

Loci



ALLYSON CLAY

IN MEMORY OF
Judith Mastai

THANKS TO
Kirsten for her assistance and
support as a reader

DESIGN
Robin Mitchell

PRINTING
Black Stone Press

This book is produced
with the generous assistance of
the BC Arts Council



THREE PERFORMANCES FOR
INTERIOR SPACES

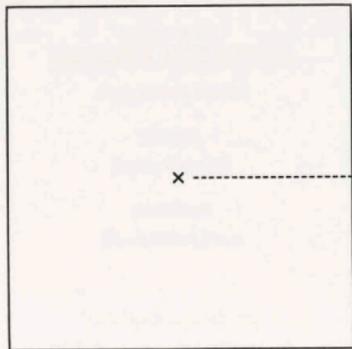


fig 1

THIS PERFORMANCE TAKES PLACE in a lighted interior space with any number of entrances, exits and/or windows. This performance involves one person and incorporates a given object. The audience does not enter the room, but is outside the space, which has closed doors. There need not be an audience. The object can be any one of the following items: a cordless steam iron, avulsion a can opener either electric or awaken manual, a salad bowl full of water a propulsion of sleep, a highball size glass, empty, but not necessarily clean, myopia-touch a rubber doorstep, a battery powered screwdriver, marked with want; sharp, warm, resound, a handful of nails or screws, a sponge, grounding, winding, a full container of milk, she speaks a jar of wild honey his tongue, a pair of wooden chopsticks, in flux a spoon, cacophonous an electric beater, with a cord or cordless, his body a handwritten recipe, invisible in loss a handful of messages, gestures mistaken for passion, a small bowl of coriander seeds, laughter, impletion, visibly regenerative in her, a cactus plant, indulgent she poured it into the water, an aromatic scent filled the room while steam coated the mirror. She drew a thought bubble on the glass around the word penis. The performer enters, closing the door, and places the found object in any relation to the interior space. Leaving it behind, the performer exits the space, and closes the door.

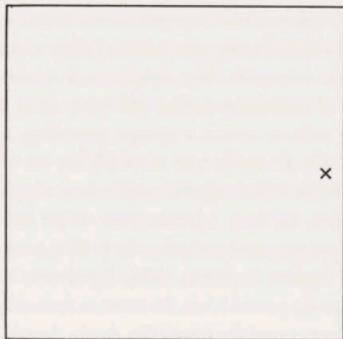


fig 2

THIS IS A PERFORMANCE FOR ONE person in any interior space. The performer enters at any time of the day a room lit by natural light. The footsteps were slightly faster than hers, coming up from behind. Impulsively she began to walk more quickly. It seemed like no one else was out on the street. She noticed someone through the window of the hairdressing salon with his back to the street, arms flaying — driven by laughter? The audience does not enter the room, but is outside the space. Coming up to the corner she knew if she stopped to wait for the cross light whoever was behind her would pass by. She stopped, and just before crossing she glanced over at the man passing her. He looked at her. They both looked away; the ricocheting of glances sent a shock through her. On the other side of the street he was ahead of her, but he was walking much more slowly. She had to change her pace considerably to stay behind him. Or walk more quickly and they could end up walking in tandem along the street. There need not be an audience. She slowed down, but surprisingly he jaywalked across the street and arrived ahead of her on the sidewalk. Now she was following him. Once the space is entered the performer closes and leans against the door. He turned into the department store ahead of her. She went in craving the company of the crowds of anonymous shopping dreamers. The performer may take either a sitting position or a standing position while leaning. The performer remains leaning until daylight has ceased and the room is dark. As the escalator took her up she saw him down among a group at the lottery ticket counter. The performance is now over and the space can be exited.

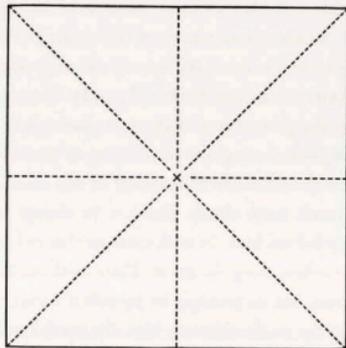


fig 3

TO BEGIN, THE PERFORMER ENTERS at any time of the day a domestic interior and closes the door after entry. The audience remains outside the room. There need not be an audience. She wouldn't listen anyway. Nothing could be said. She watched the man hopping up the street on one foot. He had started hopping when he passed that blonde woman getting out of a silver Mercedes. He put some money in his meter and limped back down the hill. All furnishings and objects in the room are to be rearranged. We avoided each other's eyes, as our children were avoiding each other on the jungle gym. Some rain plopped on the dusty sand around my feet; I was relieved, playtime was up. Her daughter's head was bandaged; some stitches were visible on the side of her face. Thunder, the air coagulating, darkly. So that there is no semblance of order in the room. She took three books by women authors off the shelf; three paperbacks; aged, and brittle with pages going brown along the edges. De Beauvoir, Stein, Woolf. She poured milk into a basin and put the books in to soak. Kneading them slightly, absentmindedly whistling, she enjoyed the sun from the window hot on her arms and neck. Later, she removed the books from the milk and tied them together with white household string. She set them in the sun outside to congeal and dry. In the middle of the night, the story began; you can sometimes feel her wandering. There is no sound, no light. A draught of air that smells like new cut grass, dank and sweet touches your hand or strokes your cheek. Once order is destroyed, the performance is complete. Exit the space and close the door.

TWO WALKING PERFORMANCES,
IN A CITY

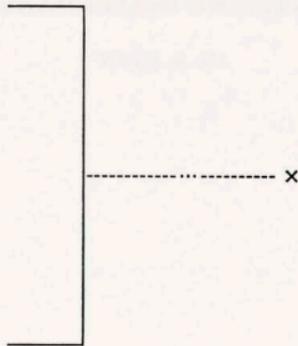


fig 4

THIS IS A PERFORMANCE FOR ONE PERSON in a city. There is no intended audience. It begins at any time of day, any day, outside. This is the day you walk until dark. There is no destination, and you don't know how fast to walk. You feel like this makes you different from other people. At first, it's impossible to dispel the fear of traveling nowhere. The birds taking flight remind her to thin her library. Some books must go. The long ceremony of deciding which ones to remove includes reading out loud, measuring, enfoldment, periods of avoidance, vanity, video surveillance, lists with erasures. As she pulls them off the shelves she thinks of the new books she will add. Dust stings, now songbirds come to mind. She reads the books by the open window. After this there is a short rest, with a dream. At twilight, the city becomes translucent — a flickering dispersion of distant domestic interiors. Some of us look closer. Other people's private spaces are tempting arrays. This is the time to be outside, walking, watching, pacing in increments intimate stories. We see ourselves looking. We may be caught in the act of a lingering glance, furtive, not research. Sleep was an accidental touch. She looks out the window. It's the end of the day, and still. No cars. No pedestrians, a small breeze. One after the other she throws the books out into the street. Some spread their pages, as if in flight, others drop like rocks. To pass the time you list the things you've seen along the way. You've seen the crows fly overhead and know you're walking east. They've gone now. It'll soon be time to stop. At dark you stop. The performance is complete at dark. You didn't know you'd be here when you started on your walk.

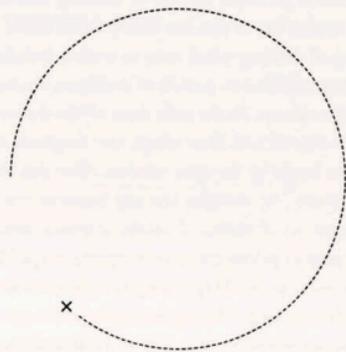


fig 5

YOU CAN BEGIN ANYWHERE, IN A STREET, in a city. Map out a perimeter through walking, defining the outside edges of a neighbourhood. You need not conform to official delineations, they are not barriers. This is a vernacular space you know through familiar routes, ritual avoidance, trespasses, or stories. There is always the question of being in the right place. Your stuttering visibility as you travel across regulated spaces can work against you, or not. Perspective is a significant factor. If you pay close attention to the look of the buildings you pass by, you'll miss the architecture. It's a fine tissue in between. A body can tear through it. There's no noise, but consequences. This is not a passionate venture, only an outline that erodes. There are things I can't remember but I know I should. Only the scent of pines under cloudless heat, lavender old, and tucked away, waxy awkward magnolia flowers distracting my breathing, and calligraphic cigar smoke, scribbling in the aromatic dome of indolent summer evening after evening with a pungent reminder of place, not here. It's the luminous cast of rascal desire. A lure. She's alone, like you, and you notice you've been following her. You change your pace to make yourself separate, confident, directional, and on the boundary between two different spaces. This performance should be carried out without interruptions. (Perhaps you faltered, changed direction, started over.) You'll return to a place you've been before. You know this through walking. Quite possibly this is where the performance ends. You know through walking when it ends. This time there is no one waiting for you, the denouement is spacious, intimate. A part of the city has moved inside you.