

ENACTIVISM

on URGENT ART for SOCIAL CLIMATE CHANGE

Essays by ALAN PROHM



ENACTIVISM: on URGENT ART for SOCIAL CLIMATE CHANGE



ENACTIVISM

*To do something. Something how. How to choose. When to know and how.
This is beginning. This is every beginning*

HhU!

(horse sound very loud)

Starting now we have, what, 12? years to reverse the strong and accelerating global warming trend, or :
(short list of dangers)

News that on a smaller scale would have us clutching a few of our nearest possessions and running out the door or trying to escape in the car or to catch the next flight out of the country leaves us a little numb, considering the trouble we're in, which has barely begun. Also right now, response and implementation channels are opening in all directions for the communication of a vast and elegant mass reaction and readjustment of the fundamental implicit and legal agreements, like how we run machines, how we treat resources, how we supply our needs, how we evaluate time, and how we incorporate as businesses or collective organs.

It is the sweetspot of change against the strong momentum of business as usual. 2006 will go down in history as the year global warming "sunk in" to common sense and popular discourse. Not universally, and not very far, but by 2007 we can say that most people even in America understand the globe is warming and we're influencing all the factors in the wrong direction. Great time to do something...

I GETTING THE CLIMATE THING

2006 is sure to go down in history as the year the world finally “got” global warming. It will be pegged to Al Gore’s *An Inconvenient Truth*, though it really has more essentially to do with the UN’s Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), whose fourth and final conclusive report came out in 2007.

So 2006 or 2007 will go down in history as the year the planet “got it”. But in what sense, and what do we mean by “getting it”? Well for starters we can say we “got” climate change insofar as we saw it show up a) as a major award-winning motion picture, b) as the fierce personal campaign of a former vice-president and should-have-been actual president of the United States of America, c) in conclusive official science from the world’s best climate scientists, and d) finally as a regular feature in the news and reporting cycles of the world’s leading newspapers and magazines.

But how far does this getting it go? How far would it need to? What would a sufficient getting it look like? And how can we facilitate this? This is our question. How do we help it hit home, and home enough?

There are a lot of people on it right now. Now more than ever but there were a lot already. Trying things. Some of these are in NGOs or local politics or global corporate leadership. Many of these are scientists and engineers and planners. Some of these are artists or others employed in the arts field. Like us. So, what do we do? There’s a lot of art starting to show up around global warming, and there will be more. More and more artistic effort will be turned toward the shifts in consciousness, action and planning that will need to take place. How much effort? How much will be enough?

The Precipice Alliance unveiled in 2006 the first winner in its new “high profile and innovative” series of yearly funded projects on global warming. It was Mary Ellen Carroll’s “Indestructible Language”, 9 words in 34 tall red neon letters around the upper windows of a large industrial building off a major urban highway. They read “IT IS GREEN THINKS NATURE EVEN IN THE DARK”. A lovely sentence. Full of pathos and sensibility. Even hope. But also admonition. It can be spoken around in the back and sides of your mind for quite a while to let it sink in in its various and overlapping significations. It is resistant to wear; it keeps meaning, something simultaneously vague and poignant, contemplative and urgent, in a sweet, mellow, lyrical band of looping syntax that really has some staying power. So it elegantly earns its title, “indestructible”, in a poetics/rhetoric sense to parallel (and here is the accomplishment that really confirms this as poetry in literary terms) the physical/technological sense of “indestructible” as embodied in the material form of the piece and in its immediate technological implications on the issues of global warming. Thus the mood and imagery of the verbal statement are joined to the frank presence of solar panels supplying the only power for illuminating the letters, the clearly ironized contrast of countless carbon breathing cars passing by at high speed in both directions, and the open-ended reference to the entire sustainability discourse. This isomorphism of form and content, and the delicate balance between openness (or indeterminacy) and poignant motivational reference, earn Carroll’s installation high praise as a poetic work of art. But will anyone get it from this?

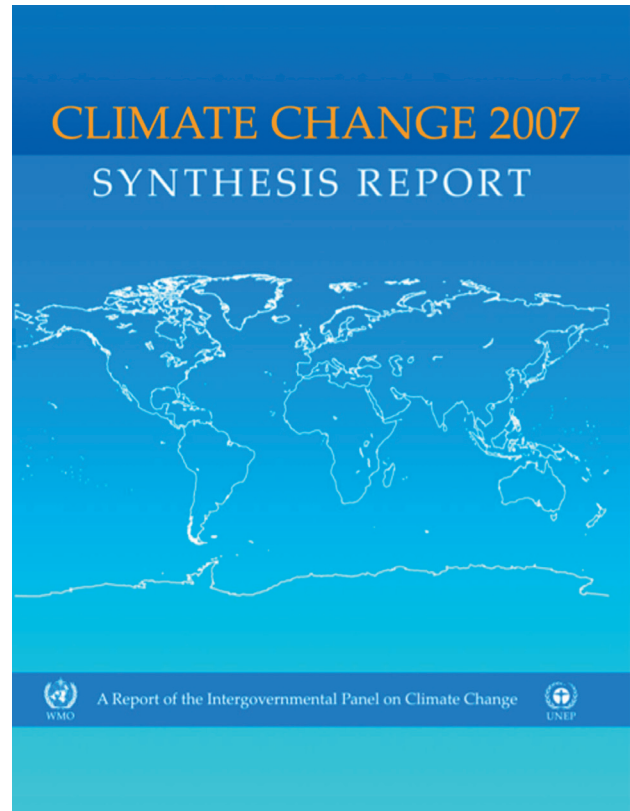
Will what anyone gets of it make any difference in their “getting” global warming? I.e. was Precipice’s money well-spent? How could we tell, and why should Mary Ellen be held responsible? Word of global warming still needs spreading, and profound and catchy and posted over the freeway are good qualities for a campaign message aspiring to memic status, but frankly if neon poetry over the highways is held up as a model for artists wanting to address global warming, there’s not much hope.

Even continuing sincerely to say that any art “addresses” global warming requires some severe investigating of the communication relationship between these two partners: over here, artist and over here drastic planetary crisis threatening everything. What would you do if global warming came up to you and said hello? Or if you came on it by surprise somewhere, or after tracking it down? How would you address this thing? You’d tell it to go away wouldn’t

you? I would, but how can you do that? What's your communicational strategy? That's the master planetary narrative and principle planning challenge of the 21st Century, isn't it, and of any additional future centuries we might like to salvage in a reasonably livable condition for whoever's around then. Oh, and if the scientists are all right we have just 15 quick years to make our point and have that have its effect. The space of a mere burp or clearing of the throat in human conversational terms.



An Inconvenient Truth (2006)



IPCC Report (2007)



Mary Ellen Carroll: Indestructible Language (2006)

REPRESENT

So if you're an artist what do you do? Well, artists often represent. They dispose of techniques of imaging and metaphor construction that have proven very effective over hundreds of years of sacral, courtly, corporate or "autonomous" free art service. Mary Ellen Carroll's poem embodies the problem in a durable verbal image that represents it to a deep part of human sensibility and responsiveness. To many, depending on your sensitivity, a powerful visual image will tend to have more of an impact. Take Erick Swenson's Björkian swan song to human civilization, the exquisite "Untitled" of 2004-2005. This piece fills a small gallery room with the flipped body of a beautiful white stag, apparently trapped in a patch of freezing lake slush but actually stumbled and caught on the broken asphalt of a deserted city street, perhaps in the freeze thaw of some (distant?) future climatic post-apocalypse. This is an exquisite symbol of our global, unique-in-history, situation. It has the depth and reach as a representation to qualify for the status "epic"; Vergil's Aeneid or Gibbon's The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire come to mind as analogous epics of empirical apocalypse, where the natural sublime emerges on the scene of civilizational collapse.



Erik Swenson: Untitled (2004-2005)

INFORM

But if we judge an artwork by looking back on it from an imagined future – which is what we do with anything epic or historically sublime – then shouldn't we be concerned if as an artworld we notice ourselves overdeveloping a taste for that poignant tragic nostalgia, for so apocalyptic a beauty? In times of crisis aesthetics, if it is tuned to the human and to the life-practical, tends to get antsy about being relevant to the times, about being historically engaged in some way, and then you get lots of discussion on what's the right way to engage, and on whether it isn't exactly giving in to the civilizational risk of this moment in history to insist that art be engaged, practical, productive. A common role art often takes in response is to become informative, to turn its aesthetic craft skills to representing life and its meanings not in symbols or imagery, but as data, information enhanced for a profounder reception. This was the job revolutionary artists/designers (Lissitzky, Tatlin, Melnikov, etc.) took back at a moment in history when the first socialist revolution had just succeeded in changing out the existing dispensation, and had not yet had to prove the failure of its own chosen solutions. And this is something we observe as an inclination of many artists today in addressing the climate crisis, at a moment in history when we are starting to see some specialized funding of "world-changing" art and design endeavors, but where the "revolutionary" spirit of the art is clearly absent the active liberty of hope that comes with believing in a change that big.

In the informational aesthetics of climate art the standard is messaging. How is the information packaged, how easily is it read and digested, who does it reach? So there is enthusiastic press about a piece like the "Geo-Cosmos", installed in a dramatic stairwell of sweeping steel and glass at the National Museum of Emerging Science and Innovation in Tokyo. It is a sphere over six meters in diameter, comprised of 1 million LED lights. The LEDs are integrated as a spherical display showing moving visuals and infographics on the current state of the climate. It is a hit as an artwork today because it condenses into one simple idea-object an informational experience equivalent to stepping back from the planet and seeing for yourself the distress we're causing it. And at a major metropolitan technology museum, this message is guaranteed a large and constant stream of audience, and the rhetorical support of a major authoritative



Geo-Cosmos, National Museum of Emerging Science and Innovation, Tokyo



institution framing it. But aside from the lucrative commission, how does an artist whose urgent about things decide if this is the kind of object s/he should spend these precious next 10 or 15 years making?

For one thing there is the question of the audience and the framing, and many artists would feel impatient about continuing to tell their story or make their point in an institutional setting, to the kind of people who could be expected to come there, and in the state of mind or action they could be expected to be in while viewing it. The same reasons artists in the 50's and 60's rejected the white cube as a disaffectedualized context for encountering art in, info artists can evaluate for themselves whether tech museums and authoritative public-sector educational environments supply the conditions for their message truly hitting home.

A great example of a very different approach to the same information is Eve S. Mosher's "Highwaterline", a sustained street-level informational action that was underway at the time the BodyBuilding Project was doing its residency at Watermill. We read about this young artist going around with a map of New York City, a wheeled chalk-line dispenser of the kind they use for marking football pitches, and research data plotting where flooding in New York is likely to reach in major storm conditions by 2050. She traced out the predicted high water line, drawing a white line across streets and sidewalks and (implicitly) through buildings that are homes and investments and workplaces to the people who move around there. Using some of the same data as the Geo-Cosmos, Mosher can effectively spread the message of devastating climate change at street level. This time the perspective gained is not like stepping back from the planet to see from afar, but wading into it, getting wet, imagining familiar geography and real estate under water: Like New Orleans. The message delivery is aimed to hit precisely those who will be directly impacted by the predicted events, and to reach them, not in a separated moment of cultured reflection, but in broad daylight, so to say, on the spot of their personal, human investment in that geography and real estate. What better conditions could you ask for in marketing your important message?

Certainly her total daily audience (everyone who walks, bikes or drives by her or her line) is more than it would be at the National Museum of Emerging Science and Innovation in Tokyo. The the number informed of the "point" of what they are seeing is likely fewer; but because of the face-to-face nature of the project the impact of learning the point is for sure far stronger. If there's any flaw it's perhaps that it doesn't speak to those who remain aloof from the streets and sidewalks of the city, i.e. those whose perspective it is too look down from afar. Well, for them there's the Global Warming Mug for \$12 at Zamashop.com.





Eve S. Mosher: Highwaterline. Manhattan and Brooklyn, NY (2007) <http://lightblueline.org/node/239>

RAISE AWARENESS/AROUSE

Of course at some level an artist has to think of his task as something other or more than just informing. Certainly the design role is not only efficiency of delivery but also depth and intensity of impact. So when information or an issue is already out there, artists often take as theirs the task of “raising awareness” of it. Taking a token “knowing the facts” and upping that to a heightened “aware of the issue”. In psychological terms arousal is a prerequisite of responsiveness, and raising awareness is a way of stimulating information in a person’s mind and generating some arousal around it.

In the implicit logic of awareness raising, a piece is successful if the next time the issue involved comes up in the viewer’s daily life, they will be one notch further along in caring about it, or doing something. To achieve that, you need not only exposure but again poignancy. Millions of people are guaranteed to see the dramatic logographic Google puts up on Earthday, flashing a clever cartoon of polar melting to everyone who opens its universally popular search engine on that day. Far fewer are likely to see the photographic work of Spencer Tunick, but his work is more poignant because it shows a real melting glacier in immediate contact with the real naked bodies of 600 human beings. A message as challenging and epochal as that of global warming needs to penetrate certain barriers and desensitizations people maintain in their processing of information, and nudity is one way to do that. Of course the piece is also representing a kind of immediacy it would hope to achieve with its audience, and from a cognitive marketing standpoint it is successful because it manages to associate the fact of climate change with a dignified visceral stimulation in the consciousness of its audience. But the subtle extra thrill that comes with seeing naked skin on cold mountains only goes so far in opening the channels for transformative understanding.

Again pounding the pavement and spreading the word at street level seems more promising than displaying a fine photograph in a gallery, or spreading a catchy one virally over the internet or in art magazines. The one-on-one, face-to-face situation at least gives the artist some chance of knowing really what quality of awareness they have succeeded in raising for their audience, because they have the experience of the interaction itself to sense and evaluate, and at least some of the audience response will be discernible immediately. Tunick’s photos are so finely made, and presume so much production and funding, they are unlikely to connect to any individual in the way a single neighborhood chat could easily hope to.



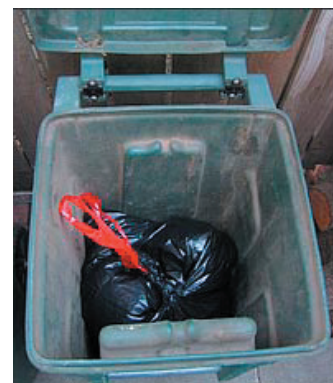
Spencer Tunick. 600 naked people on Aletsch Glacier; in the Swiss Alps. August 17, 2007

EXEMPLIFY/EXPERIENTIALIZE

Even in a heart-to-heart conversation, though, a message will not get through if the person communicating it fails to make the person receiving it feel personally involved. And feeling personally involved only makes a difference in the world if that involvement is experienced as active (or potentially active) engagement. Another great art action ongoing as we did our work at Watermill was the “Trash Challenge” put forth by the American Public Radio personality Tess Vigeland. Between the 14th and 28th of September, Vigeland challenged listeners of her “Marketplace Money” radio show to join her in a self-informing exercise concerning our individual consumption of material resources and our production of waste.

For the two weeks we spent carrying out our research and preparing our final presentation, she was carrying around a black plastic garbage bag into which she threw all the waste she would otherwise have thrown away in countless unthinking acts of “disposal” over the course of a normal day’s work or leisure. Exemplifying the truth of William McDonough’s maxim that in the 20th Century “away went away”¹ as a place you could throw things and be done with them, Vigeland accumulated her material footprint as a concrete burden and practical daily inconvenience. The point she was making was assured to show up in analog, through a simple capturing of the material evidence. Size and smell would correspond to volume and material respectively. This abstract thing we now have to engage so aggressively, our material footprint on the planet, manifests familiarly in the sensory-motor experience of handling the evidence of it with our bare hands and wearing our daily clothes.

For however many people participated in Vigeland’s experiment (I could find no estimate on the website), the idea of consumption habits became neuro-cognitively focalized. People were invited to “understand” the question in the sense that they could get concretely, practically involved with the things that give it concrete reality. There’s no more effective way to do that than through sensory-motor reinforcement. Going about your day with waste&consumption not only on your mind but in your lap, at your feet, in play as a continuing intimate logistics, you inevitably become a site of the necessary problem-solving intentionalities. The problem has in this way twined itself into the neuro-motor practicalities of your daily life, where it is then “right there” at the interchange between knowledge and action. Though the smallest and least ambitious of the projects mentioned so far, there is something about Vigeland’s experiment that puts it ahead of the others.



Tess Vigeland: Trash Challenge (2007) “Marketplace Money” radio show, American Public Radio, DATES, 2007. http://marketplace.publicradio.org/display/web/2007/09/14/tess_trash_challenge/

PROVOKE/INCITE

Because, how we get the fact of global warming into our heads/bodies is the question of the century and will stay that way. Informational aesthetics today has to recognize that today is already post-informational in this sense, that we already know what the planet is sick with. We just have to react to it as a species with a velocity never before demanded of us. Then we'll be okay, but how do we do that? How do we get it through to people who don't get it? This is the question of the century.

So through a creative public works project, where everyone performs the trash challenge as part of their coming of age, society could organize to ensure a general "getting it" that would advance universally to at least household level. There should obviously be campaigns at the federal level, specifically tailored to raising the "got it" index nationwide, say 70% by 2050. But how would you institute that? A utopianism of aesthetic efficacy could wish that a simple idea might propagate so propitiously in the conditions of it serving to symbolize a solution that it becomes one. But is this possible? And how possibly would you have to design a campaign to effect that?

The story of the search for the maximum efficacy of the word or action (known as magic) is an old one, and we can't expect it to be nearing its fabulous conclusion right in our day merely because we're starting to need it a little apocalyptically. Still the analysis of how messaging communicates through society, from sources backed by interests toward target audiences positioned to make practical actions that promise rewards for different interests, is quite highly evolved by now. A lot of it takes the form of a Situationist or Situationistic critical art analysis of the spectacle, a raft of concepts that has proven obvious and essential for articulating the life we live in media society. The spectacle is an idea of human relation, behavior and interaction as practically "jammed" by the studied and steady onslaught of media images and message campaigns. When the description of a society coincides point-for-point with the description of its communications infrastructure, you have the spectacle.

As artists (re)engage in the civilizational issues of our times, these analyses and the tactical orientation they inspired are showing up and evolving in movements all over that are devoted to knowing how maximum broadcast or talk-back can be asserted within a society structured strongly along lines set down by the channels of mainstream communication. Or where talk can be deepened in the name of a shared emergency to get negotiations finally institutionally on a human footing, where by human is understood the entirety of life available to us. Tactical Media is a label used for a bulk of these movements and undertakings. A perspective common to many of them is one that sees reality as negotiated, when not positively manufactured and forced on people against their human self-interest and desires, and in the light of glaring evidence to the contrary.² And an ethics common to many is that under these conditions³ civil disobedience presents the tactically most promising rhetorical mode for messaging toward the urgency of acting to save the planet.

An intervention undertaken by the iconic Yes Men managed to splice into the captive-audience opportunity ExxonMobil would again be able to take in explaining its practices and its human record in its own terms, and turn that opportunity against the company. It is Robinhoodism for the 21st Century and as a genre of art it is flamboyant and widely popular. Applying a proven model to a new target and in a new situation, the Yes Men pretended to be ExxonMobil and Natural Petroleum Council of Canada representatives and gave a presentation at the Gas and Oil Exposition 2007 in Calgary, Alberta. In this conference slot, where other luminaries had delivered on the benefits of mining Canada's tar sands and pursuing new coal-fuelled power plants, and with everyone there believing they really were the voice of ExxonMobil, the Yes Men presented a proposal to go ahead with oil and begin slowly replacing it with Vivoleum made from processed human fats harvested from the rising death rate we know to expect as the era of global warming and peak oil go forward.

The "tactical embarrassment" the company itself would feel was only the sweet secondary effect of the much more broadly cast communication that aimed along some vector of having an impact. As a form of hijacked public message, it effectively "raised awareness" of Exxon's actual impacts on the planet a) among the somewhat stupified audience present who got to witness the immediate social situation of that stunt and could taste the human immediacy of it, and b) among the wider audience who would hear about it virally, by word of mouth and on the net. But here the action exerted upon public awareness is not the polite "raising" that the Sierra Club does, but a provocation. To the awareness-raising message conveyed in their speech and its ironic implications is added an effective extra advocating action. Where the effective extra in Tess Vigeland's public challenge was the sensory-motor ingrainings that would make the abstraction of waste&consumption concrete, in the Yes Men's action the extra is the energy released by



Yes Men at the Gas and Oil Exposition, Calgary 2007

the breaking of protocols, both as sheer energetic urgency and as noble example set. Direct action. The transgression needs an explanation, and through a careful-enough image strategy that avoids the defensive vilifying frames, the occasion of that explanation presents the perfect opening for pitching the message. But beyond the information there's the small charge of force that accompanies it, directed through infrastructures of logistical socialization and not at individuals. This charge is not the slow loading of potentials implied in the simple model of awareness raising, but an explosive blow, aiming less to fill awareness with information for later use, than to jar the awareness that is full enough already and catalyze an action out of the stewing of knowing and the acidic "should do". It is an action that communicates its facts by exploiting a channel insurrectionally, which method enhances reception of the message also through the slight rise in excitement that accompanies any but the most heartless experience of someone crossing the line, or breaking the status quo. Again, understanding is activated close to the seat of action, and this time at the level of the collective body.

The Yes Men's actions allow a collective body to experience (vicariously, through identification with the activists) the sensory-motor realities of transgressing norms that uphold a destructive status-quo, of standing up and talking back, not metaphorically but in full physical/situational presence, to corporate entities that operate as nearly transcendental and locationless forces determining the collective human predicament. The communicative efficacy is the same as that which is perennially claimed as a leading virtue of direct action, where the act is positioned as a potentially catalytic model, which if taken up and enacted widely would be certainly revolutionary. But the spectacle is strong and resilient, and by what efficacy can such actions hope to jump the gap between a vicarious witnessing (which is still only representational and again inevitably spectacular) and the direct personal appropriation and enactment that would prove the catalytic potential on which their claims to relevance and efficacy rest? The popularity of Yes Men-type actions makes it obvious that they probably fulfill the same diffusing function for which art in general has been condemned from revolutionary and social change perspectives, i.e. people with urgent needs or frustrated impulses for change witness the stunts, experience a cathartic gratification and release, and feel their urgency and frustration relieved, along with the potential force these may have contained.

"I'm not angry at them for pulling this joke, I'm angry that it's not for real."

Where provocation and direct action stunts prove effective at a larger scale is where the gratification taps a mass desire in an organized body, or creates an addiction for the change the single action had hinted at. The Yes Men came much closer to revolution when they intervened at an investor's meeting in post-Katrina New Orleans, standing in for a HUD representative to tell the crowd of offended and outraged residents that in fact their still very useable public housing units would not be torn down on flimsy safety claims and before the prospect of serious economic upscaling, gentrification and displacement. In a climate where angry crowds have stormed the gates of public meetings to demand a hearing, where the anger is old and compounded and racially aligned, and the impacted communities increasingly organized and self-aware as an advance guard in a fundamental social/environmental justice struggle, such a "just kidding" can be dynamite. In this case it didn't go off, but it was on-target (i.e. the rage the Yes Men triggered went over their heads and straight at HUD and the investors planning the demolitions and redevelopment), and the rest would be just a matter of finding the ripe timing.



New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina



ENACTIVATE

Any victim of the flooding and evictions who “gets” what has been going on in New Orleans – gentrification and exclusion in the cynical guise of concern for poor people’s safety in the wake of an environmental disaster – gets it as rage and outrage. The information potentiates a biological energy, sourced from emotions tied to serving radical (i.e. fundamental) human needs. In a theory of revolution, e.g. Marx’s, the art lies in hyper-sensitizing people to these radical needs and their lack of fulfillment, and helping those people to an organization that pools that biological energy and weaponizes it against the conditions denying them what they need. In a different theory of revolution, e.g. the non-hierarchical grassroots groundswelling of the multitude (a la Hardt and Negri), these same needs give off a desire which can be nourished and cultured into something like a force of nature, history organized and accelerated the way a strong weather front grows, emergent out of infinite points of pressure and moving particles of mass.

In what lies the art of catalyzing immediate overwhelming collaborative force to remove the conditions blocking our ability to respond to climate change? What would it take for any people to get the point of major ongoing human and planetary endangerment the way workers in the 19th and early 20th centuries got the idea of their latency as a force that could wipe out inequality, injustice and oppression? What would it take for us (all humans) to get it even far deeper and more broadly and beyond the partisan violences that just turned socialist revolution into a new regime of inequality, injustice and oppression again, only this time with different organizational structures and terminology? What other models of radicality are there to inspire effective messaging and mobilization for what is a class conflict and a battle of ideologies, but for the first time beyond such conflict structures also a species-wide/planetary urgency with universal moral priority? And most importantly, what short-cut to immediate activation of masses carries with it the capacity to remold human and social being in synch with any reorganizing of institutions and infrastructure, to ensure the structural adjustments a moral soil to root and flourish in when the civilizational habits that have made us what we are have to be kicked? And to do it like remembering a trick one used to be really good at.

A cultural practice that would ground itself in the most radical of good wills and in the most far-sensing of self-stable intersubjectivities, and change the world for our survival, right now, would take its forms and tactics from the need to trigger a more or less instant enactment of the change meant. An art activism that campaigned creatively on this basis: enactivism. Let’s do it.



Logo of the militant environmental group Earth First



Logo for Step It Up 2007 National Days of Climate Action

2 KINAESTHETIC MESSAGING FOR SOCIAL CHANGE

It sounds ludicrous, what we are supposed to have to do. It feels hopeless and impossible. For a while every now and then, at least. Between moments when life continues to engage us and the world keeps seeming to still work. Alex Steffen of Worldchanging.com puts it this way:

So there we are. We need, in the next twenty-five years or so, to do something never before done. We need to consciously redesign the entire material basis of our civilization. The model we replace it with must be dramatically more ecologically sustainable, offer large increases in prosperity for everyone on the planet, and not only work in areas of chaos and corruption, but help transform them.

That alone is a task of heroic magnitude, but there's an additional complication: we only get one shot.

Alex Steffen, "Winning the Great Wager" [<http://www.worldchanging.com/archives/002197.html>]

What do you do if you're a coach and you can only shout one set of plays out to the team before the buzzer? It's that moment in the movies where the one star is coached to grab the other by the shoulders and shake him, or slap him across the face so s/he'll get it. Like: "They're here to get you. Get out of the house! Run. Run! And don't stop. No matter what you hear." And these are ridiculous examples, so petty appears any characterisation of a crisis of this scale. But where do we get examples we can really use for imagining what needs to be said and done at this moment? There's so much about this we've never done before.

Who has ever had to tell themselves "you know, your race is going to factually collapse if you don't really complete a full 70% transformation of lifestyles and livelihoods over the next 15 (or 10) years? Anyone but Noah? That's the scale, of course, but today the iniquity is of a very different, non-moral, and non-mythological kind. Earth to be purged for its failure to innovate in the direction of life or learn from its mistakes. Global warming has to some extent already begun to fulfill the poetry of the primal flood prophecies.

If everyone's just going about leading their life as best they can, and it's pretty much working, how does that one of them stand up and say the obvious thing: "Save Ourselves!"; without wasting precious breath in a rat's race they know there's no "out" of. How does that group position and align in order to effectively pool the authority of their collective voices and make it happen? The question can certainly stop someone from making art, or downshift their idealism about art activity, to the temporary calm of forgetting other values and buying in to the inherent validity of aesthetic production.

Or a person can be at this juncture already of course whole-heartedly engaged, as a human in family and place trying to survive, even thrive, and work gladly if not tirelessly to right&steer the course of events for everyone's benefit. If such a goal would hitherto have seemed sentimentalist and morally suspect⁴, it is now much more down-to-earth. It is not hard today to identify a major policy direction for world governance that would be of statistically universal benefit for all mankind; localized with meticulous care to the level of the watershed and the day's weather. World peace is cliché for one of the biggest wishes we as a species have yet been able to wish for ourselves. And yes, of course, world peace. But it's hardly something you can campaign for⁵; for campaigning is itself already a state of war. War cannot be abolished as such, only its conditions. Like flames in Gehenna⁶, it is kept alive by the off-gassing from layer on layer of oppression and misrule.

Stopping climate change, on the other hand, is something you can campaign for; a mass mobilization of vision, planning and initiative against the off-gassing from layer on layer of economic investment and resource dependency. And as a marketing director, one would immediately be thinking of something very "viral", a good "sticky" message that will get the issue across and understood by every body on earth as quickly as possible. But one would also look to the larger strategy in designing these tactics. The time line would be based on a 15 - 25 year end target at which point full 70% reversal in society at large will have been achieved. And the phasing of messaging interventions would be designed

to provoke, encourage, sustain, reinforce and challenge collective human will at an unprecedented scale throughout the course of this development.

Hoping for a major impact, for a spectacular success of this great human trial, there are initially two obvious directions available to position oneself for maximum efficacy. One banks on the synergy of movements (the multitude) and hopes to network in with a vast dispersal of movements to achieve maximum broadcast⁷. Another looks to the depth dimension and considers how to achieve maximum penetration and appropriation of the message. The latter finds itself trying something that sounds like magic. The former something that sounds like war.

In the name of avoiding all roads we know lead to war, and with the backup of a wide-spread miracle-worker sense of what science can accomplish, and knowing that countless colleagues and allies are steadily advancing along other fronts, it wouldn't hurt to look a little more closely into magic. The insanity of magic involves precisely the kind of maneuvered dramatic slowing of operative processes that we need right now. The seeming suspension of the laws of physics (but in a phenomenal realm where those laws don't yet apply) and the beating of the odds of expectation. A way of hyperattuning attention for maximum psychic engagement and effective action, a concentration of the moral feelings and the will, not outside the realm of real cause and effects, but rather "within", "this side of", "en deçà" that causality, aerating the taut plausibilities with the healthful froth of further possibles, before any recourse to the bludgeoning instruments nearest at hand. The subtlety of the shift we must make over the next 10 to 15 years may indeed correspond more closely to the hand-mind-eye coordination of voodoo or dance enchantment than to boardroom behavior or war partying, without wanting to mystify or sentimentalize this crucial shift in any way. Sentimentality must be avoided with as much rigor as mysticism or heartlessness because it is already a slip in those directions.

In his famous poem, "Wichita Vortex Sutra", written during the Vietnam War, Allen Ginsberg in the midst of a meditation on love and need, invokes all the krishnaite forces of the universe to declare an end to the war. Poets love to quote this as an act of heart heroics, a beautiful deed of impossible truth that nearly defies futility. Two years later, in 1968, Jim Morrison in "The Unknown Soldier" also sings: "the war is over". In the year of Mai Lai, we hear nihilistic spleen where before there was just Ginsberg's sweet beat airiness, and where the force backing up the first incantation was loving kindness, we sense a pent-up libidinal threat powering the second.

The global warming is over. How to say this and mean it? And what force do we put behind it?



Step It Up 2007, DC, 80% by 2050

MESSAGING REGIMES

We do not have time to talk ourselves out of world war, economic breakdown and climate failure, but we have time for the whole symphony of tiered and reasoned reflex responses by which the human and planetary body will finally speak up on its (our own) behalf.

Alan Prohm, from the Residency Proposal

Over human history there have been different dominant messaging regimes for making life and reality what they are. Biological, cultural and now informational/spectacular⁸. There was an era, between the emergence of life and the arrival of tool-using animals, when the way new discoveries and insights were internalized was basically biological, and that is still ongoing. But very slow. Then there was an era, from tools to the emergence of speech and advanced symbolic culture, in which already culture had enough functionality to operate fundamental rewrites or modifications onto the organizing logics of society and behavior, as we saw in the spread of Christianity or Islam in their spheres, and this cultural messaging regime is still ongoing.

And then there is an era we're in now, in which the deep meaning work of planetary self-correction is done sort of real-time, in the dramatic interplay between moments of airing in the news cycles, and the periodics of major democratic display or institutional decision. Information and spectacular time can change the world in an instant (like 9-11 six years ago, effectively marketed) and it can hold things there forever against a tremendous amount of popular opinion and constitutional prohibition. Inscription today happens at such a level of complexity that a month of news can erase whole fields of history from practical memory, and shift passions and determination in the public with a certain threatening precision.⁹ That is the force of the valves and torrents whose handling is in dispute here.

And the question is: How can the positive fundamental change be made in everyone's mindset for things to reset to a sustainable organization of life, within the next 10 to 15 years? It involves some 70% alteration in the way things work. How must this fact, this information we are now seeking to digest, need to work in us for its salvational effect to take? Powerful forces will lose money on the change and are opposing it.¹⁰ Major related forces stand to gain enormously from things getting worse¹¹, and others from marketing solutions that are no solutions¹². And it is always major forces that control the media, the military and the legislative agenda. And yet this 70% change must happen. Life is going to look quite a bit different; and this can be in very good ways,¹³ or in very bad ones.¹⁴ But there is not another option. How do you speak up in this discussion situation, optimally, given your resources, your status and your access to channels?

There was a kind of dread shock at the report that there were only 15 years to reverse global warming, which was already 3 years ago, like driving through a windshield, only stretched out over several weeks. The sudden noticing panic at a limit you detect only as you have already crossed it, your fleshly human soul already enmeshed with its implications. Over the cliff of an eventuality you barely saw coming. The gut reaction at the instant of going over into freefall, that clenching to the core and ballooning awareness outward, as if it would be possible to catch yourself. That gut reaction is all we have to save us in this time of unprecedented peril. And all we may need.

The plasticity of reality, which spectacle era communication regimes demonstrate on a daily basis, may also be to the benefit of humanity as it attempts to enforce a salvational awareness upon itself. Splashing the good cold water of the news of global warming into your face and rubbing your eyes. In the very acuteness of the apocalyptic dread we get a compression portrait of the visionary reversal we'd need to make to save ourselves. Can we discern there the outline of a design for reorganizing?

It may help to imagine the task as equivalent to that of starting a new religion, and having to mobilize a mass hope for salvation toward a certain platform of values and behaviors that will organize civilization-building along sustainable lines, but you have only 10 or 15 years to get your point across or the image won't effectively embed. Someone once asked William McDonough at a conference, or at least this is the story he tells, somebody asks him, "So Bill, how long's this sustainability thing gonna take?" And he says, "Forever; that's the point". If we, attention-challenged as we are, are going to stick with it long enough to even try, it must soon come to be nearly effortless. Like going to the bathroom. Because it's the same thing. "Waste is Food", says Bill McDonough, and you are what you eat. Because like crow, you will be eating it eventually.

Each of these regimes (biological, cultural, informational/spectacular) brings with it an exponential acceleration of the messaging, but at the price of a proportional decrease in the depth at which the message is gotten. The situation we now find ourselves in requires a functionality in the human relationship to information that has simply never been seen before. Put simply, we need something the speed of a flash news update or blitz marketing campaign but with the penetration of a major reordering of values and customs or, to give us better chances, a biological rewiring sufficient to engrain new survival and socialization instincts, new metabolic capabilities and/or new climatic tolerances.

How could Henny Penny have worded her urgent cry that the sky was falling, with a force of implication that could grow new lungs in everyone within earshot, such that after it happened they would all discover they could breathe the pressureless emptiness of space as well as oxygen? Again, the example both exaggerates and undershoots the actual situation. And the point is not to adapt but to stop it from falling.

BODYBUILDING

The task is perhaps not as impossible as it seems. To endow a string of verbal signifiers with the ability to mutate cell tissues and organ function is hard, sure, but the target is maybe nearer than that. Our biological capacity to respond to crisis is already profound and very powerful, and our ability to adapt and grow has by no means reached its limits. The form of the challenge we, the BodyBuilding Project, have taken on in the framework of this residency, is more specific and manageable than that. We want to be realistic. The task as we see it, is not one of creating a wholly new messaging regime, but rather of hot-wiring the existing regimes to transmit cross-platform. We have to consider the life drive and the survival instinct sufficient, that's what we have to work with, and we know the information spectacle has a speed and reach any shot at instantaneous evolution would require. These are tremendous resources. The point is to connect them.

We are interested in the fight-and-flight response of the autonomic nervous system as an energy resource with the explosive capacities we would require. And we are interested in the spectacular value of apocalyptic newspaper headlines for their potential as triggering mechanisms. What we are looking for is a mode of messaging that could present the dry fact of catastrophic climate change with the entirely realistic urgency of a loud cry to "DUCK!" or "Run for your lives!", plus the organismic penetration of an all-over muscle spasm as emphasis. The challenge lies in understanding and bridging the gaps in the communication chain that would entrain gut to utterance thus, allowing the current information-spectacle of global warming news to be brought to hit the raw nerve-trigger of massive adrenal discharge and to power the impending super-human feat of self-preservation we all need and are about to witness and feel a huge pride at participating in.

The gaps in the message trajectory, as we see it, are of two kinds, each involving its own difficulties. On the one hand, there is the problem of the social scope of the message, and on the other that of the temporal or time scale. For the cry to run for your life to get you running, it has to be felt to be directed straight at you. The situation determines whether you know yourself to be immediately intended, both by the speaker and by the physical trajectory of the threat, so that understanding the sentence is able to manifest in a full organismic commitment to the danger as a reality. If the threat is not sensed when it is heard as information, deeply (viscerally and depth-somatically), the reaction cannot be launched even if it is in every sense understood. But part of believing the threat is orientating within a time-construction of reality that shows its immanence. A hurricane warning with two-days advance notice can still call on all the neuro-chemical reinforcers that would kick in in the case of gunfire right to your left, but even if the threat is visible and nearing, a 15-year horizon is hard to identify with.

Social scope. The enactivism embodied in the BodyBuilding Project presupposes a notion of enlightened self-interest that takes self at a vast scale of intersubjectivity. The moral person in this universe is stable and centered as self in whatever ways healthful, but otherwise just an emergent phenomenon within a way of being alive that behaves very interpersonally. Interpersoning is a concept Rueben Baron, social psychologist and art critic, contributed to the philosophy and built philosophizing of Arakawa and Madeline Gins. It relocates all the tasks and dance and capacities of being alive in social embodiment, onto a floating potential to center; rather than onto any fixed point in the ground of an absolute identity or orientation. The selfish I that capitalism considers the wisest driver of the market and world events can by this means be reconciled with the wise and wide-spread spiritual imperative to be utterly selfless as a way of making everything good. The possibility of hot-wiring self-interest through a splitter router into radical inspired and beneficent intersubjectivity is the kind of kern-technik secret key to unlocking the mysterious power of humanity

and matter we're after; if we're interested in reversing global warming.

Time scale. Another presupposition of BodyBuilding-style enactivism is that there is the possibility of hot-wiring one time scale out to many others, channeling efficacy to where it's needed. So there is some sense in engaging in a movement practice to teach the body a gut reaction it knows innately but cannot relate to panic-inspiring events that take so long to unfold.



Daria Demonstrating the Horse Sound -- HhU!



The BodyBuilding Project Final Event at Robert Wilson Watermill Center; (2007)

The body being built in the enactivism enacted in the BodyBuilding project is understood as the bi-product of integrations at various scales of organization. Bringing ego and altruism, gut reaction and distant reckoning together, wires human being to trigger globally with the animal intensity of an individual being's reacting, self-preservingly. This is our hypothesis. The process is designed to build body in the sense that organisms are coordinated interpersonally to embody and identify at a scale large enough for self-interest to cover the globe, and respond to distant oncoming history as deftly as a well-tuned animal or flock of animals to immediate events. Kinaesthetic messaging in this campaign does not represent a new messaging regime, but runs nerve fiber and tendons down from informational/spectacular to bodily, biological and back to create a new mode of inhabiting the three regimes already mentioned. Nor does kinaesthetic messaging replace, bypass or exclude cultural messaging. Rather it enhances its functioning and fulfills its role by bringing the informational/spectacular into tighter attunement with the bodily biological.

In this sense, kinaesthetic messaging can be thought of as an urgent corrective to currents and traditions within the regime of cultural messaging that have neglected bodily channels without which the whole layer of the cultural is cut off from biology – its survival needs and resources. At the same time, of course, it is precisely a reinvestment in forms of cultural messaging that have kept profoundly in touch with the body and cultivated the channels that link through it to the greater bodies of animality and the planet.

The idea of a movement form to engrain vital life-enhancing or life-saving capacities is not new. And the whole range of such phenomena in the cultural sphere – from austere Taoist athletics to the movement mnemonics US school children learn for how to respond to a house fire, "STOP, DROP, and ROLE", or "Duck and Cover", the one they taught in the 50s for how to act without needing to think in the case of a Russian nuclear attack – are vital precedents and pointers for the kind of thing the BodyBuilding Project is trying to develop.

In this regard, our ambition is quite humble, but don't tell the universe this or it might start taking us less seriously. The "composure-panic immediate activation exercise", as the snark we have identified is called, is less epochal than a whole new regime of human messaging and more likely than the final mobilization of sheer magic to save humanity. The self-preservation instinct and the fundamentals of organismic functioning provide us what we need to do this huge thing. All we need to do is hot-wire the individual to the collective and the sort-of-far-off to the immediate present, in order to simply enact our salvation as already here. The gamble is that there is an angle of approach to the problem that aligns the wildly hypothetical with a dead-center on-targetness of unexpected efficacy. In other words, it just might really work.

HOW!

ENDNOTES

¹ Bill McDonough, World Innovation Forum talks, June 5, 2006. PDF on Pitney Bowes website: http://wifspkernotes.com/pitneybowes/pdf/BILL_MCDONOUGH.pdf. Cf. McDonough's own website: <http://www.mcdonough.com/full.htm>.

² 2004 was the year we heard from a Republican operative emboldened with the party's success in pushing the war through, the contempt in which political operatives hold the people who believe in reality. As Ron Suskind reports it, the operative said to him: "Guys like you are in what we call the reality-based community, people who believe that solutions emerge from your judicious study of discernible reality.... That's not the way the world really works anymore," he continued. "We're an empire now, and when we act, we create our own reality. And while you're studying that reality -- judiciously, as you will -- we'll act again, creating other new realities, which you can study too, and that's how things will sort out. We're history's actors ... and you, all of you, will be left to just study what we do." Aide to President Bush, interviewed by Ron Suskind New York Times, 2004.

³ When every sign is coming from the other side to say that they are in an open fight with the public interest for media monopoly expansion. Observe the FCC under Chairman Kevin Martin, in direct contravention of the unanimous findings of their own community meetings, voting to allow corporations to own multiple radio stations, a major newspaper and a major TV station in the same city. Surround sound.

⁴ For a three-part BBC miniseries on the instituting of cybernetic soft control systems in Anglo-American society since the 1950's, see Adam Curtis's "The Trap". The film's thesis is that with the Thatcher-Reagan coup the notion of "civil service" was cynically discredited, and substituted by a game theory notion of governance as the enforcement of machinic performance standards in defence of the free market. (View the video if still posted at <http://www.disseminate.com/2007/04/bbcs-trap.html>; or read about it at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Trap_%28television_documentary_series%29)

⁵ Instituting a Department of Peace in place of the Department of Defense is a campaign, because it's at an institutional scale. The poetics of such governmental campaigns should not be undervalued. See Dennis Kucinich's legislation for a US Department of Peace, <http://www.thepeacealliance.org/content/view/76/68/>

⁶ Gehenna is the out-of-town trash landfill of ancient Jerusalem, which was invoked rhetorically as a metaphor for hell as flames and burning flesh. There are cold hells in other traditions.

⁷ Two good places to glimpse the foci and scope of this clustering towards movent are: the make up of the first and second US Social Forum in Atlanta and Los Angeles (<https://www.ussf2007.org/en/about>), also the teaming field laid out by Paul Hawken in his recent book, *Blessed Unrest* (<http://www.blessedunrest.com/>). In Europe a place to start would be the EuroMayday organizing (www.euromaday.org) and the make-up of mass actions like WTO protests in Genoa and Göteborg.

⁸ This articulation is indebted to Dino Karabeg, in discussions at the 2001 conference of the International Visual Literacy Association, Malardalen, Sweden.

⁹ Enough so that claims or boasts of direct mass mind control through the mainstream media can often be taken seriously, as in the case of the Republican operative quoted above, or when the Rendon Group's propagandist-in-chief John Rendon can brag that he made the war happen. For more on the latter, see "see John Stabuer and Sheldon Rampton's "How PR Sold the War in the Persian Gulf": <http://www.prwatch.org/books/tsgfy10.html>.

¹⁰ The most notable in this context is ExxonMobil, who has not only resisted any initiatives to lighten our oil burden by reducing consumption, but has also overtly funded major research initiatives to cast confusion and doubt about the clear science that the globe is warming.

¹¹ The whole complex of disaster capitalist entrepreneurialism. Naomi Klein, for example, observes that the free market has already pretty much decided which profit opportunities emerging in the age of global warming it is most interested in: not renewables and green things, but the private security and defense industry services that can be sold to all those rich enough to be reliable consumers of protection. See: "Guns Beat Green: The Market Has Spoken", Naomi Klein, *Commondreams.org*, November 30, 2007. See also her thesis in *Disaster Capitalism* (Metropolitan Books, 2007), and its implications for the whole range of crises and emergencies that will attend the climatic changes we have in store.

¹² Consider the trap of biofuels, which with the brand-dream sanction of "greenness" are becoming a runaway mass extraction industry crippling the food supply and in many cases merely shifting oil use from the roads to the factory farms where motor fuels are made.

¹³ There are two competing paradigms for how this climate thing will all play out. The first is that switching to green will realign our high quality of life and prosperity along a different system of dispensations.

¹⁴ The second is disaster capitalism, the sophisticated cutting of a pretty fat margin of profit off of crises you have helped to create, or at least avoided solving, on into the far future running the racket of corporate war roughshod over the economic and personal interests of most people on the planet.

KINAESTHETIC MESSAGING FOR SOCIAL CHANGE: or The BodyBuilding Approach to Climate Art



KINAESTHETIC MESSAGING FOR SOCIAL CHANGE: or The BodyBuilding Approach to Climate Art

Don't Don't Panic

This, according to the initial proposal, is what we set out to do:

Through careful embodied analysis of our crisis condition – taking prominent sociological, psychological, and political/economic formulations into account – we will focus in on particular points of blockage and impasse precluding corrective action. Processing a particular formulation of the impasse through a series of conceptual, sensory and movement exercises, we will derive the kinaesthetic figure of the impasse, the structured dynamic of stimuli, response impulses, and response inhibitions that in case after case continues to short-circuit the salvational agency of our species-wide common sense. Inverting this figure we have the antidote of a counter-figure, the gestural key to training kinaesthetic readiness for breaking the cycle of deflations, and for opening a channel to the sea-changes latent in a disinhibited biological passion to respond.

The kinaesthetic messaging strategy on which the BodyBuilding Project was prepared to make its gamble was laid out in the original Watermill Center residency proposal. The strategy was conceptually quite specific, if still highly speculative and hypothetical without testing in practice. The process we followed to develop and implement this strategy, and ultimately to realize and deploy the “composure-panic immediate activation exercise” that would constitute the central message of the BodyBuilding campaign, began at the personal level of our own experiences of panic and inaction, or activation and inhibition, in various situations. The concrete movement research needed to begin from a point of personal relation to these themes, though the conceptual focussing of the project as a whole required starting from a much broader perspective. The Movement Research section of this document will show the steps we actually took in this concrete dimension of the process, drawing on the knowledge and experience of Daria Fain, following the difficulties we encountered and changes of direction that were made to find a way forward. In this section, our strategy will be represented in the order of its conceptual logic.

I THE CURRENT SITUATION

– taking prominent sociological, psychological, and political/economic formulations into account...

A key challenge to enabling an adequate response to the crises of our current situation is the difficulty of gaining a comprehensive sense of the threats we face. To run away from a danger you need to know it is dangerous and where you are running. The contemporary landscape is a brutally complicated terrain of meshed forces and trends, and modelling an exemplary panic response requires taking this whole web into account, just as successfully (spontaneously, composedly) executing that response requires forgetting this understanding as information and acting on it as concrete lived reality.

Research into the relevant forces and trends defining our current situation began months before the residency, and involved the gleaning of news items from a variety of media relevant to three overarching areas of crisis: War, Financial Collapse, and Climate Change. In each of these areas, and in the corresponding journalistic niche industries, we can observe a heightened pitch of apocalyptic panic rhetoric leading up to and following the time of our residency. Coverage in each area involved assessing specific local events relevant to potentials for a major global calamity. In the weeks and days immediately leading up to our residency, scholars, reporters and citizens on the ground could be heard crying “red alert” in each of these areas, and voices otherwise invested in an appearance of balance and objectivity were crossing clear thresholds in sounding the alarm and urging immediate action to stave off a disaster larger in its sphere than any in living memory.

Research materials on these three areas of crisis were gathered into three sub-folders, and synthesized during the residency in the flow-chart (p. 38), which attempts to show both the major forces and trends behind each threat and their vicious intricate interrelatedness.

WAR

At the time we came to Watermill, of course, the war in Iraq was already an ongoing calamity at such a constant state of crisis intensity that it could never be felt as such. In the US context, but also internationally, it also represented one of the most demoralizing failures in the background of our efforts to encourage vigorous response to impending dangers. In 2003, as the threat of war was growing, we as a people actually managed the collective moral outrage and resolute activation to respond preemptively to the war the White House was planning. Veterans of the resistance to the Vietnam war could be heard observing excitedly how much more quickly this resistance was gathering than in the 70s. And when millions around the globe gathered on February 15, 2003 to “say no to” the war, we were all a little amazed at ourselves for doing this, and felt a virtuous thrill at the size we had taken, a feeling the New York Times rewarded with the famous but short-lived acknowledgement that “public opinion” (i.e. us) amounted to an other superpower. It seemed our capacity to activate and coordinate life-saving responses as a global body had only grown and that there was a new power and confidence dawning among us. But it failed to stop the war. The dull trauma of this failure, and the humiliation of having to grow used to a war situation which was as bad as we had predicted but had now become a reality beyond the reach of any resistance, remains an important psychological factor contextualizing our efforts to respond to the global warming crisis, and needs to be taken into account.

More impendently than the war in Iraq, at the time we began our residency, rumors of a new war in Iran were reaching a peak they have not been at before or since. Aircraft carriers had been hovering in the Gulf taunting Iran, and fueling speculation that a policy might already be underway to incite an accident that could then be spun as a first

strike by Iran, justifying a US counter-assault. In the news media the assessment of this threat was focused around legislation that was being moved through Congress to impose sanctions on Iran, declaring its Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) a supporter of terrorism. Since a main result of this declaration (which went through on October 25th), would be to legally and rhetorically simplify the process of initiating aggressions against Iran, many were watching the progress of this bill with held breath, as the next step in a storyline that seemed destined to climax soon in a new conflict with unspeakably disastrous consequences.

The possible consequences of a war with Iran were themselves the subject of much speculation in the days we worked at Watermill. Clearly oil prices would go up. Clearly the Middle East would grow more inflamed. Clearly the enmity and inspiration of terrorist groups would increase. Very possibly there would be another major attack on US soil. And if that happened, another current of threat speculation was saying more and more loudly at this time, for sure there would be martial law in America. Off-hand comments from government officials over the previous few years had encouraged this speculation, and attention to legislative activity under Bush and Cheney now seemed to substantiate it. Protocols, infrastructure and manpower were all in place for a smooth transition to a police state in the case of a major attack or some other major unrest in the country. In an editorial on September 27th, Daniel Ellsberg, famous whistleblower in the Watergate affair, even argued that the possibility of war with Iran and the possibility of another 9/11 were equivalent in this sense, that they would both almost inevitably lead to the suspension of civil society.

I think nothing has higher priority than averting an attack on Iran, which I think will be accompanied by a further change in our way of governing here that in effect will convert us into what I would call a police state.... I would say after the Iranian retaliation to an American attack on Iran, you will then see an increased attack on Iran - an escalation - which will be also accompanied by a total suppression of dissent in this country, including detention camps, mainly for Middle Easterners but not exclusively.

(Daniel Ellsberg, "This Coup and The Next One", Thursday, September 27, 2007, CommonDreams.org. <http://www.commondreams.org/archive/2007/09/27/4131/>)

FINANCIAL COLLAPSE

In September and early October of 2007 the threat of a major collapse of world financial markets was not in the headlines the way the threat of war with Iran was, but it was making its way there from a buzz of dire warnings and analysis by non-prime time economists. The BodyBuilding Project factored this analysis into its picture of our current situation from the start. And within weeks of completing our Watermill residency the storm these voices were predicting was on the radar, and within months it had hit, at least the beginnings of it, in the form of the sub-prime lending crisis. Still now, a year later, the magnitude and implications of this crisis are being nervously assessed as it continues to spread and expand.

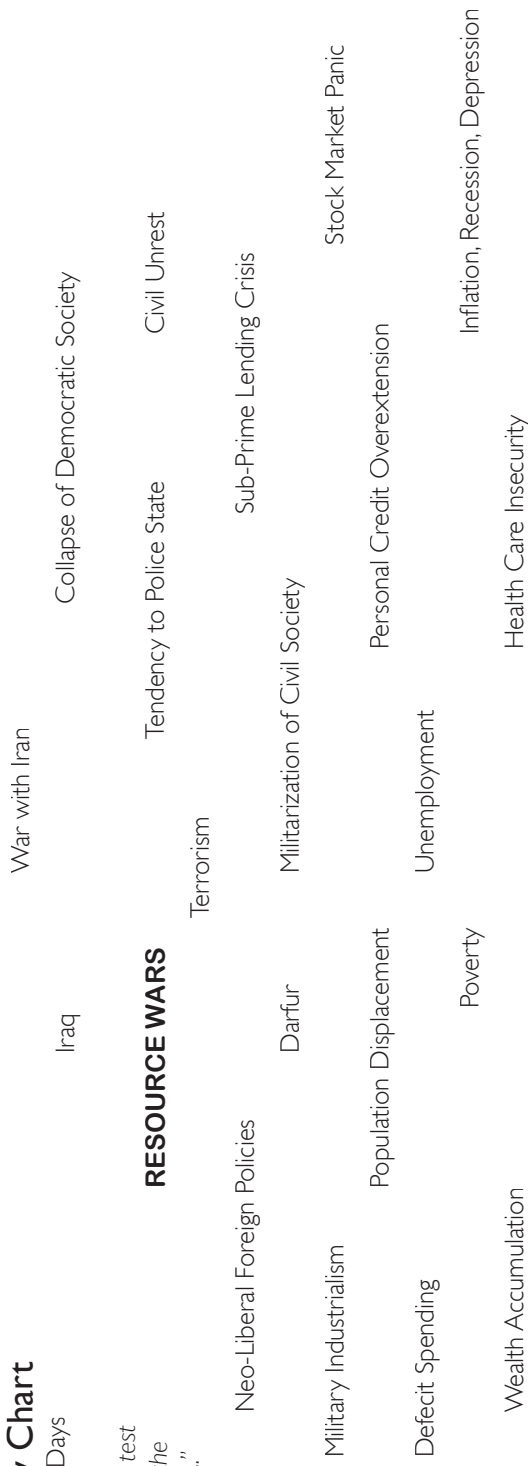
In an October 26th op-ed for the New York Times, entitled "A Catastrophe Foretold", Paul Krugman framed the crisis in the terms most relevant to our research, as a failure to react to a well-understood threat. He quoted reputable warnings from as far back as 2003 and 2004, and asked "why was nothing done to head off this disaster?" His answer, "ideology". The ideology that views an unregulated market as a fair and flawless one in this analysis functions as an inhibitor to a social management impulse that would otherwise connect the dots of clear logic and act to avoid predictable losses and suffering. The reality, of course, is further complicated by the fact that the actual management of financial markets under the free-market ideology is anything but free-market, and actually involves built-in response-suppression mechanisms that prevent the market from responding to crises according to its own logic, in particular when that logic indicates a collapse. From the radical economist Webster Tarpley, and from the more moderate liberal economist Michael Hudson, who at the time was serving as Chief Economic Advisor to Dennis Kucinich's presidential campaign, we had learned of the existence of the "plunge protection team", a panel of US governmental and financial experts whose explicit function was to intervene in the event of any emerging financial crisis and prevent the stock market from "panicking". According to their analysis, the financial systems undergirding all of contemporary society have been cultivated to grow in directions that are inherently destabilizing (not to mention unjust and inequitable on many fronts), and the possibility for those systems to fail and be corrected or replaced in due course has been artificially suppressed. In this view, the themes of panic and inaction, or activation and inhibition, show their relevance at the most concrete levels of the management of world affairs.

Triple Threat Flow Chart

Drawn at Watemill over Days

Draw your own arrows and test your scenarios by marking the propagation of impacts "if ..."

War



CLIMATE CRISIS

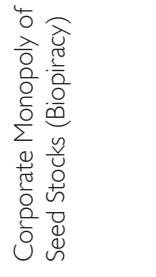
Financial Collapse

PEAK OIL



GLOBAL WARMING

Climate Change



CLIMATE CHANGE

"One responsibility we all have is action. Action, action, action."
Arnold Schwarzenegger

"The need to act is now."
Al Gore (UN Summit on Climate Change, NYC, 24 September, 2007)

The Fall of 2007 was full of dire warnings that climate change, advancing at a rate each set of calculations found to be faster than could have been imagined from the last, was nearing a point of no return. Arctic ice shelves were collapsing into the sea. Summer melting was enough this year to clear an ice-free passage through the arctic circle. Polar bears were seen stranded and drowning as the ground softened around them. And throughout the world it was becoming clear that threatened results of global warming, e.g. disruption of seasonal weather patterns, increases in the frequency and intensity of catastrophic storms, displacement of peoples from impacted regions, and the dwindling of populations among many animal species, were no longer projected, but already occurring. Every new speech, article, protest action or documentary film found itself in the inevitable struggle to formulate its call to action in more urgent terms than the last. The panics at large in reality seemed even to cross and mix, and attempting to up the volume, prophets of the panic we lack found themselves calling on the panics we have, e.g. New York Times' columnist, Nicholas Kristof, in an August 16th op-ed:

If we learned that Al Qaeda was secretly developing a new terrorist technique that could disrupt water supplies around the globe, force tens of millions from their homes and potentially endanger our entire planet, we would be aroused into a frenzy and deploy every possible asset to neutralize the threat.

Yet that is precisely the threat that we're creating ourselves, with our greenhouse gases.

Inevitably all the while, in the heart of every activist and would-be agent of change, the anxiety lingered that each new warning could go as unheeded as the last, that shouting and pointing were wearing themselves out. The spectacle of global warming's real dawning in the public debate and markets of attention in 2006/2007 thus provided us with the sobering reflection that our own inaction is a more formidable threat to the planet and our survival than carbon or methane as such.

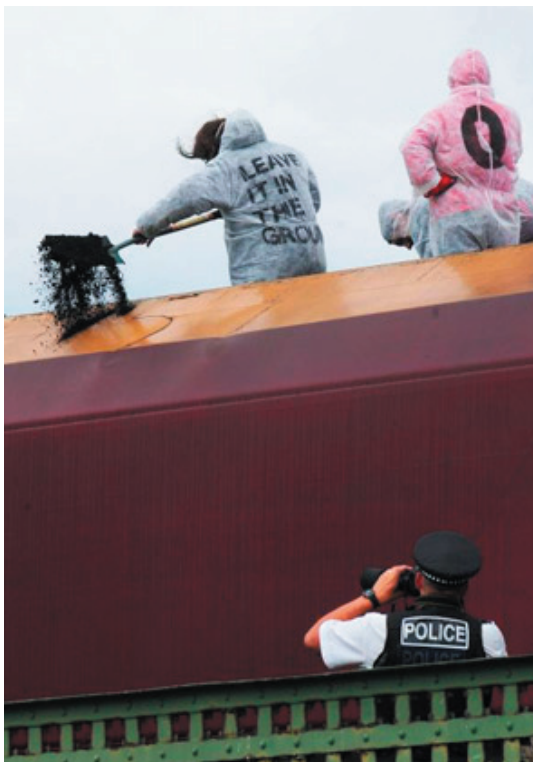
Encouraging, then, perhaps, both the scale and number of these calls to action, hitting a real peak around the time of our residency, particularly in the US. There was the big UN summit in New York on September 24th, "The Future in our Hands: Addressing the Leadership Challenge of Climate Change". Here world leaders and their representatives met in great solemnity, fronted by Al Gore and Arnold Schwarzenegger lending their star power to the proceedings. Shortly before, there had been "Confronting the Global Triple Crisis", a mega-teach-in organized by the International Forum on Globalization and the Institute for Policy Studies at George Washington University. This event brought grass-roots organizations, foreign policy experts and activists together in Washington, with movement headliners such as Vandana Shiva and David Korten, to mobilize and refocus global warming activism on three systematically interlocking crises: climate change, peak oil, and global resource depletion and species extinction. On an on-going basis, a nation-wide, government-sponsored educational initiative called Focus the Nation was getting underway, launched on the occasion of the IPCC's (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) fourth and last assessment report on global warming, released in May. On September 17th, Bill McKibben's grass-roots STEP IT UP initiative issued a press release, announcing their second National Day of Climate Action on November 3rd. As with the first event on April 14th, over a thousand local events were coordinated around the country to show popular demand for action on climate change. This initiative on its own represented a major surge in climate-related art activity, but there was also the attempted epoch-making show, "Weather Report: Art and Climate Change", which opened at the Boulder Museum of Contemporary Art in Colorado on September 14th, curated by Lucy Lippard. Her first show in 15 years, the exhibition's hype seemed to draw on the hope that the sheer urgency of the times would make environmental art as hot a topic in the 00s as feminist art or alternative social practices in the 70s.

All of these events, whatever networking, agreements, or aesthetic experiences they managed to achieve, appeared in the buzz of news and commentary primarily as publicity actions, strategized to draw attention, focus awareness and, stretching the ambitions for efficacy a bit further, catalyze action. In a way, then, they are themselves signs of a reaction happening, bits of panic response calling for panic response all over; actions taken to sell others on taking action. And while inevitably a lot of it amounted to more shouting and pointing, in the best cases the call and arguments for

were themselves embodied in actions being taken, symptomizing the change being urged; enactivist, then, in the sense described in the climate art essay near the end of this document.

But all action is not equal, and in the age that is upon us we must expect to hear calls to action that are actually inertia orders in disguise. This is the suspicion with which another major climate change event, happening while we were at Watermill, was met. On September 27th and 28th, nearly overlapping with the UN summit from which he was conspicuously absent, George Bush was hosting a summit of his own, called a "Meeting of Major Economies on Climate Change and Energy Security" [US Department of State, Major Economies Process on Energy Security and Climate Change, September 27 and 28, 2007. <http://www.state.gov/g/oes/climate/mem/>]. The event, announced after it was known that Bush wouldn't be attending the UN summit, drew skepticism from the start. Already the framing of the title showed the organizers sandwiching the environmental crisis between economic and security concerns, the twin reliable excuses for doing nothing or making things worse. And as the event unfolded, it was clear that their agenda would not even try to fake the urgency the other events were taking as their starting point. A counter-spectacle of this sort, compounded by ongoing revelations during this time of how the White House had been regularly interfering with the formulation and publication of climate science, represent to us a whole sphere of powerful activism and organizing whose actual aim is inertia.

The conflictual relationship that could be felt intensifying among major national and global interests heightened the sense during this time that the push to sustainability might have more war feeling in it than just green optimism and good vibes. As voices began to speak up and bodies to act, the resistance of the status quo could itself be felt as active, motivated, and dead serious. Forces diametrically opposed on the practical decisions were flying the same banners of sustainability and green energy. Two of the most respected and highly-positioned voices in the debate were even heard acknowledging that, where policy was stalling or failing, it might come down to direct grass-roots action against coal plants. While shorter-term and smaller-scale than the policy leadership they would be meant to fill in for, calls for civil disobedience coming from both Al Gore and James Hansen seemed to indicate that confrontation would be inevitable in achieving the kind of change that would be enough. The discussion that ensued involved assessing how complicit Gore and Hansen would be willing to be in a possible surge of militant activism, whereas the real issue remained the difficulty of getting news of something as limited and particular as a new coal plant to hit the nerve of a total global threat to life on the planet.



Protesters on a train carrying coal to the Drax power station in North Yorkshire after they stopped it just south of Drax.
(Photograph: John Giles/PA Wire.)



An iceberg melts off in Eastern Greenland, July 19, 2007
(AP Photo/John McConnico)



A NASA satellite image from September 16, 2007,, shows
Arctic summer ice. (Reuters/NASA)

Climate change-related events occurring at the same time as our project:

The Future in our Hands: Addressing the Leadership Challenge of Climate Change,
UN Headquarters, New York, 24 September, 2007. <http://www.un.org/climatechange/2007highlevel/index.shtml>

Major Economies Meeting on Energy Security and Climate Change, US Department of State, Washington, D.C. 27-28 September, 2007.
<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2007/sep/92882.htm>

Confronting the Global Triple Crisis: Climate Change, Peak Oil, Global Resources Depletion and Species Extinction.
George Washington University, September 14-16 2007. <http://www.ifg.org/programs/Energy/TripleCrisis/>

Step It Up 07: National Day of Climate Action
<http://stepitup2007.org/article.php?list=type&type=46>

Focus the Nation: Global Warming Solutions for America.
<http://www.focusthenation.org>

Weather Report: Art and Climate Change
Boulder Museum of Contemporary Art, September 14 – December 21 2007.
<http://www.bmoca.org/artist.php?id=74>

Related quotes and articles:

"We unlocked a pressure cooker of public concern in April by simply calling for local action," said [STEP IT UP] campaign co-coordinator May Boeve, amid hopes that Saturday's action will prove to be a wake-up call for politicians."
in "Groups Urge New Drive to Fight Oil-Climate Crisis" September 20, 2007 by OneWorld.net
<http://www.commondreams.org/archive/2007/09/20/3962/>

"It's a killer — it's the hottest topic, so to speak," said Ms. Lippard, 70,"in "Looking for Inspiration in the Melting Ice",
Claire Dederer, The New York Times, September 23, 2007

"Just about the only thing that the administration thinks the countries need to agree on is an aspiration long-term goal," said Mrs. Claussen at a press briefing last week, explaining that while that goal would be helpful, it is not essential.

"What is essential is that countries commit to the kinds of actions they are going to take starting right now," she said.
in "Bush to host climate-change conference", by Rachel Kaufman, Sep 24, 2007, Washington Times.

"I can't understand why there aren't rings of young people blocking bulldozers," Mr. Gore said, "and preventing them from constructing coal-fired power plants." Al Gore in "The Big Melt", by Nicholas Kristof, August 16, 2007, The New York Times.

"It seems to me that young people, especially, should be doing whatever is necessary to block construction of dirty (no CCS) coal-fired power plants."
Dr. James Hansen, in "Al Gore, James Hansen and Civil Disobedience", by Gordon Clark, September 2, 2007 Commondreams.org. <http://www.commondreams.org/archive/2007/09/02/3566/>

Photo source: "Climate change protesters hijack coal train", by Martin Wainwright, June 13, 2008, guardian.co.uk.
<http://www.guardian.co.uk/environment/2008/jun/13/activists.climatechange?gusrc=rss&feed=networkfront>

2 POTENTIAL PANIC SCENARIOS

...we will focus in on particular points of blockage and impasse precluding corrective action.

The process laid out for our research and development residency at the Watermill Center involved selecting certain real or imaginable situations as exemplary scenarios for studying the problematic of triggering an adequate response. These scenarios were taken from our own personal experiences of panic response, as well as from the arguments for urgent response being made in relation to current events. The aim in either case was to analyse the scenario for its micro-event structure and pin-point moments where the potential for a catalytic "getting it" was either realized or not. To take a simple example, the experience of saving oneself from a potentially deadly snake bite involves a pre-conscious recognition of the snake as a threat (a recognition that owes its efficacy to the biological messaging regime that has hard-wired the snake shape into the human perceptual system). The result is that before any rational assessment of the situation has time to take place, even before any awareness of seeing a snake has registered, the potentially life-saving knee-jerk fright response is triggered by neural circuits wired precisely for that. If this example embodies a simplified ideal of the healthy salvational response we are after, other scenarios are more complicated and exemplify gaps or delays in the chain of reactions that might prevent an adequate response. Certain scenarios were selected and analyzed precisely for the insight they give into inhibiting mechanisms that could potentially be overcome through sensitization or training.

A simple panic scenario that stood as an emblem for our problem as we started the project came from Al Gore's film *An Inconvenient Truth*, where he characterizes our situation via the metaphor of a frog in hot water. In the film's cartoon rendering of this metaphor, which we know millions of viewers around the world have seen, we watch how a frog, dropped into a beaker of boiling water, immediately and instinctually leaps out again. Whereas, when the same frog is placed in a beaker of tepid water whose temperature is rising, it does not react to any particular increment of warming as a specific trigger; always a little hotter seems okay. It therefore misses the opportunity for its self-preservation instinct to kick in and do its job before it's too late.

The set of scenarios we worked with in the early stages of our movement research came from our own personal experiences of panic and response or response failure. These scenarios were generally less epochal than Al Gore's parable of the frog, but were useful precisely because they were concrete and immediate enough to ground our discussion and experimentation in the familiar sensations and thought-chains that make up our own organism's response behavior. Scale here does not matter; only potential intensity. For everyone the BodyBuilding Project is trying to help, the hope lies precisely in bringing the big picture (our current situation and global panic scenarios) down into contact with the trigger wiring of our most personal and particular responsiveness. In practice we looked at both panic scenarios, in which the wiring was triggered, whether beneficially or otherwise, and inertia scenarios, in which the reaction failed to trigger.

Some examples of the personal scenarios we brought to our first days of movement research:

Scenarios in which the panic successfully incites an adrenaline-enhanced responsiveness:

You're at your grandmother's and you lightly bump a precious heirloom vase which begins falling off the table.

You're picnicking at the top of a waterfall and your child stands up and begins toddling near the edge of the cliff.

You're between a rushing stream and a steep rock, and a rattlesnake starts rattling at you from a few feet away.

Scenarios in which the panic overwhelms and debilitates responsiveness:

Your beloved dog is bit by a poisonous snake but will not move away from it to safety; your boyfriend takes cool-headed action but you just freeze.

You're pinned in a hot crowded bus not able to move; the claustrophobic panic and inability to react reinforce each other;

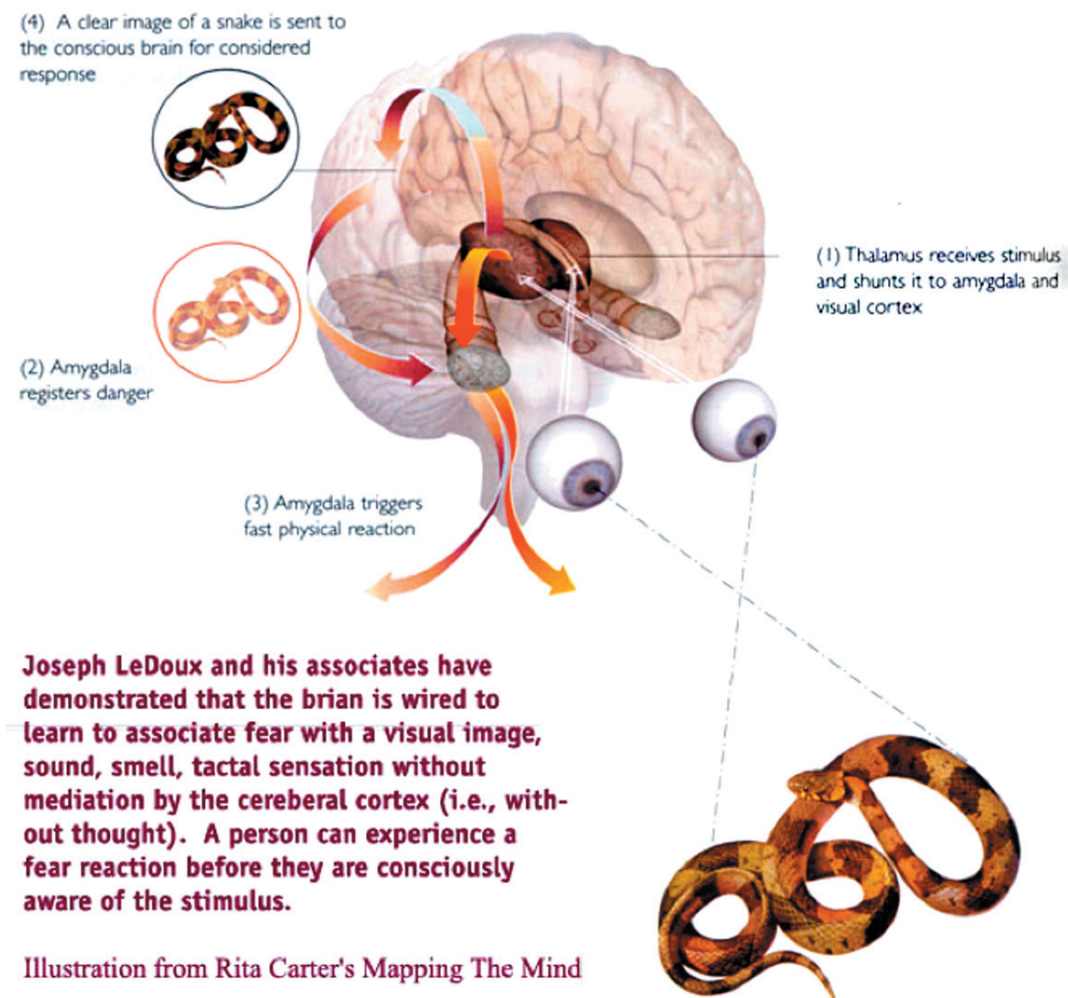
Inertia scenarios, in which an emergency is noted without triggering a panic response

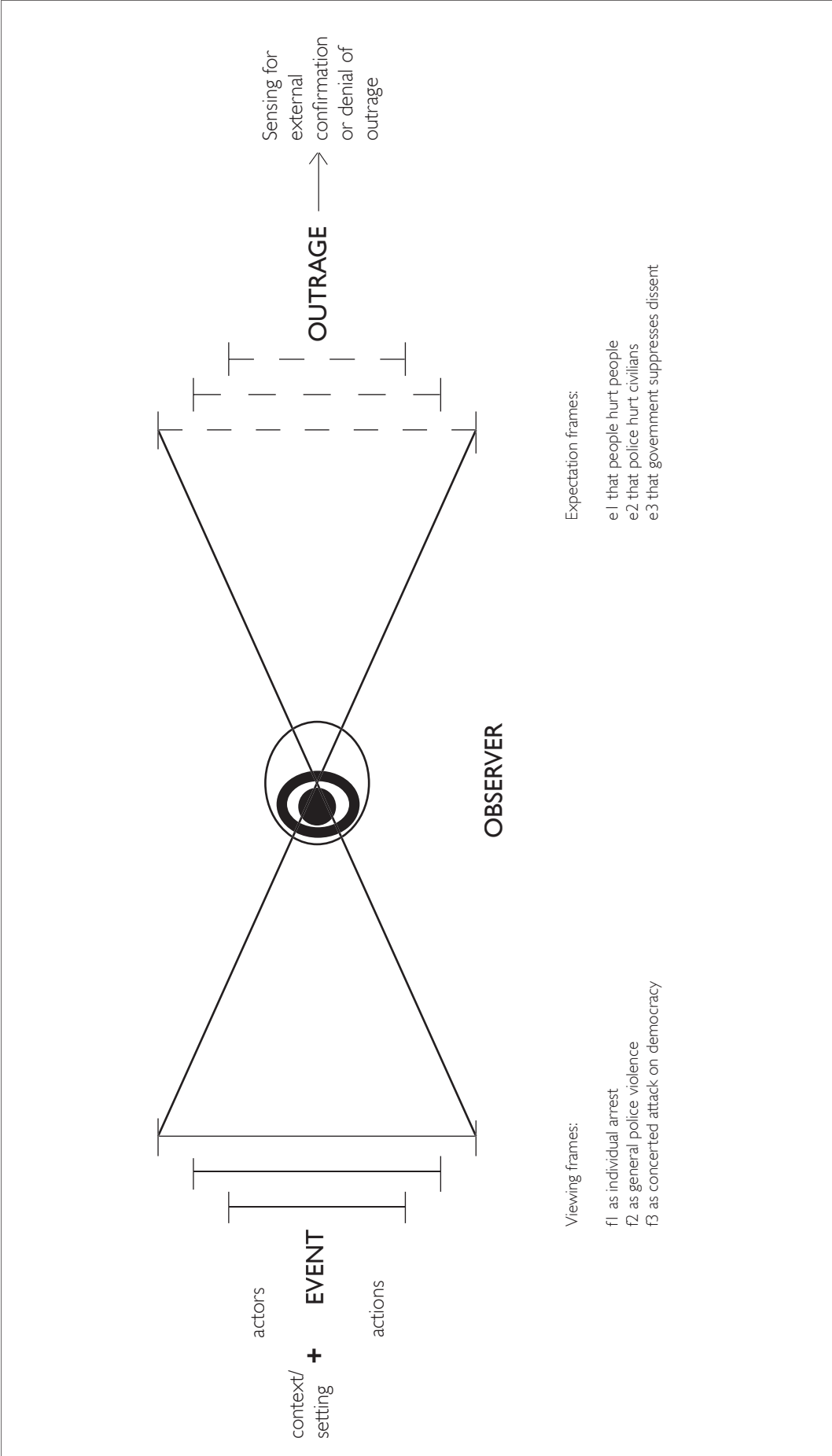
Someone collapses in the street and needs help. The feeling of not doing anything to help a) if there's a crowd and you can defer responsibility, b) if you're alone and know it's only you.

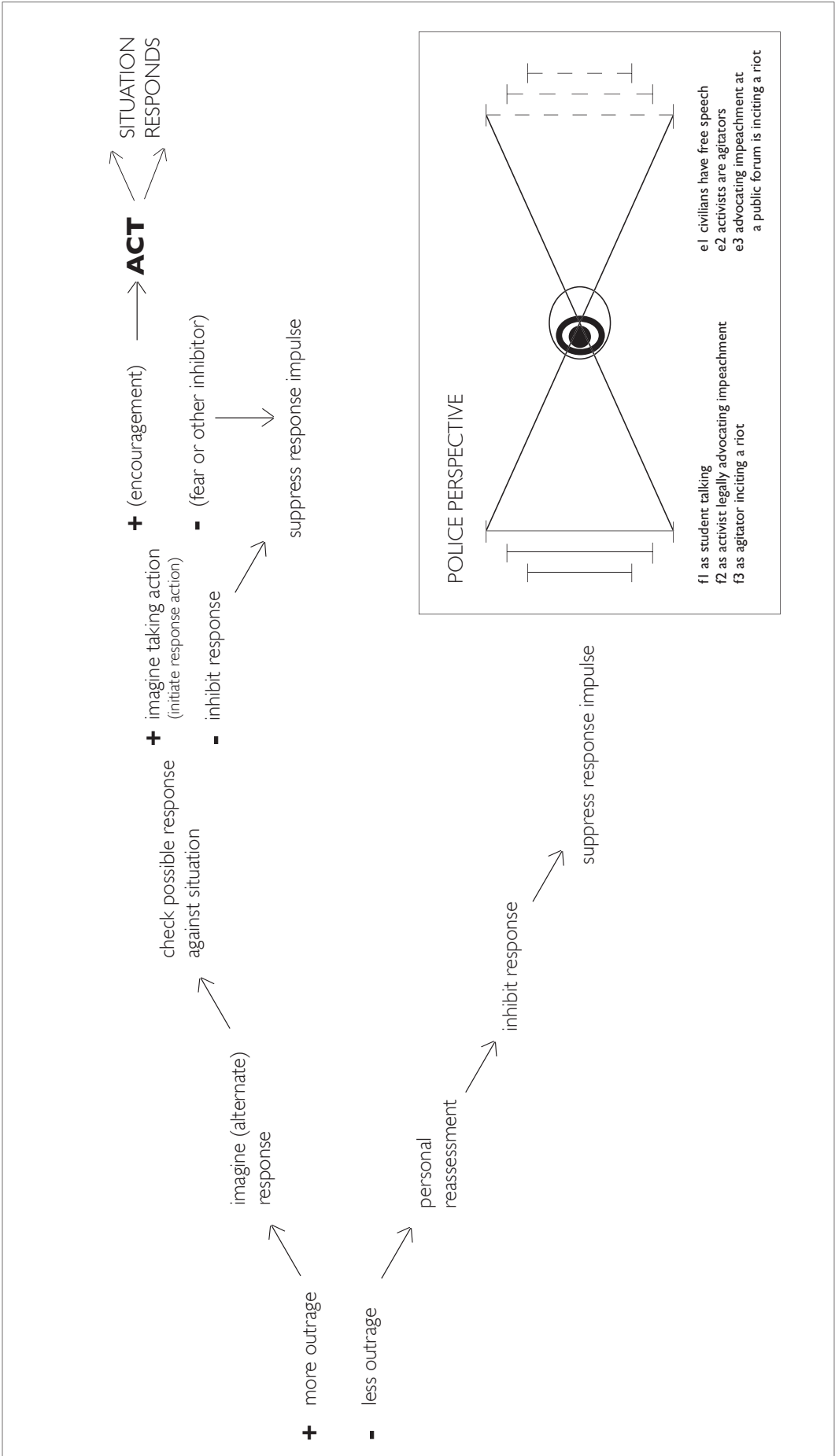
The lecturer or discussion leader in a small class pauses, looks around, and asks "are there any questions?" Painful silence, but the pressure and awkwardness only mount.

An intimate conversation is taking a turn that makes you tune out, the situation glazes over; and contact and empathy fail without either of you doing anything to correct it.

A deadline is approaching. You notice you're not feeling the stress you usually rely on in such situations to overcome the odds and produce.







A SCENARIO ANALYZED:

Andrew Meyer and the Taser (Not) Heard Round the World

The task with any panic or inertia scenario deemed relevant to our research was to analyse the micro-event structure of the situation, observing the psycho-physical phenomena moment by moment to determine where information was connecting to forces and where forces were either activating or remaining suppressed. To learn to articulate this micro-event structure as clearly as possible, Alan and Saara walked through a number of non-personal scenarios, evolving a short-hand chart language to graphicalize the relevant events and dynamics. The first example we took came from an event that occurred on September 19th at a campus of the University of Florida, where John Kerry was speaking. A student named Andrew Meyer, who had waited in line to ask questions at one of the microphones provided, was tasered and apprehended when he finished asking his three questions (see below). Video of this event was posted on Youtube and showed a whole hall full of intelligent young Americans doing nothing as this young man was wrestled to the ground without violent resistance, repeatedly tasered, and then arrested. Naomi Wolf, author of *The End of America* and watchdog of the advance of a US police state, commented the same day with an editorial in the Huffington Post:

Today's news shows a recognizable shock moment in the annals of a closing society.... It is an iconic turning point and it will be remembered as the moment at which America either fought back or yielded. This violence against a student is different from violence against protesters in the anti-war movement of 30 years ago because of the power the president has now to imprison innocent U.S. citizens for months in isolation. And because, as I have explained elsewhere, we are not now in a situation in which 'the pendulum' can easily swing back. That taser was directed at the body of a young man, but it is we ourselves, and our Constitution, who received the full force of the shock.

["Shocking Moment for Society: Taser at University of Florida", Naomi Wolf, September 19, 2007, Huffington Post. <http://www.commondreams.org/archive/2007/09/19/3949/>]

We were interested in what it would have taken for "America" to fight back the way Naomi Wolf would have wanted, and what about the situation made it seem so normal for almost everyone there to sit by and do nothing.

This is our analysis of the event:

Actors:

Andrew Meyer
Police
John Kerry
Active Audience
Passive Audience



Event structure:

- 1) Person stands up to speak in turn at public forum.
- 2) Passionate questioning of invited speaker (John Kerry), police standing directly behind the questioner:
"Why did you cede the election early?"
"If you're against war with Iran, why don't you call for Bush's impeachment?"
"Were you a member of the secret society 'Skulls&Bones' at Yale?"
- 3) Police move to apprehend him as he finishes speaking.
- 4) He protests vocally but not violently, calling attention to his apprehension.
- 5) Resists physically -- is wrestled to the floor by police.
- 6) Continues protesting vocally -- threatened with taser -- asks "what did I do?"
- 7) Is tasered 4 (?) times, cries out in pain.
- 8) Is brought to his feet & removed from the premises.
- 9) Police tell him that he is being arrested for inciting a riot.

Frames

To understand the social and personal-psychological dynamics determining the public's response, we identified a set of available frames through which it would have been possible to perceive and interpret the events as they unfolded, each frame registering the event at a wider angle of generality, and according to a different set of expectations about

what could be happening in a situation of the sort. The first, most common and most likely frame involved seeing what was happening as the simple arrest of an individual (whether justified or not), and relied on the corresponding expectation that in certain situations individuals use force against other individuals, and that in the case of the police this is generally justified. The second frame generalized one step further to see this event as an abuse of power or act of police violence, drawing on the expectation that police are known to overreact and hurt civilians without reason. And the third frame, through which Naomi Wolf for instance understood the event when it came to her attention, involved seeing it already as a direct assault on free society, based on the expectation that governments and those who enforce their policies are wont (both in general and, increasingly, at this particular moment in American history) to forcibly suppress the voices of dissenters.

The response Wolf called for in her editorial would have required those present to perceive the event through some frame larger than that of an individual incident of disruption and arrest. One friend or defender of the speaker did call out police brutality, and if the speaker had been African American, for example, in a crowd of African Americans whose cultural experience includes the wide-spread expectation frame of police brutality, a defensive response based on that frame could have been expected. But among the privileged white student body, this provoked no reaction. To “get” the shock moment for what it was, according to Wolf, they would have had to understand their free society as embattled and in the process of closing. This frame would certainly have been available to them, as it has had a certain airing in public debates and controversies around Bush administration policies. So, calling out “fascism” or “police state” might have raised this frame in the onlookers’ minds, but would that have been enough? Another dimension of the scenario analysis not represented in our chart involves the degree of identification with or embodiment of a frame. Without direct personal or cultural experience of the police state threat, activating this frame would still have been unlikely to entail a response. Wolf shows that she understands this problem when she concludes “That taser was directed at the body of a young man, but it is we ourselves, and our Constitution, who received the full force of the shock.” The after-the-fact rhetorical link, however, is not the kind that could have connected an immediate perception of local events to an impassioned reaction against global trends.

Potentiality and Triggers

So, what might have? Obviously, had the expectation frame of dissent suppression been stronger, the reaction might have been different. This is a question, then, of education and information. But, without knowing the social demographics of this University of Florida campus, can’t we assume that enough of the students at this John Kerry event shared the same basic politics and world view as those two or three who did stand up in Andrew Meyer’s defense? Presumably, as the events or non-events of that day were debated over the next few weeks in the media, a certain number were kicking themselves for their own failure to react. So, what made the difference? Identification, for one. If his defenders were his friends, bonds of personal relation were in force to connect their perception of what was happening to him to their resources for defending themselves. In an affinity group, or through movement building, these veins and tendons of inter-identification and meta-embodiment are precisely what is being grown. In the body that results, a whole different scale of sensitivity and responsiveness is possible. Like education and changes in the informational environment, this scale of body building takes time. In an emergency situation developing at the rate Wolf ascribes to it, for example in her *The End of America* where she enumerates 10 steps in a countdown towards the closing of society, the same effect may need to be achieved more quickly.

One way to evaluate the potentials for activating an emergency response in a situation like this is to consider the mental and physical state of individuals. If so and so had identified more closely with Andrew Meyer; if so and so had been more aware of broader repressive trends in society; if so and so had felt the sensations of outrage or empathy more strongly in their body; so and so may have crossed a certain threshold and reacted. But these potentials and triggers can also be assessed interpersonally. In this sense, twenty people hesitating to react can represent more potential than a handful who are certain to. Just as an individual’s body builds potential as stimuli towards a certain response accumulate, even if they enter by different senses and register in different parts of the person without explicit connections being made, so in a social body or group the potential builds collectively, and widely distributed reaction potentials can be triggered as a united resource for action. So, just because no one reacted, it doesn’t necessarily mean that a massive, society-saving response wasn’t on the verge of happening. To say this, we would need to know the potentials in the crowd as a whole, and what might have been brought to the fore with the proper trigger or positive feedback to confirm latent response impulses. It is this as much as anything else that convinces us of the worthwhileness of training reactivity, the thought that with a small key in our own bodies, we might help unlock energies to form a far larger body, and suddenly stand at the stature to activate urgently, overwhelmingly, against the great triple threat we face.

3 DERIVING THE KINAESTHETIC FIGURE

Processing a particular formulation of the impasse through a series of conceptual, sensory and movement exercises, we will derive the kinaesthetic figure of the impasse, the structured dynamic of stimuli, response impulses, and response inhibitions that in case after case continues to short-circuit the salvational agency of our species-wide common sense.

The scenario from this phase of the research most relevant to our overall goal is the one that imagines news of a new coal-fired power plant under construction hitting the population with the urgency of sirens announcing a house fire in a town of wooden houses. And the hope of enabling such a trigger-wire transmission in our responsiveness to the climate crisis involves understanding the comprehension gap that would make such a response sound like an overreaction. In the procedure we sketched out in our work plan, we were to begin with an analysis of the inhibition dynamics operating in a situation where an urgent reaction is required but unlikely, and design exercises to act directly against these inhibitions. The apparent far-offness and impersonality of the climate threat was still our greatest obstacle, and so as an exercise in designing exercises based on this type of analysis, we took a more concrete and immediate situation as our case study, namely the alleged heroic response of passengers on United Flight 93, the one plane that didn't hit its target on 9/11.

The alleged reaction of passengers on Flight 93 plays a mythical role in the American psyche post-9/11. It counters the trauma and humiliation of the attack the nation suffered with the scenario of a fearless, selfless, and tragically victorious response to brutal terror. As such, though at a far narrower scale, it has a value potential exactly opposite the deflationary memory of failing to stop the Iraq war, or the nagging sense of impotence in face of the climate threat itself. This iconic role alone made it seem a powerful and important narrative to engage in our work.

Our first step, then, was to carry out the same sort of analysis we had developed for the Andrew Meyer story, identifying the actors, events and situational factors structuring the narrative both of how things went, and of how things might have gone. In preparing a session of movement research based on this narrative, we were particularly interested in the moments of stimulus (e.g. first sight of violence, onset of understanding the scale of the threat) and in the presumed feedback loops in play either confirming or failing to confirm perception of these stimuli and either encouraging the reaction impulses they illicit, or allowing them to sink back and be suppressed. We wanted to understand the bio-energetic activity that took place in those who responded to confront the terrorists, as opposed to in those who didn't. What we were looking for in this analysis, both conceptual and embodied, we called the kinaesthetic figure*, a psycho-physical profile of the response dynamics as they played themselves out in the body of an individual or of the group.

* Kinaesthetic Figure

This term was defined in the proposal as "the structured dynamic of stimuli, response impulses, and response inhibitions". Early on in our process at Watermill we acknowledged that, since the dynamic in question involves all mental and bodily systems at once, the term "kinaesthetic" is necessarily inadequate. Bioenergetic Figure, Somatic Figure or even Phenomenological Figure might be more valid for their generality, even clumsier in other ways. However, since what we can reliably engage through a movement exercise is precisely the kinaesthetic dimension of the response complex, it seems useful to keep using this term. The kinaesthetic here can then be taken as the surface of a two-way interface between a person and the situation impinging physically upon them, on the one hand from the outside, and on the other from within. What manifests in the proprioceptive sensors registering pressure and movement in the muscles, organs and limbs (the kinaesthetic properly understood), is only one dimension of the phenomenology in play in these scenarios, but being a zone of palpable intersection where sensations and motor impulses meet and negotiate bodily response outcomes, it is the right focus for our research towards an activation exercise that will overcome inertia patterns and free our capacities for sudden confident selfless self-preservation.

Our analysis of the Flight 93 scenario paid special attention to the moments of potential panic onset. For everyone on the plane there was a last moment in which everything seemed okay and normal, followed by a first moment in which something appeared to be going wrong. It is impossible to say exactly how the hijacking situation first dawned

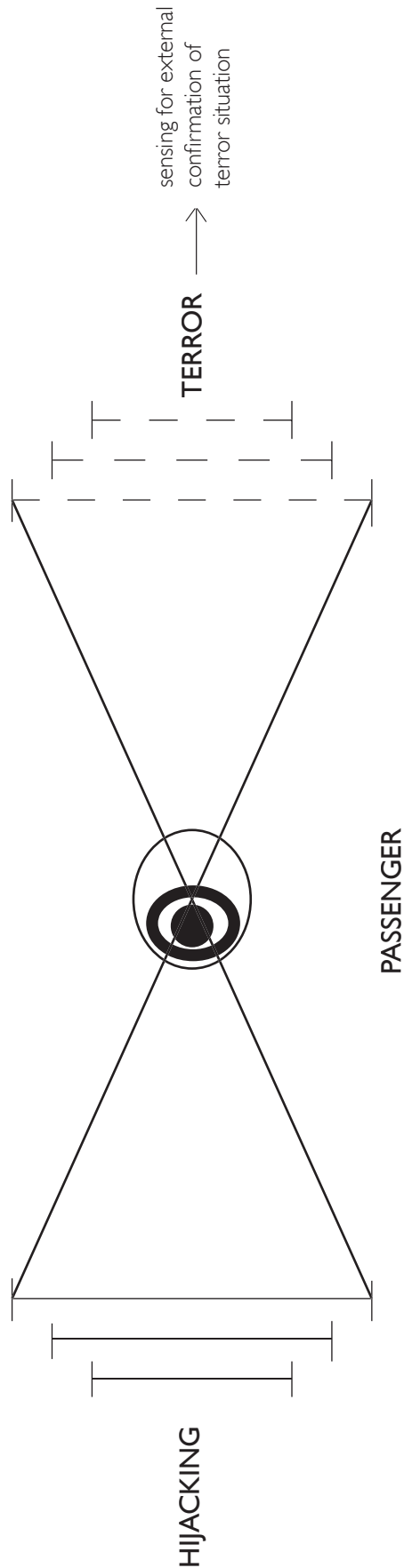
in the consciousness of the passengers, and presumably it happened differently for different people. But invariably each passenger was at one moment presented with evidence of a terrifying situation unfolding and faced with their own mental/bodily reaction. Since the heroism of the moment centers on certain passengers activating to rush the hijackers and fight the plane out of their control, the other crucial moment that interested us was the one in which the impulse to activate finally overcame whatever inhibitions may have been holding it back. The practical question is how to get from the one moment to the other.

In the simplified scenario as we imagined it, some violent or unusual action would trigger an initial shock or fear reaction. This would be followed in the perception cycle by a sensing for confirmation or denial of what just happened. For example, Is that man holding a knife? or Did that man really just storm into the cockpit and close the door? If there is no confirmation of the fear situation, e.g. if no one else seems to have noticed anything, then the response may abate, or settle into a heightened state of vigilance. If it is confirmed, however, then the full fear response can set in, with adrenaline flooding the bloodstream, accelerating heart rate and breathing, contraction of the stomach and abdomen, and heightened sensory perception. The strength and specific character of the fear response will depend a lot on what the situation is recognised as, what perception and expectation frames are engaged, and here the threshold that interests us is that of recognizing the event as a hijacking, and in particular as a hijacking by terrorists presumed to be suicide jihadists, in other words where recognizing that you are on a plane that has been hijacked immediately equals knowing you are going to die. Unless something can be done.

And here is where analysis of the kinaesthetic figure of a person's response becomes informative for our research. In a simple response cycle, we can imagine someone thinking of doing something, and then weighing that against the fear of the consequences. "Can I really overpower him?" "He has a knife." "He will use that knife on the flight attendant (or the pilot) if anybody moves." In the back and forth math of these impulses and their inhibition lies the subtle balance that might be tipped by an appropriate application of composure-panic procedures. The question is, What are the obstacles to an effective potentiation of the heroic response, and what triggers can be induced to launch one despite them? Analysis of the inhibiting factors supplies one dimension of an approach to a corrective exercise or training regime. The specific bodily effect of an emotion, the timing between the arising of a response impulse and a certain thought that suppresses it, these can be factored in to a concentration or movement exercise precisely tuned to bypass the inhibition effect. Likewise identifying positive effective triggers, key differences between the profile of a successfully launched response and that of an inhibited one, provides another dimension of the corrective exercise. In our analysis, for instance, one all-important factor in determining an uninhibited emergency response is expansion of the so-called "identification radius", or the effective scope of one's interpersoning. If the self-preservation instinct I am relying on to motivate my heroic action is grounded only in the narrow ambit of my individual self, there is a limit to the possible force of the impulse. If the self I am considering saving encompasses my family, or my nation or my planet, then the force is substantially greater.

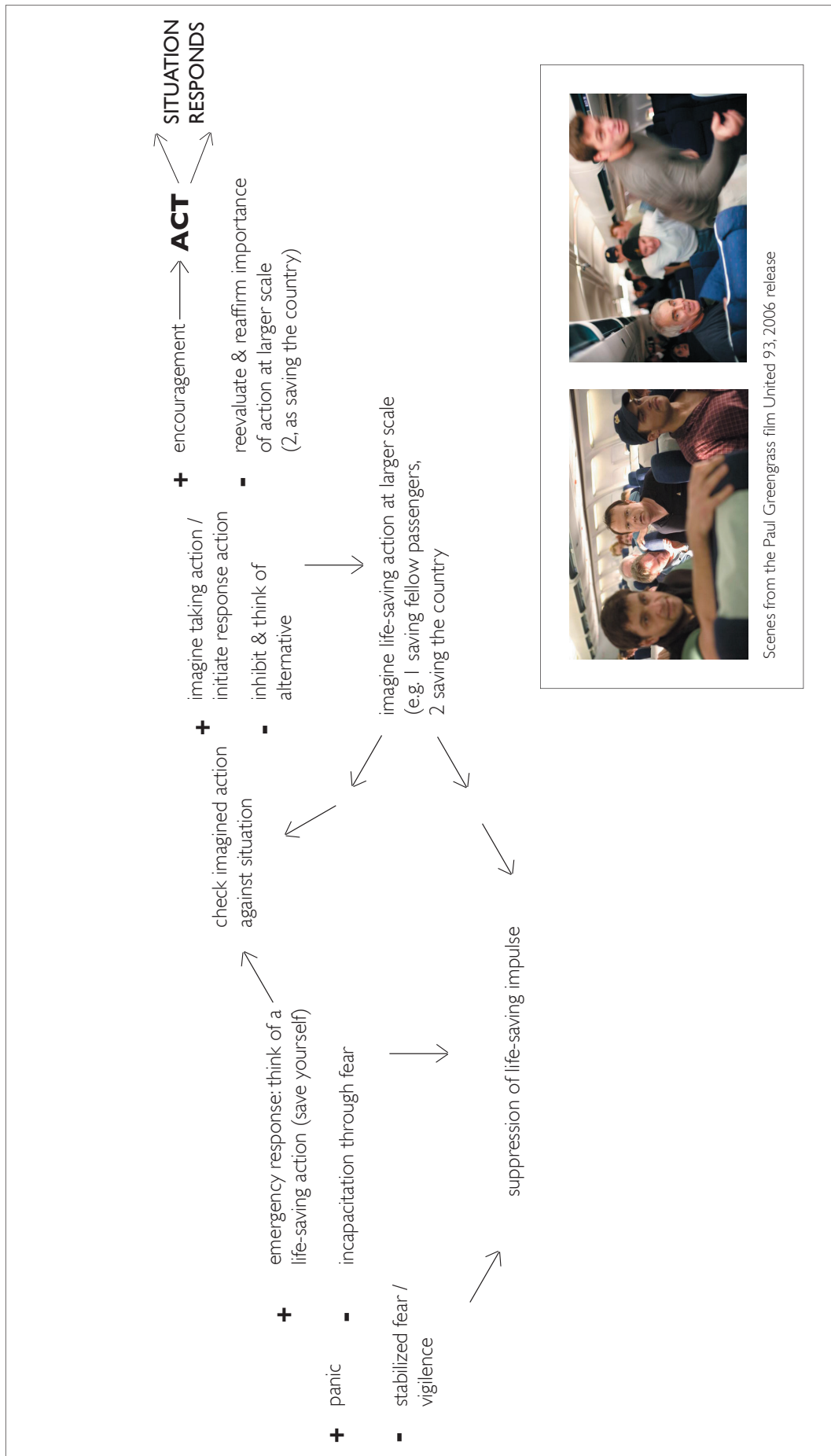
The exercise we developed to address this situation sought to capitalize on both dimensions of the kinaesthetic figure we analyzed from it. Drawing on organ-specific exercises brought in at previous stages of our movement research, we composed a sequence that had the effect, (1) first of tuning in to and taking control of the physically hampering fear response (a kidney exercise that mimics the cramping and cringing in the stomach and abdomen), (2) then of stabilizing and grounding the kidney energies as a source of power (the Bear exercise), (3) then of opening the heart to expand the identification radius and allow compassion into the mounting aggression (arms curved around, pinkies tensed, heart meridians activated), (4) then of sharpening the compassion into focussed determination (a two-finger pointing gesture that activates the lung meridians), (5) then of gathering the cumulative mass of energies activated (heart exercise, compressing a ball of energy in front of the chest), (6) then of spreading them and intensifying them throughout the body (heart exercise with tongue out, hands and palms up, demon eyes) (7) then of concentrating them back into the center of the chest, and then (8) launching into irrevocable action with a fierce shout.

The exercise, here still at an early stage of development, was conceived in two versions, one to perform standing and the other, slightly modified, able to be performed inconspicuously in the cramped seating conditions of an airliner. The standing version would allow anyone to train their capacities for overcoming fear and transmuting it into fierce compassionate activation in the case of a confrontation with terror. The sitting version could then be called on in the immediate situation of a hijacking to get a hold of oneself and jump-start the transmutation of fear into selfless heroic activation at the very moment when the crisis demands it. As a memory aide, a plasticked cartoon fold-out could be created and placed in the seat-pocket in front of each passenger; to study for how to respond in case of a mid-air suicide hijacking.



f1 as simple hijacking
f2 as muslim terrorist hijacking
f3 as large scale terrorist attack on US

e1 that airplanes get hijacked
e2 muslim terrorists hijack airplanes
e3 terrorists are out to destroy Ameirca



4 THE COMPOSURE-PANIC IMMEDIATE ACTIVATION EXERCISE: Clarifications on what we were attempting

Inverting this figure we have the antidote of a counter-figure, the gestural key to training kinaesthetic readiness for breaking the cycle of deflations, and for opening a channel to the sea-changes latent in a disinhibited biological passion to respond.

What we worked out for the airplane hijack scenario was a small case study towards our project's main goal, the composure-panic immediate activation exercise. One main difference, however, is that in the hijacking scenario the central obstacle is an excess of panic in the system. The challenge requires overcoming the fear to be empowered by it rather than overwhelmed and debilitated. In responding to global warming the challenge is the opposite: how to activate a fear and urgency response in the face of a threat that seems far off and hypothetical to most people, even where they are already experiencing effects of it and being shown the evidence. Here the energy that comes with a rush of adrenaline and nerves needs to be generated voluntarily. So the challenge is quite different. At the end of our residency, this exercise was still only in a very early phase of experimentation.

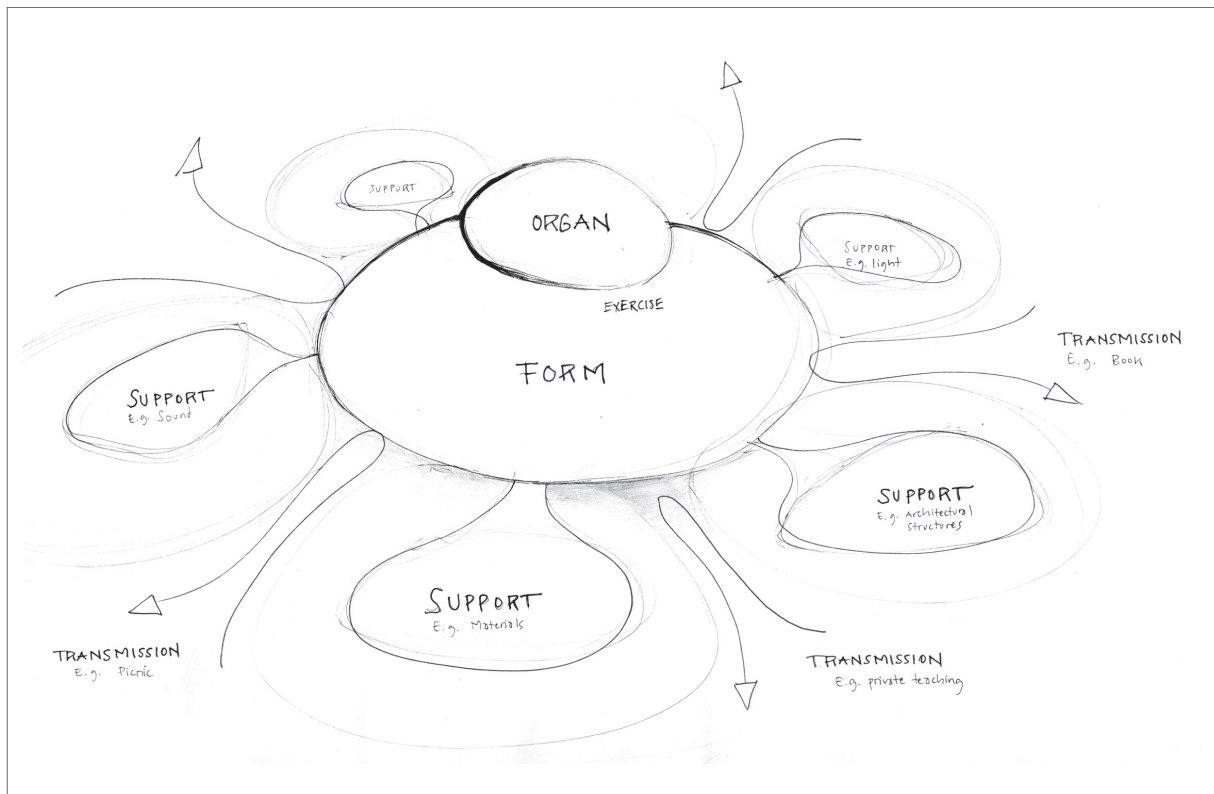
Our premise from the start was that there is in every human being enough wiring into the fundamental sources of life that if the threat to those sources could be felt, the same power latent in each individual to save his own life when confronted by mortal danger could be illicit in response to the general threat. Observing the current situation, both in "real" terms beyond the selective focus and spectacular spin, and in precisely the terms presented by the media, it seems clear that there is enough latent anxiety and panic to generate an unimaginable mass reaction among the collective body of humankind. So one goal of the exercise would be to access and activate this panic, partly through allowing the general to sink in as particular and personal, and partly through stimulating the organs that govern activation in emergency situations. On the other hand this latent available panic is of such a magnitude that it is clearly a tremendous potential threat in its own right. The healthy panic we envisioned has this characteristic in common with the righteous indignation of mothers or others whose fierceness maintains a selfless focus. Composure is our word for this complementary, stabilizing dynamic within a healthy panic response. And composure-panic was the state of urgent/steady, fierce/compassionate activation we were targeting with our exercise.

The rest of our process and progress towards this goal is described, albeit sketchily, in the Movement Research section. In approaching the movement research, however, we encountered certain confusions in the terminology we had been using, as the language of the proposal was taken up and applied to our task in practice. Before going further, it would be helpful to clarify some of these key terms. In particular the formulation of our main goal became a topic of intense discussion. Initially, we had called what we were after a "movement form", on the model of a comprehensive sequence within an evolved practice like Tai Chi or a particular strain of Yoga. Members of the group found themselves using the word "form" intuitively in very divergent senses. Later it became helpful to clarify the scale and nature of what we were trying to create by calling it an "exercise" instead. Within a more comprehensive and evolved "form", specific exercises serve particular functions. In the Chi Kung-based work Daria brought to our process, exercises were identified largely for how they influenced the functioning of particular organs.

Another defining moment for us came when, acknowledging that the organ functions we were attempting to stimulate (driving panic and composure simultaneously, for example) were incompatible within the existing organ system, Robert proposed that what we really needed (to become) was a new organ. This formulation supplied an important inspiration at a key moment in the process, and time was devoted to reformulating our goal of an exercise in terms of the missing organ it would be designed to grow; an organ with the following properties: a) a heart opener/invulnerabilizer; b) spreader and generator of concentrated selflessness, and c) an immediate activator of composure-panic.

At a point in our process when the problem of definitions came to a head, Saara and Alan sat down to create this "organigram" showing the interrelation of various terms as parts of the whole we were attempting to create. Based

on language from the original proposal and from current discussions, they added brief definitions. The diagram and the definitions were then presented to the group as a basis for discussing and clarifying our aims. In this version, the definitions have been slightly amended to reflect accepted redefinitions; the definition originally ascribed to “form” has been modified and reassigned to “exercise”, and new definition of “form” has been added.



Organigram on the Growth of the Organ drawn with Saara Hannula

ORGAN

A bioenergetic system or group of tissues that perform a specific function vital to the life and health of an organism or group of organisms.

EXERCISE

A focused movement or movement sequence that supports and enhances the functioning of an organ.

FORM

A holistic movement practice comprising exercises that address all organs and bodily systems, evolved to function for all practitioners regardless of individual differences.

SUPPORT

Anything (materials, structures, artifacts, aesthetic or environmental factors) that supports or assists the exercise or form in achieving its effect.

CONTAINER

A permanent architectural installation of the supports.

TRANSMISSION

Methods for bringing the exercise or form to people, or people to the exercise or form.