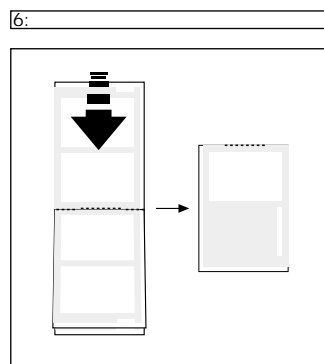
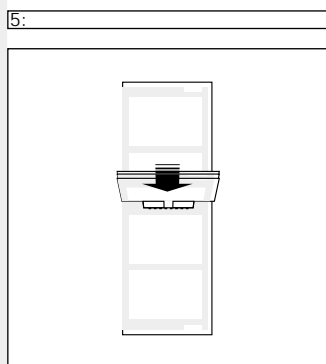
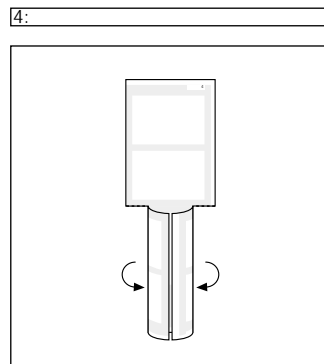
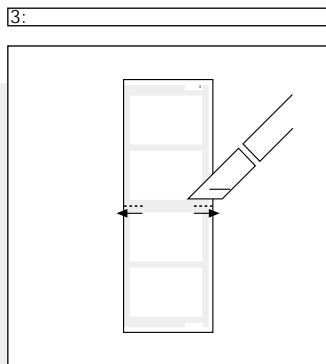
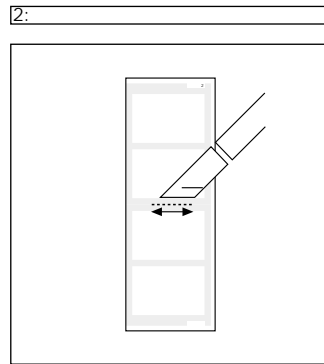
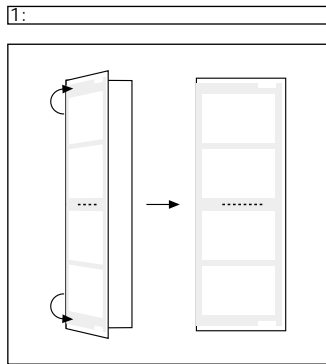


## Construction



- 1: First, fold each sheet in half along the vertical axis.
- 2: Using a craft knife or scalpel, cut a horizontal slot along the centre dotted line of the first sheet. (pages 1/2/9/10)
- 3: Then cut along the dotted lines on all the other sheets. Make sure to cut to the very edges of the paper.
- 4: Stack the folded sheets in ascending order with the even numbers at the top. Curl the bottom half of the second page (pages 3/4/15/16).
- 5: Thread the curled page through the centre slot of the first page. Repeat this process with the third (pages 5/6/13/14) and fourth sheet (pages 7/8/11/12) with the even pages in ascending order.
- 6: When all the pages have been threaded through, check the pagination. Finally, fold the booklets in half along the horizontal axis.

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THE FACT  
OF THE  
MATTER

DIFFUSION

MONICA  
ROSS  
AND  
ANNE  
TALLENTIRE





THE FACT OF THE MATTER  
Monica Ross & Anne Tallentire

www.diffusion.org.uk  
Series Editors: Giles Lane & Marcelyn Gow

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DIFFUSION Print design by:  
Nima Falatouri (www.NiMoDesign.co.uk)  
Paul Farrington (www.tonne.org.uk)  
DIFFUSION Interaction design by:  
Noel Douglas

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ISBN: 1 901540 19 7  
British Library Cataloguing-in-publication data: a catalogue record for this publication is available at the British Library  
Probooscis gratefully acknowledges the support of the Arts Council of Great Britain in funding research at the Royal College of Art in making DIFFUSION possible.





... the fact of the matter

On March 6th 2000 Monica Ross and Anne Tallentire returned to the material they had kept from a journey made to Riga in response to an invitation to make work with the artists and associates of The Creative Institute 9JR between April 2nd and 8th 1993.

"I want to write a description of Moscow at the present moment in which 'all factually is already theory' and which would thereby refrain from any deductive abstraction, from any prognostication, and even within certain limits from any judgement...."

Walter Benjamin, Moscow Diary, ed. Gary Smith, Harvard University Press, 1986.

Many thanks to Uriel Ohlow for his assistance in digitising the video material and stills.

April 1993 / March 2000.

Yes, lets leave them till later. What occurs to

now?

Do we leave these photographs in the black bag till later? Or do you want to look at those

material?

Exactly, because we haven't done that before.

Why don't we just unpack the boxes together? Not worry about the camera or the tape recorder? Let's just go through the material?

Maybe the volume of a tiny bit more?

I could put the mike a bit closer?

And the mike won't pick it up.

Maybe that will give us too much distortion.

And slow it down as well?

Lets play it low, very low, as if it is the noise within which we are actually thinking.

the fact of the matter...

Are you going to put a tape on? The knife is over there.

I was worried about these tapes getting damp.

I think maybe it is a bit loud.

That is us having tea, yes.

It is us having tea. I realise I have put the second tape on. I can't stop listening to it.

It's impossible to do anything else.

It is impossible to do anything else.

It is not background noise.

No, it's definitely not.

The good thing is that I can understand what is being said now.

Where do we begin?

If we have that other tape on while we are looking at the material... This material is also very interesting, but is it only interesting to us? How do we make what we do interesting to someone else? The eternal question!

Why don't we just unpack the boxes together? Not worry about the camera or the tape recorder? Let's just go through the material?

Exactly, because we haven't done that before.

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the fact of the matter...

Are you going to be able to focus. Is the tape going to distract you? We could have something very familiar playing in the background.

We have of course got the sea.

That meeting was an extraordinary experience. It wasn't planned. When we arrived we had no idea that Dace, who we were staying with, was a friend of Dagmar's.

The compulsion to attend to the sound of this tape is absolute.

It is very commanding.

Shall we start?

I've just cleared a space on the table.

Shall we put the other tape back on? The one that is recording what we are doing now?

Is the DV CAM on automatic or manual focus?

Is the DV CAM on automatic or manual focus?



Lithuania. We met on the platform when you

directly from there. I travelled via Poland and

interruptions the week before.<sup>4</sup> You came

No, but we came back together.

You and John were in Sheffield doing

the same outward journey, did we?

So you were already there. We didn't go on

ninety three.

The date is the twenty fifth of the third, ninety

What's the date on it?

Here is my ticket to Riga.

You've found some sweet papers too?

It's on the tape. It's the journalist speaking.<sup>3</sup>

What was that?

Plums. And they asked us if we made jam.

And then we went to that wooden summer-

house with the wonderful basement were

the sun came in like amber, caught on the

glass jars of fruit.

Plums. And they asked us if we made jam.

What was that?

It's on the tape. It's the journalist speaking.<sup>3</sup>

You've found some sweet papers too?

Here is my ticket to Riga.

What's the date on it?

The date is the twenty fifth of the third, ninety

ninety three.

The date is the twenty fifth of the third, ninety

And we performed it for them sitting in the

front of that abandoned car...

That had sunk into the sand.

There it is.

I have it here.

It wasn't breakfast, remember? It was

supper?

A porcelain cup with a chipped edge and a

fine line crack.

The tulips, petals on the tulips on the plate.

I remember that now.

Fourth of the fourth, ninety three.

Here, look, that's our breakfast.

These are notes from Asja Laci's

autobiography<sup>5</sup>

This sketch book is going backwards.

Here is my ticket back to Berlin.

That is a list of paintings in the Riga Museum.

arrived very early on the morning train of the

first of April.

I took something out of my box, now you

have to take something out of your box.

These are stills that I took from the VHS

video.

This is Riga. These pictures are amazing.

This one is from an installation. Here are

some stills of your performance with the

mirrors that you used to bring the painted

ceiling down.

Didn't you take a photograph of the ceiling

as well?

Yes and I gave you some of those stills.

These colour stills are mostly from the video

of the performance work I made with Iquna

and Ilze. I was trying to learn how to say the

Latvian alphabet and then to teach them the

English alphabet, repeating the alphabets

over and over again.

It was like a round. I clearly remember

hearing it in that room.

The missing ones you must have somewhere?



we were at the developers in Riga on the way back from Salaspils.<sup>3</sup> Do you remember the moment when we were introduced to the technician? A small rounded elderly lady in an apron, cardigan, head scarf and green wellington boots. The floor of the darkroom was awash with water and buckets?

But there was one photograph we rescued a long time ago which we kept in our office. Wasn't that on a different roll and taken on an old Soviet SLR? There's no qualitative difference between it and the other photographs although they were taken on cameras perhaps 30 years apart in technological time? They were all shot on the USSR black and white film, printed on the same paper and in the same place.

They make a copy of their faded resemblance ..... As if.....' Remind me how you came to that in subject to change.<sup>4</sup>

That performance, like this work we are making now, has a long timescale construed across excerpts from dreams, events and notes 1974 -1997. Several of the black and white

## ...the fact of the matter...

I did not realise that I had not shown you the black and white photographs in the black plastic bag and I was convinced they would disappear if we looked at them, that the fix was unstable. These photographs, faded, out of focus, are random shots taken on the train from Berlin, a series of small actions at Jakob Platz, a workshop in the studio, and some from the sixth floor of the Television Station overlooking the river Duna.<sup>1</sup> A group of strangers trying to make work together, some snaps to remember it by.

What did you think of the photographs? I have always thought they were magical things because I imagined them to be inherently flawed, unstable and incapable of functioning as photographs. I believed that they could only ever be viewed for an instant, but they are intact, preserved, hidden from the light they have become durable.<sup>2</sup>

They are like magical things. Seeing them again was mesmeric, as if for the first time. I think I must have looked at them briefly when

I am showing it to the camera. This is the lid of the jar of caviar we had for tea. We had a very nice shopping trip for food that day. Do you remember there wasn't any water that morning and we brushed our teeth in vodka?<sup>3</sup> That photograph is interesting, I'll make a note, I'll just put possible stills. Yes?<sup>4</sup> Yes. What is that?

It's another still from the VHS tape shot during the performance workshop in the art school. It's the woman we couldn't identify afterwards. So that can go over there.

These black and white photographs are ones we developed in that shop in Riga by the station and they haven't faded, have they?

Is there one of us there?

No, there isn't. I know where they are... they're in One Way Street.<sup>5</sup>

## FOOTNOTES

1. Tape recordings of an evening spent with Dagmar Krniele, the daughter of Asja Laci's, at her home in Riga.
2. 'This, to be sure, is to admit that all translation is only a somewhat provisional way of coming to terms with the foreignness of languages....' The task of the Translator, Walter Benjamin, in *Illuminations*, Schocken Books: 1968.
3. Bernhard Pletschinger, staying in the same lodgings by chance, took the opportunity to come with us to visit Dagmar Krniele. He later made a television programme for WDR (Westdeutscher Rundfunk) based on the tapes.
4. Interruptions – a performance and installation by work – seth/valentine, Sheffield Media Show, March 1993
5. *Revolutioner bei Bedarf*, (Revolutionary by Profession) Asja Laci's, ed. H. Berner, Rogner and Bernhard, Munich, 1972.
6. *One Way Street*, Walter Benjamin, Verso, 1985. Benjamin's text is prefaced by the following dedication: '-This street is named Asja Laci's Street', after the engineer who laid it through the author.'



photographs were taken by someone else providing us with photographs of ourselves together. I'm glad we have that record. What fascinates me most is that, as you say, we were all strangers and these photographs return a strange image of ourselves to us. It is as if our images have been absorbed into a different strata of technological time. They are the photos of that now, there, then. Another 1993 to the one we had travelled from. These very ordinary moments are somehow compelling because they are drenched in distance.

We were going to talk about the train journeys weren't we...?

we could do that another time...?

duplicate  
 They make a copy of their faded resemblance and put it on the wall.  
 One day a young man, who knows them well, notices it.  
 "Who's that ? - he asks. - they reply.  
 "Oh yes" he says, as if they were joking.  
 "So when was it taken ? A hundred years ago?  
 It's not really you."  
 extract from subject to change. monica ross. performance-video-text. 1998.

#### FOOTNOTES

- 1 The widely reported struggle, in 1991, for control of the Television Station was a key event in the establishment of Latvian independence from the USSR.
- 2 Photographs taken by Anne Tallentire. Photographs of Monica Ross and Anne Tallentire together taken by Norbert Meyn.
- 3 Salaspils War Memorial, a former concentration camp near Riga. In the open air a large rectangle of black stone resounds with an unfamiliar sound in a regular, but unrecognisable, pattern of interval, somewhere between a heart beat and the ticking of an eternal clock. Close by is Rumbula where several thousand Jewish people, firstly from the Riga Ghetto, and then from other cities such as Berlin, were murdered. However, the taxi driver who drove us to Salaspils said nothing had happened at Rumbula.
- 4 remains  
 Several years later and ago, maybe more or less, they walked there. It is a grainy black and white photograph. The two women are centre frame, walking in step, side by side, heads arched at the same angle, their faces turned upwards to the left. They are looking intently at something. They are looking at an exquisite detail of the street's architecture. Every tall, turn of the century, Jugendstil house has a unique facade of elaborate balconies: a surface of stone carved into arabesques. They take photographs but there is a fault in the loading mechanism and the film does not roll. This photograph, sent to them later, is all that remains. But something has slipped in the fix. No sooner do they take the photograph from its envelope, than it begins to disappear. Until their black coated figures are almost all that is left of the print. Just them, and the trace of their look, looking at something which cannot be seen.