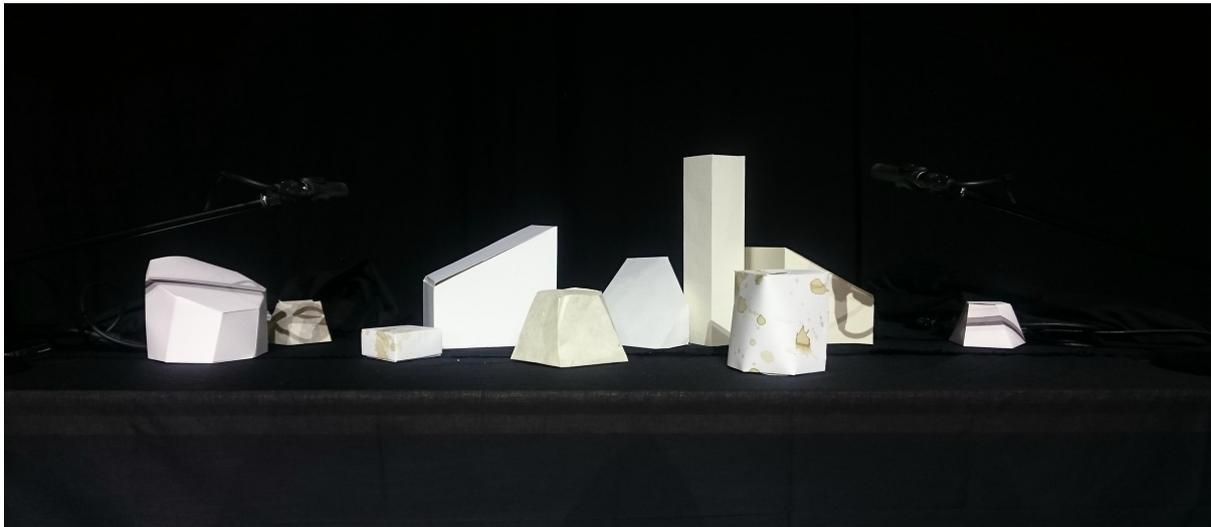


# COMMUNITY OF OBJECTS

for two to four performers

Caitlin Rowley

*Community of Objects* explores the private act of performing and the private space of the score within the situation of a public performance. The piece's score is also its principal instruments - a collection of handmade paper boxes that are handled with gloves and bare hands, and which are destroyed during the performance.



The sounds of the piece are chiefly the sounds of paper-handling, crumpling, tearing, etc. These very quiet paper sounds are interspersed with sounds and actions prompted by the contents of the boxes, discovered by the performers over the course of the piece. Approach each box as if it were a self-contained improvised piece.

**Opening** the boxes before the performance is forbidden, and as they are destroyed after they have been opened, the sense of a private experience when performing this piece should be heightened - as the performer, you are the only person who will ever experience this set of boxes. Allow yourself to show any emotional response (positive or negative) you may feel to the audience.

At all times, the boxes should be treated as precious – even when destroying them, they should be destroyed with care and attention, as something meaningful, not something used up and worthless.

**Destruction** can be achieved in any way, either gently or brutally – crumpling, unfolding, smashing, ripping, chewing, etc. Use a variety of approaches over the course of the performance.

Performers will be provided with **white cotton gloves**, either roughened, plain or both, depending on the number of boxes per performer:

- 4 boxes each or less: one pair of gloves, either rough or plain, but with both types used across the group
- More than 4 boxes each: Two pairs of gloves, one plain, one rough. All start with the same type and about halfway through the performance, remove the first pair, discard them, and put on the second pair. Change in your own time – don't wait for the other performers.

A non-performer should arrange the boxes in no particular order on a table large enough to seat all the performers together. It is recommended that the table surface be dark for contrast and visibility of the boxes – a tablecloth can be used, but should be lightweight so as not to interfere with the natural resonance of the table itself.

Performers should ideally wear dark-coloured clothing, preferably a different colour from the table.

### *Structure*

*To begin:* Start with a moment of quiet, with all performers sat at the table of boxes, hands flat on the table surface. Carefully put on your gloves. Wait for everyone to be ready, then pause a moment.

Start with just one performer taking a box. The others should pay attention to this solo for a little, before taking their own first boxes.

*To proceed:* The piece proceeds by each performer selecting a box, opening it, interacting with any contents, then destroying it as if it were precious, gently discarding the remains on the floor and repeating the process with another box (suggestions for box interactions are given in the preparation section below). Change gloves halfway if two pairs each are being used.

*To end:* At the point where only one box per performer remains, performers should remove and discard their gloves, then wait for the others to catch up. Once everyone's hands are bare, each proceeds with their final box. Pay extra attention to this last box, move more deliberately.

When everyone has finished, take a quiet, shared moment. Then the piece is over.

## *Rehearsal/preparation suggestions*

These exercises are designed to help performers access the mindset of the piece and draw out any questions before performance. If you practice mindfulness meditation, that could also be helpful in preparing for the level of attention to detail required.

### *Random objects*

Sit at a table with your eyes closed while a friend selects an object and places it in front of you. Open your eyes and observe the object, feel it, find its tiny details and particularly seek out its sounds – explore it with a level of attention you may not normally use – imagine it is precious & interesting, no matter how banal it seems. Repeat with different objects.

### *Imagined boxes*

Find scraps of different types of paper – copy paper, notepaper, newspaper, toilet paper, etc. - and place them on a table. Run through the whole performance structure to familiarise yourself with it, while pretending the scrap paper is boxes. Pick up a piece of paper, explore its sounds and use your imagination. Try narrating what you are doing, describing your imagined box and its contents.

### *Interacting with the boxes – some suggestions*

What detail do you see on the surface of the box? How does it feel through your gloves? Does it crackle if you gently squish the sides? Does it have a smell?

Let yourself be delighted by tiny banalities, be seduced by the feel of smooth paper under your fingers or fascinated by a rough texture. How does it sound? Does it rattle when shaken or tipped up (watch for loose lids!)? Can you see light through it?

When you open it, what sounds does it make? Does it open easily or does it struggle?

How are you going to destroy it? What different ways of destroying it can you come up with and how will you go about destroying and discarding it as if something precious – what does that mean to you? (Don't feel limited to these questions – they are just a starting point.)

Caitlin Rowley

Gravesend/Bath

April/May 2017, rev. Dec 2017