MANUAL —
THE WILSON EXERCISES

RIVET

ANNA CRAYCROFT & MARC VIVES
WITH TEXTS BY:
TRINIE DALTON
DIEDRICH DIEDERICHSEN
RUTH ESTÉVEZ
GEIR HARALDSETH

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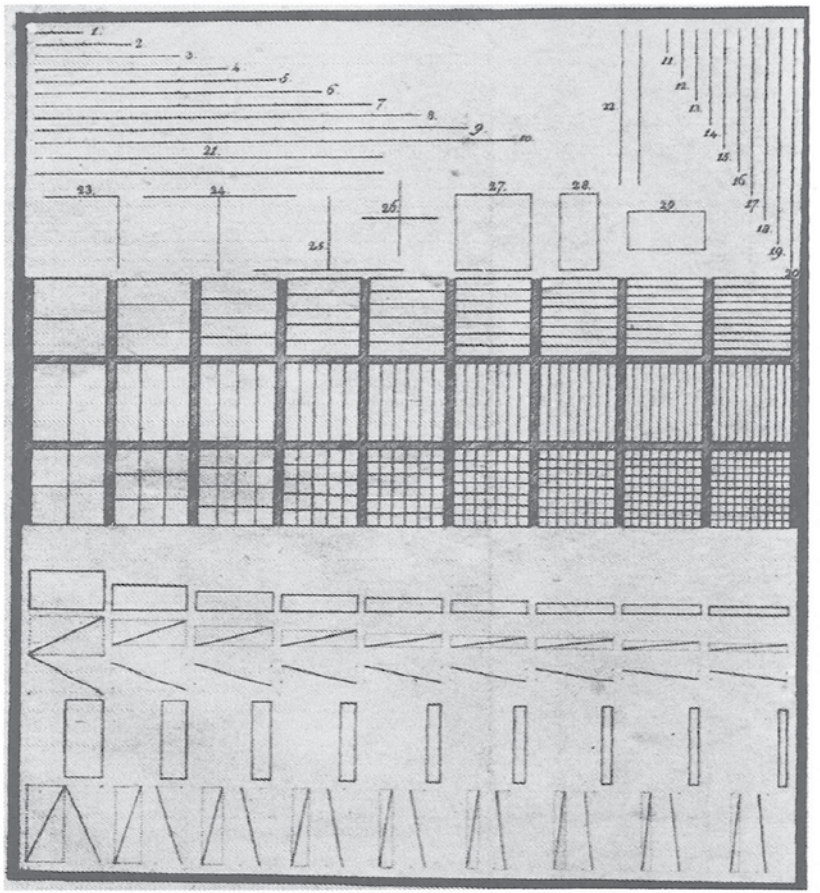
ANNA CRAYCROFT

MARC VIVES

The Wilson Exercises is a framework in which the artists Anna Craycroft and Marc Vives and the curatorial office Rivet have exchanged materials since fall 2012. It primarily involves developing a shared method and productive process that evades the evaluative and interrupts doing, making, and showing. Their exercise rhythm balances joint conversations against withdrawal into individual practice. Throughout, the curators have also put their analytical gaze on hold in favor of responses in an associative and fictional voice that engages with aspects of the artists’ material. *The Wilson Exercises* surfaced as a semipublic program at the Rogaland Kunstsenter in Stavanger, Norway in summer 2014, and took the shape of an exhibition at the Gallery at REDCAT in Los Angeles in winter 2014 and, in spring 2015, at the Miró Foundation’s Espai 13 in Barcelona. *Manual* is a fourth public facet of the framework sharing the thoughts and references that shaped the exercising.

verse



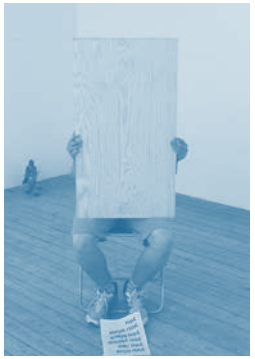
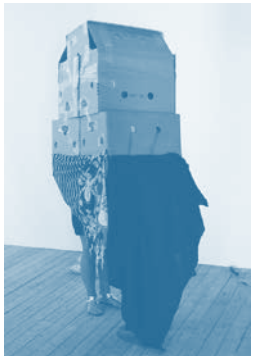
*writing to a metric rhythm

TRINIE DALTON
TO MAKE IT IS TO HABIT

Reflection about what one is going to create or what one has created alters the creative process: we think differently when we have a language to describe something. [1]

To form a habit is to make a home, for once habit is established through exercise and ritual, the body expects its routine to be satisfied whether through muscle memory, fulfilled craving, acquiescence to fixation, or revelation through thought pattern. Tradition arises through repetitive practice, and while becoming mired in tradition is often a recipe for boredom and the death of innovation, to establish tradition through habit used conscientiously as a constraint in creative endeavors can be a fruitful path that yields at least productivity, and at best brilliant unexpected results. If something cannot be deemed radical unless it is judged against that which is traditional, then habit is a key leverage for creating evolution from the tedious to the revolutionary. It is through "habit" that one can push through "routine"—which implies formula, rote activity, and tedium—transforming what has become routine into a vehicle for upheaval and alteration. In other words, habit can be a good thing.

I used to despair that I had no home because I have moved quite a bit and have made lives in various places; in actuality, these locations additively convey home to me. When I discovered that any touring musician or any artist who travels extensively shares this peripatetic sensibility, and that nomads use ritual to create home (cone of incense burned, chant or song played, food cooked, set of decorations installed upon arrival) I confirmed that home is

not necessarily dependent on its architecture. Architecture (a family house) merely offers a space in which people can actively create habits—habits are what make the home. The same can be said in the arts in regard to creative practice. When we as artists complain that we aren't making art because we don't have the appropriate studio and materials, office and writing desk, it's not the stuff or space we need but the discipline, a framework of habits that encourage production. The classroom can be ideal for establishing this; that's why so many artists attend school and artist's residencies. Quality artwork exudes habitude; it is a product of repetitive efforts that embody focus and dedication to one's craft. One can always feel habit in art; even if the art itself does not aesthetically reveal the habit, the viewer or reader can sense the artist's habit of thinking or making via a consideration of the methodologies or decisions that went into creation. Habit is poetry, is an organizational tool.

> *Thinking is an activity which takes bulky, disorganized storage in the brain, and attempts to put the pieces into a harmonious relationship. The result pleases the brain and makes the thinker happy. But to inspire such a process there needs to be a desire to communicate the happy conclusion to the world-at-large where its validity is tested.* [2]

Activities such as collecting, foraging, dancing, drawing, typing, biking, or collaborating are structural

performances that tend to fall into two categories. One, they externalize the act of thinking per Schumann's definition above, wherein thinking "attempts to put the pieces into a harmonious relationship." Or, they sublimate intellect by prioritizing physicality. Both are exciting possibilities and of course there is a spectrum between those polarities. But any performance/action implies a calibration of the body/mind relationship and it's the artist's job to navigate this synchronicity (or intentional imbalance) between the body and mind. This balancing exercise can be harnessed into habit, in order to aid the artist in their attempts to trigger or express an original state of being. Thus the creation, over time, of a garden, a novel, an album, or a body of artwork.

Consider how the creation of pattern, which derives from habitual activity, is integral to sacred art. In the development of patterning as ornament, the aestheticization of spiritual practice and the pursuit of mathematics are siblings since both disciplines seek to order chaos through locating and rendering divine proportions. Looking at math from a deficient outsider's perspective (I am terrible at math), formulating numerical equations and solving them hybridizes yoga (habit to train body over mind) and verbal, linguistic communication (habit to train mind over body) insofar as math is a symbolic language, but it seeks to express concepts that move far beyond language, into universal and perceptual phenomena. If to establish pattern is to achieve something sacred, because discovering similarities and symmetry within repetitive gestures can produce epiphany and delight, then considering math in its traditional, empirical light makes me suspect that math might be superior to art because math is unbound by materials. Well, performance is not necessarily bound to materials, either, it might just require a costume, a prop, a stage. Maybe math is performance art then, borne from a desire to problem solve and to express the results. Deciphering and decoding as empirical methodologies dependent upon endurance, reiteration, and redundancy are means into meditation on a cosmic mystery or problem in spiritual practice, math, or science. Solution requires habitual activity—not routine,

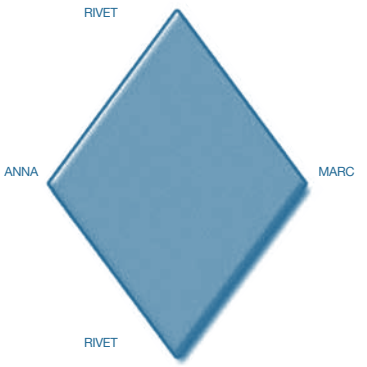
in which one makes the same decisions again and again, but habit, an inclination to keep trying and unraveling—through this, natural patterning evolves. After the pattern is established, symbolism and significance make meaning; take for example the usage of geometric forms in Indian art:

> *Continually pursuing fundamentals, Tantric art has always tried to integrate forms into geometrical and architectural patterns, the archetypes. The Bhagavata Purana says: "He perceives through the geometrical lines the forms he is to sculpture." A modern critic notes the same thing: "Geometry thus provides a plane of refraction, as it were, between the world of essential being and the world of formal manifestation..." Geometrical forms dominate the whole range of Indian symbolism, particularly in Tantric diagrams and formulae. In these the motifs aspire to absolute 'geometrical purity.'* [3]

Habit, as a "refracting" technique as Mookerjee says, is also central to non-spiritual creative practice, to linguistic and visual semiotics. Lexicons inherent to language systems, repetitions inherent to visual grammar, and sonic patterns inherent to rhythm all rely on establishing conventions then using them or breaking them. This ordering gets to the root of humanity's rapport with our environment, insofar as human experience—including the creation of art as a human activity—has traditionally been about cultivating what Anni Albers calls "points of certainty amid the confusion:"

> *Anyone seeking to find a point of certainty amid the confusion of upset beliefs, and hoping to lay a foundation for a work which was oriented toward the future, had to start at the very beginning. This meant focusing upon the inherent qualities of the material to be used and disregarding any previously employed device for handling it.* [4]

Then again, what if artists (like myself) seek to embrace chaos and to relish in the idea that the universe is



uncontrollable? If habit systematizes, does this exclude habit as a device in cultivating an aesthetics of mystery? Of course not—systems abound in natural forms, and evolution as well as the health of our planet (no thanks to humans) relies upon ecosystems whose extensive structuring are practically incomprehensible to us ape-descendants. In order to understand the rich complexity of biodiversity, for example, habit is essential in all modes of inquiry from scientific examination to shamanism; replicating the habits in a system one seeks to understand offers insight into that system. That's a fundamental idea in medicine and healing. In the arts, then, experimentation with materials to understand their derivations as well as capabilities requires habit; that's why habit often informs innovation.

> *Civilization seems in general to estrange men from materials, that is, from materials in their original form. For the process of shaping these is so divided into separate steps that one person is rarely involved in the whole course of manufacture, often knowing only the finished project. But if we want to get from materials the sense of directness, the adventure of being close to the stuff the world is made of, we have to go back to the material itself, to its original state, and from there on partake in its stages of change.* [5]

To put oneself on a schedule, to attend a class, to invent a collaboration and see what is yielded through that intervention, is to subject oneself to the benefits of habit. The beauty of self-assigned repetitive gestures is that one can change them if they're not enticing. Habitual and aleatory exercises are not as different as one might think. John Cage got this; he understood, perhaps through his studies in mycology, that systems in nature develop through repetition and repetition's interruption by chance. Just as home cannot exist without ritual, radicality depends on tradition, and systems are conditioned by chance, there is no dualism within habit. Habit permeates all of our activities, and at its core is merely a call to action.

1 Christian Leborg, *Visual Grammar* (Princeton Architectural Press, New York, 2006), 1.
2 Peter Schumann, "The Radicality of the Puppet Theater," in *The Bread and Puppet Theater*. PDFs available on their website, 1.
3 Ajit Mookerjee, *Tantra Art: Its Philosophy and Physics*, Kumar Gallery, 1966, 13. (Quote cited by Mookerjee from Alice Boner's *The Symbolic Aspects of Form*, 1949.)
4 Anni Albers, "Weaving at the Bauhaus," in *Selected Writings on Design*, (Wesleyan University Press, Connecticut, 2000), 3.
5 Anni Albers, "Work With Materials," in *Selected Writings* on Design, (Wesleyan University Press, Connecticut, 2000), 6.

"FREE" DID NOT SEEM TO WORK

RIVET IN CONVERSATION WITH DIEDRICH DIEDERICHSEN

Shortly after we began The Wilson Exercises*, we became aware of how our interest in "exercise" related to a host of long-standing queries concerning individual creation, collectivity in art making, and even the notion of labor per se. We had been privy to Diedrich Diederichsen's "Rückkehr des Kollektivs," an essay that looked at free improvisation while discussing collective forms of life and labor, dissecting the movement's yearning for rulelessness.*[1] *Though we were dealing with contemporary visual art, we felt a resonance with Diederichsen's astutely dialectical analysis of this musical phenomenon and therefore invited him to engage in a conversation with us.—Rivet*

Diedrich Diederichsen: Growing up, I had different likings for improvisation. When I was fifteen, I was totally in awe of long improvisations in rock (Grateful Dead) and free jazz, which came to be known as free music. But when I turned twenty, I found it to be escapist, inadequate, and weak, and I fell in love with punk rock. Since then, I go back and forth between these two positions, although hopefully in a more dialectical way.

Rivet: In the improvisational movements that you study, to what degree does a practitioner's interest in improvisational methods have to do with a belief in creativity as something free (as in "ruleless" but also as in "stress-free") and trans-individual? As in creativity *happens* versus creativity comes with training (and work) and is subject to development and improvement. Where does repetition or formula stand in the type of improvisation that you described?

DD: When composers like Franco Evangelisti and Ennio Morricone founded the Gruppo di Improvvisazione Nuova Consonanza in the mid-1960s, they thought that only improvised music—spontaneous composition, as they were calling it—could continue to produce something new. They still held on to the high-modernist imperative not to repeat yourself as an original artist, especially as a musician. Such avoidance of repetition or of the well known or the obvious is often like an ethical imperative for many improvisers of the first generation (Joseph Holbrooke, the Gruppo, AMM, etc.), in that they were following ideas and serialist principles like the twelve-tone method (another methodology against repetition), although they had fully emancipated themselves from this culture (i.e., the culture of the Darmstadt serialists and other serialist composers). In serialism and twelve-tone composition the ultimate goal is to avoid musical clichés by forcing oneself to follow certain rules of organization. But by the mid-1960s people like Cornelius Cardew and the members of the Gruppo started to realize that what was not repeated and only growing in complexity was leading to a cul-de-sac. So the idea of spontaneity came up but with the same goal: avoidance of clichés, forcing you to compose on the spot and under a certain stress, caused by the imperative to decide on the spot.

It might be important to remember that spontaneity as a concept could make a career only after those days. At that time it was not meant as an antidisciplinary lifestyle or a means of liberation and or even of quasi-esoteric self-fulfillment—it was considered to be a constraint for musicians who were used to working according to rules and scripts (which result from rules). But another problem was that more often than not one is less inventive and closer to cliché when under time pressure or other forms of constraint, which also lead to the esotericization of the concept of spontaneity.

Finally, some free improv people had ideas of collectivity and communication—but how can you communicate when you are constantly trying to avoid any known vocabulary? And how can you be original and on the spot if you have been programmed in highly complex and intensive music training? The new imperatives were: either follow your inner voice or listen to your collaborator, depending on whether you were part of the hippie or the socialist wing of improv—and often they worked together. It is worth noting that there were again imperatives. "Free" did not seem to work in a pure sense when someone else was involved (even if that someone else is your so-called inner self or your musical collaborator). So people like AMM developed ideas like working with boring situations, not being original by any means, being out of it for a while, avoiding the obligation to be

intense and dense, which improv inherited from free jazz. Others, like the Scratch Orchestra, did not believe so much in spontaneity but in different degrees of skill, letting trained and untrained musicians collaborate. Here Cardew's—it was his idea—thought was that only untrained musicians could help the professionals, not because they would be so romantically authentic and naive but because they would have—involuntarily—other forms of access to conventional and unconventional musical tools (voices, instruments, recording facilities). They would also transgress the traditional distinction between audience and producer. Sometimes the Scratch Orchestra was traveling with almost a hundred people plus their families. Their most (and only) recorded work consists of paragraphs from a piece by Cardew based on the writings of Confucius called "The Great Learning."

Graphic notation was another device (in Cardew, Roman Haubenstock-Ranmati, Earle Brown) in the early days before free improv but with similar goals—and finally you had people like Selten Gehörte Musik (whose members included writers like Oswald Wiener and artists like Dieter Roth), who were not so much after freedom and liberation but more interested in discovering the deeper structures and rules that run your brain—what are the determining factors, instead of what sets you free. It was about finding out what is determining your actions when you're acting in such a way that you consider yourself "free" or in agreement with your wishes, intentions, or desires.

R: For us an exercise is a strange amalgamation of something similar to a "jam session" combined with rigid instruction. An exercise is a pretext to continue a very specific interest and also provides a structure/time in which to experiment, to surprise oneself. That's why we wonder whether you also see a relation between improvisation and instruction—perhaps the planned nature of the instructions strives for a not-so-dissimilar aesthetic/ethical goal?

DD: I don't know exactly what a full-blown instruction piece might be; classical music would be a candidate or any theater play. And of course in Fluxus, in sixties avant-garde poetry and music, there were plenty of works about instructions that were impossible to follow (Paik, for instance). So all you could do was surprise yourself and anyone else. Whereas in classical music this would be what a virtuoso would tell you: after twenty-five years of practicing every day for six hours you're still, or again, surprising yourself. (Which sounds a bit ideological to me: what options does one have after having wasted most of one's life practicing? One has to romanticize it.) Mastering is, in a way, eliminating the chance of surprise; virtuosity, in that sense, is to be able to adopt the reliability of a machine in a nonmachinelike body, very much a circus-like body.

Yet the 1970s cult of self-surprise and unpredictability has resulted in the most predictable gestures and attitudes. The reply to that was either punk rock or Kraftwerk, but in the long run the necessity to develop an idea of musical openness reappeared in the post-techno decades since 2000. Many have returned to semireligious exercise-like

practices in order to be surprised by an extended exercise (both producers and recipients of many noise formats, for example); others tried to reorganize music socially along the lines of weird social parameters, such as meeting informally in an uptown Manhattan park at a vaguely fixed hour and slowly finding each other while playing (like I saw the NNCK do a few years ago).

R: The modes of collective art making (and especially music making) that you discuss are clearly from a particular time and context, but we wonder to what degree you may see similar convictions at work in more recent artistic practices. Does the contemporary market structure equally provide for pockets of "experimentation" like those you've previously noted in music? Is it really possible to improvise, whether individually or collectively, under a neoliberal paradigm?

DD: Well the neoliberal paradigm forces you to improvise. Improvisation was a rebellion against the old Fordist factory-like music production in orchestras, radio stations, and music schools—you no longer have that—so to say it is exactly the other way round would be bad dialectics (give us a hierarchic orchestra and we liberate you from neoliberalism), but there is no big ethical/political contradiction between neoliberalism and improvisation.

If you are asking whether improvised music still sells under current conditions, then I would answer that it never sold at any time and point out that it was subsidized by festivals, art councils, radio stations (though always a little less than other jazz or other new music, but still). Today it is no longer subsidized but practiced in large quantities all over the world, and practically outside the market. The Internet discographic project Discogs lists a little more than twenty thousand free improv records from all time; more than five thousand have

been released in the last four years, and another ten thousand between 2000 and 2010.

R: When discussing improvisation in "Rückkehr des Kollektivs," you stress the notions of "praxis" and "project" (as in collective improvisation is always already a project). Improvisational work is a project that needs to be made real through practice. Does that mean that this type of collective work consciously negates notions of production/product? (From what we read, it seems it certainly opposes notions of specialized producer and/or consumer, as all seem to be invited to participate.) We're wondering this as we're living in a time when everything is primarily a "project"—when products have become applications or programs that need periodic updating and so have an awareness of development over time built in.

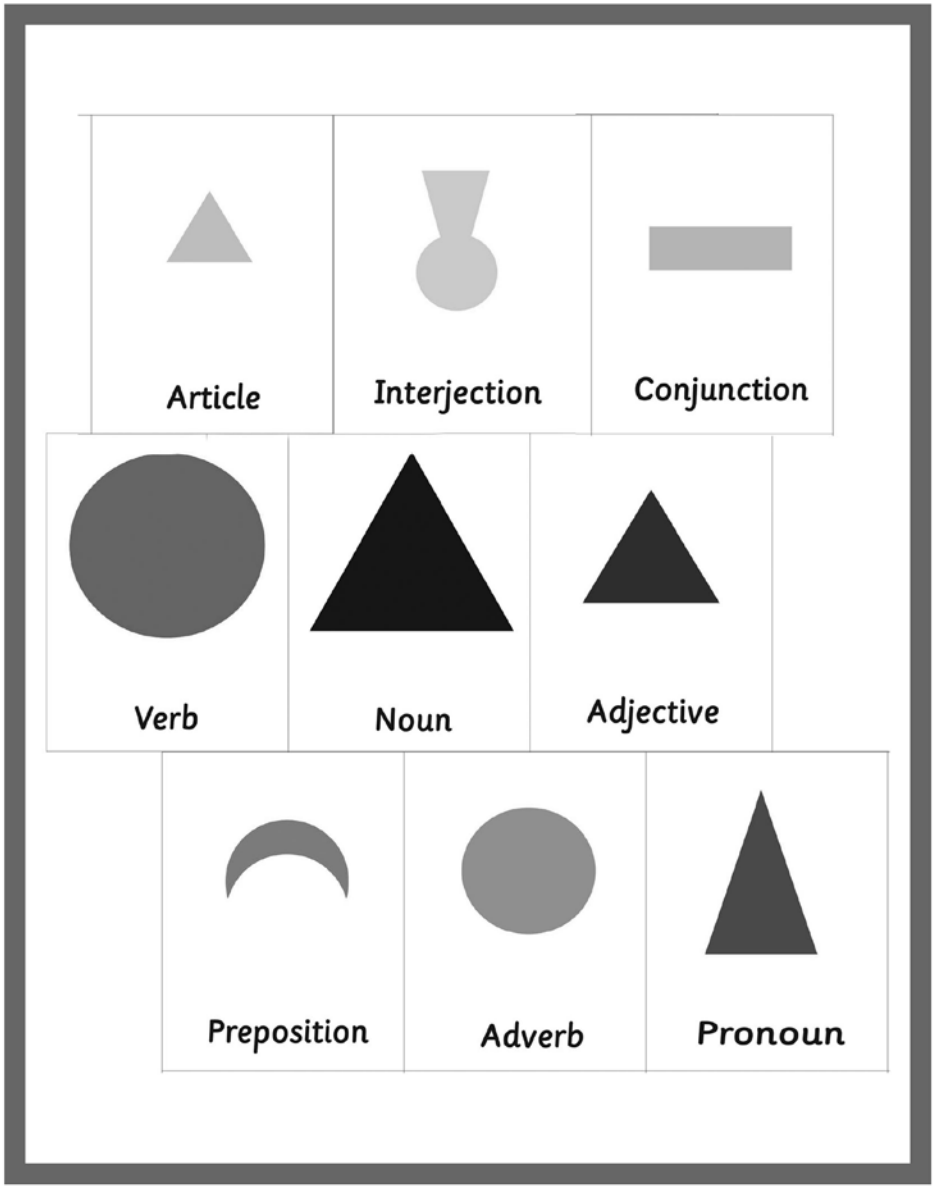
DD: The question of whether or not there should be recordings is already an old problem of jazz, which is in most cases not a free, improvised music but a partly improvised music with strong social and musical rules. Not for the sake of artistic adequacy, but for two other reasons: First, documentation. Second, even music that is meant to be heard only once can be heard better when heard again. It is edifying to know complex improvised music by heart by listening to it over and over again. This is a productive abuse, which has reinfluenced the music itself.

R: We operate in a condition in which there are more "freelancers" than ever. That means that professionalization has become a synonym for the complete merging of life and work. Does thinking about work, and in particular artistic work, as an exercise change anything in terms of labor? And, relatedly, does "improvisation" point to a rejection of such professional living in which one's work is also one's leisure? In other words, does "improvisation" point to a mode of production without that necessarily being the fruit of conscious labor?

DD: This could be a problem indeed. I rather see improvisation being a form in which you are able to play at any time and in which life and art are completely mixed but in a liberated way. Those were the collectives and hordes traveling in the 1970s and partly again in the first decade of our century. But of course improvisation in general, and especially under less romantic circumstances, is the organizational formula of how people are forced to live these days: constantly prepared to jump, to be intense, to identify, and to communicate. To continue to improvise would mean to get rid of or to critically expose the gestural and habitual mannerisms created by these conditions of life and to move beyond.

1 See Diedrich Diederichsen, "Rückkehr des Kollektivs: Ein Hintergrundessay zu 'Collective Identities,'" in Katalog Wien Modern 2005, ed. Berno Odo Polzer and Thomas Schäfer (Saarbrücken, Germany: Pfau, 2005), 66–69.

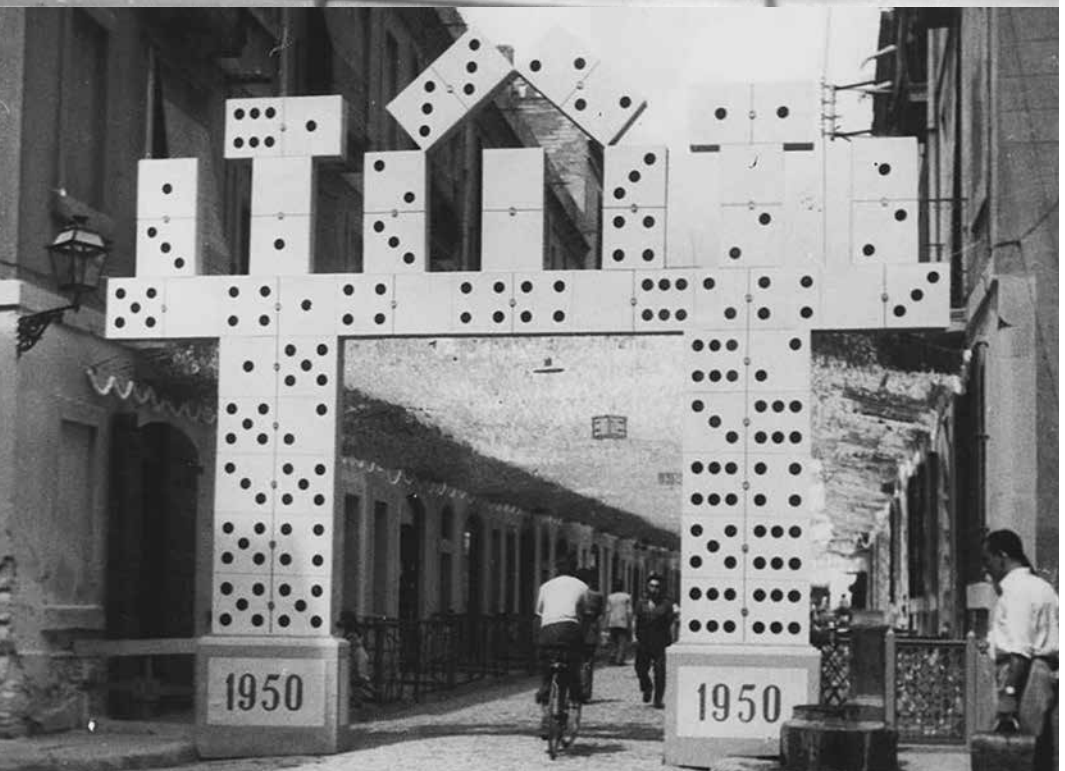
repeat



* predictable symmetries along a plane

frame

*individual picture in a sequence of images



GEIR HARALDSETH
EXERCISING THE WILSON

Most of us have a basic understanding of the concept of exercising in order to improve. We have completed our exercises in school by going over addictive additions, manic multiplications, sassy subtractions, and divisive divisions until they feel like second nature. We garner a desire to learn the rules and understand the structures that govern our lives.

As a child I had a vision of my brain exercising, developing muscles and large, pumping veins that made my nerd harder, better, faster, stronger. And as an adult I know that I am not exercising my body as much as I should. My brain is probably not as ripped as it should be. My love handles are oozing with love, and my stamina for walking up the stairs to my office decreases every day. Meanwhile the idea of exercising both body and mind is appealing, especially to my instinct to understand and improve myself. I want to be better. But working out the mind and the body are two different things, even though I wish my brain had more muscle and my handles less love.

The Wilson Exercises was an experimental program that set out to do something like this. Exercising the mind and the body. The two artists and two curators, whom I lovingly refer to as the Wilsons, worked their way through a schedule akin to a gym, providing different exercises to target different mental and physical regions. But what are the differences between the two?

The mind-body discrepancy might be more apparent in my native tongue of Norwegian, in which the word *exercise* is a slippery entity to deal with. Norwegians love to work out, meaning the physical part of working out, of blood, sweat, and tears that correspond to the idea of exercising. *Trening,*

øvelse, and *mosjon* are all associated with the body. But what about the mind? Is there no hope for improving a Norwegian's mind? *Trening* is "training," and though it is possible to train your mind, the dictionary wants us to practice slalom, to train for the world championship, and to improve our memory too. *Øvelse* is "practicing," which is important if we want to get better. Here the dictionary advises us to practice the piano, practice skiing, rehearse a song or a play, to train our leg after injury, or to practice to excel. It also offers the option to master the arts or a certain subject, to be good at something, as long as these are related to the idea of practice. To keep yourself in practice, to be out of practice, to have a staff member who is adept at typing QWERTY but needs to master InDesign. Finally, *mosjon* is related to health, and the examples in the dictionary focus on swimming and getting sufficient exercise.

While the Wilsons are suggesting an exercise routine that might be physical, they are also exercising their rights within an art context to question and confound the terms. The initial idea of the exercises was to rehearse or to come up with a plan of progressing and becoming better at something. That something was not defined in a clear sense and could be anything, including making a work of art, working together, or curating a two-person exhibition. Their lack of a clear goal is what is essential to the exercises the Wilsons were after but also something that confuses the

process of improvement, when you are not sure where to aim and are expecting a big game takedown.

Exercising the Wilson way means working out in ways you never have before. And probably never will again. The physical part is obvious, based on familiar routines that you might have done at the gym or seen in the army. But you are doing these exercises with a group of artists and curators, forcing a different context in which to see one another and in which to work (out) with one another. The mental exercises were even more challenging as they varied on a daily basis, and it was hard to measure their results in the same way as with the physical routines. After three and a half weeks with daily physical exercise, I felt good, looked better, and had better sex! But after three and a half weeks of daily mental exercise, I was exhausted and needed a holiday. Who would've thunk? I certainly didn't.

The exercises provided new ways of working together, both physically and mentally, and with varying outcomes depending on one's stamina. Collective exercising also offers a study of group dynamics and of the ways of convincing oneself of the worth of such an endeavor. Like the running of the lemmings, it's an exercise in group dynamics, gradually showing who swims and who sinks—literally . . . blub, blub—on the way to the undetermined goal of improving and progressing.

DAILY HABITS/NO ROUTINE

RUTH ESTÉVEZ IN CONVERSATION WITH RIVET

Ruth Estévez: How did *The Wilson Exercises* begin? Or what brought you there? And how would you explain *The Wilson Exercises* in relation to Rivet's other projects and interests?

Rivet: We had been pondering the notion of exercise for a while. When we were working on an exhibition in Belgium in 2012,[1] a few artists kept using the term *exercise* to describe the way in which they displayed their work. We were attracted by this idea of a supposedly pristine gallery presentation as an exercise, by the idea that things didn't quite end there. These artists' approaches also signaled a synergy between the shown (the object) and the person who shows (the artist): it's as if they met halfway between subject and object, learning from each other. This relates to something we've been circling around a lot since we started working: the question of cocreation and codependence between objects and subjects, as well as our lack of really understanding objects beyond the fact that we deal with them on a daily basis. As curators who are not affiliated with an institution, we've tried to be consistent through the handful of questions that we come back to, and because of that, one

project leads to another. In the end they become all connected, a little bit like an exquisite corpse.

More remote influences for this specific project were Ignatius of Loyola's *Spiritual Exercises* [1548], one of the first "self-help" handbooks, in which the author outlined a spiritual training of the self that is very much focused on regimenting time in order to sharpen the imagination. And there was also the *Ejercicios espirituales en un túnel* of Jorge de Oteiza, a renowned Basque sculptor of the mid-twentieth century, a text for artists with which we had become familiar thanks to artists and colleagues from the Basque Country.[2]

RE: What made you connect with Anna Craycroft and Marc Vives (who, I believe, didn't know each other or each other's work) and see them as potential collaborators—with you but also with each other?

R: We shared those interests and experiences with both Anna Craycroft and Marc Vives because we felt the type of work they made and the lines of research they developed in their individual practices shared a great deal of that same spirit. It is true that they did not know of each other beforehand, and for us it was challenging as well as worthwhile to have them meet and potentially work together. We felt that beyond the differences in context or formal articulation, they shared concerns that had to do with transformation, learning through doing or experience, and analyzing or expanding learning and unlearning dynamics. And they had both worked in unusually collaborative or participatory settings.

RE: It seems that for you exercise is related to a way of dealing with work, practice, and process. So I wonder how the exercising together happened?

R: Our premise was that the project existed and started as soon as our conversation started. That is why *The Wilson Exercises* goes from preliminary doodling and getting to know each other to concrete work-in-progress, to the semipublic residency we did over the summer at the Rogaland Kunstsenter in Stavanger, Norway, to individual concentrated studio time and the exhibitions at REDCAT and Espai 13 (Fundació Joan Miró, Barcelona). All are equally relevant for us, even if it seems that REDCAT and Espai 13 are the final products. *The Wilson Exercises* is in itself a long-term exercise of doing and thinking together without a finite apotheosis or closure; instead its goal is to affect the artists' practices as well as our own.

We were also very much attracted to the possibility that the notion of exercise could disrupt curator/commissioner and artist/executor divisions. We hoped it could allow for an unexpected togetherness as well as timely withdrawals. Thus far *The Wilson Exercises* has done that to an extent, because in the end there is a (necessary) division of labor and expertise, especially in the communication with institutions, which ensures that things happen.

In regard to your observation about exercise as a way of dealing with work: some may indeed say that exercise, or the way we treat it, has a more metaphoric meaning than simply staying fit. What we do is not the type of body toning that you might associate with a Californian image of bodily health. Our exercise is more related to the kind of exercises you did in school to learn useful skills or techniques. Whereas assignments are evaluated and graded, exercises aren't, but they somehow lead to better grades. In that way, exercises are quite predictable. At the same time, there's hope for magical yet willed transformation, for something new at the other end.

All in all, what we like about the term exercise is that it's rather unpretentious; it doesn't carry the surprise effect of experiment or doesn't pretend to be intellectual speculation (a term that has been much used over the last five years). A studio or a gallery is not a lab or a think thank: there is an engagement with materials, a coming back over and over to what may seem mere details. That's not to say that there is no intellectual component to exercising.

RE: Let's talk a bit more about the idea of exercising in terms of routine and repetition in *The Wilson Exercises*, similar to the school training. In particular, I'm curious about the relation of routine to artistic practice but also about the possibility of getting rid of routines, and of favoring new ways of learning. Is there something in exercise as you or the artists see it that deals with the relation of exercise to improvement (of a movement, a thought, a specific ability)?

R: With *The Wilson Exercises*, we stand still at the practice of exercising. To us, exercise happens between two poles: that of habit (routine, maintenance, repetition) and of intuition (improvisation, surprise).

When *The Wilson Exercises* started (in fall 2012), it had a lot to do with organizing time: how were we going to create something together over a distance? And we were keenly interested in taking the time to see what happens along the way, to consider closely work in progress. We devised a structure (spatial and temporal) that allowed us to share materials over periodic intervals. Ideas developed individually, but there was cross-pollination. In that respect, our common exercising was more about a certain common routine than about actual literal repetition. All in all, the ebb and flow between structure and disruption (or between routine and getting rid of routine, as you mention) that emerged reflected already existing interests:

Marc Vives had consistently looked into modes of unlearning or of nonrational expression, whereas Anna Craycroft looked at and created models and structures.

In regard to the new ways of learning, we think this point is very connected to Anna Craycroft's individual practice. Her research on early pedagogy is precisely an attempt to look at how these languages of/for learning are translated in other media and how they can express a whole new insight, or language even, in a distinct context. For her it is also very much about doing something with the pedagogical as a language and as an aesthetic: it is learning through making. When you talk about learning things anew, you could say that Marc's work has such an effect: it proposes different ways of doing daily activities inspired by popular culture, and it displaces or disconnects these actions from their natural environment or sense of place. By doing this, he looks closely at habit and at the structures that can suspend habit—hence his interest in the urban and in corporeal architectures of the time of exception that is carnival. Certainly the relearning that you may notice in Marc's work defies the idea of improvement.

RE: I'm thinking about something very common in the world of dance: corporeal or muscular memory. It implies that certain movements are "grafted" into the muscle and that repeating them happens unconsciously—the body retains thoughts, memory, and meaning. (I, for one, vividly remember being in music school, where I would have to train my fingers for five hours each day. Even mistakes would remain recorded in my fingers' memory.) That's all to say that the body is an archive that preserves and that can reactivate things learned. For me, the best example of the use of such muscular memory is Yvonne Rainer's *Trio A* [1965].

R: These are telling and key examples indeed. There's also a great work by Nina Beier based on reactivating that muscular memory, *The Complete Works* [2009]—extremely touching and absorbing.

But for us, the idea of exercise had less to do with body conditioning. While there are certainly similarities between the way we aimed for individual "training" in the privacy of the studio (a great example here is how Anna Craycroft, during the first five months, took to making daily watercolors, as if in a mechanical ritual), we saw the entire project, with its several phases (preliminary publicity, Stavanger's discursive/social nature, and Los Angeles's and Barcelona's exhibition forms) as a single sustained exercise in honing our common ideas and stimulating one another's creativity. What you mention about the play between individual and common realization is certainly key here too.

RE: I'm also thinking of other references that were explored by Andrés Jaque in his recent work with REDCAT: eurhythmics as created by Émile Jaques-Dalcroze, Adolphe Appia's stage designs, or Heinrich Tessenow's architecture for the so-called Gartenstadt in Dresden (aka Hellerau). These were post–World War I utopian experiments aimed at creating a space in which all the workers of the city's textile factory could try out routines every morning. Everybody would gradually learn to do the same movements and so create a group harmony

that could be extended into the workplace. They would do this on a pristine white stage without an audience. Jaque contrasts this phenomenon with break dancing from the 1980s, a collective practice in which, starting from a single rhythm, the participants can do their own movements.

R: We actually also talked about the Hellerau example when we were thinking of the relation between time and collective time management and creative production. Perhaps the closest we came to enacting something like that ourselves was at the Rogaland Kunstsenter in Stavanger, where we all had a one-hour warm-up physical routine in the morning. The idea was that it would help us overcome certain blockages and get the juices flowing for the rest of the day, which was all about studio practice. We never intended our exercises to become a template for others, so in that sense it's hard to draw this parallel further.

At least in spirit, what we did is much closer to break dancing than to rhythmic gymnastics.

RE: In spatial terms, I was wondering about the notion of *parcours*. It's a word that has a military origin: it is about avoiding obstacles in the battlefield. The term has also been used to talk about cities, especially in relation to developing new ways of walking through the city (think, for instance, of the *dérive*). These new ways of walking also relate to disrupting conditioned movements.

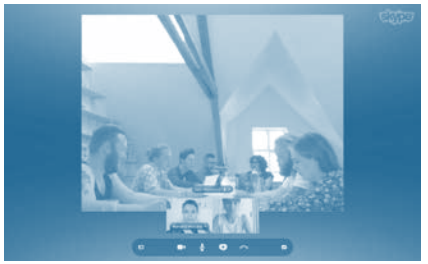
R: In terms of the overall *Wilson Exercises*, you could say that the city we aimed to walk in differently is the overall process of working together toward a final two-person exhibition. We wanted to unfold the entire process, get lost or dwell on smaller aspects, and connect what may seem to be a finished entity (the exhibition) with something more open, ongoing.

Spatially, exercises often come with stations and specific actions at a certain place. They are often superposed onto an existing city map. We considered this spatial characteristic for the exhibition as well, but we quickly realized that an art exhibition always already implies a *parcours* (each work or cluster of works by default requires a specific engagement or action), so it would be all too forced to literalize that in the exhibitions in Los Angeles and Barcelona.

RE: When *The Wilson Exercises* had its first public manifestation, at the Rogaland Kunstsenter (July–August 2014), it took the form of a summer school. It borrowed from the summer camp format: there were a lot of outings; the spirit was upbeat. How did this happen? And for REDCAT, the project's second public articulation, you have chosen the title *The End of Summer*. What do you imply here?

R: In Stavanger, *The Wilson Exercises* functioned as the first iteration of a summer school that the Kunstsenter is trying to develop. Our premise was initially fairly simple and not so much about summer camp or school even: the proposition was that we had fixed individual studio time and that some of the exercises the artists did would be open to the public (and would be the content providers for the school). It was a program that mirrored the sharing and withdrawal dynamic that we had developed among the four of us. It turned out that both Marc and Anna were very interested in the physical terrain, in exploring the relation between their individual interests and the actual field: hence the trips, the language to motivate people to join, or the scenic pictures.

When that summer residency ended, we had a feeling of transformation (personal and artistic), and we thought it was worthwhile to tune into. *The End of Summer* refers to accumulated experience,



to an awareness of change and to looking forward to more. And on a more anecdotal level, we also work in different hemispheres, so for some of us it's summer when others are freezing. Talking about summer when it's winter in Los Angeles suddenly makes you aware of the local nature of seasons.

Similarly, when we go to Barcelona in March, we will tune into the feeling or insights that emerge when working together with you in Los Angeles.

RE: You've noticed that the references that come to my mind have much to do with collective training, with a democratizing of sorts. Your project, however, seems to want to say something about a way of producing, about an economy of sorts.

R: That's right. While exercise is often associated with a self-determined work for and on the self spawned by late capitalist notions of labor, we aim to decouple it from all-too-strong notions of subjectivity or self-fashioning and think about exercise as an entity that supersedes distinctions between subjects and objects, doers and done-tos. We propose looking at the artwork, from beginning to exhibiting, as an exercise that implies artists, matter, curators, and technology. *The Wilson Exercises* has public products but is as much about process and upkeep. Together with Anna Craycroft and Marc Vives but also with our hosts Rogaland Kunstsenter, REDCAT, and Espai 13 at Fundació

Joan Miró (Ane Agirre Loinaz and Juan Canela), we've followed an economic principle that equally depends on exercise's other: falling off the wagon, missing goals, divagation.

1 *Esta puerta pide clavo*, Galerie Tatjana Pieters, Ghent, June 3–August 26, 2012.

2 Jorge de Oteiza, *Ejercicios espirituales en un túnel: De antropología estética vasca y nuestra recuperación política como estética aplicada* (San Sebastián: Lur, 1983). Oteiza completed the book in 1965, but it was not published until 1983 because of censorship.

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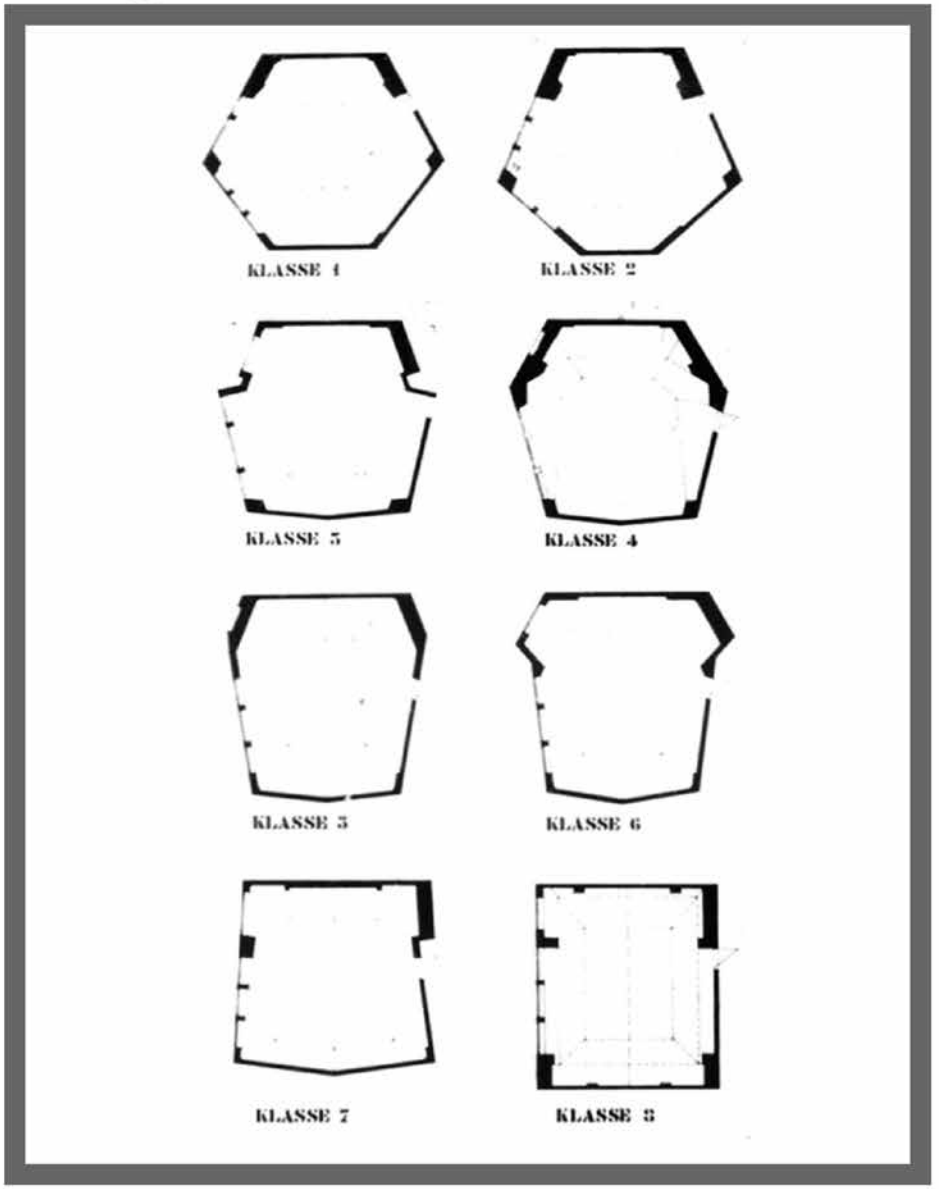
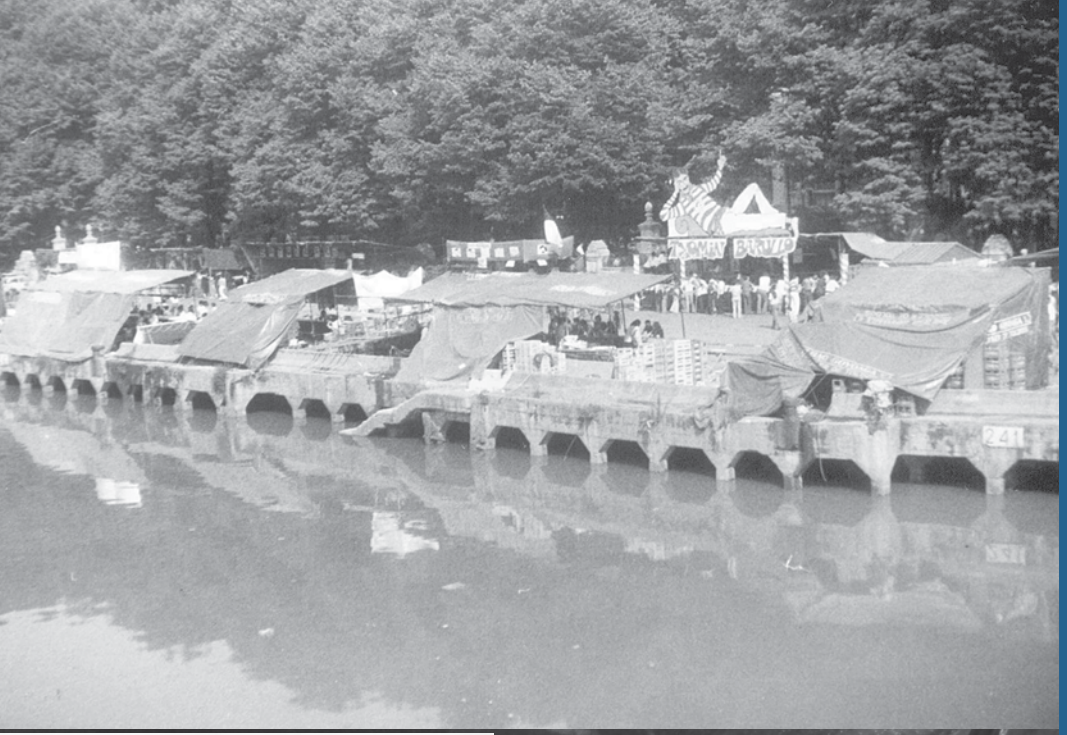
dynamics



*the expressive quality of human movement



REDCAT — Roy and Edna Disney/CalArts Theater
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www.redcat.org

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Rivet (Sarah Demeuse and Manuela Moscoso)
Guest Curators
http://rivet-rivet.net

Ruth Estévez, Gallery Director and Curator
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