

Project: A New Six Public Acts

To transmit violence to concord: Tampering with the Master/Slave System

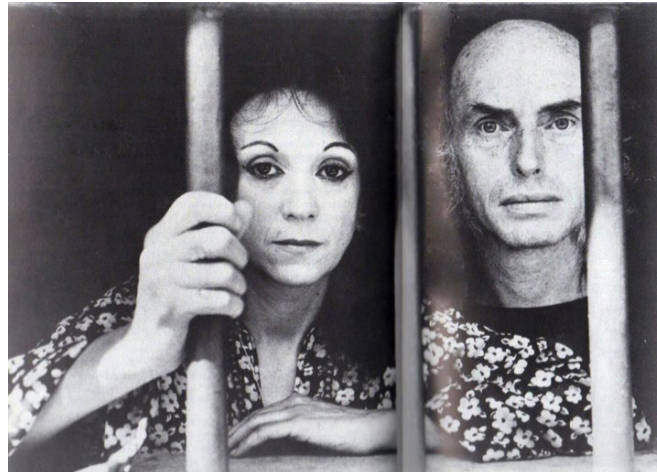
Ceremonies and processions: changing the city



On the 100th anniversary of the births of Judith Malina and Julian Beck (2025), an international theater project

What can the theatre do? Release the creative impetus into the people. Change the atmosphere. Change the moral values. Change perception. Change the mode of thought. Change the music. Go down into Egypt. To the slaves. What can the theatre do? It can entice, zap, pull, inform, cajole, and openly inspire the proletariat, the Lumpenproletariat, the poor, the poorest of the poor.

Julian Beck, *The Life of the Theatre*



Judith Malina and Julian Beck imprisoned in Brazil (1970)

Is Man's Destiny a blind alley? Eric Gutkind

Six Public Acts (1976) is part of the cycle of plays ***The Legacy of Cain*** by **The Living Theatre**. The cycle asks the simple question: why are we violent? And how do we create antidotes to this violence? This work was started by the group after an intense and difficult imprisonment in the military prison of Brazil (1970). The Living began its research based in part on the author **Leopold Ritter von Sacher-Masoch** (1836–1895). Created collectively by the company other source materials include works by Proudhon, Herbert Read, Bertolt Brecht, the San Pueblo Indian Tribe and Dylan Thomas.



The Love Procession, The House of Love

SIX

Masoch identified six themes that he believed manifests in society in various forms of violence: master/slave, oppressor/oppressed; aggressor/victim. These themes (*Houses*) are: the State, Money, War (violence), Death, Private Property and Love (in its sadomasochistic aspects). He proposed that these six themes connect *all* living persons on the earth in a web of entanglement, based in conscious and unconscious forms of master-slave/sadomasochistic forms. (The entomology of *Masochism* is from his name.)

The systemic problems apparent today in the world can be viewed through the lenses of these six themes:

- On a global level, the climate crisis.
- In international relations, as seen in the Ukrainian conflict and in the many ethnic and religious conflicts from, Israel/Palestine, India/Pakistani and the many civil wars; in the forced migration and the ensuing exclusion and exploitation (racism) of migrants; in the millions of refugees the world over.
- At the level of interpersonal relations, especially in the violence against women.
- In the sphere of work in the exploitation of person's labor, as in the children mining the cobalt and other minerals for our electric batteries (just one example).
- On an individual level, in a general spiritual malaise and state of alienation, as seen in the epidemics of drug use (legal and illicit), sex and consumer addiction as well as the increasing rates of depression and suicide among the worlds peoples, especially teenagers.



Prostrations, The House of the State

PUBLIC

The basic proposition of *Six Public Acts* is the public aspect of the play. It is a series of *appearances* in the streets of the city that disrupt and create a situational conflict with the daily life *mise en scène* of the city. The player/participants of the spectacle appear as themselves (non-fictional acting) and perform a series of physical, psychology and spiritual actions, at once ceremonial and ritualized.

The actions are based on the six themes above and are brought into contact with the architectural representation of a given theme: a church or war memorial (Death), a City Hall (the State), a police station (War), a bank (Money). The last two themes (Love and Private Property) are presented in two neutral plazas and utilize scenery and objects. Much like a medieval pageant play the six public spaces are connected by a wandering and ritualized procession. Also of note: many of the actions are open to the participation of the spectator/citizens of the city and each action ends with spontaneous public assemblies whose scope is to create dialogue between the players and the public and between the public themselves.



The House of Money

ACTS

As stated, the spectacle presents a series of physical/psychology/spiritual actions, at once ceremonial and ritualized. These borrow from various theatrical, religious, spiritual and mindful practices of various sources, including an enactment of death by the plague (from Antonin Artaud, *The Theatre and its Double*), Tibetan prostrations, a blood ritual, a bondage ceremony, an offering of bread and roses, a biomechanical rendering of the myth of Cain and Able and others. Again, *situationist* forms are presented expanding, confusing and merging the lines between religious, spiritual, political, theatrical and experiential forms. These interruptions in the daily flow and behavioral forms of the city provide an opportunity of expanding perceptions; of generating new mindful states, of contextualizing various human aspects and their fundamental exploitative character in the spheres of work, sex, psychology, class and gender, all with the goal of rendering apparent the personal choices and responsibilities of individuals in their relationship to society and each other, and within the proposed themes of the *Legacy of Cain*.



The House of Private Property

A NEW SIX PUBLIC ACTS

The goal of this project is to first explore and examine and place in the current context of today's social, technological and political climate the original six ceremonies and rituals.

Then through a collaborative process with various artists, performers, directors, social activists, therapists and mindful practitioners, as well as including new research in the fields of dream and sleep research, technological innovations, therapeutic innovations, the new archaeology and anthropological advances (see *The Dawn of Everything: A New History of Humanity*, David Graeber, David Wengrow) the task of this project is to create six new public acts within the framework of Masosh's original six themes.



Bondage ceremony, The House of Love

The project proposes to work in six countries in which The Living Theatre already performed *Six Public Acts* (or has some other important and historical connection with the group) and to return to those localities to propose these six new acts, and to involve local artists and activists in these (possible locations): Pittsburgh (USA); La Chaux-de-Fonds (Switzerland); Napoli, São Paulo, Prague, Paris.

When you will have made him a body without organs, then you will have delivered him from all his automatic reactions and restored him to his true freedom. Then you will teach him again to dance wrong side out as in the frenzy of dance halls and this wrong side out will be his real place."

Antonin Artaud, *To Have Done with the Judgment of God*

What acts could open up a way out of humankind's blind alley? Are we doomed to violent behavior in our lives and social forms, be it individually or collectively? Might the theater strip away our subterfuges, our false egos; might it illuminate the individual and collective shadows that limit us and too often end in violence?

Actions: modes of behavior that indicate a state of being and that raises consciousness of the participants and the public; that integrates the higher senses of intuition, imagination and inspiration; a revelatory state that leads to compassion and empathy (that lets Love love) whereby any use of violence is felt as a gross and regressive aberration. These actions should indicate a new direction, a leap in human development, manifested in the social realm.

How can a man know himself? He is a thing dark and veiled; and if the hare has seven skins, man can slough off seventy times seven and still not be able to say: 'This is really you, this is no longer outer shell.'

Nietzsche, *Untimely Meditations* (Compilation)

The *New Six Public Acts*, in addition to being a tribute to a theatrical experience that had a global impact on political and social history, has the ambition to once again transform society as we know it. Just as in a dream *from the wings the actor, as if in looking in a mirror, senses all that is false and uncomfortable in his costume and thus his role. In a sweeping gesture he strips away his falsities and enters into the scene to the complete shock and initial dismay of his scene partner. He becomes real - and suddenly the play has changed (also to the surprise of the public and fellow players); the script is no more, and the two actors encounter one another as if purely naked.*

The [Actors] are committed to practicing “death” while alive. That is, whether engaged in life or not, they remain aware of that which transcends life. They remain full in the bliss that transcends bodily sensations. Whether in relationship or not, they are already free, as if already dead, fully responsive in relationship but deeply indifferent at the same time. [The Actors] practice the recognition of consciousness. They recognize that consciousness is their true nature. It is that which is always true, always present, unaffected by experience and changeless even as their lives continue to change.

David Deida, Intimate Communion.