

22.

If yes, if we do—
do revel in the uncounted,
do wave, do transition,
do trespass, do make due.
If we do,

then we live in the experience of uncounted futures.

A commitment to the **unseen in time.**

Beyond the will to measure.

20.

This year it was suggested that humans had the capacity to conceptualize time 5,000 years before previously believed. Stone Age holes filled by the

light of the moon. The will to measure. **The moon the method.**

The ordering energies of day and night. Hanging our narrative on breakfast lunch and dinner.⁹ The construction of time and history itself. What is under the water after the moon? A minor planet dragging through the galaxy? scale altering temporal drag.¹⁰ Something to slip through.

19.

On April 4th of last year I had the idea to write a play where ‘something fantastic is discovered, something that debunks the white supremacy ideology of the ruling patriarchy.’

This lost thing

would let loose the ordering energies, shift the paradigm. You could find it under water. Or it could be in a major collection’s closet. Underwater, that would be theatrically productive. Gravity would shift. The audience could be weightless. Blue. Shouldn’t we be constantly surprised, a politics of surprise.⁸

18.

Not to be the thing itself.

I was in a workshop with Miguel Gutierrez, he asked us twenty-seven questions and this was one of my answers. Life, permission, conditions. When I build something – a project, phrase, collaboration – there are little holes everywhere. I encourage the space between

0—0 Little gaps of intention that life fills up **with conditions, with proximities.**

Little holes everywhere 0—0 little holes. Permission.

Not to be the thing itself. It’s also a way of saying ‘with’ 0—0 entanglement and alignment. Honoring a margin from a movement. Not to be the thing itself is a transition that is not a solution. Is this the queer form?

17.

How can we build a structure to be alive inside?
To to to-wards a building of space and commons
that privileges movement and margins.⁷

16.

Virginia Woolf opens “A Room of One’s Own” with a disclaimer, “I have shirked the duty of coming to a conclusion upon these two questions - women and fiction remain, so far as I am concerned, unsolved problems.” Woolf resists the call to a conclusion and instead performs as an unsolved problem - she thinks. She writes a scene of thinking.

“Thought - to call it by a prouder name than it deserved - had let its line down into the stream. It swayed, minute after minute, hither and thither among the reflections and the weeds, letting the water lift it and sink it until — you know the little tug — the sudden conglomeration of an idea at the end of one’s line: and then the cautious hauling of it in, and the careful laying of it out? Alas, laid on the grass how small, how insignificant this thought of mine looked; the sort of fish that a good fisherman puts back into the water so that it may grow fatter and be one day worth cooking and eating. I will not trouble you with that thought now, though if you look carefully you may find it for yourselves in the course of what I am going to say.

But however small it was, it had, nevertheless, the mysterious property of its kind — put back into the mind, it became at once very exciting, and important; and as it darted and sank, and flashed hither and thither, set up such a wash and tumult of ideas that it was impossible to sit still. It was thus that I found myself walking with extreme rapidity across a grass plot. Instantly a man’s figure rose to intercept me. Nor did I at first understand that the gesticulations of a curious-looking object, in a cut-away coat and evening shirt, were aimed at me. His face expressed horror and indignation. Instinct rather than reason came to my help, he was a Beadle; I was a woman. This was the turf; there was the path. Only the Fellows and Scholars are allowed here; the gravel is the place for me. Such thoughts were the work of a moment. As I regained the path the arms of the Beadle sank, his face assumed its usual repose, and though turf is better walking than gravel, no very great harm was done. The only charge I could bring against the Fellows and Scholars of whatever the college might happen to be was that in protection of their turf, which has been rolled for 300 years in succession they had sent my little fish into hiding.

What idea it had been that had sent me so audaciously trespassing I could not now remember.⁶

Thinking as trespass.

She hopped up, Virginia Woolf popped up and sprang about. Her thought had her alight and the territory fell away. That she was minor, and should be mindful escaped her. That she was minor and should be mindful and un-thinking escaped her. That she was minor and should be mindful and un-thinking and un-passionate and not un-bound escaped her.

There were bushes aflame in Autumn light and soon proud thoughts hither and tither. So there was no territory. There was a stream and a line down. So there was no territory. So there was no, so there was. Was territory.

The thinker, call her by any name you please, had trespassed where there was no, where there was.

UNCOUNTED

Emily Roysdon

I dedicate this text to Ian White. I had the pleasure to discuss some of these thoughts with Ian in our last conversation, his fierce mind a reflection. Ian was a beloved friend and inspiration, and I dedicate these uncounted futures to him.

1. While reading and researching around the idea ‘uncounted futures’ I found a book called *Open Secrets* by Anne-Lise Francois where she discusses uncounted experience. I first found the Auden quoted there. The poem, “In Memory of W. B. Yeats” was published in Auden’s anthology *Another Time*, 1940.
2. As Robin Bernstein says in her text, *Dances with Things: Material Culture and the Performance of Race*, “the term script denotes not a rigid dictation of performed action but, rather, a necessary openness to resistance, interpretation, and improvisation.”
3. “The Walker,” Peter Schjeldahl, *The New Yorker*, Dec 23, 2002. Full quote: “I really love to watch the way black people make things . . . just the way we use carpentry. Nothing fits, but everything works. . . . Everything is a thirty-second of an inch off.”
4. MPA performance at the Hessel Museum, Bard College, May 1, 2011.

23.*

What instruments have we?

1.

I believe in an alchemy of time. That a certain combination of words, a length of inaction, a discomposed room, or with some such cipher, I believe we we can make time.

21.

The most crucial and most queer thing I can say is that these thoughts are all about that which is unseen in time. All that exists and goes unnamed, uncounted, disregarded. In a queer life you use and mis-use shards of time, search out references, create your own constellation and pull small threads forward.

You dig and discover all that was, **in its time, against the continuity of its time.**

That which stepped out to a different speed and didn’t reproduce itself in the pendulum’s binary. Can we grab the discontinuous untimely and name it in the future it didn’t know? Where is the permission to name? To use, to materialize, to make due.

2.

In a memorial poem to Yeats, W.H. Auden wrote “poetry makes nothing happen.”¹

Nothing is the realm of uncounted experience.

4.

In the same poem Auden repeated but one refrain, “what instruments we have agree” “what instruments we have agree.”

What instruments have we?

3.

Uncounted experience, unseen in time. **If only a wave in proximity to other waves. If only a wave** that made a texture of a surface of a top of the

line. **If only a wave expressing the contour of a bottom, its bottom, the under. If only a wave** a rhythm. All potential to break. Crash. hit. rock. wander. If only a night wave, peaking. If only a wave never counted. Measured if a threat.

5. Beyond the will to measure.

6.

Gertrude Stein said: “The only thing that is different from one time to another is what is seen and what is seen depends upon how everybody is doing everything,” what is seen. How everybody is doing everything. In 1926 Stein wrote “Composition as Explanation,” to talk about ‘time-sense,’ distribution, ‘using everything,’ and a continuous present. In her elliptical statement on epochal thinking, imaging and representation (what is seen, difference) are aligned with the ability, potential, and mechanics of the body and technology (how everybody is doing everything). To which I add: How everybody is doing everything is what is different, and how difference is seen.

What is seen depends upon how everybody is doing.

7. What is time if not activism?

8.

I’ve been thinking about the word ‘to discompose’ for about two years now, and I can barely use it in a sentence. In some ways I have taken this as a good sign, and in others, the failure has felt constitutive of the idea itself - a focus on the frame, a limit. My pleasure in holding on to it was to work with something open ended and hard to harden, a word that eschews form and opens to the queerly formed. That as a horizon of thought, I could not see the end of its line.

Now as I write this I am noticing something.

A scene I have been seeing and not saying, that has gone unnamed.

Behind the eyelids. I realize that I am someplace when I see this word. When I hold this word, to discompose, there is a particular wall in the Museum of Modern Art that I feel like I am walking past. It is a blank wall, taller than I, whiter than I. There are other people in the room, gazes in all directions. It is no coincidence that it is one of the atrium walls dedicated to MoMA’s performance program. I’m looking in the direction of this wall and walking by.

...And now moments pass in writing and I can examine the ‘scene of my thought,’ it is in fact still, a still picture. I have the gesture of a stride, but I am still. The people around me are fixed points.

To discompose, I have always resisted conjugating it. The infinitive form is part of the proposition, an integral part of the dramaturgy of the idea. That its in motion. But the action I cling to in the word, is stilled by the scene of its thinking. My struggle to understand it has been in this contradiction - that the movement became an image, fixed and framed out of time.

And I could not use it in a sentence.

10.

I look to Lucinda Childs’ masterpiece *Dance*, a collaboration with Phillip Glass and Sol LeWitt. About this work Childs has said, “The conflict in *Dance* between the image and the dancer is very much intended.” I know that here she is referring to LeWitt’s projection onto the dancers. I know this is formal and that *Dance* is the title of the work. But what if we extended the metaphor into all elements of this collaboration... Glass’ monumental repetition with variation. LeWitt’s perspective and scale altering projection. Childs’ rigorous epic continuous movement. Some of these elements, adjectives, are of the house already built. For is not traditional exhibition making ‘monumental repetition with variation?’ And then some of the elements are strategies for how to recognize conflict in that house - rigorous, continuous, scale altering, movement. Could Childs’ intentional conflict be a script for liveness in institutions?²

I look to Jack Smith who was obsessed with what he called ‘landlordism,’ and made work that started seven hours late and lasted five hours long. Undisciplined time to counter the culture of owning and renting.

I listen to David Hammons when he says “nothing fits, but everything works.”³

9.

What if the museum becomes the authority on alive time? How does an organization, built to historicize and exhibit, work in aliveness? Practically, everybody’s asking, practically. Institutions discipline, live time within an architecture of power, so how now, thinking through movement, what is an ethical way to authorize alive time?

12.

Collectivities instead of collections. Is this a question? Can we support collectivities instead of collections?

15.

With every passing, any awareness of time, the choreographic discomposes the space around us, asking how we arrange our bodies in response.

14.

Does naming time generate time? Rehearsal is a great name for time, solitude another. Clock into darkness. Clock into leave. Falling, a time. What if we all agreed to live a year on moon time shunning the sun. Name it. Your period is a great name for time. Now another.

Alive time, name it, now another, is there anything else? Alive time, call and response. There is the right time and punctum. And the unstable value of kairos and around, the end in the beginning. Now another.

13.

For the past while I’ve been thinking about transitions. The shifting of weight, changing of direction. Genders and governments. Choreographic and interpersonal. Transitions, no matter the context, are a political moment. A chance to detach from weighted positions, a chance to be moved.

What is a transition that is not a solution?

What’s a transition that is not a solution?⁵

5. This question was developed in conversation with Eleanor Bauer.
6. Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One’s Own*, 1929. A ‘beadle’ is ‘a minor official who carries out various civil, educational, or ceremonial duties.’
7. 3 quotes below the line: “Act so that there is no use in a center,” Gertrude Stein, *Tender Buttons*, 1914. “The place in which I’ll fit will not exist until I make it.” James Baldwin, *Notes of a Native Son*, 1955. “How we define public space is intimately connected with ideas about what it means to be human, the nature of society, and the kind of political community we want.” Rosalyn Deutsche in *Agoraphobia*, 1996.
8. In the introduction to *Time Travels: Feminism, Nature, Power*, Elizabeth Grosz writes about a ‘politics of surprise’.

9. A story through Sara Jaffe about Lynne Tillman realizing her time structure could be meal time.
10. Temporal drag, coined by Elizabeth Freeman in *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories*, 2010.

* I wrote this inconsistently between 2012-2014, accumulating questions and phrases and sometimes presenting them along the way. Notably at three performance conferences: “How Are We Performing Today?” at MoMA in NYC (November 2012), “Dancing With the Art World” at the Hammer Museum in Los Angeles (April 2013) and “Is the Living Body the Last Thing Left Alive?” The new performance turn, its histories and its institutions” ParaSite Hong Kong (April 2014). Simultaneous with these symposia were two year commissions from the Portland Institute for Contemporary Art T:BA Festival and a partnership between If I Can’t Dance and the Stedelijk Museum (Amsterdam) which encouraged these questions in textual, material and performative ways. Poster designed by Carl Williamson and I for my exhibition *If Only a Wave at PARTICIPANT INC*, January 11- February 21, 2015.

