

MANUAL is a collaborative publication by performance artist Victoria Gray and writer-artist Emma Cocker. The publication is a response to *Berthing Bone*, a video work by Victoria Gray. MANUAL comprises photographic stills from the video *Berthing Bone*, alongside writing by Gray and Cocker.

Conceived as a durational series of miniature performances for the hands, Gray's video *Berthing Bone* explores incipient action; the affective experience of movement before movement takes form. Throughout the production process of *Berthing Bone*, Gray and Cocker met for dialogue, witnessing together the evolving process of the video work. Cocker's writing reflects on ideas emerging through these encounters. Her text is not conceived as an explication of *Berthing Bone*, but rather as a set of exercises or thought-fragments imagined alongside. In turn, Gray's text is a meditation on both the video and Cocker's response, exercising the practice of attention that the original performance and Cocker's text call forth. Excerpts from the video *Berthing Bone* can be viewed at, www.victoriagray.co.uk/berthingbone

Berthing Bone was filmed on location at Yorkshire Sculpture Park, Longside Gallery, Wakefield. Performance and direction by Victoria Gray. Camera and post-production by Orillo Productions. Funded by Arts Council England through the National Lottery. Supported by Yorkshire Sculpture Park and the Arts Council Collection. The publication MANUAL is supported by Nottingham Trent University.

Victoria Gray is a performance artist and writer who has presented work nationally and internationally, including France, Germany, Italy, Poland and the USA. Often durational in length, her work is concerned with the politics of affective and kinesthetic experience in the live encounter. Her writing has been published in peer-reviewed journals, and edited books in the field of performance. Recent publications include *Journal of Dance & Somatic Practice*, 2012; *Kinesthetic Empathy in Creative & Cultural Practices*, 2012, *Choreographic Practices*, 2013, *Emergency Index*, 2013, and *Reading/Feeling*, 2013. www.victoriagray.co.uk

Emma Cocker is a writer-artist and Senior Lecturer in Fine Art at Nottingham Trent University. Operating under the title *Not Yet There*, her research enquiry often addresses the endeavour of creative labour, focusing on models of (art) practice and subjectivity that resist the pressure of a single or stable position by remaining wilfully unresolved. Her writing has been published in *Failure*, 2010; *Stillness in a Mobile World*, 2010; *Drawing a Hypothesis: Figures of Thought*, 2011; *On Not Knowing: How Artists Think*, 2013; *Reading/Feeling*, 2013, and *Cartographies of Exile*, 2014. www.not-yet-there.blogspot.co.uk



PRACTICED LIVING || And so, as it goes — *we don't know what a body can do*. We have not yet realized the true extent of its capabilities. *We*, a force whose power has yet to be grasped, remaining unfathomable, stranger even to ourselves. Yet, there are ways of tending, for attending to this untapped potential. Not that this is an easy task, a task to be taken lightly. But still, lightly must the task be undertaken. So, practice a little levity, *levitas*. Practice with effort, yet without. Exert the self with care. *Askesis*: exercise or training. Yet, not of self-control or self controlled. Not the renunciation or deprivation of the sworn ascetic; (s)he who abandons the living of life in pursuit of higher ideals. Exorcises self. Takes leave of flesh; ecstatic disembodiment. Rather, an art of life, *practiced living*.

CAPACITY BUILDING || Indeed, it is with and in the body, through the body, that we might escape its limitations. Or instead, *our* limitations, for a body is boundless, it is we who set its limits, determine its perimeter edge. Exercise *with* the body. Experiment with *other* bodies. Remember too, that mind is *of* the body, muscle and memory equally receptive to the push and pull of working out. Train (ing) of thought; thinking pressured as limbs tested against the leverage of external force or weight. *Meletē*: an Ancient Greek term meaning meditation. In myth, sibling to the muse of melodic voice and memory, related then to rhythm and remembering. *Meletē*: to ponder, the mental weighing up of an idea or thought, the contemplation of a repeated phrase. Ponder — from *pendēre*, to be suspended, to hang in the balance. Training is never the end, never ends, rather the building of capacity. Capacity is both actual *and* potential, an ability both to yield and to withstand, a measure of both receptivity and resistance.

RESISTANCE TRAINING || Resistance requires strength, to turn away or abstain from *certain* action. Conceived as a form of opposition or confrontation, it requires taking or making a stand, refusing to be moved. To resist is to reject then, to counter-act, to operate contrary to the norm or expectation. External pressures create the conditions according to which the body must acquiesce, contravene or somehow work around. Yet, resistance can also cultivate capacity, empower, augment. Small acts of minor resistance increase incrementally the body's inner strength. With practice, muscle matter can be trained to transform the resistance of other forces into its own. Gradually, greater pressures can be applied and still converted. Care must be taken though, for without caution the body becomes dense and hardened, insensitive to the affects of subtler force. Attuning oneself to the intensity of a force is different to feeling its weight. It is often easier to recognize the greater the impingement, experience that which is felt to be heavy or hard to bear. Lesser pressures often go unnoticed, so are tolerated, not transformed. Attend to the micro level, for it is through the turning of imperceptible forces that true action might then emerge.

MEMORIZATION || Acts of minor resistance can be rehearsed daily, practiced in quieter moments or under the cover of *other* activity, concealed within everyday gesture. Yet, such practices cannot be learnt, perfected by rote. In time, the body becomes inoculated against the potency of a given move or action. So, memorize not movement's *moves* but rather its affect. Be *moved* by movement, which is to say transformed. Commit then not to movement's form but in fidelity to the feeling of its force. The disciplined body is good at sticking to the score, impressed with how a given move should look. Discipline sets the mold that shapes that which is unruly. However, affect is unscripted, indivisible, invisible. It is impossible to predetermine how the body will respond on a given day, a given hour. Preparation becomes synchronous to the event. Attend to each situation with new precision, which might mean disobeying the rules. The body must learn to improvise. Conjure each movement as an act of invocation, a calling into life. Cultivate the muscle-memory of intuition. Have courage. Take (to) heart.

REPEATING NOT REPEATING || Practicing circuits builds endurance. Practice circuitously then, never a straight course. Practice loops and repetitions. Replays. Reversals. Feedback. About-turns. However, the body must stay focused to avoid slipping towards routine. Pay attention to every loop and return as if encountered as the first. Repetition never repeats, unchanging. The same form can carry different force; the same cause, transformed effects. Yet, the promise of difference — indeed of change — is not always so easy to recognize. Repetition can both dull and sharpen the attention. It can groove lines of habit where the score becomes over-familiar, each loop approached as was, as will be. Yet with practice, repetition might score deeper, where every loop awakens greater understanding, in turn revealing something new. Repeating acts in a vertical key, generating vertiginous difference within what at first glance appears to be nothing but the same.

EXTRA-SENSORY PERCEPTION || To notice the changing within the seemingly unchanging requires the training or re-tuning of the senses. The sensory apparatus of the body has been conditioned to act within a certain spectrum of expectation. Senses conspire to recognize the familiar, to disregard that which differs, falls out of range. Like other muscles within the body, the senses can be made to stretch or extend, reach and strain. Perception can be pressured beyond its habitual limits, to become *extra*-sensory. Begin with the eyes — the most susceptible of the senses for re-cognizing only the *thought* known, moreover, for being easily tricked, deceived. Consider the magician's sleight of hand, the slowness of the eyes against the quick of fingers. The eyes often fail to *see*; instead thinking-a-seeing of that which isn't really there. Work out the eyes, for true perception — perspicacity — requires sharp-sightedness, the art of keen vision.

VIGILANCE || Grow hypersensitive to the smallest of details. Take the light down low. Lower. Lower still. Removed from the usual distractions of the diurnal world, the eyes become sensitized to the play of shadows, as darkness moves. Notice the differing gradients of density, intensity. Avoid assigning names, for the operation of language is a nominal regime that favours the solidity of things; is quick to override the wordless act of sensing. Both thought and gaze must remain somewhat passive to perceive the micro-movements of existence, the vibrations of motion at the verge of action, trembling. Like the stalker or the poacher, practice stillness. Know how the smallest start can scatter one's focus. Remain patient. Keep alert. Be on the *que vive*. On guard, stay watchful.

SEEING BEYOND THE VISIBLE || Foreseeing the unforeseeable is a skill that can be honed. Pay heed to the stalker or the poacher, she who anticipates the direction of flight in advance of its taking form. Before movement is ever actualized it can still be felt or sensed. Even before intention there is intension. Before extension into space, movement has intensity, the rising of energy that precedes resolve. Prescience is the art of knowing of things before they happen. Before the term clairvoyant meant the capacity for seeing into the future (foresight), it referred to a quality of insight, keen perception or clear-sightedness. *Clair* (clear) + *voyant* (present participle of *voir*, to see) — an intuitive ability to see or see-k out things as they really are. So open the eyes. This does not mean look harder but rather more receptively. Cultivate a different retinal attention. Look twice; activate second sight.

MAKING THINGS DISAPPEAR || Magic is a word given to experiences that exceed our habitual ways of comprehending the world; *extra* to the logic of ordinary cause and effect. Less a supernatural power, the art of magic involves learning how to suspend or stall the rules of causal law. This requires practice. The magician practices how to make things disappear. Close up magic eschews virtuosity. The skill is not in showing one's knowledge through flourish or excess, but in paring things back, keeping it simple. Misdirection relies on the viewer not seeing what is happening in front of their very eyes. Sleight is the practice of dexterity. The artist works hard to keep her cuts and interventions imperceptible. The art of close up is one of making things vanish in clear sight. Attention can be taken elsewhere, momentarily distracted. Focus can be made to shift. Or the invitation can be to look harder, longer, with more intent — to fix the gaze, not to look away. Extended attention — like the process of repetition — can be used to defamiliarize, make strange, where the more something is scrutinized the *less* it becomes known. Through sustained observation, things might begin to shape-shift — becoming light, becoming shadow, becoming time. To make things disappear is not to render them invisible, but rather, that they are no longer recognized. Edges can be made to soften, solids made to melt, names can be forgotten.

ELECTIVE ELASTICITY || The body is inherently polymorphic, yet its capacity for taking manifold forms is often compromised, curtailed. Its movements and gestures are often molded in advance. The body becomes choreographed to the rhythm of habit and routine, bends backwards to the fit of convention and the norm. It takes some effort to move the body in other ways, to convert the experience of compliancy (the obedient *pli* of being folded by others' force) towards that of pliancy — voluntary stretch and flex. Towards elective elasticity then — begin small. Consider the hands. Their idleness does not the devil's work make; but rather is a precondition for self-transformation. Strip the hands of utility; allow them to become empty. Do not distract them with other things. Dislocated from their habitual duties, the hands fold back upon themselves to investigate their own potential. Wring out old habits. Wring in the unaccustomed, the unfamiliar and the new. Twist and turn into unexpected shapes and forms; becoming supple, sinuous, never still. Extend towards other parts of the body. Life too, can be made malleable, approached as material that can be worked and shaped, turned in *other ways*.

DELIQUESCENCE || Transformation requires some preparation. Before it can be practiced differently, the body will need warming up. Turn habits up and over. Invert familiar ways of doing things. Rotate. Reverse. Rehearse an alternative routine. Warming the body's limbs and ligaments can prevent unnecessary strain, caution against the risk of pain or injury. It can also work in other ways, transforming the solidity of flesh and form towards a molten state, towards liquidity. The edges of self can be made to deliquesce; the line of separation between inside and outside collapsed, dissolved. Indeed, the body is already more fluid than it cares to remember. It is often keen to convince itself otherwise, ignoring the swell and surge of its liquid interior, the incessant sway and undulation of its own oceanic force. The body easily forgets that it is always and already moving (*within* itself). Yet, in moments of stillness or slowness, its restlessness can be felt.

MEDIAL REFLEXIVE || Self can be conceived as an interior condition, pitched against the rest of the world that exists without; skin, the line of separation that keeps these two realms distinct. Yet, under scrutiny, the borderline where the body ends and where the world starts is impossible to discern. Self is *of* the world, not identifiable from. Internal and external exist along a continuum, where the skin does not keep the individual protected from the world but rather is the threshold through which they merge, inseparable. Interiority extends far deeper than the centre of the body; can be pressured beyond the limits of the skin to create spaces other than the body's own. The exteriority of the world can be clasped between the fingers. Self is a field of forces, not fixed form. Its capacity is endlessly modified according to how it acts with and against the pressure of other forces. Become sensitized to one's own force, which is always multiple. Experience this by pressing the palms tight. Notice how the balance of power shifts between left and right. Allow one side to dominate, now to yield. Practice between activity and passivity. Feel the point of balance once neither side takes charge. Apply this awareness to other encounters.

AS LONG AS || Experimental practices require time, resistant to being rushed or ushered quickly towards some goal or destination. They take as long as they take, set their own pace. Clock-time measures the passing moments according to what can be accomplished therein — experimental practices might then strive to do as little as possible. Failing to fill or spend time productively draws attention to the passage of time *as* time. Changing the speed of one's action can change the experience of time itself. Slowness and stillness have the capacity to stretch and elongate duration. Time becomes elastic, no longer fixed. Slowing one's habitual responses extends the space of hesitancy, liberating attention from the deliberate (directly purposeful) towards deliberation (weighing up).

QUICK OF THE SLOW || Before a decision is made to act there is an interval of time where the future trembles, hovering in the balance. *Pendēre* — suspend, pending, impending. Threshold between the *as is* of the present and the *not yet* of the still-to-come, the interval is a point of reflection from which things might be steered differently, else remain unchanged. Paradoxically, through experimentation, time can be revealed as continuous (indivisible flux that refuses to be spatialised into minutes and seconds), whilst at the same time as discontinuous (comprising an infinite number of intervals whose fleeting potential is either to be seized or lost). Strange conjunctions materialize: the timely instants of invention within duration; discontinuity within continuity; the infinite within the finite, quick of the slow.

TEST OF NERVE || To encounter time stripped of its familiar beat and meter can be disconcerting to say the least. Dislodged from the tenses of past and future, time is experienced simultaneously as now and forever, inconstant and eternal; or else perhaps, forever now, eternally inconstant. An experimental practice locates itself on the trembling edge as time unfolds, uncertain. No longer scripted in advance, here, every next action has to be called or conjured, summoned into play. The temptation might be to fall back onto a repertoire of familiar forms and practiced rhythms. The body wavers at the cusp of action, stalls from making too swift a move. Instead, remains expectant, anticipatory. Hopeful. Intrepid. Not without some unease. For, it takes some nerve to lean into the unknown, to be open or vulnerable to what lies therein. So, test the nerves. Exercise this most fragile of the faculties, for unattended nerve is easily lost. Lean then, into the void; remember — *we don't know what a body can do*. (EC)

The Terminal Segment of Free Upper Limbs

With the Latin the Anglo-Saxon shares her hand

Forth they bring senses toward eyes, nose, ears & mouth

A primitive power of grasping with prehensile hands

Delivered dread to her possessor's attention

They prehend

They flay hold

They seize

Due to their power over her sense hand,

it became necessary to develop a terminal segment

A free upper limb

The Long Spoke in a Radius of Circle

The cross shaft with staff, stake and rod spoke of wheel

Made her circular area of defined distance around some place

It is a long boned space, prismatic in form, and slightly curved longitudinally

On head, a shallow cup or fovea folds acuity for articulation, of

An intense transversal plane

Off hand, a circumference is a smooth

Neck on a round but constricted portion, a tuberosity having small pit

Beneath the neck on her medial side is an eminence

A body or shaft which has for three borders three surfaces

In the lower extremities the surface prepares for the Ulnar notch

Of the Radius, say it is narrow concave smooth

And freely articulates with head

A Small Brace for Lateral Support

Ulna is divisible into a body and two extremities

The upper of which is for great thickness and strength

The lower diminished in size, is excluded by interposition

Which is meaning a projection onto a bone

Of the thickness which presents is a two curved process

It couples with her Latin 'cessus' which is now but forwards and gone

The first is a larger eminence

Bent forward at a summit so as to present prominent lip which is received

By the second which is a triangular project,

whose ossification is considerable strength

Behind and a little lateralward, narrow and oblong

The Semilunar and Radial notches are large and lesser suppressions – respectively

The head of Ulna; the medial, narrower and more projecting,

is now a non-articular eminence

By a depression for the attachment of the apex

And by a brace by a shallow groove

A Gliding Surface of Irregular Rotation

Eight irregular shapes wrist collectively

They call Carpals for bones

Navicular being the largest with name from a fancied resemblance to a boat

Or its being boat shaped

The Lunate, like a half-moon, is distinguished by its deep

Concavity and crescentic outline – it's crescent-moon-ness

By its pyramidal shape the third is a triangular bone which brings with it

A distinctiveness

But by a small size the Pisum makes known one singular articular facet

– its pea shape

The Greater Multangular distinguishes for her a deep grooved volar surface

The lesser is again the smallest but shows wedge-shaped form

The largest of the carp occupies the centre - which she finds not new

Nor does the hook-like process wrest from her in a net or clasp

The surfaces glide slightly over each other, allowing three-dimensional movement

All can be flexed and extended, moved side to side

But rotation is limited

A Common Palm Characteristic in Form

The Palm has long strides of Metacarpal

They are cylindrical and of five she names them from their lateral side

The first is stouter than the others since it diverges

A prismoid toward the reading surface

To a greater degree,

the second is the digital just lesser of the longest which is

The third, a little longer than the second

The fourth, the bone of the ring finger, is shorter,

smaller and weaker than the indexal

The fifth is just the littlest finger

A Concave Separated by a Shallow Groove

They are fourteen in finger number; three for finger, and two for thumb

Each consists of a body that tapers articulation from above downward

Like in the world, each are made convex posteriorly, concave interiorly,

or merely flat

The Ungual, despite their small size, end in a nail

Which by a roughened elevated surface of a horseshoe form behaves a hook or claw

From side to side two extremities occur which come to mean 'two bodies bones'

For all might each ends

Her in two, separated slightly by a furrowed rut

The distal extremity of each of which occurs serves to support her sensitive pulp

The More or Less Rounded Mass

Sesamoid bones, after the seeds Sesame, are small and more or less

As rounded masses she embeds them in certain virtual palmar surfaces

Probably they are to modify pressure

Probably they diminish friction

Two are constant at the thumb and one is frequently hesitant in the little

One or two gesture with the index

Occasionally seeds are found at joints on an occasion of the ring finger

And serve to alter the direction of a non-specific force or pull

(VG)