

**The basics:  
Materials**

**AA**

### **Objectives**

- To explore the materiality and physicality of objects that may be used in performance.
- To encourage students to see everyday, plain or mundane objects anew and to explore the potential of these objects beyond their common use.
- To understand objects as part of the performance vocabulary and be able to incorporate them in future performances.

### **Exercise 1**

Students are asked to start walking within the space of the studio. They are allocated a piece of chalk (or a sheet of paper) by the instructor who also walks among them. They are asked to explore this as an object in whatever way interests them. After a few minutes of exploration, they are asked to choose one or more of their moves/interactions with the object in order to perform them. The centre of the room is designated as the performance space. Students are asked to enter and leave the performance space at random. When they are outside the space they can observe what the others are doing. When they are inside the space they perform their actions repeatedly. They are encouraged to continue exploring their actions and possibly change them throughout the exercise.

### **Notes for the instructor**

The instructor walks among the student and demonstrates the exercise by starting off on some of her own experimentations. You should define a (small) maximum number of students that may be outside the performance space at any time, so that most of the students are performing in the space.

### **Exercise 2**

Students are asked to do a short performance with an object from the prop collection. In preparation of this they are asked to observe the object as if they saw it for the first time and explore it as material, form and sound, in connection with their body, etc. They are then asked to present their performance in a neutral space and not to involve the audience in any interaction.

### **Notes for the instructor**

This exercise presupposes that students have built a collection of props by bringing clothes, fabrics, tapes and objects from home to donate to the studio. Ideally a collection of props has been built over the years.



1 and 2 Exercise 1

## Assignment

*One object, one minute*

Create a one-minute performance using an everyday object.

Make sure that the object is big enough to be visible to the audience. Negotiate time as duration of the action (do not create a static image).

Assignment to be given after the presentation of the performance:

Write a text describing your performance and your original idea.

What worked well about your idea? What would you change if you re-performed it?

**0A 01 Materials: Objects (1)**





### 3 and 4 Assignments

#### Notes for the instructor

Taking space and audience out of the performance parameters is intended as an attempt to facilitate the exploration of the object itself as an element of the performance without any distractions and further complications.

#### Repository

- Juliane Foronda's various *Accumulations* (<https://vimeo.com/65016256>, <https://vimeo.com/86137929>) are a good introduction to working with objects. Although these works are not performances per se, they introduce objects in a playful way by connecting them in a seemingly random order as parts of a purposeless construction.
- Erwin Wurm has famously produced his self-explanatory *One-minute* sculptures by placing himself or members of the public with, up or against everyday objects and furniture. His imaginative use of objects coupled with a distinct sense of humour create a unique result.
- Martha Rosler, *Semiotics of the kitchen*, 1975. In this single-channel video Martha Rosler demonstrates the use of kitchen utensils with a dead-pan delivery and following an alphabetical order. The absurdness that results from the lack of cooking materials and her mechanical movements and borderline violent gestures are connected to the second wave feminist critique of women's domestic life as restrictive and suppressive.

## 0A 02 Materials: Objects (2)

1 Exercise







## 2 Assignment

### Objectives

- To understand objects not as mere elements of the performance but as actors (agents).
- To organise a performative image by negotiating both persons and objects as actors.

### Exercise

Students are asked to walk around the space where the instructor has placed objects from the prop collection. They are then asked to choose an object as a partner in this walk. They may walk with it by holding it or by considering it as a partner in their walk from a distance. They may place it in another spot.

In the second stage of this exercise, students are asked to form diptychs, triptychs and so on, while considering the objects as partners in the synthesis (agents). [Agents: performances with agents are orchestrated by an artist and executed by others. The agents are usually left with a margin of improvisation.]



### 3 Exercise

#### Assignment

Create a performance with objects. They may be multiples of the same object or different objects. The subject of the performance is repetition. You may take on different interpretations of repetition that have to do with time, boredom, learning, the everyday, failure/success, etc. The performance is expected to last 3–10 minutes.

#### Notes for the instructor

This is the first time that students organise a performance that is longer in duration. The presentation of the assignments is an opportunity for the instructor to comment on the originality of approaches, suggest ways to explore the theme further (you may want to do this in a circle discussion) and comment on the clarity of the beginning and the end of the performance, the position of the performer in relation the audience, etc.



## Repository

- Marina Abramović, Rhythm 10, 1973.  
<http://www.medienkunstnetz.de/works/rhythm-10-2>  
During this performance Abramović aligns 20 knives in front of her and picks up one knife after the other, plunging it quickly between her open fingers until she cuts herself and picks up the next one in order to repeat the process. Sound is recorded and when all the knives have been used, Abramović tries to repeat her actions and cut herself at the same points as in the recorded sequence.

### Notes for the instructor

Topics for discussion include the connection of the repetition of the trauma to gender, self-harm and performance (additional reference can be made to the work of French artist Gina Pane).  
Eva Meyer Keller, *Death is Certain*, 2002.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pfxdB33hAS8>

In the performances of *Death is Certain* Keller organises a space of tables that are stacked with household appliances and stationery alongside a bowl of strawberries or, on other occasions, cherries. Keller goes on to “execute” these fruits by ironing, poking, electrocuting them etc. The exhaustive utilisation of everyday objects as “deadly weapons”, her subtle humour and the obvious connotation of the red colour of the fruits elicit mixed reaction from the audience.

### Notes for the instructor

Points for discussion: How do Abramović and Meyer Keller organize their objects in space? Are there any further props and staging that aid the narrative of the performance? What do these performances negotiate? How do they comment on repetition? How do the artists negotiate the beginning and the end of the performance in connection to a repetitive act that may carry on happening?

### Objectives

- To understand and be able to utilise objects as parts of narrative building.
- To understand collections as expressions of subjectivity.

### Exercise

#### *The anarc(h)ollection*

The students are asked to organize the collection of props into groups of their own conviction. These could be based on affinity of colour, shape or size but also personal references or groupings that may emerge by chance. The floor and furniture of the studio may be used for the purpose of this exercise. Students are asked not to use speech during this exercise in order to communicate their ideas but to observe and experiment with following or leading the process. They are asked to move to the edge of the room when they think that the process has concluded. The process may then be repeated or used as a starting point for an object exercise.



1 Exercise