

PURE RESEARCH 06 - The Box

Report by Camellia Koo

With additional reports by Guillermo Verdecchia and Christine Brubaker.

The Box - What happens when you place the audience and/or a performer inside an 8' x 8' box.

INTRODUCTION

Going into Pure Research, I was very interested in experimenting with putting a barrier between a performer and the audience. We chose to use an 8' x 8' box in order to do this and contain our research as well as our audience and/or performer.

Fundamentally, what I was interested in exploring was the blurring of roles of performer and audience member, who is leading who, who is driving the piece, and who is watching who.

Some questions that initiated the research:

- How can a performer communicate to or with an audience through the box?
- How can an audience interact back?
- Who is the viewer and who is being viewed? And does this perspective have to remain static, or can it be fluid and keep interchanging?
- What types of barriers can we place between the performer and the audience?
- How can an audience learn through the performance what the rules are and what they are allowed or required to do in order to experience the piece as a whole.
- How can we implicate the audience into experiencing what they are watching so that they do not remain a passive “watching” audience?

Participants: Camellia Koo, Guillermo Verdecchia, Christine Brubaker, Brian Quirt, Jessica Glanfield

DAY 1

THE FRAME

Day one started with us assembling the pre-built, 8' by 8' box frame. Once assembled, our progress quickly came to a stand-still. Guillermo, Christine and I stood around it, then eventually went inside it and still had no idea what to do with it.

The box frame provided an interesting “stage” in which performers could perform to an audience on the outside, and vice versa, but it did not provide many opportunities for interaction because there was no barrier between the two; no mystery.

THE SKIN PLY BOX

We then moved on to covering the sides of the box frame with 8' x 8' sheets of skin-ply wood, leaving only a narrow doorway into and out of the box. The ceiling remained open and we had two lx instruments focused directly down into the box.

First, we started placing as many chairs inside the box as we could for a potential audience, making them face the same direction to start, then making two sides face each other next, then making them all face the walls etc. This did not get us very far as we quickly ran out of variations.

Second, we removed all but one chair. We aimlessly walked around the box, walked into the box, brainstormed as a group inside the box, using it as our sort of think tank of things we could do. But it did not go much beyond just talking about what we could do with just the three of us. One idea was to close the audience up in the box, box them in, and then do things to them or to the box to provoke them to interact with us on the outside.

Then, Brian and Jessica joined us. We did more of the same aimless walking around and into the box until only Brian and Jessica were in the box by themselves.

Experiment #1 - Spontaneous Entrapment

Guillermo, Christine and I spontaneously and silently mobilized and decided to trap Brian and Jessica in the box. They did not know of any of the ideas that we had come up earlier. Quietly sliding the door piece into place then very quickly using screws to drill the door piece permanently into place before they could escape, we had finally tested our first idea. (This idea would later go on to greater experimentation even beyond Pure Research, but more about this later.)

Then, we did nothing. We waited to see what they would do first. We found impromptu peepholes looking into the box (old screw holes), which allowed us to watch what they were up to. After awhile, we started provoking them. Guillermo, Christine and I did very little talking to each and just ran around provoking the people in the box through silent agreements with each other and spontaneously improvising with the tools and object we had in the room: hitting the box, kicking the box, hammering the box, throwing things at the box, tapping the box, writing on the outside of the box, running around the box, whispering around the box, and turning the house lights around the box down so that only inside the box was lit.

Discussion

From the “audience member’s” perspective, this experiment became about experiencing an ordeal. The experience of actually being drilled into the box was unexpected and jarring at first. Then it became about what was going to happen next? What are they going to do next?

We, the “performers”, manipulated the box or provoked the people on the inside of the box in order to try and make them react or engage with us. It became about us watching the audience, which blurred the lines between who the performers were and who the audience were.

Experiment #2 - Not So Spontaneous Entrapment

Brian then walked into the box by himself and before he could barely pull his leg in, instead of quietly sliding the door piece into place, we slammed the door into place and once again drilled the box closed. This time, we tried to be more selective of what we were doing on the outside of the box; Guillermo, Christine and I did a lot more planning and talking to each other.

We did more of the same as Experiment #1, this time with the introduction of tangerines which were originally brought in as snacks, but quickly became alarming noise makers when thrown directly at the box from the outside. We also started drilling new peepholes while Brian was inside the box.

Discussion

This time, for the lone audience member, the experience of being drilled into the box was still alarming as before. The person on the inside of the box was more aware of and more interested in what was happening on the outside of the box, about what we were doing, even if we were not directly manipulating the box, i.e. Talking and planning our next move which, could apparently be heard slightly from the inside.

As in #1, this experiment was also about ordeal, about putting an audience inside the box, subjecting them to things to try and raise a reaction from them.

During this post experiment discussion, we spontaneously all gathered inside the box together, pulling chairs inside and discussing what just happened from inside our makeshift think tank.

Experiment #3 - The Box Man

Then, at some point in the discussion, Brian slipped outside of the box, before drilling the rest of us into the box. (Guillermo, Christine, Jessica and myself). Next, he slipped a handwritten note under one of the walls, which read, "Sit quietly and await instructions". We read the note, but kept on talking and wondering what he was doing outside of the box. Brian then slipped another note under the wall, which read, "I said quietly." This time, we tried to listen for him on the outside but couldn't hear anything.

Suddenly, Brian began reading aloud some passages from a book that I brought in called *The Box Man*, by Kobu Abe. (A friend had lent it to me thinking it might be appropriate research for our experimenting)

At first, we listened to the passage being read, about this man's experience of living his entire life inside a cardboard box. Then Brian stopped reading as suddenly as he had started and we spent the next couple of minutes trying to listen for his movements on the outside. Nothing.

Next, he began to manipulate the lights by turning them off in a snap blackout, dimming them up and down, and flashing them.

Then he read more passages from the book, and while doing so, we heard him walk out of the studio, still reading, and letting the outside door apparently close behind him. Then we heard nothing.

Discussion

This experiment was more theatrical in many ways. As audience members inside the box, we were asked to wait. Unlike the previous experiments, we were given instructions on how to participate. As a result, we remained audience members in that we were waiting to see what Brian, as the “performer” would do next. His choices of activities were decidedly not in direct contact with the box, such as the hitting and hammering etc of the box, but instead atmospheric around the box, i.e. Using his voice to read to us, manipulating the lights inside and outside of the box, and leaving the space entirely. Also unlike the previous experiments, the audience was not required to interact or react to what was happening.

For Brian, the trapper/reader, was still less of a conventional performer, and from his perspective, the event was more about taking care of the audience, giving them instructions, reading to them, trying to keep them entertained.

Experiment #4 - The Box Girl in the Box

The chairs were removed, and somehow I ended up in the box all by myself.

Somebody drilled the door closed and the game continued. This time, Christine, Brian and Jessica continued the activities of the first two experiments, this time throwing in a sweater at some point, throwing more tangerines, and also introduced the idea of moving the box. Since there was no floor to the box, it is easily movable. They pushed the box, with me inside it, out of the circle of light.

Since by now, I was very familiar with this line of experimenting, I began to repeat some of the same activities that they were doing, only from the inside i.e. I listened to find out where they were on the outside, tried using the peepholes to look out, I smacked the box from the inside when I heard Christine directly on the other side, and also managed to move the box a little by pushing from the inside.

Discussion

This experiment became a game between inside and outside. Despite having been the driller of the door twice before and even having experienced it from the inside once before, it was still definitely still surprising when it happens. I found out later that Guillermo sat on the side and just watched the interactions from the sidelines.

End of Day Discussion

Several questions came up repeatedly over the course of the day and during the end of day discussion about rules:

- How do you get the audience into the box?

- Do we blatantly direct them into the box?
- Are there signs that tell them where to go?
- Do we trick them to go into the box?
- Once they are inside the box, how do we keep them in there before the box is closed up?
- What if they escape before or while we are closing them in?
- What if they do not react/interact to what we subject them to?
- What if we put things on the walls on the inside to make the audience look at something to entice them inside the box?
- Why did no one just try to scream or yell out from inside the box?
- Why did both inside and outside participants always choose to whisper?
- Do we make them wait in line and take tickets before letting them into the box?
- What if we only put one chair inside the box?
- What if there were 12 people trapped inside the box instead of only 1 or 3 people?

DAY 2

PART 1 - WHITE TRANSPARENT TARP

Day 2 started with us removing the skin-ply sheets and recovering the box frame with white translucent plastic tarp (the kind you can buy in hardware stores to cover boats, cars etc). The tarps were stapled in place and covered all 4 walls of the box and also, this time, the ceiling of the box. Leaving one edge of tarp unstapled to create an openable/closable flap created a door. It resembled a greenhouse.

Experiment #1 - Light Box

The house lights were at zero, leaving the theatre completely dark. A floor float lighting instrument was put on the floor inside the box, and Christine went inside to play.

She created shadows using her hands and entire body, repositioned the light around the space, lay down on the floor so that she appeared to have disappeared from inside the box, then slowly raised herself up, and manipulated her own shadows and silhouette by moving closer or farther away from the light source.

Discussion

Christine was clearly putting on a performance for us on the outside. We all sat around the box and watched it and waited to see what Christine could come up with next.

A beautifully clean white translucent light box is inherently theatrical, in that it is attractive to look at and once a performer is inside, incites shadow play, which is hypnotic to watch.

Experiment #2 - Flashlight Box

We removed the lx floor float and gave Christine a mini-flashlight only.

She began to reflect the light off herself, and off the material. Since the material was translucent, the closer she stood to the walls, the more colour and specific details we could see. She also began to turn the flashlight off, move to somewhere else in the box,

and turn the light back on, requiring us to guess where she might appear next. She began chasing herself with the light around the box, leaving the flashlight on but somewhere stationary so that she could be hands free, and then she began to chase us around the space when she could see us moving around on the outside.

She then began to taunt us with the flashlight, using it to get our attention, using it to make us do something, and trying to get us to react to it.

Experiment #3 - We Play Back

We began to play back with Christine from the outside. Using another flashlight, we created a copycat game, then a game of light tag, then a sort of light dialogue between the two flashlights.

At some point, both Christine and Guillermo pulled out Sharpie markers and began writing on the material. Someone write KEEP OUT, someone else tried writing backwards to directly talk to the person on the other side.

Also, to replace the tangerines, Christine brought in soft rubber balls to throw at the box from the outside. Eventually some of them got stuck on the roof of the box and they became a performance onto themselves, especially when Brian began to poke them and manipulate and move them around the roof with his hands from inside the box.

Discussion

Even though there were chairs present in the studio, none of us felt compelled to stay sitting in them while watching Christine. We were free to walk around the box, which in turn gave Christine the opportunity to engage us and teach us how we could interact with her using only her flashlight, and then later with a Sharpie.

The rubber balls were amusing. It became a game to move them around and make them jump up by hitting the tarp roof from below, and from both the inside and the outside, it was compelling to watch.

Interaction began and remained fluid between the inside and the outside, between performer and audience because anyone can pass off the roles of who is leading who, who is chasing who and who is watching who etc.

End of Experiment Discussion

The clear plastic tarp material was inherently theatrical. It was attractive to look at even as a sculptural installation, and also as a device for shadow play.

The material also automatically invited play. There was still a very visible barrier to create both enough mystery and enough access to watch, to play, to interact and engage a person standing on the other side.

Some questions arose out of the experimenting:

- How do you engage the audience?
- How do you make them participate?
- And finally, what if the material were more transparent, would the audience play more?

PART 2 - CLEAR PLASTIC PAINTERS DROP

This time we covered the box frame with completely transparent plastic sheeting (hardware store clear plastic painters drops).

Discussion

It took ten minutes to put up, but only lasted another ten minutes of us standing around it staring at it before we took it down again. No one wanted to interact with it, or play with it or go near it. Christine attempted to go inside it and play around, but came up with very little.

We realized that there was no surprise, no mystery; therefore, no incentive to interact with it. It was too transparent. We discovered that we needed a barrier between the audience and the performer in order to give an audience a reason to get closer to the box to investigate it further and be drawn into it's mystery or reason for being there, and eventually make an audience want to interact with it.

PART 3 - WHITE PAPER

This time, we decided to explore what would happen if the material was more opaque than the white plastic tarps but not as solid as the skin-ply. We covered the box with white paper off a roll.

This time we lit the box from above and just let Christine play inside. Christine began simply with walking around inside the box, sometimes allowing us to see her shadow and singing.

Because the paper had seams where the reams of paper overlapped, Christine and then later Guillermo began interacting with their hands and shadows of their hands, through the paper.

Eventually, the inherent attractiveness of the paper light box and Christine's singing became hypnotic and we all just sat and watched her. This lasted for about half an hour of us just silently watching.

Next we gave her a bucket of water and a paintbrush and she began writing on the paper with the water, and letting the water melt holes in the paper.

Eventually, Christine started creating new peepholes for herself and then larger holes and rips in the paper by tearing at with her fingers. She re-found the flashlight and began using it to create shadows that she could control. Then hands and limbs started to poke through the paper, then eventually her entire head at which point she started to

aggressively engage the audience by shouting at us and interrogating us, using the flashlight to indicate which of us she was talking to.

She began to rip the paper further so that we could see more of her inside it.

Discussion

Similar to the white plastic tarps, the paper light box was beautiful to look at as a sculptural installation. With the addition of Christine's beautiful singing, none of the audience members felt compelled to disturb her. The seams in the paper provided opportunities for immediate interaction between the inside and outside; hands, objects, etc could be passed from one side to the other, in addition to shadow play. The water writing was interesting, but also still just a performance, or something for us as audience members on the outside to look at.

With the exception of some shadow interaction between Guillermo on the outside and Christine on the inside at the very beginning, we all just wanted to watch from the outside. A pretty box, a pretty voice; you could watch it forever. It was inherently compelling to watch.

A number of questions arose from this experiment, though they started to ask questions that were about what the box meant as a metaphor:

- What if she were in an orange jumpsuit?
- What is the water?
- How did it get there?

DAY 3 - AN EXPECTING AUDIENCE

We invited a few people to come for Day 3 so that we could revisit some of the past day's work with unsuspecting audience members. They were all people who worked in the theatre community so they were not exactly 'unsuspecting'.

We began with the White Plastic Tarp box.

We left the flap open, and put a few soft rubber balls both on the inside of the box as well on the roof, and also left both a broom handle (to poke the roof with), a flashlight, and a few sharpie markers inside the box. We hoped it would look inviting to an audience to want to go inside and play inside.

We made the mistake of leaving chairs out in the space around the box.

When the 4 audience members entered the space, the box was beautifully lit, flap open and appearing to be inviting, but no one entered the box. They walked around it a bit, poked their heads in, then they saw the chairs or the edge of the stage and they all sat down and just stared at it. Christine eventually went inside it and tried to get them to interact with her, using the flashlight to get their attention and to try and teach them how to interact with her...but no one moved from where they were sitting. We decided to end it, then ushered the audience back out.

We did a quick changeover to the Skin Ply box.

We left the doorway to the box open. But this time we placed a few chairs inside the box and arranged them around the box to be inviting, and let the audience back into the studio. Once again, the audience members followed the chairs and this time went into the box.

We slammed the door closed and drilled them in. Then we did nothing for a bit. We looked at them through peepholes, drilled new ones while they were inside, hit the box, dangled a c-wrench from the ceiling above them, threw rubber balls at the box, etc. and then the audience came to life.

Either boredom or survival instincts kicked in or the audience began to get ahead of us. We had planned to move the box across the floor while they were inside, but before we got that far, they began to push the box themselves from the inside. Then they started whispering and planning their next move and then to our surprise, lifted up the box and escaped from underneath.

Game over.

Discussion

Since our audience was invited, they were not completely unsuspecting. They entered the space expecting some sort of performance or demonstration, and not to be the instigator of the work. Since we were blurring the roles of performer and audience, the box as an installation requires that the audience drive the piece, and not a performer. Since the audience were either not given instructions on how to participate, and/or our signals were unclear, and/or because we have all been brainwashed to play the role of audience in a specific way, they did not participate so the demonstration was over before it began.

With the Skin Ply box, the audience was put into a situation that invited interaction between the inside and the outside, but instead of being absolutely passive like they were with the Tarp box, this time they were absolutely aggressive and they completely took over the event. They created the event, which immediately relegated us, the demonstrators, suddenly to audience members since we could not longer do anything else but watch to see what they were going to do next.

This was a fascinating and unexpected turn of events.

FINAL DISCUSSIONS

One of the most difficult tasks to keep on top of during the day was keeping context out of the experimenting i.e. Not making the box a metaphor for something else, ie. A jail, a prison, a shipping container etc. As storytellers, it was extremely difficult to keep context and narrative out of our playing.

The day also became about “Rules” or theatrical conventions; how we have been brainwashed to watch theatre, how we are suppose to behave as an audience member,

how we are suppose to behave as a performer, and how we use signs, signals or instructions to teach or condition the audience. When there are chairs present, the audience immediately knows to sit in them and expect a performance soon after. Also, who is the viewer and who is being viewed?

One point that was brought up in our final discussion was the idea that Theatre touts its liveness, but we as theatremakers constantly strive to recreate the perfect show the same way each time every night usually (but not always) to a passive audience who have come to the theatre expecting to sit and watch a performance. In reality, audiences love the uniqueness of those moments when something goes wrong, or is unexpected, or they are surprised; e.g., when watching a show in a park, unsuspecting dogwalkers always walk through the playing area during a performance.

Brian mentioned his dislike for cell phone announcements at the top of shows since they ruin the sound cues at the top of the show because it starts with an admonition directed at the audience. Discussion arose around the following: what if you left the houselights up during a show, then take them down or away, or what if they suddenly go up, the audience suddenly becomes more aware of where they are.

The experimenting of the last three days became about social experiments and perceived preconceptions or “rules” of how to be an audience member.

- What are audience members allowed to do?
- How do they know what they are allowed or not allowed to do?
- How do we engage them directly?
- How do we make the audience drive the piece instead of a performer?
- How can we blur the roles or subvert the roles of audience and performer?
- How do we implicate the audience in what they are watching or experiencing?

GUILLERMO VERDECCHIA

The Box

"What happens," Camie asked, "when you put a barrier between the audience and the performance?"

People can't see? They get frustrated? They resolve not to go the theatre again? It seemed pretty obvious to me. So I figured there had to be more to it.

ONE

One of the most interesting things I learned was that the barrier to visibility presented by certain materials acted not as an impediment but as a stimulus. The completely transparent box was utterly uninteresting; it had no secrets. Everything was revealed at a glance. When the box was covered in a translucent material it became much more intriguing, inviting. Limits were created: an INSIDE, an OUTSIDE. The translucency of the material allowed for communication between the inside and outside. Games emerged, positions, dialogue of different kinds.

When the box was boarded up, everyone wanted to look inside. Though unappealing aesthetically, the box was interesting. What was INSIDE? Everybody eventually peeked in.

A dramaturgical analogy occurred to me. Delaying information is a good way to 'hook' an audience. Tell an audience too much too soon and you risk boring them or overwhelming them. Don't give them enough 'information' and they will eventually get frustrated and tune out. Give them a few key pieces of narrative information and they will sit forward, listen and watch actively, attentively. (Here the transparent material is the equivalent of telling an audience too much too soon.)

- The box invites narrative. Who will make that narrative? What happens after I've looked inside the box? If something doesn't happen soon I'm going to get bored, resentful, leave. It's just like a regular, *normal* play. Or maybe I can't stop thinking like a 'regular' *normal* play

TWO

We also wondered how an audience might be encouraged to participate, to engage.

It also became very clear to me that with a little bit of thought it was easy to control our audience. (Not all audiences – some will be less tractable, biddable than others. Questions of cultural "competence," as well as relationship to various kinds of authority – fields which are probably interestingly related -- will enter into the equation at some point). Shine a light here, leave an opening there, arrange a few chairs to look like seating for a performance, and folks will march into the box.

The group of spectators who did not want to play in the lovely translucent box became surprisingly (to us, at the time) animated in the wooden box. But again there is a dramaturgical analogy. If you provide the right conditions, context, you can get your characters to do almost anything. If you lock a "passive" audience in a box, they quickly become active. Conditions impel them to act, to break through their reserve, shyness, to disregard the rules of theatre propriety. After all, by trapping them in the box, we showed a fairly blatant disregard for the rules so they were quite right to feel no longer bound by them.

- Bourriaud (on relational aesthetics) says the aura of a work of art has shifted from the work to the viewer.

THREE

And finally I was reminded how everything doesn't necessarily signify but everything does inform. We are constantly making judgements, discriminating at the minutest levels, piecing things together. Quickly. Often below the level of consciousness. The quality and level of light, the texture of materials, the arrangement of events and objects these things determine whether we step in to the box, if we stay long, if we feel comfortable, if we feel secure or vulnerable, what we are disposed to do once inside or outside. We immediately begin making associations, inventing, telling a (kind of) story based on the smallest stimulus.

Looking at the paper box after it had been ripped, my imagination worked to imagine what had once been there, what had happened. I'm tempted to say that narrative is everywhere. Unavoidable. That our minds are always making narratives as a way of making sense. Faced with a wooden box covered in ripped paper, the mind imagines multiple scenarios that led to this state. But that's not true. I spend lots of my time not making sense of things, not making narratives, simply accepting things, figures, people at limited face value, not associating, not connecting.

It seems like an extremely simple project. You build a box, you cover it in wood or different kinds of plastic, you try to get people to go inside it, you try to get people to engage, to participate rather than simply watch passively.

But it's not simple at all.

Why a box? Why not a parachute or scaffolding? Why not metres of felt and bathtubs on wheels? Why not a floor covered with spikes or flowers or spoons? Why not a swimming pool? The box is making all kinds of meaning all the time, suggesting possibilities.

And why do this in a theatre building? A theatre, empty and unloved as it may be, still comes with some very strong, if tacit, rules or, if not rules, expectations. The box would 'mean' something very different (or not at all) in a parking lot, a park, an art gallery, a shipyard, a slum.

And why should an audience participate, engage? What is wrong with watching? Is watching necessarily passive? Is engaging "better" than watching?

Sure, there's value in the sheer dumb fun of goofing in a box with others; it can be a way of re-figuring all kinds of relations – for a moment at least. But then what? What happens next? Sometimes some kinds of installation strike me as very slight, deeply unambitious, suspicious of the possibility of engagement with larger, more difficult, important questions. Long-term, larger scale.

Further, what is an audience? How is an audience constituted? How shall we know an audience? Are the people waiting in a foyer an audience, or are they something else? Are they in the process of becoming an audience? Are they an audience when seated? Are they an audience if they are scattered around the space? And wouldn't it be more accurate to speak of spectators rather than an audience? (Audience comes from *audire* – which is about hearing; whereas spectator comes from *spectare*, which is about watching). Or participants perhaps? People?

Anyway

Guillermo Verdecchia
6 January 2007

CHRISTINE BRUBAKER

The Box, The Audience and a Space

Being the "hired actor" for this research project was interesting as there was actually no real performance, or actor technique ultimately required (that being said, there were moments of more conventional performance, but all of us agreed that that was not as interesting given what we were exploring). The project became more of a desire to explore the possibilities of space and audience relationship and I was more of a fellow researcher than a subject. A few observations:

- games involving unwitting audience members were fun
- real obstacles were fantastic (ie: REALLY being trapped inside a box - screwed in) - it demanded a response, created energy where there was none before
- real obstacles activated our audience instantly - they became active participants in the event
- obscured sound is threatening - everything from whispers to loud thuds on the walls - not being able to see where sound is coming from but knowing it's acting upon you can be disturbing, disorienting
- barriers of various materials really do evoke different emotional responses: the opaque plastic felt permeable, breathable and ultimately not nearly as threatening. The wood was solid, ultimately breakable, but not without a great deal of effort or tools. There somehow seemed a need to meet it with an equal amount of force or effort.
- it's very difficult for our "audience" to really step outside their conventional prescribed role of passive observer without really doing something drastic
- audiences will look for a place to sit
- when asked to take a seat, audiences will choose a chair over the floor
- audiences will gravitate towards chairs in a space

Acknowledgements:

This research was conducted at the Glen Morris Studio, U of T, November 14, 15, and 18th, 2006 and made possible through Nightswimming's Pure Research '06 with the support and encouragement of Brian Quirt and Naomi Campbell.

Special Thanks and Escaping Audience Members of Day 3:

Naomi Campbell
Yvette Nolan
Lisa Codrington
Andre du Toit

Special Thanks:

Sandra Lefrancois
Kevin Steeper

EPILOGUE - The Crate Installation

Back to the question of "how do we implicate an audience?", we were invited to bring the box out of storage after Pure Research was complete. We decided to use the Skin Ply box and test it with unsuspecting audience members in a festival called Audience Re/Location TURN LEFT HERE FESTIVAL at Buddies in Bad Times on March 1st and 2nd, 2007.

On the inside of the box, we covered the walls with dates and statistics of people found in containers, in backs of trucks, body parts on lawns (having fallen from airplane wheels), bodies found in abandon boats etc. We left the door of the box open, using the door piece as a pathway leading into the box. It was nicely lit, there were two nice big signs that warned people who were claustrophobic not to go inside, and we, the "workers" in black coveralls, just sat around, or nearby chatting. When the time was right, or when we felt like it, we snapped the room into blackout and slammed the door closed and then we pretended to drill them in. (we were not allowed to actually screw the door closed because of safety and health concerns) Although, from audience feedback after they were let out, the slamming and the drilling sounds were scary enough for people.

Large groups never went in. The whole festival was sort of "walk around on your own time" so it was hard to usher people into the box. Instead we let them wander in. Sometimes we closed them in, sometimes we just let the box be its own mini museum of statistics. The only other sign on the outside of the box was a sign that read "CAUTION-SMUGGLING AND ILLEGAL IMMIGRATION MAY BE ENCOUNTERED IN THIS AREA". You only saw this once the box was closed as it was on the outside side of the door.

After closing the box, the lights slowly faded up along with a soundscape of wind and

water and low rumbling music (provided by Thomas Ryder Payne). Also a live feed video camera and the TV's were turned on so that everyone on the outside could watch.

We found that we didn't need to do very much. Occasionally we would bang on the box if we saw (by looking into the peep holes) that they were too close to one side of the box; a few people we pushed the box. But otherwise we let them be. And just watched them. During Pure Research we felt compelled to keep doing things to the audience on the inside of the box. After the initial shock of being drilled in, at first they laughed, one couple started slow dancing, some continued on with their conversations. But the longer we kept them in, the more dates and statistics they read and the more they became overwhelmed by them and then it started to resonate – where they were, what they were reading, etc. The longer we kept them in, the more uncomfortable they became, but they kept reading. Only one person didn't fall for the illusion of being drilled into the box and subsequently body checked Giovanni Sy, who was holding the door in place from the outside.

Discussion

Unlike during Pure Research, we didn't do very much to the people on the inside. The people on the outside looked into the peepholes and watched the box people on the TVs, some joined in with the occasional banging on the box.

Also unlike Pure Research, this experiment had a very very clear context and, with the help of lights and sound and our actions, we had a sort of beginning and ending to the "experience" for the people on the inside.

Acknowledgements:

This installation was an extrapolation of research first conducted through the generous support of Nightswimming's Pure Research '06 and the encouragement of Brian Quirt and Naomi Campbell, and with the additional support of Buddies in Bad Times Theatre and Cahoots Theatre Projects.

Participants of The Crate:

Camellia Koo
Giovanni Sy
Guillermo Verdecchia
Sandra Lefrancois

Special Thanks:

Erika Hennebury
Kendra Fry