

Research Series

Improv Score for the Covid-19 Age

We've all settled into our COVID-19 lives and, as May pulls us further and further into, we can see the end to social distancing on the horizon. This time of near (or complete, for some) isolation had us thinking about our research for the YLDE Research Series in a new light. The focus of our research as Artists-In-Residence was collaboration: radical collaboration between three artists, the space around us, and the audience. When we found ourselves no longer able to be in the same room with each other, we leaned into the isolation and imagined our work for one person. This improvisation score is what we came up with. As we anxiously await the day we can all be in the same room again, we can offer to you a way to be alone with your thoughts and your movement while connecting with what you have around you.

This improvisational score starts consists of a solo exploration, an object collaboration, and an exploration in collaboration with the space around you. Change the rules as you need and want to. The suggested times are only suggestions. Follow where you lead. The score is a little complicated, but so was our research. We've provided our thoughts, suggestions, and some some bits about our research at the bottom.

Things to do before you begin:

- Choose a room
- Collect three objects to interact with. They should vary in their importance, uses, size, texture, and sensory impact.
- Choose two things that held your interest today: one specific interest, one broad interest. We define a specific interest as something small that pulled your attention that day and a broad interest is a larger event/subject that you're interested in. Ex: you noticed birds chirping outside your window this morning, and you're particularly interested in the works of a certain fashion designer.
- Make sure you have a timer

Music suggestions

<https://youtu.be/5yx6BWIEVcY>

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Using Headphones:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCrRpYEytIHGyDgNWO6VbHIQ/videos>

Solo exploration

- Start with your specific interest

- Find a comfortable position to start and set your timer for five minutes
- Start by considering your specific interest. How does it sit in your body, how does it encourage you to move? Follow where it leads until you hear the timer
- Take a moment to reflect on the experience
- Set your timer for seven minutes and explore your broad interest. Afterwards, take a moment to reflect

Object collaboration

- Take the objects you have chosen and place them around the space
- Your task is now to engage with one of your interests and use that as a starting point to engage with each of your objects. Effectively, you are working in collaboration with the objects
- You have the choice of setting one fifteen minute timer in which you work with each of the objects during that period of time, or you can set the timer for three intervals of five minutes and collaborate with one object at a time
- Find a place in the room to start, set your timer, and begin your exploration
- Afterwards, take time to reflect

Environmental exploration

- Consider the entire space. The walls, the other objects in the room, the lighting.
- How can you bring the environment into your existing collaborations? How can you collaborate with your environment via one of your interests?
- Set your timer to fifteen minutes
- Choose how you'd like to start, whether it be with an interest or with an object collaboration.
- As always, take time to reflect once the improv has concluded

Our considerations

Research:

Our research began with a question of what happens when two ideas – in our case, two interests – are brought together. Is it possible to preserve the integrity of each interest, how do the interests impact each other, and what challenges, strategies, and discoveries do we make when we engage with each other? We found that beginnings need structure but that structure can be morphed or abandoned in real time to serve the work, that feelings of boredom and frustration are useful, valid, and can lead to deep creativity if handled with care, and that collaboration requires trust, perseverance, and hope.

Object choice:

Some examples are: a sentimental piece of furniture, a guitar, and a package of Oreos. Some loose string, a bell, and an exercise bike.

- i. Something Mark is currently exploring is revisiting specific moments in his life that conjure a certain emotion. He calls them “room memories”. You can consider this as you choose your objects if that’s what you’re into.

Solo exploration:

We have found that sometimes the chosen interest, this initial consideration, leads you nowhere interesting. Boredom here is not a failure, it is something else to be explored. How much troubleshooting and conscious decision-making did you have to do to keep yourself engaged? How far from your interest did you stray in an attempt to stay interested?

Object collaboration:

The idea here is not to continuously remain true to your interest, but to allow it to evolve to serve the collaboration. That being said, you can take moments to reconnect with yourself and with your interest – there is no expectation that your attention should always be on the collaboration. Your priorities are in flux.

If collaborating with an inanimate object seems impossible, consider what the object is: what does it do, what does it mean to you, why do you have it? Then let your interest bump up against the information you have about this object and explore their intersections. Maybe your body will become a garment that that fashion designer created and you move every time you play a note on the guitar, maybe you transition into your workout on the exercise bike because you’re bored of this shit. Whatever happens, happens.

It’s good to remember that you and your objects cannot move in the same ways. Is this a roadblock or an opportunity?

Environmental collaboration:

Allowing your priorities to be in flux will be important here.

Thoughts will always change - be mindful and be mindful of being mindful. This can help you minimize your adjustments as you get going so you can relax into the work. Remember that you are both following and curating ideas.