

**The Centre for Philosophy and Visual Arts**  
LECTURE SERIES AND RESIDENCY APPLICATION

**Research Proposal**

We are deeply excited to apply to CPVA's Artist in Residence programme, and to attend Christopher Hamilton's module, 'The Search for Meaning'. Our artistic practice is restless and fidgeting; we're curious as to how an artwork can approach and frame meaning, while eluding any fixed message. Our work excites, flirts with and troubles meaning - rather than didactically addressing its audience, it seeks to skewer contradictions in order to sidestep what appear at first to be dead-ends. Not only do we insist on the presence of extensive and rigorous thought within our collaborative process; but on the practice itself as a generative and ongoing process of thinking and understanding in its own right.

In particular, we are drawn to Hamilton's question; 'How do modern, bourgeois individuals make sense of their lives?'. Our work is concerned with the depiction and performance of the thinking figure itself, and our practice has been described as the somatics of thought. We present seemingly-isolated figures who consider, test, trip up, reconsider, discover and become confounded, in their encounter with and exploration of their context. Interested in children, idiots and the absent-minded, we have recently been drawn to the history of slapstick. This history of work is concerned with the rise of the individual in the late 19th and early 20th century, and how one negotiates the wider world around them. These curiosities frame the project we propose to work on throughout this residency, a new choreographic performance *This*.

*This* would consider the gestures of attention, sensation, investigation and thought. We're curious about their slipperiness: how pointing, tapping, rubbing and shaking can suggest both scientific exploration and childish recklessness. We're interested too in the unstable demonstratives of 'this', 'that', 'here' and 'there', and how these utterances and actions can shift from detail to whole, gesture to pose, position to architecture; and even, perhaps, emergent and fleeting relations between performer and viewer.

By interrogating these live processes of meaning-making, we're excited by the potential exploratory and exhaustive power of this performance - and the contexts in which it might be undertaken (stage, gallery, video, site-specific). In testing and rewriting the possibilities of body, object, gesture and space, *This* would draw together the restless and rebellious bodies of slapstick with contemporary choreographic and sculptural thought, in order to interrogate the seductive power of identification, definition, demarcation and demonstration.

We would plan to emerge from this residency with a new performance to share

across choreographic, academic and public contexts; but we also insist on the vital role of distraction within our process. We are extremely keen to respond to the stimuli of the lectures, and seek to approach both parts of this opportunity with the willful playfulness with which we undertake all of our work. We seek extended and tangential conversations, and toy with multiple fleeting artworks on the periphery of an apparently central project, with the knowledge that these activities lead to the most unexpected and rich insights.

### Artist Statement

Timber & Battery's playful work considers meaning and meaninglessness through oblique gestures. This collaborative practice of Rohanne Udall (b. 1990) and Paul Hughes (b. 1991) takes place across choreographic, performance and visual arts contexts. Trained in fine art and philosophy, our practice is a meeting point between disciplines; a persistent and fidgeting enquiry that continually questions itself and the contexts it finds itself within.

Our work prioritizes momentum and plurality of gesture, and works with performance, sculpture, video, audio and print. Playful and opportunistic, our practice is sensitive to the materials and contexts that surround us (galleries, theatres, studios, universities and publication) and is shaped by the concerns and demands of distinct disciplines and bodies of thought.

We're interested in weak and minor gestures - how to do less? What if it was 'just' that? What might happen? Polite, white, middle-class kids, we have failed to adopt any radical gesture or pose, and have ended up toying with and foregrounding the complex materiality of the body – fleshy, awkward, restless, lethargic, playful, and inescapably political. As we plunge into the contradictions of our weak aesthetic (being serious about meaninglessness, intentionally wasting time and valuing pointlessness), we align ourselves with both a historical legacy of critical conceptual practice and the figure and physicality of the clown.

Recent credits include: Chisenhale Dance Space, Rich Mix, Bethnal Green Working Men's Club (all London), Attenborough Arts Centre (Leicester), Coventry University, Summer Lodge (Nottingham), DISKURS (Gießen), The Society for Artistic Research (The Hague) and ICW (Blackpool).

### How will this residency benefit your practice?

Strongly identifying our work as research, we feel it imperative to engage with discourse and share our knowledge beyond the production of artworks. Over the past couple of years, we have presented our work and spoken at conferences and symposia (Positioning, University of Roehampton, London, May 2016 ; Yes Conference, ATW Institut, Giessen, February 2016; The International Conference on Artistic Research, Society for Artistic Research, University of the Arts and Leiden University, The Hague April 2016; and Dialogues on Dance, Philosophy and Performance in the Contemporary, Neoliberal Moment, Coventry University, June 2017). These experiences have been deeply informative and stimulating to our work,

and we're constantly looking for further opportunities to place our work in relation to, and within, the context of academic research. We are keen to pursue our proposed project within the context of this lecture series - to have our work and ideas scrutinised. In return, we offer our own rigour and playful criticality.

Additionally, residency periods are essential to our practice; alongside offering us a concentrated period of time to think, test and make together (essential and unfortunately rare for any collaboration). past residencies have given rise to significant new questions, and have brought visibility and challenge to unquestioned aspects of our work. Most importantly, these residencies have unfailingly been the source of new relationships and long-term friendships. This professional and peer support helps sustain the numerous perspectives we hold as we move between disciplinary contexts.