

Other works on paper included outline drawings of white-painted tubular steel chairs that resemble Michael Craig-Martin's paintings of quotidian objects (Craig-Martin, it should be noted, curated the 1976 exhibition at the Serpentine Gallery in which the group participated). The generic functionality of the chair, which appears frequently elsewhere as a stage prop, is typical of a closely defined aesthetic lexicon, a preoccupation that sets the group apart from other live art that eschews aesthetic considerations in favour of spectacle and the singular event. A contemporary document for *The Street*, 1975, instructs the performers: 'Nothing but beauty to be gained from a performer taking an hour over a progression.' This revealed a preference for refinement over immediacy that must have appalled a few purist critics of performance in the 1970s.

The live elements on show here, led by Howell and Templeton, underlined that *The Theatre of Mistakes* is an endeavour orientated around performance rather than objects, and is still a going concern after all these years. Howell's performance workshops throughout the exhibition on Fridays to Sundays were an invitation to try out some of the performance art strategies in Howell and Templeton's comb-bound manual *Elements of Performance Art*, 1976, which was handed to every attendee. As a former student at the Royal Ballet and a poet, Howell is especially interested in how body movement and linguistics can be reimagined through restriction and repetition. One exercise was to carry out a series of actions with a chosen object (for example, a chair) and then carry out the same actions on a person (for example, standing on the person, pushing the person under a table), with predictably slapstick results. This kind of rudimentary approach is like a physical and mental workout for artists and performers (intriguingly, Howell has recently provided similar workshops for prison inmates).

Alongside this, on Friday and Saturday evenings, Templeton directed *Going*, 1977, a performance for a cast of either three women and two men, or two women and three men, rotated throughout the six weeks (the performers were Manuela Albrecht, Javier Cardona, Yoko Ishiguro, Florence Peake, Andrew Price and Taylor Smith). They shared a claustrophobic space with the audience and followed a short repetitive script and tight stage directions. When they expressed a desire to leave, they could not get past polite repeated mannerisms and found themselves stuck in a demented loop. This might be interpreted as a satire on social mores, yet the structure of the work was always on the surface. The repetitive action created a mesmeric weaving effect that became monolithic, like an inscrutable computer program continuously tweaked by some unseen logician. ■

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The House that Heals the Soul

CCA Glasgow 22 July to 3 September

During an interlude in her 2015 short story collection *Public Library* entitled 'soon to be sold', Ali Smith takes grim stock of the havoc wreaked on library services in the UK by cuts and closures under the Conservatives. In the time it took to edit her book for publication, Smith recorded 28 threats of closure to branch libraries and 15 to mobile libraries – 43 'in a matter of weeks'. Like Smith's powerful polemic, 'The House that Heals the Soul' at Glasgow's Centre for Contemporary Arts addresses the aggressive economic and ideological attacks of the past decade not only on the fabric but also on the concept of the public library. It asks what libraries are, what forms they might take, how to protect

shared public spaces, and in what ways precarity might be an opportunity for resistance, rather than exploitation.

CCA has worked with the artist Nick Thornton to map out some possible answers to these questions, inviting artist-run initiatives that employ the form of the book and the structure of the library to inhabit the galleries. These projects are linked by shared concerns with the processes of exchange and circulation. Even in the case of Emily Jacir, whose work is perhaps most explicitly focused on the book-as-object, these are key tenets. Six photographs from *ex libris*, 2010-12, are propped on a shelf near the exhibition's entrance. Each documents a section of marginalia inserted into books looted from Palestinian homes and libraries by Israeli authorities in 1948. The pasted-in scraps of paper and annotations record the passage of the books through the hands of lost owners. Jacir's work serves as a reminder that not all circulations are volitional, and that books and libraries have so often been targets and agents of cultural and political conflict.

The overall emphasis is less on individual books, however, than on the conditions that enable libraries to function and the possibilities each library ecosystem might offer. In one area, books hanging by strings from the ceiling form an immersive cloud of text and images. Published by Temporary Services and Half Letter Press, they include skills-sharing manuals, photo-books containing documentation of impromptu, authorless interventions into cityscapes and an account of an art gallery in a bathroom. Elsewhere, books stuffed into backpack-like frames affixed to the walls constitute part of *The Pacifist Library* gathered by Curandi Katz (Valentina Curandi and Nathaniel Katz), a project that has assumed a number of manifestations on its nomadic path through public spaces in Queens, New York. Both Temporary Services and Curandi Katz work dialogically, using the library as a catalyst for exchange and action.

Print's radical, emancipatory potential is a significant aspect of many other projects in the exhibition. Beatrice Catanzaro's video installation *The Needle in the Binding* is the culmination of research into the role played by a library among a group of Palestinian political prisoners in Israel between 1972 and 1995, which traces how it fostered a culture of discussion, lectures and teaching among the inmates. One of My Kind (OOMK) – the name of both a handmade zine and a collective led by Sofia Niazi, Rose Nordin and Heiba Lamara which focus particularly on inclusivity for Muslim women – has gathered a selection of books and pamphlets from a recent research trip to Malaysia. The display includes a guide to activism produced by Malaysian students at the University of Nottingham. In these initiatives, books operate as nodes in wider networks, as agents that bring people together, which have the potential both to establish and bind communities, and to incite consciousness and change. Individual books, and the libraries they belong to, are also modes of aesthetic expression; this is most explicitly foregrounded in a series of book-based prints collected by The Serving Library, but it is evident in the care and attention to detail that inform all of the projects.

Not that 'The House that Heals the Soul' atavistically fetishises printed material, although it does retain a heartening adherence to the physicality of reading and the need for accessible forums in which ideas can be debated. CCA and Thurston have included several endeavours that use the web to distribute texts based on the principle of open access, including the Open Humanities Press (all of its books