

PRACTICAL RESOURCES

A Set of Exercises to support the design methodology of Moving and Making Strange

Exercise 1. Investigating the act of walking by varying the speed, direction and scale of the movement

The aim here is to develop sensing and awareness of your body-mind through a playful inquiry into movement possibilities with your own body. A good place to start is with the act of walking. Experiment with your normal way of walking through variations of direction and speed. Start walking at your normal pace. Walk in different directions – forwards, backwards, sideways and notice how this affects the action of the walk and the feeling of your body.

Then double the speed of your pace and notice what happens to the movements. And then walk at half your normal walking pace and then at quarter speed. Make clear decisions about which of the four speeds you chose. What do you notice, internally and externally?

Now walk as slowly as possible and notice how this changes the length of your stride. Then vary the length of your stride all the time at very slow speed.

Then use the stride of your normal walk but move at 1 cm per second maximum total body speed. Then at 1mm per second.

As you play with different parameters, take your awareness to how each change feels in the body and what the ground feels like under your feet.

As you walk, experiment with changing the focus of your gaze. Look at different points in the space, or let your focus be soft and directed to a wide area. Change the direction of your focus and vary the duration you look before changing to a new focus. Do the changes in focus affect the felt sensation of the movement? Note also what parts of the body are harnessed to achieve the movement.

Find language for the felt sensations by working with a partner. One person move and the other observe, then change roles and discuss your experiences afterwards. Note the different forms of language each person employs in describing movement and its qualities. Exchange understandings of the relation between variations of speed, scale and direction to the felt sensation of the movement.

Inspired and sourced from the Bodyweather movement investigations, led by Tess de Quincey in Sydney, Australia 2007.

Exercise 2. Generating movement through imagery

This exercise is based on the notion that the body is predominantly water.

Standing upright, feel water slowly rising up through the soles of your feet to the top of your head. At first this process can take 10-15 minutes. It becomes an internal meditation. Have a sense of buoyancy and lightness. You can allow your arms and hands to follow. Take the time to feel water infusing every small part of your body as it rises. Allow the body to be moved by the water. The physical shell is passive. Allow the imagination to activate your movement. For example, you can imagine that you are a strap of seaweed anchored to a rock. Gently undulating waves caress your form and move it in the water. Allow your mind to free itself from being in control of the body. The water inside is moved by the water outside. See if you can feel individual cells, filled with fluid, rolling and sliding over each other.

This process can be reversed. That is, feel the water gradually drain out through the feet.

Contributed by Bronwyn Turnbull, inspired and sourced from Noguchi Taiso.

Exercise 3. Developing skill in applying Laban movement analysis

This exercise first explores the basic Effort action of Dabbing. Dabbing is Direct in Space, Sudden in Time and Light in Weight.

First explore Dabbing with free flow. Then with bound flow.

1. This action is clearly felt in the hands as in a painter dabbing at a canvas or in typing. Try dabbing with the right side leading across the body, diagonally backwards, over the opposite shoulder. Repeat with the left side leading.
2. Dab with the feet. It is easy to quickly point the heels or toes. Again, try in all directions and all zones.
3. Try with the knees, hips, shoulders, head, elbows, chin, back and chest. Take plenty of time to experience dabbing in all these parts of the body. Some parts will lend themselves more easily to the effort than others.
4. Try the action with steps. Knees can dab upwards and toes or heels downwards.

Working in pairs, one person leads in a succession of exploratory movements using one of the basic Effort actions. The other person observes and describes the movement in terms of the motion factors of Space, Time and Weight. The mover and the observer compare notes on the experience of performing an action with specific qualitative characteristics and observing and describing the action. The roles are then swapped and the other basic Effort actions are explored until each person has developed confidence in performing and observing movements using Laban Effort analysis. The observer may like to try mirroring the mover to see if this assists in developing observational skills.

Sourced and extended from Laban for Actors and Dancers, Newlove, J. 1993