

THE SCHOOL OF MAKING THINKING

A Venn diagram consisting of two overlapping circles, positioned behind the word 'MAKING' in the main title.

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## SUMMIT ON A SUMMIT 2

*Group Hike May 26 - June 1 (2015)*

“Summit on a Summit” is a perambulatory gathering on the mountainous Catskill summits of individuals curious about how our creative practices, our selves and our world are re-shaped through the process of walking in nature.

In 2015 our hike will involve 2 groups of 8-10 hikers walking similar paths but in different directions. The two groups will start the hike together, then separate to walk paths that will ultimately intersect in a culminating art salon on a summit. Although a large portion of the hike will be devoted to allowing spontaneous occurrences to unfold, there will be two structured components: one for the time we are together as a large group and another for when we are with our smaller groups.

**All together:** In the first meeting each member of small group A will give another member of small group B an object which will be the fodder for 5 minute performance to be enacted at our later meetup--an art salon on a summit. **Apart:** Each participant will be responsible for leading a site-specific workshop/lecture which explores this fluid, mobile, and circumambulatory connection between our creative selves and our world as both natural and artificial. We will ask for a short written description of your workshop one month before the hike begins.

All participants are required to have backpacking experience and to be physically prepared for moderately strenuous hiking. Each day will involve 6-9 miles of hiking. SMT will provide both food and transportation to and from the hike starting location and NYC. Hikers are responsible for supplying the following: sleeping bag (rated to 32 degrees or colder), a tent (sharing is an option), a suitable hiking backpack (recommended 50 liter volume), at least two 1-liter water bottles, and a flashlight/headlamp.

## RE-RE-MAKE: AN IMMERSIVE PERFORMANCE LAB

*June 16 - July 6 (2015)*

*Context largely determines what is written, painted, sculpted, sung, or performed.*

*We unconsciously and instinctively make work to fit pre-existing formats.*

*Opportunity and availability are often the mother of invention.*

-Excerpts from David Byrne, *How Music Works*

Art is a product of the circumstances from which it is born. How can we enliven our circumstances through our work? How can we consciously curate our culture?

In this session, we invite artists who want to incorporate performance into their work (whether you consider yourself a performer or not) to undergo an intensive performance lab. Performance in this case is a highly flexible term, brought into the limelight to be stretched, challenged and explored collectively. For example: what are the performativities of sculpture, painting, and other mediums not traditionally viewed in the context of performance?

Because we are interested in questions of process and how to incorporate a culture of feedback into the session, we expect participants in this session to present work a number of times throughout the session. As a group, we will practice giving each artist our conscious attention and create "response art works" (as inspired by the work of artist and teacher, Matthew Goulish) as an alternative to the traditional art school critique model of viewing work.

The group will be invited into work via participatory rituals, response pieces, experimental audienceship, and making work collaboratively. No one in the session will be an artist in isolation; rather we will live within each others' work and process. We invite applicants who are looking to shake up their current practice and invite others into that process. We welcome open-minded and open-hearted collaborators of the intersection of art and life.

## TIME AS STRUCTURE, TEXT AS SUBSTRATE

July 9 - 29 (2015)

*Substrate: 1. The material or substance on which an enzyme acts 2. A surface on which an organism grows or is attached 3. An underlying layer; a substratum*

This three week session is an interdisciplinary exploration of structured process and primary texts. Residents will enter the session with a chosen text that they are excited to work with closely. Whether a book of philosophy, a manifesto, an essay, a poem, a newspaper quote, an oral history transcript, a work of critical gender studies, a scientific argument, or a challenge to the notion of text itself, this primary source will become a substrate which feeds and develops each individual project and the creative process of the group as a whole. Within the first few days of the session, each participant will propose a creative project of any medium (performance, writing, sculpture, sound, video, dance, painting, etc) to work on for the duration of the residency. This project will act as a catalyst to actualize, manifest, explore or question the ideas within their chosen text.

With the hopes of developing a rigorous community of focused work, this session will be highly structured. The following is a sample schedule: Each morning, residents will gather for a short meeting. Late mornings to mid afternoons will be devoted to individual work. Late afternoons will be dedicated to trying out methods of textual activation in small groups, before a communal dinner.

We will occasionally break this rigorous daily routine with field trips to neighboring residency programs, guest artist workshops, and experimental group activities. These extracurricular activities will be aimed at sharing our texts and exploring ways of manifesting ideas into action. As both an experiment in text interpretation and structured creative practice, we hope this session will offer artists and thinkers a fruitfully unfamiliar yet rigorous playground.

## A SUMMIT ON A SUMMIT

*May 27 - June 1 (2014)*

*Now I see the secret of the making of the best persons,  
It is to grow in the open air and to eat and sleep with the earth.  
Here a great personal deed has room.*

-Whitman, Song of the Open Road

“Summit on a Summit” is a perambulatory gathering on the mountainous summits of the Catskills of individuals curious about how our creative practices, ourselves and our world are re-shaped through the process of walking in nature. Each participant will be responsible for leading a site-specific workshop or lecture which explores this fluid, mobile and circumambulatory connection between our creative selves and our world as both natural and artificial. In addition to these structured presentations, a large portion of the hike will be devoted to allowing the spontaneous to unfold. The hike will conclude with a closing event left open for participants to present some “findings” or activity that comes to them through the process of the hike itself.

All participants are required to have backpacking experience and to be physically prepared for moderately strenuous hiking. Each day will involve 6-9 miles of hiking. SMT will provide both food and transportation to and from the hike starting location and NYC. Hikers are responsible for supplying the following: sleeping bag (rated to 32 degrees or colder), a tent, a suitable hiking backpack (recommended 50 liter volume), at least two 1-liter water bottles, flashlight/headlamp.

## BETWEEN NATURE AND CULTURE // RECONSTRUCTING WILDNESS

June 7 - 27 (2014)

Why is wildness so enticing? Why is it especially exciting to those with creative practices? Can we embody it? Can we take from it without destroying it? What are the political and colonial histories that affect our view of what “wild” is and means? Is “wild” reliant upon the long-held belief in a division between nature and culture?

Charlotte Turton's course *Becoming Wild* will explore the possibilities of human and cultural wilding through a series of active seminars. Moving through three phases of engagement: Abandonment, Absorption and Anarchy, the course will traverse a wide range of texts including the writings of J. Jack Halberstam and George Monbiot, examine strategies for the letting go of self-constructs and explore the personal and group psychologies that connect every human to becoming their inner wildness. Through a variety of experiential techniques such as storytelling, slow play and performed discussion, together the participant group will move towards the development of investigations that spring from the unknowns of The Wild.

**Charlotte Turton**, an interdisciplinary artist and researcher whose work explores the enactment of new rituals, the challenges of self and collectively organised structures and the use and proliferation of anarchic principles in relation to wildness, both human and environmental. In 2013 Charlotte co-organised *Merz DIY: A UK-based residential summer school for artists and an experimental space for interdisciplinary practices within a temporary creative community*.

## UNTHINKING/UNKNOWING

*July 1 - 21 (2014)*

How can one make thinking? According to the contemporary French philosopher Gilles Deleuze, we cannot. Thinking is always something that happens when we are least prepared, unexpected, unknowing. For Deleuze: to think is to create what we do not know how to think.

This session will be a collective exploration of the question: how we can think what we do not know how to think? During the first week of the residency we will hold an intensive seminar led by Danièle Bourque. This seminar will explore thinking and the unknown through the conceptual framework of French philosopher Gilles Deleuze; however, there will be no reading of Deleuze, or any other text for that matter. Rather, Deleuzian concepts will be activated through a series of exercises modeled off of the somatic techniques of Roberto Freire and the critical pedagogy of Paulo Friere. This first week intensive will contain an extremely physical portion and a portion that is focused on exploring specific words through lecture and conversation, all in the attempt to enter into relation to thinking.

Following this one week intensive Benjamin Korta will offer a series of courses that come about as a response to the unknown grounds opened up during this first week. This will be accomplished through a closer relationship to theoretical texts, discussion and phenomenological and meditative exercises. This section of the session will be less intensive in that its content will be delivered over a 2 week period with less frequent class meetings.

**Benjamin Korta**, a teacher, poet, and translator, has taught SMT courses on Merleau-Ponty and Mysticism, both of which have relied upon interweaving texts, movement, discussion and experiential exercises. Korta teaches French and is training to be a chaplain at the New York Zen Center for Contemplative Care.

**Danièle Bourque** is a teacher, researcher, and spiritual caregiver for the dying. She has attended Deleuze's seminars at the Université de Vincennes, co-founded a Grotowski research group for Quebecois performance artists, and has taught undergraduate courses on Contemporary Mythology, Rhetoric and Theater.



## **NOMADOLOGY & BEING-NOT-AT-HOME**

*June 10-July 1 (2013)*

Participants explored the session theme in three ways: through their own creative practices, through collaboration with others, and by participating in one of three classes offered during session A, each of which engaged nomadology & being-not-at-home from a different perspective. Unlike in previous years, session A residents did not submit a project proposal with their application. Residents spent the first four days of the session thinking and exploring the session theme in broad strokes. On the fifth day of the session, they submitted a project proposal describing how they planned on continuing their exploration of the session theme during the remainder of their stay. Session A culminated in a group show that features residents' processes, ideas and work around the subject of nomadology and being-not-at-home.

### **Theme Description**

Nomadology & being-not-at-home are two theoretical frameworks that can help us think through a certain loss of stability or familiarity that began in the 20th century and continues today. The nomad is a figure that operates on the margins, defying centrality and navigating away from fixed territories and demarcations. Being-not-at-home is a way of being that integrates the uncanniness, strangeness and difference of the world into one's self.

Are these two theoretical frameworks compatible? What lifestyles and values do these frameworks justify or negate? Do the death of the author and relativising post-modernisms create artwork that is fundamentally "homeless"? Do we find our home temporarily in the process of coming to terms with its loss? Or is this loss of home something more fundamental that cannot be negotiated? What sorts of psychological struggles and concessions are made by giving up a home? What can we learn from the experiences of immigrants and emigrants in the 20th and 21st centuries? How do these experiences force us to critically interrogate citizenship and the state?

This is a (by no means exhaustive) list developed by the SMT community of a few artists and thinkers whose work engages with nomadology and being-not-at-home:

Deleuze and Guattari's *A Thousand Plateaus*, Martin Heidegger's *Being and Time*, Sara Ahmed's *Home and Away*, Trinh T. Minh-ha's *Elsewhere, Within Here: Immigration, Refugeeism and the Boundary Event*, Gloria Anzaldúa's *Borderlands / La Frontera: The New Mestiza*, Antonioni's *The Passenger*, Samuel Beckett's *Watt*, Theresa Cha's *Dictee*, Vibeje Tandberg's *Living Together*, Adrien Piper's *Catalysis Series*, Nikki S. Lee's *The Schoolgirls Project*, Sophie Calle's *The Shadow*, Felix Gonzalez-Torres's *Untitled (Passport #11)*, Trinh T. Minh-ha, *Reassemblage*.

## Classes

### **“This Living Hand”: Uncanny Imagination in Theory, History, and Practice**

*Dani Holtz & Craig Franson*

Something occurs in the space of returning to a place once called home that transforms it, where you re-enter the rooms that no longer fit, and examine a set of walls that in no way match the rustled pages of your memory. In its alienation, has the space committed an act of violence or has your mind? Were you to go back in time, would that place ever have existed or can it only exist through the structure of imagination? And, for that matter, on whose imagination can you place the blame for being forever exiled?

This course will unsettle an ideological and ego-centric doctrine of imagination through a combination of historical, psychological, and theoretical interventions. In addition to looking at the poetry of Keats and Shelly, the psychoanalytic theory of Freud and Lacan, and the materialist theory of Benjamin, among others, participants will keep dream journals, create structured encounters with the imagination, and, ultimately, adapt the uncanny imagination into their own praxis. The class will follow a mixed seminar format, with brief lessons, discussions, and interactive projects.

### **Itinerant and Itinerary**

*Brian Pines*

An itinerant or nomad is juxtaposed against those who settle, those with homes, who curiously do not have a word to describe them. If a nomad is negatively defined as “someone without a home, someone who does not settle”, then our understanding of a nomad will depend on our understanding of a home. How can we recognize a home? What distinguishes a home from other objects in the world? There are boundaries, an effort to draw a clear line between the interior and the exterior. Dirt, garbage, and chaos are thrown outside, the home is organized. The home is familiar, cozy, intimate, but also securely tucked

away, private, concealed from the outside, withheld from others. What is hidden and secret is also threatening, fearful, and uncanny.

This uncanniness, this uncertainty and danger is also popularly considered to characterize the life of the itinerant. The goal of this course will be to work towards a discourse that has insight into the distinction between the nomad and the settled.

The course will be mostly seminar style. There will be shorter, but denser texts for students to examine as homework. Students will be expected to read thoroughly and contribute to each class discussion. Students will occasionally be called upon to give small presentations in class.

## **Unlocking the Present**

*Hollis Witherspoon*

Guided by the principles of improvisation queen Viola Spolin, the teaching methodology of the People's Improv Theater (the PIT) and elements of the Meisner acting technique, "Unlocking the Present" will challenge the elastic spontaneity of the mind while introducing the basics of improvisation. Through pattern, acting and mimicry games and exercises and basic scene studies, we will explore and practice the building blocks of improvisation ("yes and"...., truth telling, following the follower, mirror speech, and more) with a focus on unlocking the whimsy, spontaneous and truthful reactions, being present, and having outrageous fun within a supportive environment.

## **PLAYING WITH STRUCTURE AND NOT-STRUCTURE**

*July 3-22 (2013)*

After two summers of running The School of Making Thinking, we have collected a lot of great ideas both about how our program could be more structured, and about how it could be less structured. When dreaming up this session we thought—what about both!?

At the start of our program people want to be with one another as much as possible—making, thinking, learning, teaching, cooking, and eating together. But that level of togetherness is intense and not sustainable, and after a week residents tend to feel pulled back towards their individual projects and practices. Playing with structure and not-structure is an experiment in aligning a session with this phenomenon.

For the first five days of playing with structure and not-structure residents were immersed in structured play that allowed them to get to know one another through workshops, playshops, classes, happenings, gatherings, groups meals, etc.

On the fifth night residents had the option of camping out in the woods alone, which was followed by a “day of silence,” giving residents the opportunity to detach themselves from and reflect on the group experience. By the end of the sixth day of the session, residents completed a written project proposal describing the project they wanted to work on for the duration of the session.

The following twelve days of the session were completely unstructured, allowing for individual time to work on one’s project and for organic and unforeseeable events to occur.

The final three days of the session were devoted to putting up a group show featuring residents’ processes and works.

## **MAKING THINKING**

*June 2-30 (2012)*

This four-week session offered the chance for residents to delve deep into their projects while providing ample opportunities for formal and informal collaboration. Residents had the opportunity to plan their own classes and workshops and participation was always optional. At the end of the session, residents presented their projects to the group in the format of their choice.

## **MAKING SCHOOLING**

*July 2-15 (2012)*

This session explored how SMT can function more as a school and less as a typical residency program. During this session we offered 3-5 classes geared toward the interests of the group; classes met twice a week and sought to think in depth about a different fundamental question. Residents were encouraged to take one or more of these classes. Classes differed from collaborative workshops in that they involved short weekly assignments and they met through the course of the session with the same group of participants.

### **Classes**

#### **Occult Shennanigans: Primitivism, Ritual, and Ceremonial Time**

*Mollie Mckinley*

I am working on a curriculum about perspectives on the metaphysics of time, particularly in the context of ceremony and ritual, that will overlap with a video project I'll be doing! I will ask my students to be co-discoverers with me about the subjectivity of time, resulting in a final video performance wherein each of them will represent a different anthropological perspective on time (sacred time, profane time, micro time, biological time, etc) and synthesizing it all into META TIME via a collective occult ceremony.

#### **Visibility (Performance Art Workshop)**

*Adriana Disman*

The collision of my life with the Occupy Movement(s) and student movements throughout the world (particularly in Montreal) have catalyzed my interest in what we choose to make visible. Visibility is a weapon. How, in performance do we choose to wield Visibility and, perhaps more interestingly, what do we choose to make visible? In our increasingly neoliberal contexts, how can we activate/act upon a social responsibility? What does this look like in relation to performance?

In this workshop, we explore our unique generative processes of creating “performance art.” Via body-based exercises, we delve into the work of excavating our interior world to create with and from. By pushing our bodies beyond (our story of) their limits, we find we may not be who we thought we were. Enlisting tools from critical thought, spiritual exploration, social action, and what we come into contact with: we create and share “performance.” Elements of performance that we will focus on include site-sensitivity, specific relationship to the Other, clarity, and exchange.

I don't have anything to teach you... I have only suggestions for paths down which you may discover what you have to teach yourself. The overall tone and outcome of the workshop will be deeply influenced by the participants. I will promote critical thinking, heartfelt listening, and intuitive trust in the space where we work together.

A note on readings: With attention to environmental concerns I will make all reading materials available digitally and you will be welcome to read them on my computer if you are not bringing one. There will not likely be much required reading but rather suggested readings that may be of interest. I will also bring some hardcopy reference books for you to use if you like.

### **To Be Written in**

*Abraham Avnisan & Aaron Finbloom*

What does it mean to write? Why not speak? How does writing relate to the world outside of it? How does writing structure our thinking? How do different ways of structuring writing (different writing methods) radically change our thinking and making? How can we understand the historical advent of writing? How does shifting from pen, to typewriter, to computer, to internet, shift the way we write?

In this course Avnisan and Finbloom will be embarking on an explorative journey of how writing can be used and understood as a fluid and permeable technology.

#### 1) Origins

- 2) Wordliness to Worldliness
- 3) Writing as Immortalization
- 4) e-writing: the Rhizomatic Cure

We will begin by exploring the historical advent of writing through the eyes of Anne Carson and Hans Georg Gadamer. We will then go on to explore writing's relationship to externality and how varying methods of writing can provide different windows and energetic affections into worldliness. Then we will explore writing's connection to immortalization (solidifying or deadifying?) using Plato's Symposium and Phaedrus as jumping off points. Finally we will explore the advent of e-writing as a method of writing that sidesteps linearity and that allows for a radically interactive and temporal interfaces.

## **MAKING TOGETHER**

*July 16-29 (2012)*

Our Making Together session added a focus on collaborative projects made in small groups. Over the course of the session, each group met twice a week to brainstorm, plan and make a collaborative project that reflects its collective interests and creative practices. The session culminated with a final presentation of each group's work. These projects gave us the opportunity to explore a more radical form of collaboration that allowed for unexpected and fruitful discoveries.

## **INAUGURAL SUMMER SESSION B**

*June 16 - 30 (2011)*

This session brought together performers of diverse backgrounds, writers, philosophers, and a botanist. Investigations included the exploitation of states of madness in order to liberate and blow apart rote creative practices (sane making) and stagnant logics (sane thinking), the aesthetics of uncertainty in the art market, and a study of emergent structures.

## **INAUGURAL SUMMER SESSION A**

*June 2 - 16 (2011)*

This session explored the interdisciplinary practices of eight residents with a focus on performance and collaboration. Investigations included improvisation-based screenwriting, the live deconstruction of documentary, and taking texts from Sartre's *Being and Nothingness* and Blake's *Four Zoas* to investigate ideas of apocalypse.