

Performance Scores & Scripts

Gauche

Steely Dan
Gauche (1980)

Music & Lyrics by Walter Becker & Donald Fagen

♩ = 125

A 1: Saxophone Interlude (doubled)

~ The electric piano was played by Donald Fagen. ~
(This does not include the acoustic piano part.)

Electric Piano

F B♭(9)/f F B♭(9)/f F B♭(9)/f F C11

5 F B♭(9)/f 6 F B♭(9)/f 7 F B♭(9)/f 8 F C11

9 ... 10 11 12

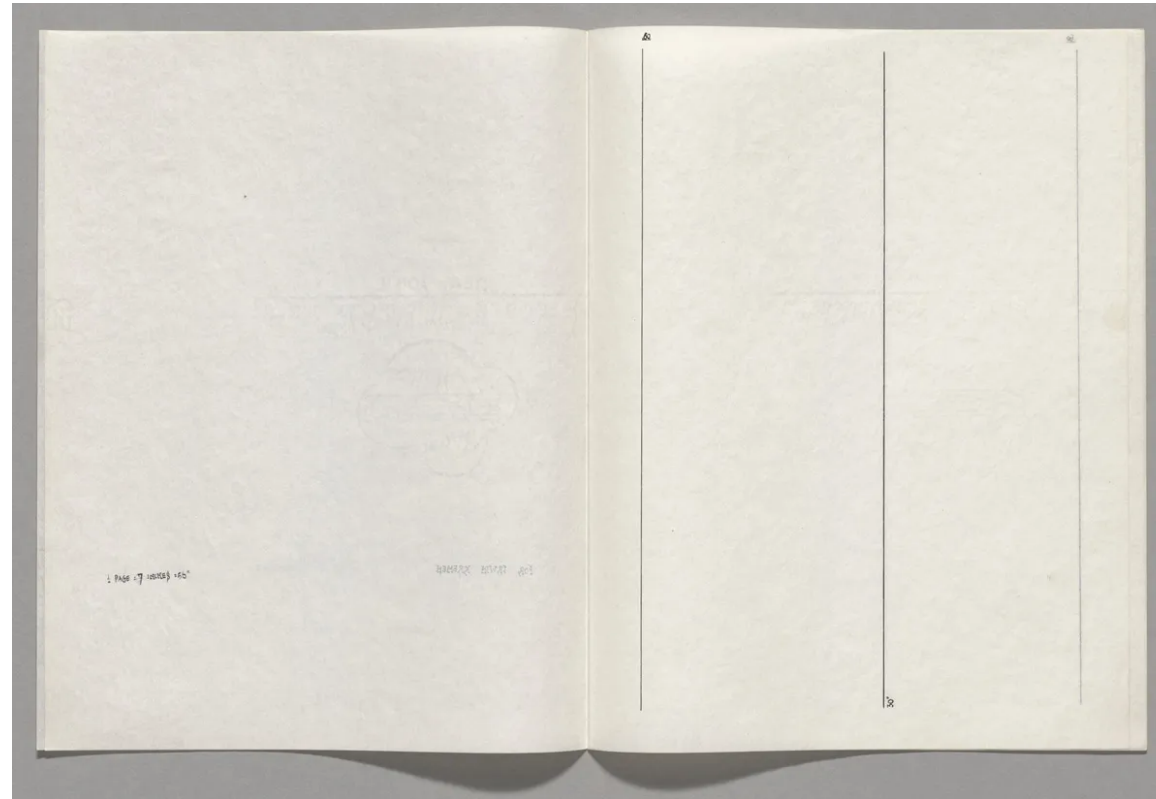
13 14 15 16

{0:32} B 1: Horns hook

B♭ F B♭ F C C11 F B♭/f F Gm/f F B♭/f

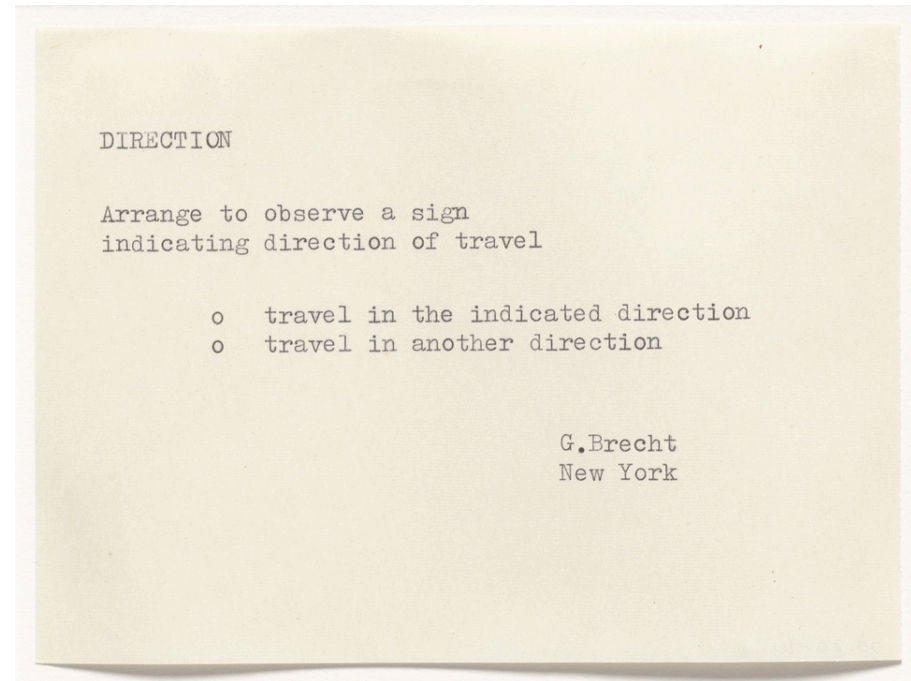
A score, traditionally, is a form of graphic musical notation. From the Old Norse *skor*, meaning notch or cut, which evolved into the Middle English *score*, indicating a line or boundary. Apparently, shepherds would cut twenty notches into a staff to represent each group of twenty sheep. The musical score is composed of staves (the parallel lines), bars (vertical lines that organize tempo), notes, notation symbols (such as tempo markings), etc. Musical scores may be interpreted by any musicians who can read them and play the indicated instruments.

John Cage, score for 4'33" (1952)



John Cage (1912-1992), another contemporary of Yves Klein and Carolee Schneemann (see last week's lecture on Live Art), was among the first innovators of the score for performance beyond the musical concert. Cage was an experimental composer and conceptual artist known for his work that crossed boundaries between musical composition, performance art, and choreography. Among his most well-known works is 4'33", 4 minutes and 33 seconds of orchestrated "silence". The audience becomes audience-participants in the dual act of listening and making sound (breathing, rustling, etc) that reveals true, absolute silence is impossible. The score indicates little more than time passing.

George Brecht, *Direction* (1962)



Flux is the effect of something passing through another substance. Think of flux in soldering: it is the material that removes the oxidized layer from the metal being joined, allowing the solder to flow into the metal for a stronger bond. Flux suggests an event of change or transformation.

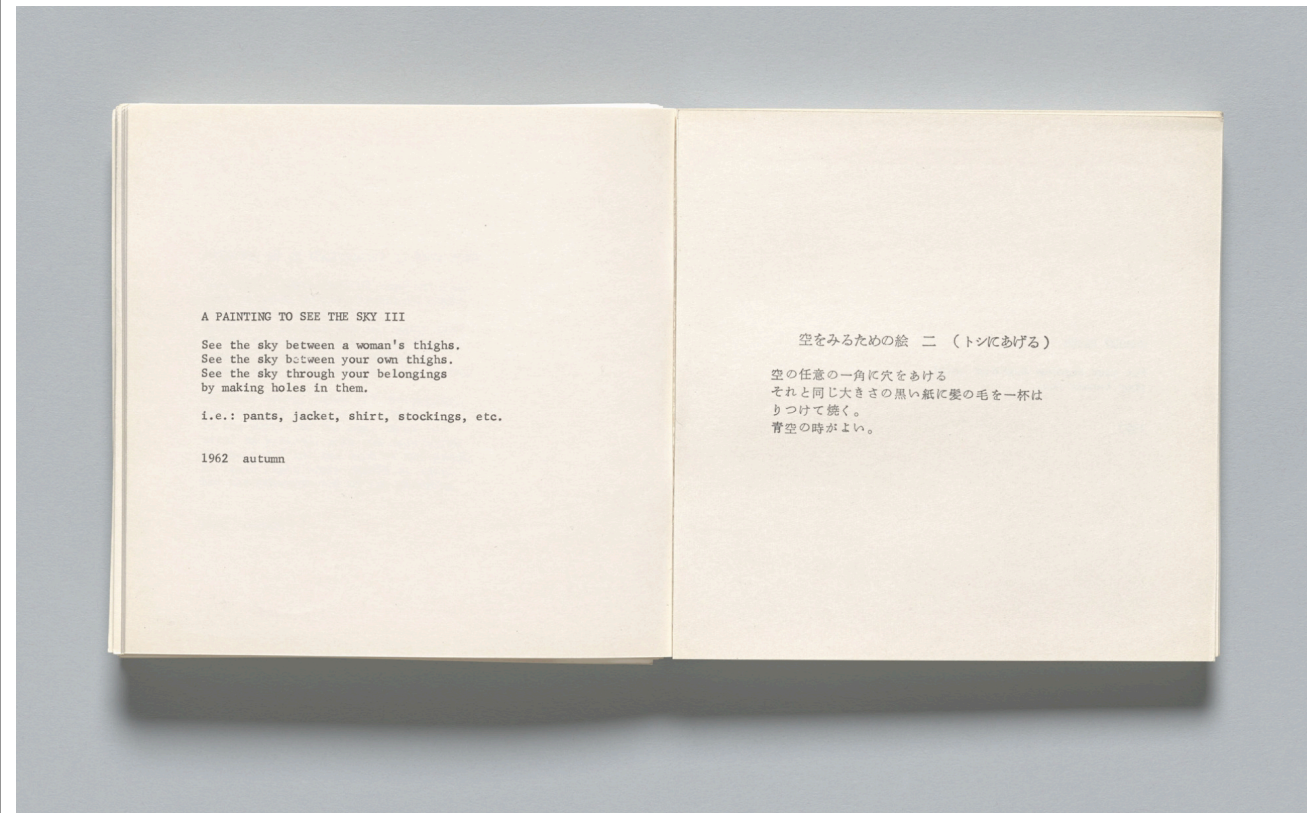
Fluxus was an international intermedia and conceptual art movement in the 1960s and '70s in which Performance Art really came into its own as a genre. Fluxus artists often used the formal conventions of the musical concert to structure their performances, which emphasized chance and process over finished product. John Cage was a direct influence on Fluxus performance scores, which were a (largely) textual take on the musical score. These scores present a series of predetermined actions that are meant to be reinterpreted, as a composer's musical score would.

"The first examples of what were to become Fluxus event scores date back to John Cage's famous class at The New School, where artists such as George Brecht, Al Hansen, Allan Kaprow, and Alison Knowles began to create art works and performances in musical form. One of these forms was the event. Events tend to be scored in brief verbal notations. These notes are known as event scores. In a general sense, they are proposals, propositions, and instructions" Friedman, Smith and Sawchyn (2).

The *Fluxus Performance Workbook* is a compilation of performance and event scores by Fluxus artists from across the world. Many of the scores are textual, allowing them to be interpreted by a wide (English-reading) audience; however, some scores are symbolic or graphic as well.

SOURCE: Friedman, Ken, Owen Smith, and Sawchyn, Lauren, eds. 2002. Fluxus Performance Workbook. 40th Anniversary Edition. Performance Research.

Yoko Ono, *Grapefruit* (1964)



Yoko Ono's *Grapefruit* is an enduring collection of her event scores, which were written as suggestions or provocations for the readers to “perform” or enact. Scores map time; they come alive in performance and go dormant as documents. *Grapefruit* lives a double life as a mass-produced art object and collection of dormant scores.

Buddhism and “Oriental” culture was very popular with white artists of this era, and Ono's minimal poetic writing wasn't fully legitimized until white Fluxus artists like George Maciunas published their own works in similar styles.

Evgenia Mikhaylova



Make a Soup

by Evgenia Mikhaylova | Location: St. Lawrence Market, Toronto, 2020.
Sculpture for four voices. Somewhere between singing and saying.

Voice 1 Make a souuuuuupe.

Voice 2 Find water. Look beloow, abooooove or aroooooooooound.

Voice 3 Exchaaange a firm belief for someone else's, let it ssssssssssssssimmer.

Voice 4 Locate ssssooft and mooooddy feelings and offer them for a fresh perspective;

Voice 1 taste until happy with a distinct flavor.

Voice 2 Spike with reflections for some unexpected texture.

Voice 3 Infuuuuuuse with a pinch of overheard comments for an invigorating temporary awakening.

Voice 4 Tasssssstte for a balanced flavor, if something overpowers, a duuull monotone

Voice 4 composition could still be saved by adding more freshhh perspectivess.

Voice 1 Let the whole thing mmbubble for a while and serve it with an open mind.

Voice 1-4 Shaaare the recipe.

Evgenia Mikhaylova is a Russian-Canadian contemporary artist who engages in playful and graphic ways with score notation. She completed her MFA at the University of Guelph in 2024. Her work carries a particular aesthetic sensibility, informed by the landscapes of the Alberta badlands, the colour red, and biotic+abiotic matter such as plants and rocks. In *Make a Soup* (2020), she treats the recipe as a kind of score, accompanied by graphic marks.

<https://evgeniamikhaylova.com/Make-a-Soup>

Evgenia Mikhaylova, *Rock Sonata for a Rubber Chicken* (2022)



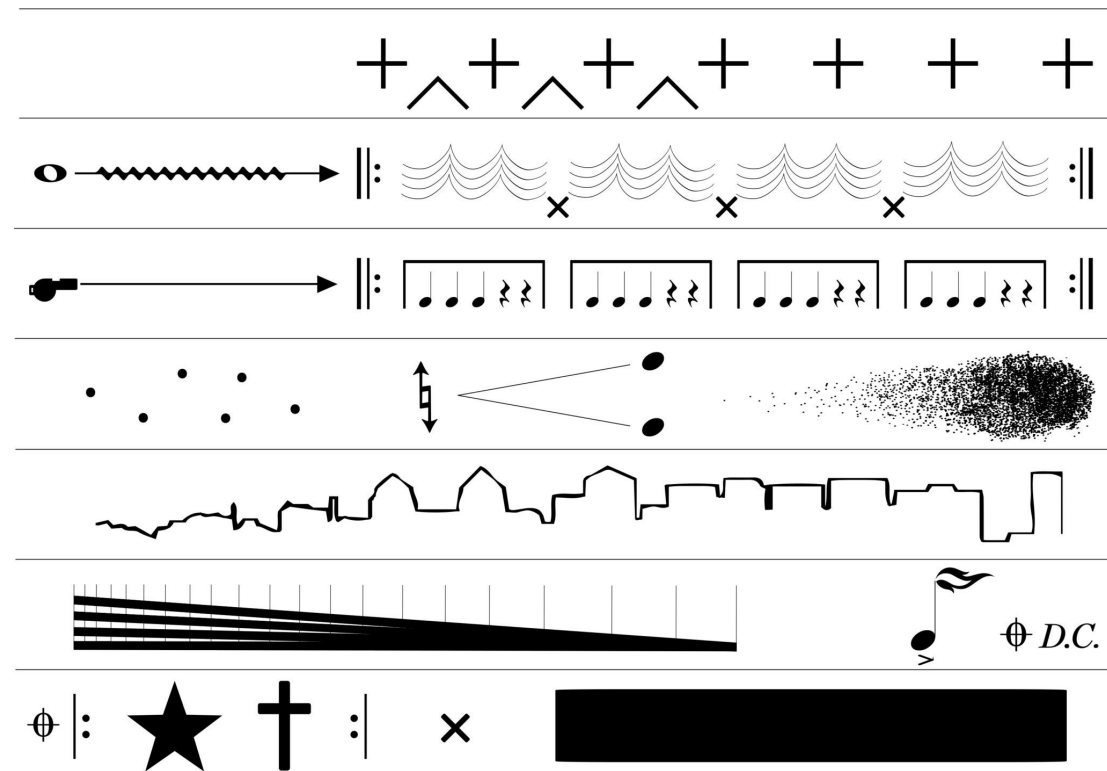
Rock Sonata
for a rubber chicken



Here, Mikhaylova exaggerates and transposes the natural holes in this geological formation into a graphic score, which is then interpreted by her manipulation of a rubber chicken.

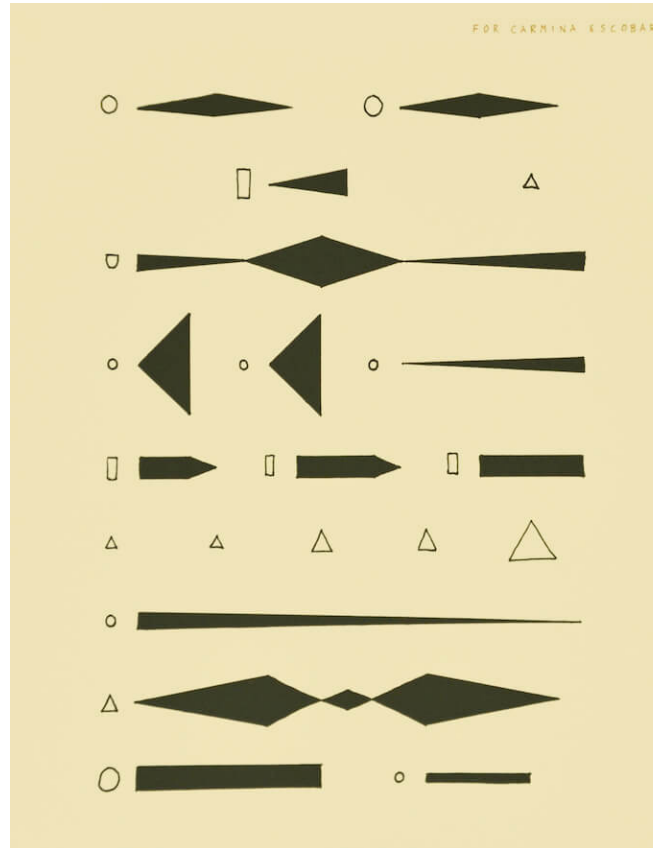
<https://evgeniamikhaylova.com/Rock-Sonata-For-A-Rubber-Chicken>

Raven Chacon, *American Ledger No. 1* (2018)



Raven Chacon is a Diné artist and composer from the Navajo Nation in Arizona. (What is it about the desert landscape that Mikhaylova and Chacon are so inspired by in their work?) He is well-known for his graphic scores that combine pictorial symbols from across cultures and disciplines: musical notation, religious symbols, cartographic symbols, etc. He samples from both Western and Indigenous cultural traditions of music and storytelling. *American Ledger No. 1* tells the story of the founding of the United States of America: “In chronological descending order, moments of contact, enactment of laws, events of violence, the building of cities, and erasure of land and worldview are mediated through graphic notation, and realized by sustaining and percussive instruments, coins, axe and wood, a police whistle, and a match.” It is exhibited in physical form as a flag, billboard, blanket, wall, or door.

Raven Chacon, *For Zitkála-Šá* (2017-2020)



From Chacon's website: "For Zitkála-Šá is a series of twelve graphic scores dedicated to contemporary American Indian, First Nations, and Mestiza women working in music performance, composition, and sound art. The series as a whole is a dedication to the Yankton Dakota composer and musician Zitkála-Šá, (1876–1938) whose work also included writing poetry, fiction, and political essays, teaching, community organizing, and founding the National Council of the American Indian. Several of her works chronicled her early struggles with identity; as an orator, many of her speeches brought awareness to the systemic oppression of Native people. As a composer and musician, Zitkála-Šá taught violin, later writing the libretto and songs for *The Sun Dance Opera* (1913), the first American Indian opera.

The scores function as both transcriptive portraits of the contemporary Indigenous women artists and how they navigate the twenty-first century. The scores draw on a range of symbols, including Western music notation, tribal geometries, and numerology, among more ambiguous designs."

<https://spiderwebsinthesky.com/for-zitkala-sa/>



Andrea Fraser,
*Museum Highlights: A
Gallery Talk* (1991)

pumps. Her brown hair is gathered into a small bun held in place with a black bow:

Good afternoon, uh . . . Everyone? Good afternoon. My name is Jane Castleton, and I'd like to welcome all of you to the Philadelphia Museum of Art. I'll be your guide today as we explore the museum, uh, its history, and its collection.

Our tour today is a collection tour—it's called Museum Highlights—and we'll be focusing on some of the rooms in the museum today, uh, the museum's famed period rooms; dining rooms, coat rooms, etcetera, rest rooms, uh—can everyone hear me? If you can't hear me, don't feel shy, just tell me to speak up. That's right. As I was saying, we'll also be talking about the visitor reception areas, and various service and support spaces, as well as this building, uh, this building, in which they are housed. And the museum itself, the museum itself, the "itself" itself being so compelling.¹

Of course, we'll only be able to visit a small portion of the museum on our tour today; its over two hundred galleries contain hundreds of thousands of art objects spanning the globe and centuries. But, just to give you a general idea, uh, to help you orient yourself, this may be your first visit, your very first visit to the museum today—welcome again.

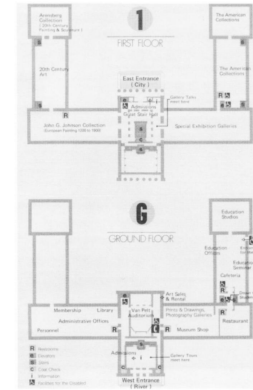
This is the West Entrance Hall. Uh. Opposite, of course, is the East Entrance, where we'll be going shortly. This is really the center of the museum which—as you can see on these maps here—consists of a long central building with wings extending back at each end. It's four stories high including a basement.

This West Entrance Hall provides access to the ground floor of the South Wing which houses some of the museum's public facilities that we'll be visiting uh, later on today . . .

Jane walks to the information desk in the center of the West Entrance Hall:

It also houses the museum's brand new combination information desk, admissions desk—I hope that all of you have paid your admission fee—and, uh, membership desk. If you're a museum member, of course, you don't have to pay an admissions fee.

1. "Museum Highlights" was developed as part of the Contemporary Viewpoints Artist Lecture Series, which was organized by the Tyler School of Art of Temple University, and funded by the Pew Charitable Trusts. The performance owed its existence to Hester Stinnett, the director of Contemporary Viewpoints, who invited me to Philadelphia, and to Danielle Rice, the Philadelphia Museum of Art's Curator of Education, who sponsored the performance from within the Museum. I would also like to thank Donald Moss for his comments on various drafts of this script; Allan McCollum, for first calling the activities of docents to my attention; and Douglas Crimp, at whose request this script was first prepared for publication in *October*.



The performance script, in comparison to the score, comes from theatre, entertainment, and broadcast media. Scripts are textual documents that give instructions for the various people involved in running a performance or broadcast: performers, stage technicians, lighting technicians, sound technicians, etc.

Andrea Fraser is among the most well-known artists in the sub-genre of “performance lecture.” (From Wikipedia: “Performance lectures draw attention to the form of knowledge presentation, the situational elements of teaching, and the dynamics of lecturer and audience interaction.”) Her scripts are written with particular personas in mind, often switching between personas at multiple points, and indicated by textual details such as speech and physical mannerisms.

This is a photo and script excerpt from her performative lecture *Museum Highlights* in 1991, in which she takes on the persona of the fictional Jane Castleton, a museum tour guide.



WHERE ARE YOU FROM? OR ORIGINALLY

Joshua Sofaer

People often ask me where I am from – or even worse say, ‘What are you because you look Italian or Greek or something?’ And I’ll say, ‘Do you mean where was I born?’ – and thinking they’re going to hear something ‘exotic’, they say ‘Yeah’, and I’ll reply ‘Cambridge’ in the poshest voice I can muster. And then they say, ‘No, but originally’.

‘Well’, I say, ‘In 597 BCE, Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon invaded Jerusalem. After sacking the city, he brought the King and his officers back to Babylon. My forefathers were part of that Royal household.

‘So then my ancestors stayed in what became Persia, later Baghdad in Iraq. In 1877, my great-great-grandfather left Baghdad with his 10 year old son for Burma, as a kind of economic entrepreneur. Born in Rangoon, my grandfather left Burma as a young teenager to live with relatives in Calcutta in India. That is where he met my grandmother who was also his first cousin once removed. Her father was born in Aleppo in Syria and I’m not entirely sure how he ended up in India. Anyway, they came to the UK in the 1930s, and my Dad was born in London.

‘That is on my father’s side.

‘My mother’s side is a bit more complicated. They probably went to Eastern Europe some time in the fifteenth or sixteenth century from Germany where they had settled in the second half of the first millennium. Anyway, her paternal grandfather was born in 1880 in Gashmanka, a town somewhere in Russia, but moved to Dankera in the province of Kurland near Riga, in Latvia. He decided to emigrate to the USA for a better life, so he got on a boat to New York. When it docked on the Irish coast en route on the 22nd October 1904, he thought he was already there, so he got off.

‘I was born in Cambridge, but we moved to Edinburgh when I was one year old, and that was where I went to school.’

And when I’ve finished this, a common response will be, ‘Oh, but you don’t have a Scottish accent’.

Joshua Sofaer gave a series of performance lectures in the early 2000s, both to a live audience and to camera (recall *What Is Live Art?*, which I would consider a performance lecture and which Sofaer called an “infotainment”).

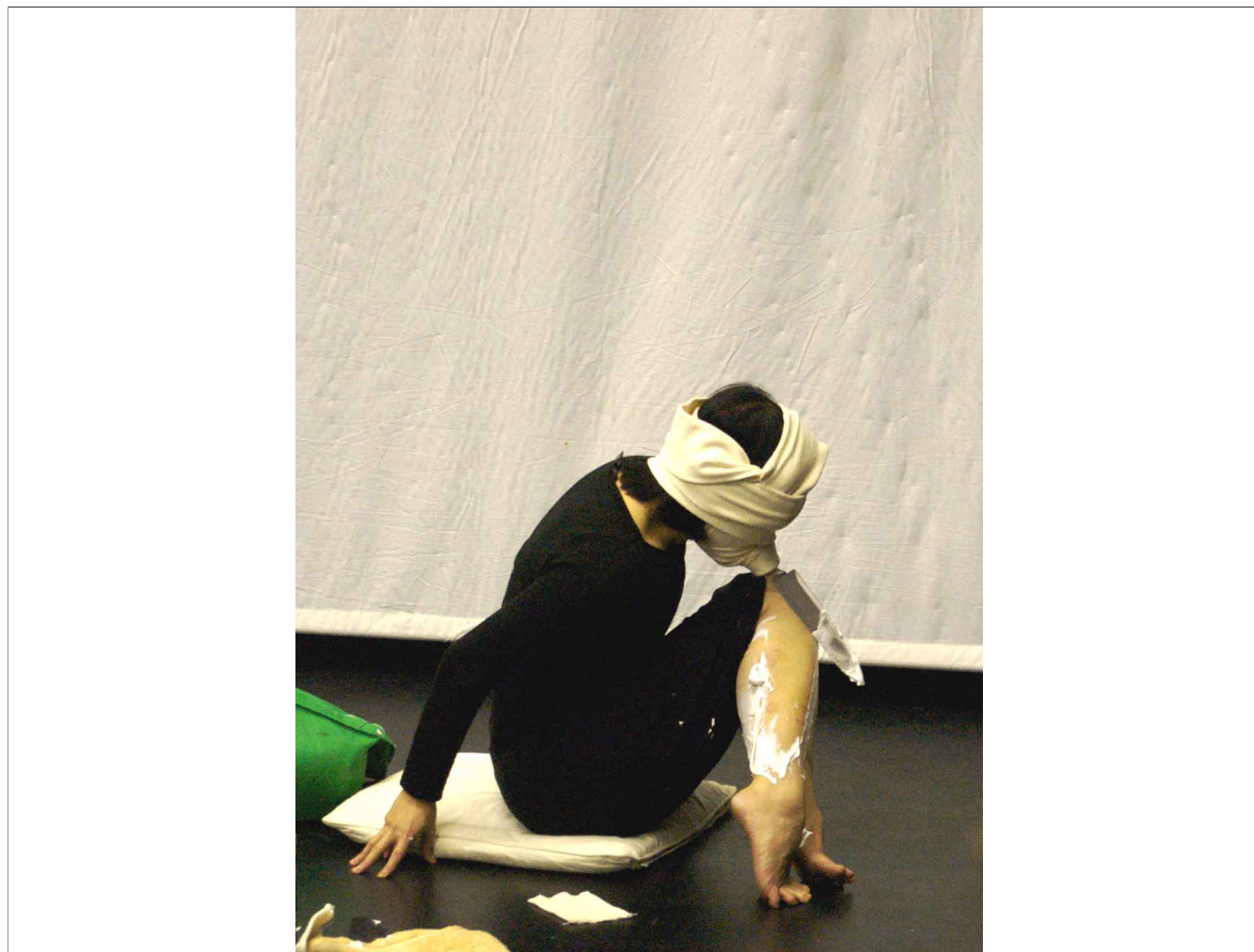
The image is from Sofaer’s piece *Embarrassment: A Bare-Buttoked Lecture* in 2015 (originally performed in 2000-2002) but I couldn’t find the script. The text on the right is from a 2001 performance lecture, from which I couldn’t find any photo or video documentation.

Guillermo Gomez Peña



During his performance *Pandemic Divination Ritual* with collaborator Balitrónica at the 2023 *BUZZCUT* live art festival in Glasgow, the two used Tarot cards and a casino roulette to make chance fragmented selections from their oeuvre of performance scripts and scores.

Peña's script for *Brownout 2* (2000-2003) is a detailed document that lays out the physical requirements for the performance to take place (spatial, technical, costume, etc) as well as the actual text of the performance and performance notes (change of accent, pace, costume, etc). The script is divided into multiple sections and contains the voices of many characters/personas. Peña directly addresses the audience several times throughout the piece.



Stacy Makishi's *Italics* (2010) is both a script and a score: although it is written from her perspective, it invites "you" (the reader, or the audience) to engage in or reinterpret the performance ritual. "This ritual is for you..."

Reading Discussion:
Brownout 2
and
Italics