

An Artist Statement for the
Serious Artist

A Performance Piece in 7 Acts

by

Noelle Choy and William
Lanzillo

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Cast of Characters

Noelle Choy	Played by Noelle Choy
William Lanzillo	Played by William Lanzillo
Shrimp 1	Played by Noelle Choy wearing the shrimp costume
Popsicle 1	Played by Noelle Choy wearing the popsicle costume
Shrimp 2	Played by Cooper Siegel wearing the shrimp costume
Popsicle 2	Played by William Black wearing the popsicle costume

Scene

The Print Media Critique Room at Cranbrook Academy of Art.

Time

The present. The past. And the Future.

ACT 1

Scene 1

SETTING:

A hospital in Maryland.

(NOELLE is born.)

(END OF ACT)

ACT 2

Scene 1

SETTING:

A hospital in Chicagoland.

(WILLIAM is born.)

(END OF ACT)

ACT 3

Scene 1

SETTING:

The Cranbrook School's dining
hall.

(WILLIAM and NOELLE meet to discuss when they should
meet to make a plan for their project.)

(END OF ACT)

ACT 4

Scene 1

SETTING:

The Sculpture department at
Cranbrook Academy of Art.

(NOELLE and WILLIAM form their ideas and execute their
ideas.)

(END OF ACT)

ACT 5

Scene 1

SETTING:

The Print Media Critique
Room.

(NOELLE and WILLIAM create a "decoy piece" for their elective critique in Print media. This piece acts as the work that the department will attempt to review and discuss in the department's critique. The decoy functions so that people think that this is the work in its entirety and prepare to critique it and then are unsuspecting when a performance breaks out during the critique.)

Given an interest in endings and beginnings, WILLIAM and NOELLE create a closed loop timeline around the entire room. A welded rod is created that perfectly fits the perimeter of the room to have a physical representation of a timeline. On the timeline they attempt to put random events and objects in no particular order with no relation or immediate specificity so that there is an absurdity to this endless loop and no distinct direct narratives can be drawn from it. There are one hundred items on the timeline including painted words and Post-it Notes and such events and objects as, the Big Bang, a single Pop Rock candy granule, world peace, two flags [one which says, "sit on my face", the other saying, "while you tell me lies"], governmental collapse, *Noelle is born, *William is born, dog cries, and first kiss with tongue, to name a few. Timeline sets the stage for the performative elements in Act 6.)

*Appears twice on timeline

(END OF ACT)

ACT 6

Scene 1

SETTING:

The Print Media Critique Room.

AT RISE:

It has been three days since "the decoy piece/timeline" was installed in the space. Noelle and William, along with the Print Media department, gather in the space to critique the work. Chairs are set in a circle. William sits with his back towards the windows next to the timeline element "Make the world a stage". Noelle sits near the door. The whole group is encircled by the timeline. People get settled in their seats and prepare to begin critique of the timeline.

WILLIAM

Okay so for this crit we would like to start by first just reading our artist statement.

(WILLIAM gets out his laptop to find the statement.)

Okay so here we go...

(WILLIAM reads from his laptop.)

"Consideration of the temporal dimension of human experience directs our attention to certain categories of events: beginnings and endings, entrances and exits, pauses, gaps, interruptions, and ordered sequences of all kinds. A subset of these phenomena might be considered issues of temporal punctuation which address the question of how events in time are segmented or partitioned so that one event is perceived as over

(the issue of closure), and another event is perceived to begin. The concept of closure is essential to the concept of change, for given the infinite capacity of human beings, some sense of closure seems to be necessary to make possible new activities. But a sense of psychological closure to temporal events implies more than that they have ended; it implies a sense of harmonious completion. It is this sense of harmonious completion, of balance and equilibrium restored, of tension reduced that allows the pursuit of new challenges and activities." -Stuart Albert

(NOELLE discreetly leaves the room.)

WILLIAM (Cont.)

(WILLIAM Reads in a serious manner with a tinge of sarcasm.)

Since before time, humans have tried in a plethora of manners to understand the nature of our own existence. Central to this understanding are beginnings and endings. Birth and death. Is death the ultimate ending? Is birth the first beginning? What is death? Is it final? It was these questions that first piqued our interest in the contrast between the divine, the spiritual and the tangible. Maybe these aren't mutually exclusive, especially here on Planet Earth. What is the human experience without an understanding of our bodies, minds, and souls as one. Time has stripped us from this reality, and we struggle to connect with ourselves and our humanity. Let us not forget Let us not forget, all of this may be politicized - a representation of politics and a politics of representation are both at play and make it impossible to exist impartially. There can be no purity in our modern world. We all bear the blame and drag our guilt behind us. How can we ever form a better world amidst this rot? Art. Art is the answer. Through the old clichés and tropes of art, humanity has found its salvation. The work today is unabashedly in conversation with nostalgia, memory, archive, and the human condition, to name a few concepts. We've chosen these objects for their simplicity, neutrality, un-specificity, elegance and grace. The piece here before you is the culmination of a lifetime of dedication to a singular vision, that we all could be a part of a better tomorrow.

(WILLIAM's tone shifts to become more frantic as he continues to read.)

Let's talk about the random, the new. Is the new recycled old? Is a fulfilled expectation a conclusion?— what's the deal with the satisfaction of that? Are we happier with a happy ending?

The happiness is resolute. A package on your doorstep is filled with only packing peanuts but you find one real peanut and it grants you eternal youth.

As Judge Judy said, "I love the truth, if you don't tell me the truth, you're going to be eating your shoes."

Tomorrow is the future and we know today will end and when the sun goes down we know that the day is ending and we hope for tomorrow, or, "a better tomorrow," because you know that it will come and believe that it's a guarantee. The bitter end for us all is arbitrary and so we believe in an endless continuing, or maybe we don't and that person becomes misanthropic and needs to lighten up.

If time is a river, how can we grapple with the game Freeze Tag? It is a winter sport they said.

Time has pulled us apart, separating us from our bodies, and our beings. How can we reconcile when we can't go back?

The creative process is speckled with accidents that can change everything.

(WILLIAM accidentally knocks over his water bottle. Shrimp fall out and spread across the floor. While continuing to read the statement, WILLIAM picks up the shrimp and starts to eat them.)

WILLIAM (Cont.)

Wait, stop! Think. How do ideas come to be? A brothy soupy concoction of experiences facts, opinions simmers in the body and sometimes when you dip the ladle deep into this concoction new delicious morsels will find their way into your bowl, to be digested by the brain and added to the pantry as new ingredients to pick from.

(SHRIMP 1 enters rowing with a large ore across the ground while on a skateboard labelled "BOAT". Shrimp 1 docks the boat and takes the shrimp tails out of WILLIAM'S mouth and begins to pin them to the timeline with pieces of tape from her tail.)

WILLIAM (Cont.)

Narratives are key. They are what give us understanding and root us in reality, or rather, are the tool we use to construct

reality so that it all makes sense. Data is just Data until someone ties it to experience, a story. People die every day though, and this is natural. Sometimes it's not what we want or what they want, but so it goes, they said.

How do we sort through all the narratives in the world? There is the one for why I am here in art school, the one for why that person broke up with you and the one for why I didn't brush my teeth that one time. How do we tell them all apart? When does one narrative end and the next one begin? Or are they all a part of a bigger story?

There are 4 components to ending social encounters according to the Social Psychologist, Albert Kessler. Most endings of social encounters utilize multiple of these components. He breaks them down as such:

(SHRIMP 1 moves around the circle of people staring at each for a couple of seconds before moving to the next person while WILLIAM continues to read the artist statement.)

WILLIAM (Cont.)

1). Summary Statements:

A summary creates a concise historical record of an encounter so that the participants can agree about which conversational objectives have or have not been attained, an agreement presumably useful in bringing about an ending. There is an increase in summary statements during the end of a conversation. An example would be, "Crit was really great today."

2.) External and internal justifications:

(SHRIMP 1 rows out of the room. Shortly after, POPSICLE 1 returns on the skateboard that now has the label "SKATEBOARD". POPSICLE 1 dismounts skateboard and stands next to WILLIAM who all the while continues reading the statement.)

WILLIAM (Cont.)

A statement of justification for ending a social encounter may refer to elements within the encounter (internal justifications), such as "I'm bored" or "We finished the task, so let's stop," or to elements outside the encounter (external

justifications), such as "I have another meeting." A general increase in both kinds of statements is expected during the terminal phase of a conversation.

3.) Continuity statements:

These specify the time, place, or circumstances of possible reunion. There are specific continuity statements, such as "see you in 10 minutes," and those that omit the details, such as "see you later." Both general and specific continuity statements refer to a possible reunion between the participants of a social encounter.

4.) Expressions of positive affect and well-wishing:

"Take care" or "have a good trip," are closely related to the desire for continuity in that they indicate a care for a person's future well-being.

Maybe the 5th way to end things is for them not to end at all. And just let things keep going on and on and on and on and on and on and on and on and then just...

Let me pause here...

Let us all pause for a moment of silence, to remember all those...

(POPSICLE 1 removes an actual popsicle from inside her costume, opens the wrapper and balances the popsicle on her forehead. She is looking up towards the sky.)

WILLIAM (Cont.)

Let us pause, and repeat...

Let's rinse and repeat...

Repeat. Stop. No. You don't get it do you. I can't handle the truth.

I wouldn't know it if it fucked me. It sucked me. Dripped all over me. Froze me and posed as me. And I posed as you. You little... you.

That's all she wrote. But then the credits. Then the empty theatre. What about the high school kid who comes to sweep up the popcorn? You have to leave in the cold too. You dream about

it. You talk about it later. You die. People still mention it from time to time, I'm not sure who.

The carousel has stopped. You can't let go. You don't, they think you should, but you haven't. It's not like what they see, or what you see. It's not enough. You know it isn't, but it must be somehow, right?

This is over. The statement is finished. It never started and ended a while ago. Or it's always starting and will never end.

It keeps hitting us on the head. Do you feel it?

You don't like it? Neither do I. It disgusts me. It is all treachery and a blessing.

You are a magician.

There's something about stalling, trying to extend the point of termination.

But then you stall and try to extend time, the day, the everything. Every romantic comedy makes you wanna die but you're not mad. What else is late night TV for than to keep you up later, make the day 25, 26, 27 hours long. You can't see the sun rainbowing above you so how do you even know a minute passing from whatever? Completely still you still slide across the field and you're like I guess it's still gonna come, the rainbow sun in every color again and again. A deep weight that's so heavy it's filling you up and you're full of that stuff, the missing, the hole in your chest when you start to cry and you don't even plan to like that one part in that movie. Do you know it?

POPSICLE 1 AND WILLIAM IN UNISON

I hate the way you talk to me, and the way you cut your hair. I hate the way you drive my car. I hate it when you stare, I hate your big dumb combat boots and the way you read my mind. I hate you so much it makes me sick, it even makes me rhyme. I hate the way you're always right. I hate it when you lie. I hate it when you make me laugh, even worse when you make me cry. I hate it that you're not around. And the fact that you didn't call. But mostly I hate the way I don't hate you, not even close, not even a little bit, not even at all.

(POPSICLE 1 hands WILLIAM the popsicle off her sticky head. He begins to eat it and continues reading the statement while he finishes eating.)

WILLIAM

Have you even considered for a minute, for a SECOND, that we're all just swirling around in cosmic goo and we can shuffle ourselves, any THING and BAM: context? One person is a person, two is a couple. Snap crackle and pop, they said.

(By this point, WILLIAM finishes eating the popsicle, POPSICLE 1 takes the stick and pins it onto the timeline then exits the room on skateboard.)

WILLIAM (Cont.)

Here's a little anecdote to get the juices flowing. I needed change for a dollar to buy one of those gummy slap hands from the store. You know the ones.

Here is a bigger anecdote: to get the secretions juicing.

You know when you're having so much fun you're not even thinking about it? Like it's just happening so synced up with your experience of the thing and you stop for a minute and you're like, "wow this is crazy." You know that in one hour, one day, one year, you'll wish you were back in this single moment and it makes you hold it tighter, you try to get the room around you to hold you tighter but you literally can't because that doesn't happen so you forget about it and the rest of it zips by and you just let it go on.

(A long moment of silence, roughly 2 minutes of stillness.)

(NOELLE re-enters room subtly for the end of the reading of the artist statement.)

WILLIAM (Cont.)

Starting over. How do you start something? A start implies a finish.

A note on ending rituals:

They may substitute the end for the thing itself and lack integrity and provide counterfactual obfuscation. Thank you and congratulations.

(Another brief moment of silence to transition. WILLIAM's tone shifts from reading to more conversational.)

WILLIAM (Cont.)

Okay so now we are going to go into five minutes of free writing, so I will set my timer for five minutes and then we will come back together.

(WILLIAM hands out Post-it Notes.)

NOELLE

(NOELLE reads from her notes.)

It is through the creative process that new realities can be forged. This simple line may at first appear straight, and well, simple, but let me complicate this all for you. The line can mean whatever you want it to mean. The work is not forced down your throat but is given to viewers as an intellectual gift to chew on and sift through. Let the meanings come to you.

Humanism is in again they said, (I don't know who said that) but post-structuralism still runs free to muck up your understanding, to give you a framework for that framework, that could be applied to new frameworks so a narrative of justice can prevail.

(END OF ACT)

ACT 7

Scene 1

SETTING:

The Print Media Critique Room.

AT RISE:

The group is free writing about their experience while The instrumental version of "If I Ain't Got You" by Alicia Keys plays from an iPhone XR on the floor.

(At the end of the song, the group transitions into the rest of critique talking about the experience so far.)

(Meanwhile, SHRIMP 2 and POPSICLE 2 appear in the courtyard in view of the windows in the crit room. They sit at a table and play cards the remainder of the critique. Eventually, members in the group notice the performers during the discussion, realizing that the performance is, after all, still without an ending.)

(At the conclusion of the discussion, the group leaves the crit space.)

(END OF ACT 7)