

THE SCHOOL OF MAKING THINKING

PHILOSOPHY

Embracing the Unknown. We recognize that people, processes, and institutions are always growing and changing and don't occupy a position of stability. As artists, we strive to make this instability generative. In admitting to never fully knowing how things will happen until they happen, we believe that SMT's fluidity and non-sedimented nature can allow for exciting unfoldings.

Play. Life can sediment into boring and painful habits. We hope to provide a respectful environment for playing with the habitual. From colorful and strange signage, to desks in the woods, to role playing with multitudes of voices and props, we encourage creative spontaneity.

Spontaneity. Sometimes one-off rituals, sometimes dance parties, sometimes in-depth conversations--spontaneous creative occurrences are absolutely integral to the culture of SMT. We encourage individuals to go with an impulse and fashion whatever spontaneous collective creation calls to you.

Process over product. While we like good art products as much as the next art maker, we think that sometimes creation practices can become rigid when the focus is always on an end-goal. We hope that SMT can be a space where you can focus more on the shifting growth of your practice, allowing space to discover the creation you are, instead of the creator you think you are.

Communal living. Living together in secluded locations can foster great productivity, but we also recognize that it can be very hard sometimes. In the momentary intentional community that is SMT, housekeeping, cooking, and sharing are ways of tending to our own and each other's care. With this, we encourage life and art to bleed into each other in ways that we haven't experienced in non-communal settings. The way this happens can look different from session to session but the joys and tensions of living together have been an essential part of SMT.

Conversation. Deep, thoughtful conversations that arise intentionally or accidentally are an integral aspect of thinking. Conversations, unlike some written texts and lectures, are unforeseen, unpredictable, embodied and deeply personal, often allowing theory to be more accessible or thinking practices to unfold in new directions.

Developing a Mutual Language. We've found that seeing, reading or listening to the same texts (which includes written texts, works of art, sonic pieces) helps the group develop mutual reference points and a common language. We value that these texts come from a wide range of traditions and encourage individuals to bring texts that inspire their practice into a collective setting.

Activism. Creating alternative learning spaces is, for us, a form of activism. We have had many residents in the past who have expressed activist-space burn-out, particularly in finding that they couldn't sustain themselves emotionally in "activist spaces." Lots of the staff here have had similar experiences. Within SMT, we want to create a space to talk/think/do activism that also feels sustainable, productive, and GOOD. We know it's not always possible but we think it's more possible than not.

Anti-oppression. Sometimes SMT can feel like being in a bubble, but we recognize that it is not secluded from the power relations that shape us and the world we live in. We strive to open space to look at, talk about, and shift those larger systems that move and are moved by us. Because everyone entering into this space (including staff!) comes from very different backgrounds, the form that this thinking and doing takes is different every session and might not be in forms that feel familiar. We invite and strive to embrace those who want to open space to delve further into how we can undo systems of power on an inter-personal level during our time together. We want residents themselves to step forward if they feel the desire to facilitate these conversations!

Emotions. Feelings happen! A lot! Especially when you live together! SMT realizes that our emotions are a vital part of art and thought and doesn't want to extricate them from our collective experience. We know that talking about feelings is not always comfortable or fun for everyone but we think it's important that we do it.

Experimenting outside of your comfort zone. The collisions of different practices and ways of living can often be disorienting. We think that, within certain limits, moving outside of our comfort zones is one of the gifts that these collisions bring. Many residents have found that their practice has transformed in unexpected and amazing ways. This being said, we don't push anyone to do anything they don't want to and we strive to always respect personal boundaries. Instead, we articulate this as a mode of openness toward entering into SMT.