



## DOCENT WORKSHOP: Gesture & Resonance

*using theatre techniques to engage meaningfully with visual art*

### warm-ups for ensemble building

#### BUH

Everyone stands in a circle. Person A turns to the person to their right, Person B, and says "Buh." Person B passes the "Buh" to their right and it continues around the circle. The pace can begin slowly but the goal is to find a rhythm and go as quickly as possible without disrupting the rhythm.

*Complication:* Let it travel in either direction, determined by whoever has the "buh." This can lead to "buh" arguments, stuck going back and forth between two players. This is good, but it can get tedious- if it goes on too long, make a rule that only 4 "buhs" can go between partners before it has to move on.

*Complication:* Have players use their names instead of the word "buh." Have them switch from using their own name to their neighbor's.

#### PASS THE FACE

Stand in a circle. Person A looks to their right and makes a face at Person B. Person B mimics the face and passes it on. The "face" gets passed around the circle. Each receiver must try to copy exactly what they are receiving, and in this way it will change from person to person without anyone trying or forcing the face to change. Let it go around for a minute or two, and then change directions.

*Complication:* Add sound, or full body movement, or both.

*Complication:* Send it across the circle instead of just to left or right. This requires focus and only works with a small group.

#### WORDS ON CARDS

Have players write a word on an index card when they enter the room. It is their word for the moment, not yesterday's word or tomorrow's word. It can be an emotion, a color, a noun. Put all cards in a bag.

When everyone has filled out a card have players pick a card out of the bag, they may get their own card, this is fine. Players must now use their card words to try to form affinity teams based on their word. Once they find their team (ex: "happy" "bubble" and "yellow" are now a team) they must share / justify their choice to be a team with the group.



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## **observation exercise**

### TAKE THE SHAPE

Find a human form in a piece of art. Take on the posture of the body you are observing. Fine tune your position by studying the small details. Take on the facial expression. The positions of the hands and feet. If the form is holding something, make the space in your palm to hold that object. Once you have taken the shape, practice going from neutral position (standing straight, hands at sides) into your shape, and then back to neutral. Repeat this until the shape of this form is memorized in your body.

Complication A: Choose up to three different human forms and memorize them. Make sure you can easily and clearly transition from Posture A to neutral, to Posture B to neutral and then onto Posture C.

Complication B: Working in pairs or small groups use these postures to create small dance or movement phrases.

## **content building exercise**

### INTERNAL MONOLOGUE (writing exercise)

For this exercise, we will use a shape we explored from the previous exercise and build on it.

Explore the story that reveals itself to you as you take one of the shapes. What is the internal monologue of this posture? Try to capture it in three sentences, using these prompts:

- I feel like \_\_\_\_
- I wonder when \_\_\_\_
- Tomorrow I must \_\_\_\_

Note: Your sentences should come from *your* experience of the physical shape, not the perceived experience of the figure in the artwork.

## **placement and sharing**

Now that everyone has one shape and three sentences, break into groups of three.

In these groups, learn each other's shapes and practice "performing" your three sentences. Each actor will read their *own* three sentences while the other two hold that actor's shape. You can play with going from neutral to the shape if you'd like.

Set the "performance" of holding the shape and reading the sentences, and then move on to the next person's three sentences. Think about where in the gallery you will place each performance. Will it be in front of the photograph that inspired it? A little bit away? Facing it? Make this decision, but don't forget your audience; make sure a small audience can view and enjoy what you share.

Once everyone has set their pieces, invite an audience (or just the other members of the group) to tour the gallery and view the performances.



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