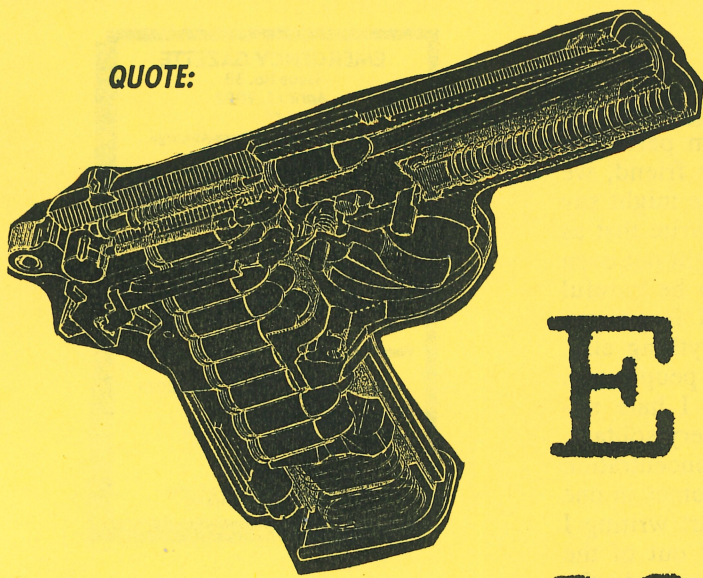


QUOTE:



walkabout: FRESH AIR FOR THEATER

The lesson of the **CHEESEBURGER**. When eating a cheeseburger represents cruelty and imperialism, you may choose not to eat it. If you choose to eat it anyway, then it is your obligation to accept fully what you are doing, without blocking out any painful truths. Similarly, one ought never to judge a work "on its own terms." Nothing that is in the world may be put aside or conveniently forgotten. Everything is at stake in everything.

The lesson of **KARAOKE**. People flock to karaoke for the pure joy of plugging into a completely defined text. The pleasure comes from playing a role, even to the extent of mimicking the style of the original singer. Why does the average person not relish the idea of playing a scene of Hamlet? Why aren't there theatrical karaoke bars where people can go and take turns reading scenes off the wall?

The lesson of the **SPAGHETTI DINNER**. The price was listed as five dollars, but when I got there, the price was ten dollars. "Ten dollars isn't so cheap for dinner," I said. "You get to watch theater too," they said. Which is true, but it changes the nature of the event fundamentally. At five dollars, the performers are bribing a very poor audience to come watch them in exchange for food. At ten dollars, we have entered the realm of theater, no matter how cheap.

The lesson of **ANARCHISM**. The philosophy of anarchism does not propose disorder or chaos, but rather an order that is voluntary. Such order can only exist when every participant is able to balance listening and speaking. Anarchism requires both the generosity to give up domination and the shared vocabulary with which to communicate. These are the same traits that allow for theatrical and dance improvisation, but applied on a social rather than a personal level. Any successful non-scripted performance is an enactment of working anarchism.

The lesson of the **MAYANS**. They say that at one time the Mayans refused the wheel. They knew of it, but they did not want it. This is difficult to imagine. "Not taking what one doesn't desire is the hardest thing in the world," said Camus. Indeed, the world is full to bursting with things we have taken that we did not desire. Theater, at this moment, is defined by what it refuses: video, pop music, internet connections, advertising. Question: Did the Mayans survive? Answer: You cannot survive unless you accept the wheel. But the moment you accept the wheel, you are already dead.

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April 11, 2002

DOs & DON'Ts

DO (for actors)

Act like a professional on stage.
Leave the stage immediately when your part is over.
Allow time for laughs and applause, but not too much.
Keep track of your personal props and belongings.
Know what time to come, where to report for costumes and make-up.
Know where to stay when not on stage.

DO (for audience)

Go to a show expectantly, prepared to enjoy yourself.
Share in the responsibility of make-believe.
Pretend that the action of the play is happening now.
Arrive at the show on time.

DON'T (for actors)

Indulge in curtain peeking.
Take part in any off-stage talking during the performance.
Wander round in costume.
Enter the auditorium when your part is over.
Ask a lot of questions because of nervousness and excitement.
Look at the audience when you are acting in a play.
Ever relax from your part when you are onstage. If you have no lines, act at listening.

DON'T (for the audience)

Be stingy with your emotions, your interests, or your applause.
Be uncooperative or unsympathetic to the mood of the show.
Whisper among yourselves or in any way distract the rest of the audience.

"And be sure to choose a play that everyone can understand and enjoy."

FROM:
"How to Have a Show" by Barbara Berk & Jeanne Bendick ©1957 Franklin Watts Inc.



www.emergencymagazine.com

The lesson of the **BREAKDANCERS**. In the Times Square subway station, a large crowd has gathered. The performers, all male, are dressed entirely in black & white—the traditional costume of mime. Yet mime is dead, and breakdancing very much alive. The difference is visible in this performance, which discloses the most important sign of a vibrant theater: both company and audience are intergenerational. The work is stretched into past and future. Old traditions are passed on to young students. No living community can exist within a single generation.

Ben Spatz



INVISIBLE THEATER

Invisible theater focuses on experience.

*EXPERIENCE- n. 1. direct observation of or participation in events : an encountering, undergoing, or living through things in general as they take place in the course of time *what we call education and culture is the substitution of reading for experience, of literature for life, of the obsolete fictitious for the contemporary real G.B.Shaw* 2. knowledge, skill, or practice derived from direct observation of or participation in events : practical wisdom resulting from what one has encountered, undergone, or lived through*

The primary objective of IT is to construct performances for its audience, which are lived through as real life experiences. In other words, IT substitutes itself for literature and the obsolete fictitious. It is this substitution that eliminates many of the boundaries and restrictions of traditional theater.

First, the audience does not choose to watch an IT performance. Rather, the IT performer chooses their audience. Because the audience is selected, it becomes possible to know more about them. One can do research on a specific person or a select group of people before encountering them as an audience. Where do they work? Where do they live? How do they vote? And, yes, what is their favorite color?

Second, the IT performer selects the time and place of the performance. IT can take place anywhere and at any time of day. IT understands that there are many who do not go to the theater.

IT addresses two final crucial restrictions: that of money and that of recognition. IT does not rent performance or rehearsal space. IT does not "split the door" with bars or other performance venues. IT does not sell tickets or merchandise or advertisement space. IT does not make programs or postcards or fliers or posters. IT has no business plan. IT does not pay actors or writers or directors or stage managers or lighting designers or publicity personnel. IT does not send out press packages. In short, those who make IT receive no financial compensation or personal recognition. The very realistic need for financial stability and the very human desire for personal recognition are understood. IT does not seek to pooh pooh this. However, the elements of money and recognition in theater are seen as restrictions. They restrict not only the theater artist and their decision making, but they audiences as well.

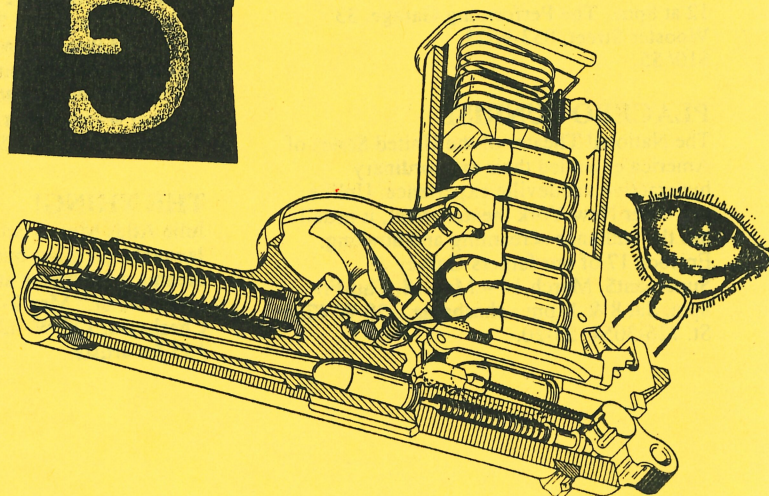
What IT needs, however, is awareness. IT desires only the recognition by theater artists that there is another way—another way to use the skills you have to make theater. IT is truly experimental. IT involves risk, commitment, and great sacrifice.

brandoevan@netscape.net

FREE
WATER-TIGHT INTEGRITY

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ART & REVOLUTION

an interview with Susanna Cook
by Ben Spatz

Susana Cook moved to New York City in 1993. Since then, she has written, directed and produced eleven full length shows, including *HOT TAMALES*, *THE FRAUD*, *TANGO LESBIANO*, *RATS*, *GROSS NATIONAL PRODUCT*, and *HAMLETANGO: PRINCE OF BUTCHES*. I met with her on a rainy Tuesday at a restaurant near the Women's One World Cafe on 4th Street. We went there because they let you smoke inside.

According to your autobiographical poem, "Going South," you're from Buenos Aires. You escaped with the circus at age five, traveled for some time with a monkey named Sandy, got a free education, became a doctor, and then discovered your ten holes. Is any of that true?

Well, I'm from Buenos Aires. And the holes part is true.

You write: "Through my holes I was listening, reading, shitting, talking, fucking / I was my holes / then I thought / How can our relationship with our holes affect our relationship with other people's holes?... I asked Mother Nature about holes ... she gave me fingers. / digging in my holes / I found my soul / I found political tendencies / sexual preferences / cultural origins..."

Everyone thinks holes are all about masturbation, but [cleaning her ear with a pinky finger] we're always digging around in our holes. And I am from Buenos Aires. I went to drama school there. I started performing with a little company there in the time of the dictatorship. That's why my work is so political. The militaries took over in 1976, it was called the "dirty war." It was genocide. They killed 30,000 artists and activists. The "subversives." The

people they now call "terrorists" here. And when there's a repressive government, the artists are always missing or exiled first. My company was even more underground than WOW is, but we were doing a show about the missing people, and it also made fun of the military. One day we got to the theater and all the posters had been ripped down. The owner said we couldn't do the show anymore. It was too bad, but we also felt empowered and flattered. We knew they were afraid of us, that we had power. I began to think there's a lot you can do with art, using art as a political tool. It's about bringing communities together. It does more than if I started a group of women of color. Look at how many women of color come together at WOW to see my shows.

I've noticed that you work with many of the same actors over and over again, although you don't exactly have a permanent ensemble.

We have to keep changing people. Some people work with me for many years. But people need breaks too, it's exhausting, and there's so little money. Also, I encourage people to go off and do their own work too. But there are no auditions. I hate auditions. I went to two auditions in my life and left crying. And once I had an audition for one of my shows and 400 people showed up. In this city, if you put an ad in *Backstage Magazine* you get 400 people showing up and you feel like shit rejecting them all. Many of my people aren't even performers. And the people who are not actors, I love them. They don't say "What's my motivation?" I can't work that way. You don't need "motivation" in my shows, you just do it as yourself.

Yes, there is an almost uncanny naturalness to your plays. Is that because your performers help to write the script? Do you use improvisation to generate material?

No, there's no improvisation. But I always write the script with certain people in mind. I know who I want in the show, and I write the part to

fit them. It's like making a sweater for them, so it fits them perfectly. And also, Mistah is my friend, we talk on the phone, so she might say something and I might write that as one of her lines. She might not even remember saying it. So be careful when you talk to me. I forget my phone number and everything else, but I never forget what people say. But there's no improv. I hate improv. Writing to me is very solitary. I wait for the perfect concentration moment. Sometimes it comes in one weekend, but once I start writing I don't stop. I cut myself out of the world and become a hermit. At the show I'm very social, but three months before I really stay apart. I usually have to break up with my girlfriend, and I don't pay attention to my friends, everyone feels abandoned. But while I'm writing, I'm thinking about the faces of the people in the show...

Do you consider yourself a New Yorker?

I would never leave New York. I came here when I was 29 knowing only ten words of English. This is my third language. And something happens when you write in a language that isn't your first language. It makes a kind of distance. I like it. I make errors, and sometimes the actors correct my errors, but sometimes I like errors. I feel like I take the language the way I want. That's what this project [*HAMLETANGO*] is too. I like writing original scripts, like *GROSS NATIONAL PRODUCT*, but I also like to translate from the white cannon. I want to do the Greeks too. No one would want me to direct Shakespeare, no one would think I even know Shakespeare, but we grow up learning your culture. So now I'm going to do my own fucking Shakespeare. I want to ask, What would happen if it was the ghost of a woman? *HAMLET* is so "ghost of the father, revenge me," it's like a dick thing. "He took my wife, go kill everything." A mother wouldn't do that. Also, I was watching the *HAMLET* movies, and the whole

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royalty dies, and the peasants are all sad that the king is dead. In mine, the peasants go and get drunk. They love it.

What about success? Do you want to be rich and famous?

Do you want to be rich and famous? Why would you want that? It depends who you want in your audience. Brecht said he wrote thinking of Marx sitting in the front row. My audience is all word of mouth, but my shows get packed anyway. I never get reviewed except in the gay press. What I would like is to be published at some point, but that's a whole different job to take on. I do two shows a year and I do solo shows all the time. Usually I don't even get a listing. But now I feel: So what? Who is the audience that comes because of a review? Sometimes I read the reviews and I get so curious, I have to go. And the tickets are \$35, so I usher. But I don't have any ambition to get to places where I could charge that much for tickets. I don't care about that audience. I like working class lesbian latinas. I don't want more fame. All I want is that, a packed theater of people who are eager. I believe in underground theater. There's a power there that's not in the mainstream. The mainstream has rules, you have to make compromises. I would get censored. I reach a lot of people this way. I reach the people who are thirsty to hear a voice in contrast with all the shit in the mainstream world. I don't think my work could go intact into a bigger theater. The intellectuals, they are old-fashioned communists, arrogant, writing in language that the working class doesn't speak. There IS a way to outreach people... So I'm in the place where I want to be. WOW is a blessing, and I get all these people who work for almost nothing. The Bronx is cheap to live in and the shows are cheap to do. I pay my bills. I'm a dog-walker.

Wasn't Valerie Solanas a dog-walker?

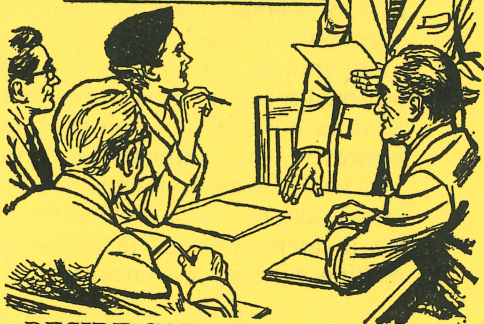
Oh, I didn't know that. That's great.

HAMLETANGO: PRINCE OF BUTCHES ran March 8-30th, 2002 at the WOW Cafe, 59 East 4th Street, 4th Floor. Coming up: Watch for *DYKENSTEIN*, premiering at WOW in October, 2002. More information on Susana Cook can be found at her web page:

www.mindspring.com/~susana.cook

HOW DO WE FIND THEM?

LISTINGS



DESIRE CAUGHT BY THE TAIL

Text by Picasso. We don't know anything about Curious Noise Theatre. May 2-5 at 7pm, May 5 at 3pm. HERE, 145 6th Ave., 647-0202.

I'M SO SORRY FOR EVERYTHING

Henrik Ibsen's *DOLL HOUSE*, directed by Yelena Gluzman. A Science Project. May 1-12 at 8pm. The Performing Garage, 33 Wooster Street, 853-9623. \$10/ \$5.

PLACEBO SUNRISE

The National Theater of the United States of America extended their extraordinary hyperactive vaudeville experience. Unlike any other New York theater event, it usually has the audience screaming and howling. Episode 17 of our fathers Garvey & Superpant\$. March 14 - May 18, Thu-Fri 8pm, Sat 8 & 11pm. chashama, 125 W 42nd St. 726-3054. \$3-20.

IN THE LAND OF THE BLIND THE ONE-EYED MAN IS KING

An American premiere by Mexican writer Carlos Fuentes. In English, Thu 8pm & Sat 3pm. In Spanish, Fri & Sat 8pm, Sundays 4pm. April 19-May 19. Thalia Spanish Theatre, 41-17 Greenpoint Ave., Sunnyside. 718-729-3880. See www.thaliaattheatre.org.

CHEAP THRILLS

Proto-Type's "pop psychology story of obsession and amnesia." April 11-14, 17-21 HERE, 145 Avenue of the Americas. \$15.

in 3 to 6 seconds

Human Nature Productions. "No need for your brain to remain hijacked, these chemicals will dissipate in 3 to 6 seconds." Thu-Mon 8pm, April 11 - 28. Theater et al, 330 W. 38th Street 12th Floor. 496-4591. \$12.

BINDLESTIFF FAMILY CIRKUS

The "Stiffs are the only anarchist punk freak circus I've ever seen, and now they are in residence at the Mazer Theater, presenting different programs weekly. See www.bindlestiff.org for the schedule.

ABC No Rio MOVIE MARATHON

A benefit for Books Through Bars and the Zine Library at ABC No Rio. No less than Ten fabulous movies. 6pm Fri May 3 - Noon Sat May 4. See the list of films at www.abcnorio.org. Suggested donation \$7.

THE THING!

Julie Atlas Muz, Matt Mohr & Janusz Jaworski get gogo-butoh in a pond. "Wishes, dreams, nightmares are born where money meets water." May 2-19 Thu-Sun at 9pm. Chashama, 129 W. 42nd Street, 802-9480. \$15 / \$5 for artists.

PLEASUREDOME

A continuous 40-hour burlesque fantasia celebrating the world of Pleasure, with non-stop music, dance, visuals, and performance by over 40 artists. You can choose to stay a few hours, to come and go, or to remain the entire weekend. As part of the audience, you will become a part of the happenings; you will simultaneously experience them. Friday, April 26th at 11PM, and runs non-stop until Sunday, April 28th at 3PM. Combustive Arts, 250 Varet Street in Brooklyn. Reserve at 479-8411.

SANJURO

The movie by Kurosawa. Starring the exquisite Toshiro Mifune Yeah! April 15 & 16, 4:30, 6:50, 9:10 pm. BAM Rose Cinema, 30 Lafayette Avenue at Flatbush Avenue. Adults \$8.50

THE WATER HEN

By S.I. Witkiewicz. Translated by Daniel Gerould. Directed by Jeff Lewonczyk. Apr. 18, 20, 25, 27 at 8; April 19, 24, 26 at 10. Present Company Theatrorium, 196-198 Stanton St. 212-20-8877. \$15.

A CALL TO SUPERHEROES

ben by spatz
Calling all archetypes, mages, performance artists, afrofuturist cyborgs, cyberfeminist warriors, hacker punks, drag queens & kings, glam rockers, anarchist DIY wizards, candy-ravers, zine-crafters, singer-songwriters, and loudmouths from all walks of life. We must be affiliated. The criteria to join our community will be as follows: have alter-ego, wear costume, perform with style and flair. Possible activities: 1) Stage carnivals and disappearing; 2) Issue proclamations from rooftops; 3) Create media frenzy; 4) Take mythological control of Gotham City. Other possibilities will be discussed at the first meeting.

#39