

ANNE LUKINS

WRITTEN BY KRISTINA CENTORE

To engage with Anne Lukins's work is to be destabilized, caught up in a world of shifting identities. Lukins is an interdisciplinary artist, conducting investigations in performance, sculpture and puppetry. Yet, her primary artistic medium may be communication itself. Communication is a transformative act of exchange: For Lukins, it can simultaneously illuminate and alter the interpersonal relationships that shape an individual's lived experience. She views this destabilization as a kind of therapy, though it may upset, anger or as the artist describes it, "antagonize" its subject.

In this sense, conflict is of particular importance to Lukins, and is explored in the work *Mutual Service Exercise*. The work is a collaboration with fellow MFA candidate Netta Sadovsky, in which Lukins and Sadovsky set out to wrestle, to physically fight each other. A video piece featuring one iteration of their fighting, overlaid with dialogue between Lukins and Sadovsky, was recently displayed at Pilot Projects, a gallery in Philadelphia. As Lukins and Sadovsky discuss in the video, the two see *Mutual Service Exercise* as an investigation into the nature of close friendships. More specifically, the work interrogates what the artists see as implicit assumptions that structure friendships between white women, including their own.

Lukins and Sadovsky are frequent interlocutors and their collaboration is built around their shared fascination with psychotherapeutic practices. During a residency last summer at the School of Making Thinking, Lukins and Sadovsky participated in a form of therapeutic practice orchestrated by one of the residency facilitators, known as psychodrama.

Psychodrama is a tool designed to address unresolved trauma or challenges by bringing these experiences into the present moment. In some ways, a psychodrama has a theatrical quality and resembles a play or performance. The therapist acts in the role of the director, while the main participant becomes the central character, the protagonist of the action. Other participants in the psychodrama are cast into roles such as "the mother" or the "adulterous husband." Lukins describes these enactments as illuminations of complex elements within interpersonal relationships that would otherwise remain latent.

Such experiences inform a yet-to-be-named work in progress in Lukins's and Sadovsky's ongoing collaboration. Lukins and Sadovsky describe this project as a utilization of the methodology of the psychodrama in an investigation of racial and class-based privilege. As the descendants of relatively affluent white families, they explore the psychology of the artists' relationships to the concept of money. Following the format of a psychodrama, the artists will take turns playing the role of director and the role of the protagonist, as well as casting others into additional roles. As the performance takes place, the participants will act in discussions of the ethical implications of their position in society.

In "calculated interventions" such as these, Lukins seeks to excavate the nature of relationships, simultaneously bringing their potentially unrecognized aspects to the fore and imagining possibilities for a restructuring of their foundations ●



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Mutual Service Exercise (still)

(PREVIOUS PAGE) Anne Lukins and Netta Sadovsky. Video. Dimensions variable.

Mutual Service Exercise

(still) Anne Lukins and Netta Sadovsky. Video. Dimensions variable. Photo credit: Fred Schmidt-Arenales.



