

Too shy to stare
Davis Freeman/ Random Scream

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Too shy to stare should be seen as a performance/ installation where an audience of 10 is invited to see 7 different scenes one at a time. Everyone starts in a "bar" we create and given 6 cards of different colours. The piece begins with this introduction.

"Welcome to Too shy to stare. There are 7 rooms we want to share with you this evening. *(I point the rooms out)* Now you notice the lights outside each room *(there are two small lamps over the door of each room)* now to enter a room you look for a green light that means the room is available. You pass your card through the curtain, wait, and when the light turns red you enter. A red light means a room is occupied and you shouldn't enter. Now you have 6 cards because the 7th room doesn't need a card, as it is an installation with these headphones you'll find at the bar. You put them on and walk around the room and discover how the installation works. Now tonight you create your own dramaturgy. You can go in any order of how you see the scenes and this then will be your show. Remember there's no rush; take you time and feel free to come back to the bar throughout the show to have a break. Thank you for coming and enjoy the show."

The cards we hand out let the performers know which photograph to use, but also give control to the audience where they can guide their journey through the space themselves. Each person creates a different order of scenes therefore contributing to their own personal experience of the show. During these scenes the performers wear masks, which hold photographs of the audiences face so it seems as though you are performing for yourself in almost every room. Each scene is under 10 minutes and with no breaks is 70 minutes but the audience needs to take their time and set their own pace.

In each of our shows we've had very strong reactions from the audience. Some people cried others couldn't stop laughing. What makes "Too shy to stare" unique is that everyone is affected differently depending on their own psychological make up. The material we made gives general directions but the specific gestures are open doors for the audience to interpret their own way depending on their life experience. While one sees the "couple scene" to represent their male and female side, another sees their parents. While one sees the music scene as a moment of internal meditation another sees their own funeral. The performers themselves repeat their same scene for all the audience members while each time changing their masks. Once they have performed their last scene each performer joins the audience in the bar who ask questions and share their experience of the show.

Scene break down/ Technical requirements

In most of the scenes you see yourself in the mask but we created a few breaks where you would see another audience member or a performer. Here's the breakdown in order of the video:

- Scene 1-** (Portrait) You see a photo of yourself with your eyes closed in a black frame while a musician creates a musical portrait for you. Note that this is the music for the whole piece. Each time an audience member comes in Gerrit creates another portrait, which we can all hear throughout the space.
- Scene 2-** (The couple) You see a male body and a female body with your face at the same time.
- Scene 3-** (The mirror room) You see a male body with your face.
- Scene 4-** (The Outside world) If you are a woman you see a woman with the back of your head and your face. If you are a man you see a woman with the back of your head and the face of a woman you know from the audience. (Wife/girlfriend) If you came to the performance alone then you just see yourself.
- Scene 5-**(The Body) If you are a man you see another man's body in black underwear with your face. If you are a woman you see a man's body with the face of a man you know from the audience (husband/ boyfriend).
- Scene 6-**(Headphones) Is a sound installation where you wear headphones in a specific space and depending on where you walk the sound changes.
- Scene 7-** (Memory) A female performer wears a mask with a black and white photo of herself and you see a black and white photo of yourself on the wall next to her mixed in with 12 other photographs.

Technical requirements

The photographs

When an audience member books tickets for "Too shy to stare" there also has to be an appointment made for them to have their photograph taken. This appointment is usually done two or more days before their performance and our digital photographers take the photo. The timing is 11-2:00, 3:00- 7:00 each day but we make special arrangements for people with difficult schedules. We then take photographs in a few minutes of the front of the face with eyes open, one with eyes closed, one black and white, and one back of the head. These appointments are very important, as it's necessary to have time to process the 80 photographs we need for each show.

The rooms

"Too shy to stare" is adaptable to be performed in different spaces (gallery, theatre, house, factory) We need 7 separate spaces for the performance plus one space that is centrally located as the bar. These spaces all have flexible dimensions but as a base they are 3 x 4 m, 5x6 m, 15x 3m, 6x8 m, 6x6 m 7x8 m, 5x5 m. We then use one space to set up the digital technicians who process the photographs and one small space to set up the studio to take the photos themselves. These rooms can be set up either by using existing rooms, curtains, or bringing in exhibition walls as an example to create the separate rooms in a single day.

The performance schedule

As a schedule we set up and adapt our performance over three days. We then have one dress rehearsal for the people of the festival that invited us. We then perform 2 shows a day over 6 days with one day off. The performance itself last two hours 30 minutes and is for 10 people at a time. After each performance we then have an epilogue of the piece with a talk with the audience for 30- 60 minutes. This demands that the 2 pieces are spread out over a 4 1/2 hour period usually 5:00 and 9:30. The crew consists of 10 people: 7 performers, 2 digital technicians for the photographs, 1 technician to set up the rooms and run the show, and 1 production assistant.

Additional Versions

Too shy to stare was always conceived as a larger piece for 10 people but it's possible to create a mixture of alternate smaller versions. One possibility is just to perform the piece as one 10-minute solo as it was in Indoor Fireworks in Riverside. This would require only one performer and one digital technician and the piece would be performed over a series of days or one marathon day. Another possibility is to perform with only three rooms such the solo, a duet, and the music room.