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# U O I S F F U S I O N



## An A-Z of The Ting: Theatre of Mistakes – I, J & K

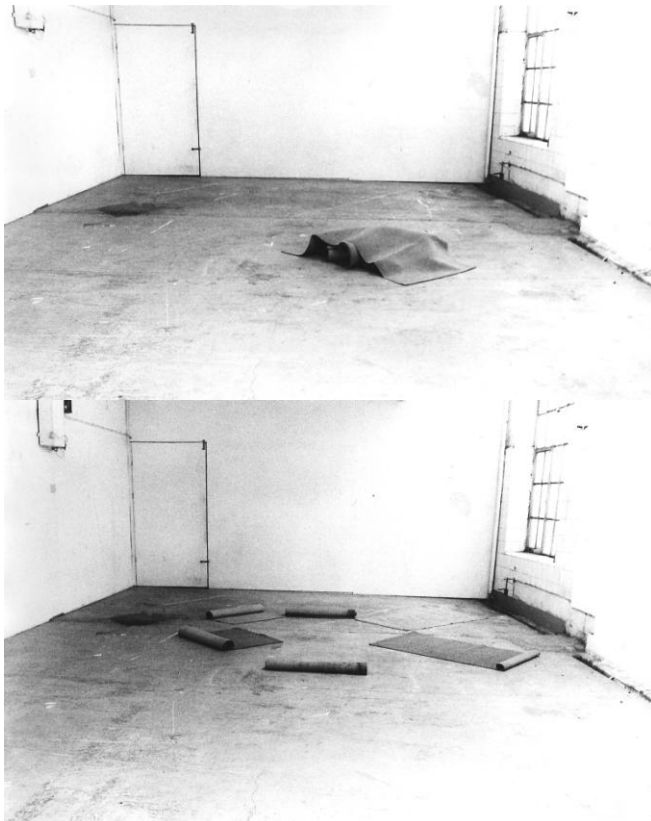
Marie-Anne Mancio

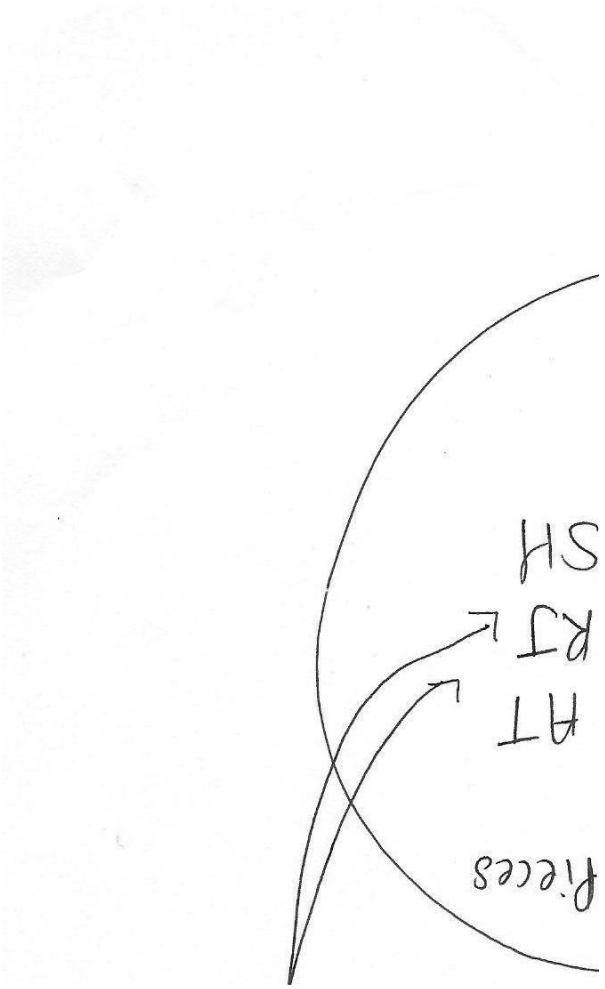
minute then move in slow motion to pick up the stick. On touching it, they could move at normal pace again, placing it upright within 10ft of where it fell. Rugs and chairs were also substituted for sticks. He was also involved in *The Street*, and a contributor to *Wallpaper's Summer Pieces*. It is also thanks to Jantz's photography, that there are records of Ting's early performances in his studio:



The Ting c.1974, Photo: ©Robert Jantz/The Theatre of Mistakes, The Theatre of Mistakes Archive

Jantz currently lives in NYC with his partner **photographer** Jennifer Kotter and is represented by Cheryl Palavin gallery (see [www.cherylpalavin.com/artists/RJ-B.html](http://www.cherylpalavin.com/artists/RJ-B.html)).





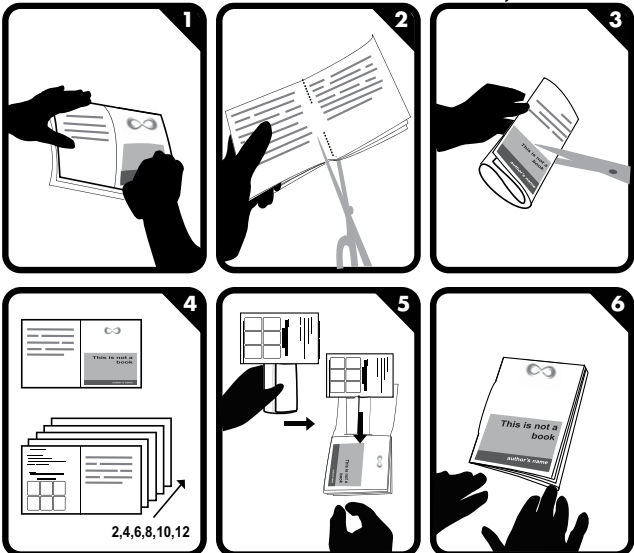
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**Inconsistencies** As evidenced by both the **Soundings** and the **memories** of participants, there are inconsistencies in the naming of the 'collective' and its participants. For instance, Victoria **Chick** is both a Vicki and a Vicky; Michael **Greenall** is a Mik and a Mikey. **Documentation of Preparations for Displacement** (1975) refers to "The **Ting**: Theatre of Mistakes"; Fiona **Templeton** claims it was always "The Theatre of Mistakes"; Peter **Stickland** did not recall the name "Ting" being used after 1976 and yet there it is in the catalogue for the 1977 Paris Biennale. By 1978, they are calling themselves The Theatre of Mistakes, Art Company. It is possible that these inconsistencies arose in part from the fact that different individuals took on responsibility at different times for writing press releases and so forth (see **Roles**). Perhaps there was an element of politicking here too, Ting being associated more with **Signe** Lie Howell and the looser group prior to the core. This A-Z prefers to mimic, rather than resolve, inconsistencies. Therefore although my preferred name is The Ting: Theatre of Mistakes (it sounds more fluent and the incorporation of both elements reflects the shifting organism it is), various versions are used throughout. See also: **Two Freedoms**

**Indebted** Jason E **Bowman** and I are indebted to all the participants of Ting: The Theatre of Mistakes (and related artists) for their generosity and continued willingness to contribute to the debate have proved invaluable.

**Influences** Several members of The Theatre of Mistakes cite poet John Ashbery, writer Gertrude Stein, and performance director Robert Wilson as influences. Others include:

# The Ting: Theatre of Mistakes

## an A-Z

# I-K

Marie-Anne Mancio

As well as instructions for performers, Ting: The Theatre of Mistakes often provided detailed instructions for their audiences. In the early days, this facilitated participation. For instance, the program for *Preparations for Displacement* explains how the viewer may insert themselves into the action. Later, program notes seemed to be instructions to viewers on how to read the works.

Amsterdam, 1996, 130)  
 (Anthony Howell in Nick Kaye *Art into Theatre*, Harwood Academic, the event of another exercise being set."  
 exercise would also be our servant or somebody else's servant in possibly could, on the understanding that the person who set that an exercise and we would all adhere to its rules as rigidly as we and masters of each other. In other words, anyone could suggest art by creating instruction recipes and we were all the servants Theatre of Mistakes, were based on the idea that we were making "The initial workshops [at the Dairy] of our group, The Ting:

**Instructions see Conceptualism, Exercises, Fantasy, Kisses**

(Interview: Andrew Eden & Susan Bonvin, Peterborough, 24<sup>th</sup> Nov 2008).

"Yes"  
 Eden:  
 "That kind of physicality... the interest in gravity?"  
 Marie-Anne Mancio:  
 of thing - being a key influence."  
 people throwing kids over their heads, that sort - from the beginning was the figures in the parks - "One of the things Anthony talked about right

"Punk; avant-garde French new wave fiction; systemic music and composers such as Robert Ashley, Philip Glass<sup>1</sup>, Terry Riley and Steve Reich; the theories of Fluxus poet Henry Flynt and concurrent works by other performance artists including Stuart Sherman<sup>2</sup>, Steven Cripps<sup>3</sup>; or the legacies of instruction based works by Sol LeWitt and those distributed in London by Yoko Ono<sup>4</sup>; early incarnations of expanded cinema by early manifestations of the London Film Makers Co-op; and the art criticism of writers such as the late Barbara Reise<sup>5</sup>, Stuart Morgan, Gregory Battock, Jeff Nuttall and RoseLee Goldberg."  
 (Jason E. Bowman "Accidentally on Purpose: The Ting: The Theatre of Mistakes, Towards A Retrospective" Unpublished paper by Jason E Bowman and Marie-Anne Mancio, PSI 15 Conference, Zagreb, June 2009)  
 Andrew Eden noted:

<sup>1</sup> Philip Glass and Robert Janz were members of the artist collective Continuum which pre-empted Art and Language.

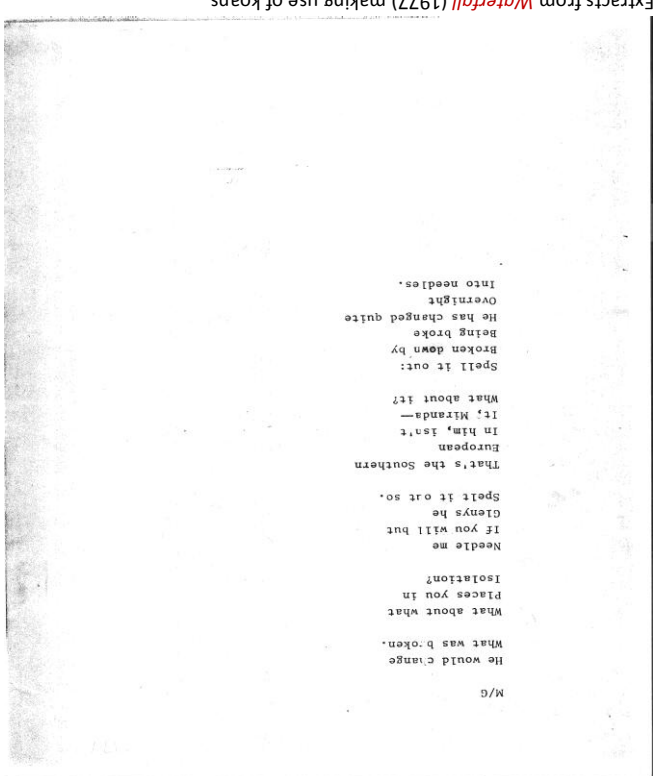
<sup>2</sup> The American performance artist Stuart Sherman, companion of Carson McCullers was a practitioner of monologues and minimalist performances. He died in 2001.

<sup>3</sup> Trained as a fireman Stephen Cripps became British pyrotechnic sculptor. He died in 1982, aged 29.

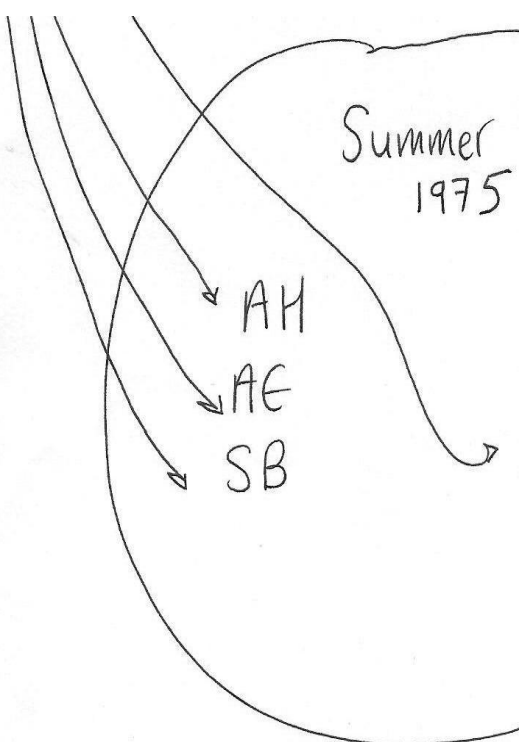
<sup>4</sup> Although Ono's book of instructions *Grapefruit* was published in 1963 in tandem with her first exhibition in the UK at the Indica Gallery in London.

<sup>5</sup> American critic Reise moved to London in 1966. She favoured minimal and conceptual art in her writings. She took her own life in 1978. Her estate was recently purchased by Tate Britain.

Extracts from *Waterfall* (1977) making use of koans ©The Theatre of Mistakes, The Theatre of Mistakes Archive



For an introduction to koans:  
[www.thezensite.com/MainPages/koan\\_studies.html](http://www.thezensite.com/MainPages/koan_studies.html)  
 Further reading: *Sitting with Koans* by John Daido Loori, see **(Bibliography)**



Kisses exchanged outside of performances are not being disclosed.

Instructions for performers in the script of *Going* (see [Bibliography](#))

- C) A kiss on the Cheek signifies Primary Scene C
- B) A kiss on the Brow signifies Primary Scene B,
- A) An Absolute kiss (on the mouth) signifies Primary Scene A,

**Kisses**

Early Ting workshop, nd, c.1974. Photo: ©The Theatre of Mistakes, The Theatre of Mistakes Archive)



(Presumably though this is not a real child....



Peter Stickland; Anthony Howell kisses Fiona Templeton; Mickey Greenall in *Going*. Photo: © The Theatre of Mistakes

**Koans**

See also: *Poetry, Waterfall, Ritual*

“Koans may be understood as psycholinguistic riddles, capable of generating a certain type of experience or as a literary genre with a complex history, embodying centuries of religious and philosophic discourse.”

(Barry Stephenson ‘The Koan as Ritual Performance’ *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* June 2005, Vol. 73, No. 2, 275-496)

In the Zen tradition, the posing of seemingly meaningless questions which may be used in a meditative state or to encourage deeper thinking. There are no sole answers.

E.g. from *The Gateless Gate*:

- Does the dog have Buddha-nature or not?
- No
- Does the dog have Buddha-nature or not?
- Yes

After watching the performance for an hour anyone may enter the shaded area surrounding circle B by crawling very slowly. Stop before you reach the edge of the circle and lie down on your back, legs straight, hands by sides, with your feet just touching the edge of the circle—as if the circle were the hub and you were one of the spokes of a larger wheel. Freeze, and remain prone for as long as it would take you to crawl all the way along all four sides, retracting the path by which you entered. Should you bump into anyone or be bumped into by anyone, freeze and remain motionless of this building. Exit by crawling backwards very slowly indeed, retracting the path by which you entered. Should you bump into anyone or be bumped into by anyone, freeze and remain motionless for an hour while in this area, freeze and remain motionless for as long as it would take you to crawl all the way along one wall of this building.

After watching the performance for an hour anyone may enter the shaded area surrounding circle A by walking very slowly. Stop before you reach the edge of the circle. Freeze, and remain completely motionless for not less than the time it would take you to walk all the way round the outside of this building. Exit by walking backwards very slowly indeed, retracting the path by which you entered. Should you touch anyone or be touched by anyone at any time while in this area, freeze and remain motionless for as long as it would take you to crawl all the way along one wall of this building.

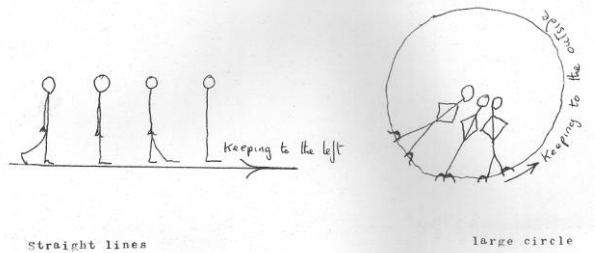
After watching the performance for an hour anyone may enter the shaded area surrounding circle B more than once during the performance.

Please read these instructions carefully:

After watching the performance for an hour anyone may cross the corridor at either end of the performance space in a series of no less than seven jumps. Pause between each jump as long as it would take you to walk the length of this building. Please do not cross the corridor more than once during the performance.

**DANCERS ON THE DAY**

1. Walk along straight lines with hands by your sides, very slowly, pausing with both feet together between each step. Always keep to the left. Do not walk on the red lines.
2. Walk sideways with hands on hips along the outside of the large circle. The circle always moves anti-clockwise. Do not walk along the smaller circle painted in red.



3. When you feel you have completed your part in the dance follow the lines to the second door which leads to the S chamber.

Excerpt Program for *Birth Ballet Chorale* (1974)  
The Theatre of Mistakes Archive

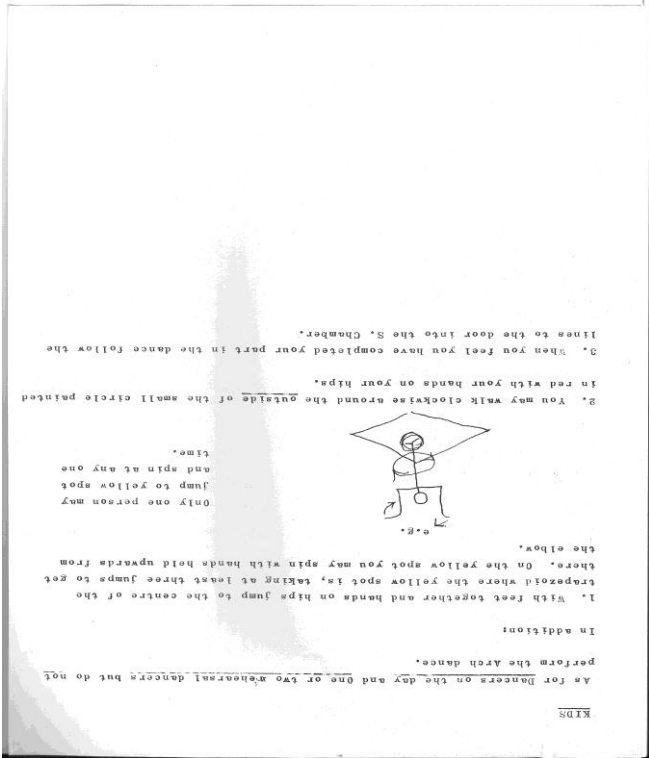
Exercise from *The Street* book, ©The Theatre of Mistakes, The Theatre of Mistakes Archive

MUSICAL FREEZES

Dance silently. Freeze for as long as you hear music.

Children were welcomed as performers in the early work of The Ting: Theatre of Mistakes, in *The Street* (1975) for instance.

Extract from *Birth Ballet Chorale* (1974), The Theatre of Mistakes Archive



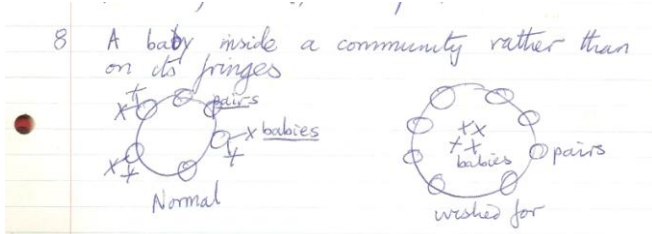
Kids



SLOW MOTION CHILDREN in DOUBLE BODY COSTUME in front of camouflaged archway.

Documentation of *The Street* ©The Theatre of Mistakes, The Theatre of Mistakes Archive

It is also clear from the notebooks of Anthony Howell (nd c. 1974-5) that at least one of the performers in The Ting: Theatre of Mistakes considered their role as part of their 'personal necessities':



Book/s of notated exercises and experiments 1974-1976. *The Gymnasium* has not been found in the cataloguing undertaken to date. It

arts schools such as Hornsey and Falmouth.

The training of certain artists engaged with The Ting also reveals an extraordinary potential to consider experimentation in particular British

Wallpaper was founded by Howell in 1974 and ceased publication in 1977. It issued 7 editions.

Howell left the Royal Ballet in 1966 to pursue his poetry and interest in interdisciplinary work.

[...] In 1975 The Ting became The Theatre of Mistakes through devising multiple performances from a series of rules and games-based exercises (known as *The Gymnasium* and recorded in eponymous notebooks) explored and refined by advertised open

disbanded in 1981.

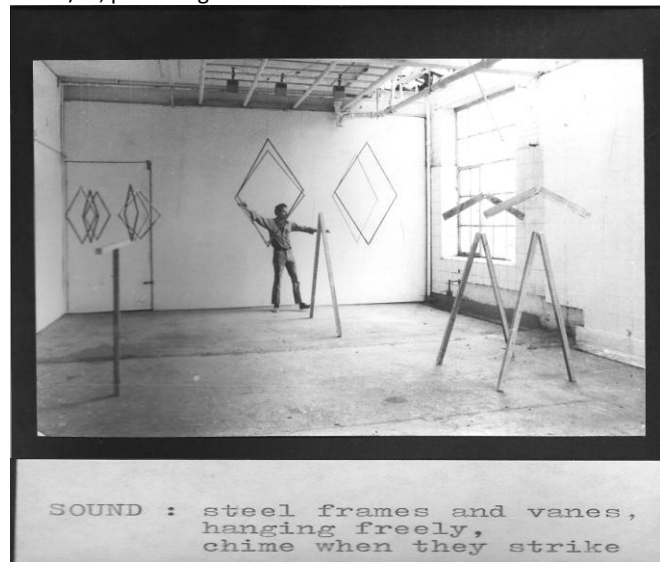
1977 under the shortened moniker The Theatre of Mistakes, they participated created its dynamic and then its works. Practising by processes were informed by the individuals whose interaction and dancers, economists, film makers, visual artists and architects its interdisciplinary collaboration. Populated by writers, poets, Mistakes was inspired by chance and the possibilities of proliferation of cultish behaviours The Ting: The Theatre of impending background of Punk, Thatcher, D.I.Y culture and post 1968. Active in the UK's recession of the 1970's against the milieu of collective practice and artist-led operatives occurring magazine initially instigated Ting in London in 1974 contributing "Writer and dancer Anthony Howell, founder of *Wallpaper* Curator, Jason E Bowman:

Introduction

Interdisciplinarity

Anthony Howell's concern with interdisciplinarity is evident as early as 1971 in a document for the Association of Creative Arts, instigated by himself and film maker Mike McKinnon. Their proposal for a workshop project suggests weekly meetings to exchange ideas and "break down the barriers existing between the arts, which at present deny an artist the opportunity to comment on work outside his or her own field."

The ethos of events at Purdies farm and the creation of *Wallpaper* were also instrumental in this. Interdisciplinary practice enables one to be both inside and outside. It disputes the need for either/or, preferring 'and' and both.



SOUND : steel frames and vanes, hanging freely, chime when they strike

Photo: ©The Theatre of Mistakes, The Theatre of Mistakes Archive, nd, c.1974



Below: Johnson in her studio, courtesy of the James Hyam Gallery

Above: The Theatre of Mistakes in rehearsal (Mike Greenall, Fiona Templeton) nd, c. 1976. Photo: ©Glenys Johnson



**Key** Text typed in this colour refers to cross-referenced entries. E.g *Homage to Pietro Longhi*: the reader can go to e-book H, *Homage* for more information and/or to e-book L, Longhi for different or perhaps the same information. Other abbreviations include nd for no date/ undated document. The key to the **Diagram** on pp25-6 of this A-Z is as follows:

**AE** Andrew Eden  
**AF** Alan Fuchs  
**AH** Anthony Howell  
**AMc** Anthony McCall  
**AN** Annabel Nicholson  
**AT** Amikam Toren  
**AU** Anita Urquhart  
**DC** David Coxhead  
**DS** David Spathaky  
**FT** Fiona Templeton  
**GJ** Glenys Johnson  
**HT** Howard Tong  
**JMS** Julian Maynard Smith  
**LM** Lindsay Moran  
**MC** Marc Chaimowicz  
**MO** Mike Owen  
**MP** Miranda Payne  
**PM** Pat Murphy  
**PS** Peter Stickland  
**RB** Richard Bernas  
**RQ** Richard Quarrell  
**RJ** Robert Janz  
**SB** Susan Bonvin  
**SLH** Signe Lie Howell  
**SH** Susan Hiller

Where names are joined by two lines ), this indicates a relationship between them.

sessions and interdisciplinary happenings. Decisions were made either unanimously or through chance including by the roll of dice and resulted in concepts such as the co-created *Manifesto for Mutual Art*<sup>10</sup>. David Coxhead, Michael Craig-Martin, Susan Hiller, Robert Janz, Anthony McCall, Michael Nyman, Julian Maynard-Smith, Pat Murphy, John Welch and Amikam Toren were associated with its initiatives.

Its core members Michael Greenall, Anthony Howell, Howard Tong, Lindsay Moran, Glenys Johnson, Miranda Payne, Peter Stickland and Fiona Templeton continued to develop its extraordinary internal logics and structuralist bias throughout its ten year history. Each project came to contain an internalised **mistake** which would corrupt pure concept and yet be coddled in the crucible of its structure. Public exposure came via the diverse distribution systems of the time such as the experimental Artslab spaces, the eclectic Cambridge Poetry Festival, the Serpentine Summer Open exhibitions, The Hayward Annual, the Paris Biennale and tours of the United States including penitentiaries in tandem with artist-led spaces such as The Dairy; shared by The Ting and London Filmmakers' Co-op and home to the studio of sculptor Robert Janz. In parallel to public performances obscured, interdisciplinary processes developed intermittently over ten years at an isolated farm informed early versions of works such as Hiller's *Dream Theatre of Mistakes* core members including *A Waterfall*, *Going*, *The Street*, *Performance for the Blind*, *Rape of the Mind*, *Secret*

potentially no longer exists although it is believed that the majority of the exercises it recorded remain documented in other forms.

<sup>10</sup> *Manifesto of Mutual Art*, 1975 Unpublished, The Theatre of Mistakes Archive

<sup>11</sup> Maps', McCall's *Five Pieces*<sup>12</sup>, Toren's *Performance for Cars* and research for performances later to be realised by The Ting: *Performance*, *Ascending [Ascent of] the Stedelijk*, *Ballet for Pregnant Women Chorale* etc. The work of The Ting: *The Theatre of Mistakes* defies the orthodoxy of body art within the art history of performance art, allowing for a unique reconsideration of how performance art practice relates to the overlooked history of contributions from the legacy of Minimalism through Conceptual Art and towards Punk." (Jason E Bowman "Accidentally on Purpose, The Ting: The Theatre of Mistakes, Towards A Retrospective" PS15, Zagreb, June 2009)

Writer/Researcher, Marie-Anne Mancio:

I begin writing a biography of The Ting: Theatre of Mistakes which goes something like this: Anthony Howell instigated Ting inspired by his interest in chance and seeing Robert Wilson in New York; his interrogation of systemic art; and conversations with his then wife, Howell and Signe Lie co-created The Ting, or, Howard Tong was responsible for the visual development of The Ting; or, Fiona Templeton was instrumental in the shift from The Ting (a more fluid group of behaviours) to *The Theatre of Mistakes*, a dedicated

<sup>11</sup> Hiller tested and made diagrams and drawings for her first *Dream Maps* at Purdies Farm, 1974

<sup>12</sup> McCall's first *Five Work* was for the wedding of Anthony and Signe Lie at Sinfield Road, Reading, 1971

