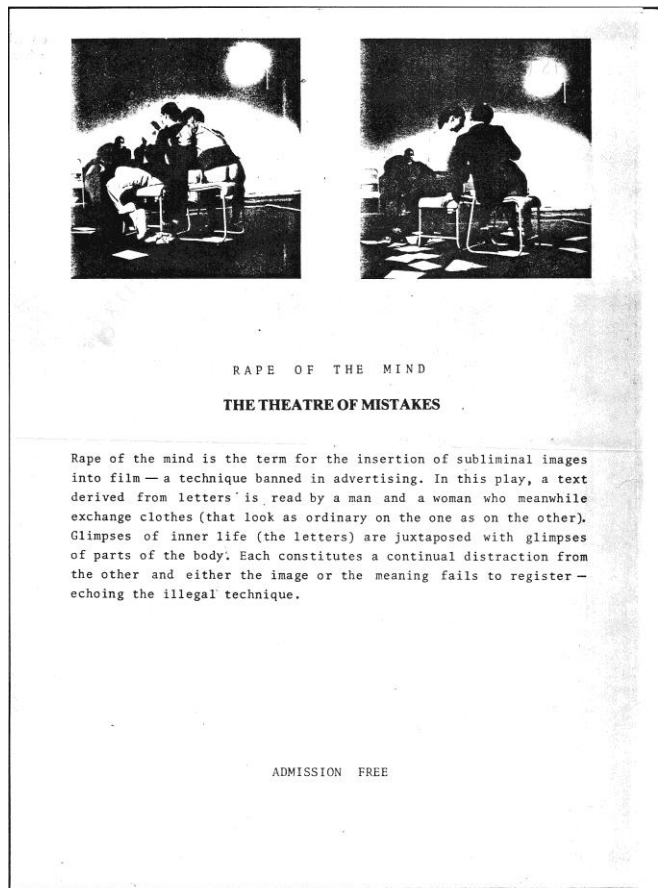
#### SURPRISES

There, another member of the group said last Friday: "We're nicely surprised with the rain, but will have to wait and see just how long it lasts. We are all very pleased with our eight hours' work."

At the met office at the Royal Aircraft Establishment, Farnborough, a spokesman said: "Friday's rain was quite expected. It was on the cards and we had it in sight for a long time."



The Theatre of Mistakes' Rape of the Mind deploys an additive and subtractive structure. A man and a woman seated at a table read from a letter, adding, removing, exchanging clothes.



Program, The Theatre of Mistakes Archive

See also: Letters

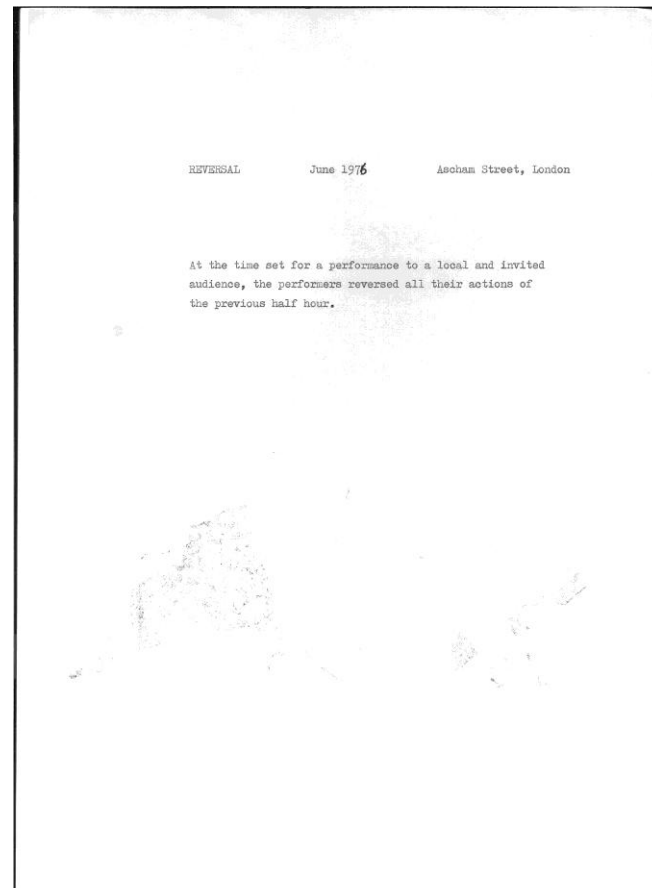
Research See: Empirical Reversal

Described by Anthony Howell as "a primary element [in performance art] similar to a primary colour in painting (in that it cannot be created by a mixture of any other elements). In analysis repetition is associated with obsession." (The Analysis of Performance Art: A Guide to its Theory and Practice, xiii, see Bibliography)

Poster for Reindeerwerk, nd



caught fire, only to be rescued by Reindeer Werk. [www.genesisp-ortridge.com](http://www.genesisp-ortridge.com)] wrapped himself in plastic and (Conversation: Howard Tong, London, October 2008)



Reviews See Critics