

## Venice Agendas Proposal - Timber & Battery - Rolling Contracts

### The work

For *Rolling Contracts*, we propose to employ two performers to undertake a seemingly simple score. In a semi-public and indoor space, in the vicinity of other festival events, every hour each performer crosses the space by rolling on the ground while reciting the text of their employment contract. Each performer undertakes this task a half an hour after the other; individuals dealing with the same set of circumstances, apparently unable to make contact and reflect on their conditions. The work questions the contract's possibilities and limitations in meaningfully addressing or accounting for an unpredictable live event.

The score smuggles a subtle complexity and sensuousness beyond the work's initial pun; the performer's attempt to recite a learned text whilst rolling in an unfamiliar context becomes a vulnerable negotiation. Post-Fordist working conditions demand adaptability to changing circumstances, short term goals and conflicting priorities. The "creative identity" of the performer (as artist, dancer, etc.) is reduced to a banal encounter with the specific and "uncreative" act of learning lines and moving the body; the text simultaneously exposes the conditions of their labour, yet frees them from obligations to choice, invent or be creative. The audience become aware of their passivity, and the limits to their involvement: the performers are free to undertake their work, without subtle and unspoken demands to engage in social relation or the production of subjective expression for a spectator's gaze.

This literalisation of the 'rolling contract' draws from the legacy and embodiment of slapstick. We note the prevalence of the 'neutral' or 'task-like' body, within the recent rise of performance in the gallery, tied to specific legacies of experimental choreography. Corrupting this attraction to dancers within task- or work-like processes, we use slapstick to invite the foolish or clumsy body; one that interrupts, fails, is clumsy, heavy, awkward, confused, falls over and just gets in the way. There's a childishness to this literalisation of the rolling contract - but carrying with it a poetic power to speak to a wider culture of 'bullshit jobs' alongside the specific politics of performance and artistic practice.

### Bio

Timber & Battery's playful work considers meaning and meaninglessness through oblique gestures. The collaborative practice of Rohanne Udall and Paul Hughes, it takes place across choreographic, performance and visual arts contexts. The work emerges from, and speaks to, a culture that is saturated in content and subject to endless streams of reference and possibility; we are attracted to sidestepping, fidgeting, distraction and emulation.

Recent work includes *Some Possibilities* (Chisenhale Dance Space; Coventry University; 2016-17); *Infinite Tango*, in collaboration with Sam Pardes and commissioned by Third Row Dance Company (Michaelis Theatre, 2016); *Empty Gestures* (Rich Mix; Attenborough Arts Centre; 2016); *Partner Dances For One* (Camden People's Theatre; Battersea Arts Centre; I'Klectik Art Lab; 2015-16) and an exhibition of performance *Floorplan//Here Or Now* (Rich Mix; 2015).

We have been awarded residencies with New Wolsey Theatre (Ipswich 2015); Hospitalfield Arts (Arbroath, 2016); and TOP SHED (Norfolk, 2017). In early 2017 we performed for Vlatka Horvat on new work *Minor Planets*, commissioned by HAU, Berlin.

**Website** [Timber and Battery](#)

### Specific Works

[Temporary Contracts, 2016](#) / [The Contemporary Position, 2016](#) / [Empty Gestures, 2016](#)