

# Skeleton Argument

What happens when living bodies collide with the languages of clinical practice and health-care legislation? What gets lost - or transformed - as the body is translated into words and back again, via text books, policies and political rhetoric? Artist Josh Bitelli and workshop coordinator Amie Taylor have developed 'Skeleton Argument', a performance workshop that explores points of contact between the state and our health.

In her 1991 book, *The Woman Beneath The Skin*, medical historian and feminist scholar Barbara Duden critiques the objectifying power of the medical gaze, proposing the body as a product of the anatomical textbook, rather than the other way around.\* In the same vein, 'Skeleton Argument' thinks about how the language of care might create and condition the social body. One of the key amendments that the Care Act 2014 proposed was to replace the statutory duty to provide free healthcare with the statutory duty to promote such healthcare. This linguistic sleight of hand suggests that administrative absurdity might replace actual medical aid.\*\* Veteran public health adviser and campaigner, retired GP Dr Michael Fitzpatrick, goes so far as to characterise state promotion of health-care as pure political strategy: 'recognition by government that a way of establishing a point of contact with an atomised and alienated electorate was through the medium of health.'\*\*\*

'Skeleton Argument' utilises *The Care Act 2014*, along with other documents including 'The Cambridge Guide to the Medical Interview', 'The FY1 Situational Judgement Test', and 'The White Paper: Caring for our Future', to examine how such texts work to create a recognisable language of altruism, empathy and understanding, a language so standardised that it has come to lack meaning.

Using bodily awareness techniques ranging from political address to martial arts warm-ups, 'Skeleton Argument' looks to reorder the relations of state health-care by privileging body language over verbal language. Through your participation we are trying to find another voice, to embody another process of communication.

## Skeleton Argument

Performance workshop  
at Friday Late:  
Body Language,  
Friday 4 November  
at Wellcome Collection.

Curated by Alice Carey and  
Elsa Richardson

## Bibliography:

\* Barbara Duden, *The Woman Beneath the Skin*, Harvard University Press 1991.

\*\* Care Act 2014.

\*\*\* Dr Michael Fitzpatrick, informal conversation with Josh Bitelli, London 2016.

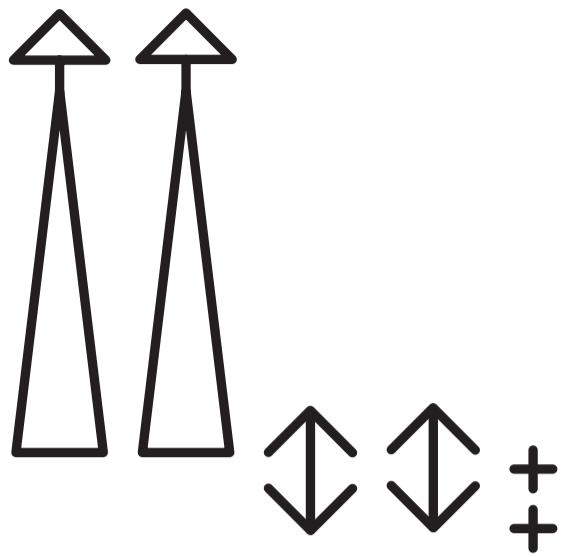
## Thanks to:

Anna Bitelli  
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Flip Webster

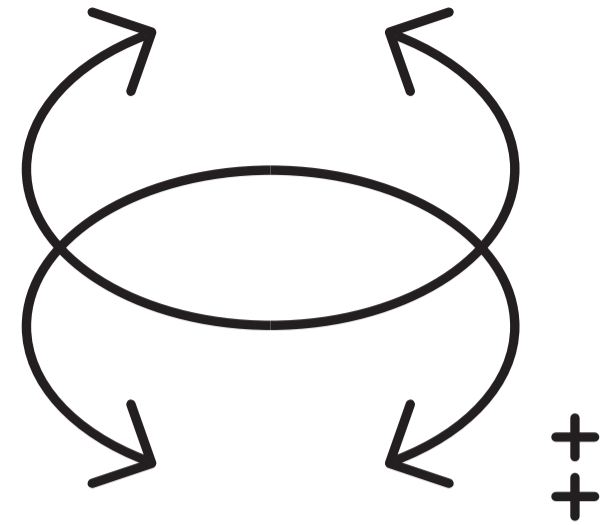
Ulele Burnham  
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Satellite of Love

Graphic Design:  
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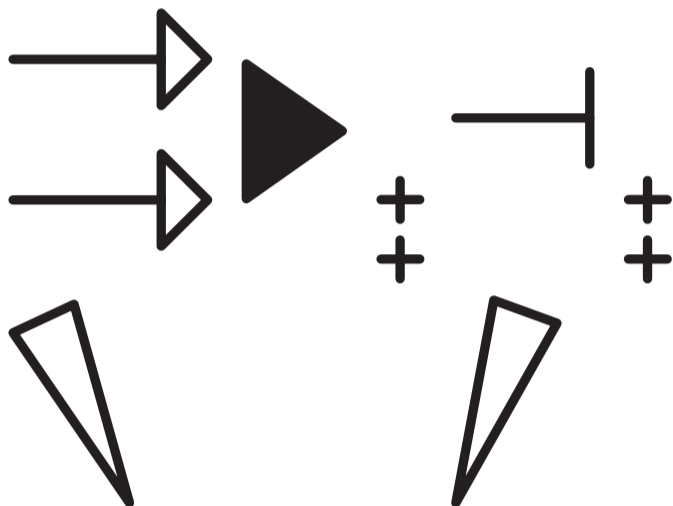
Sound Coordinator:  
Ivan Lapse



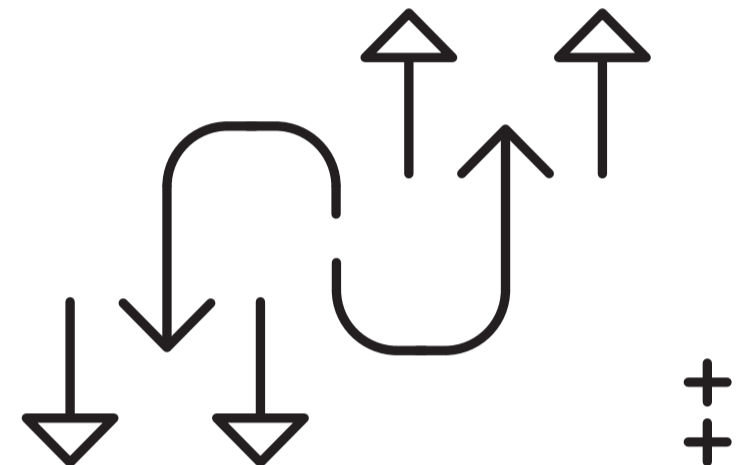
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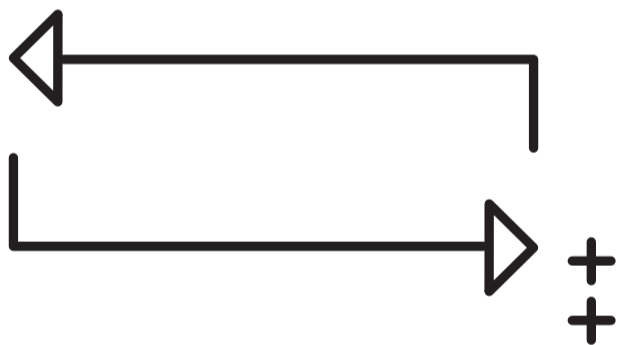
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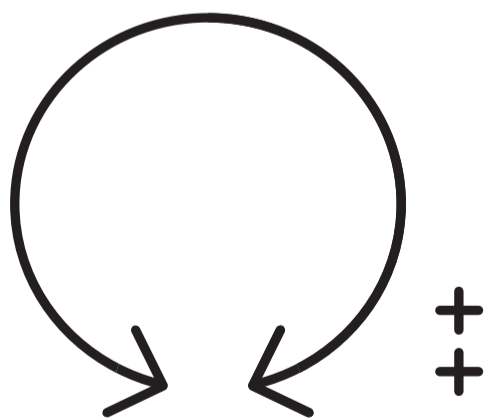
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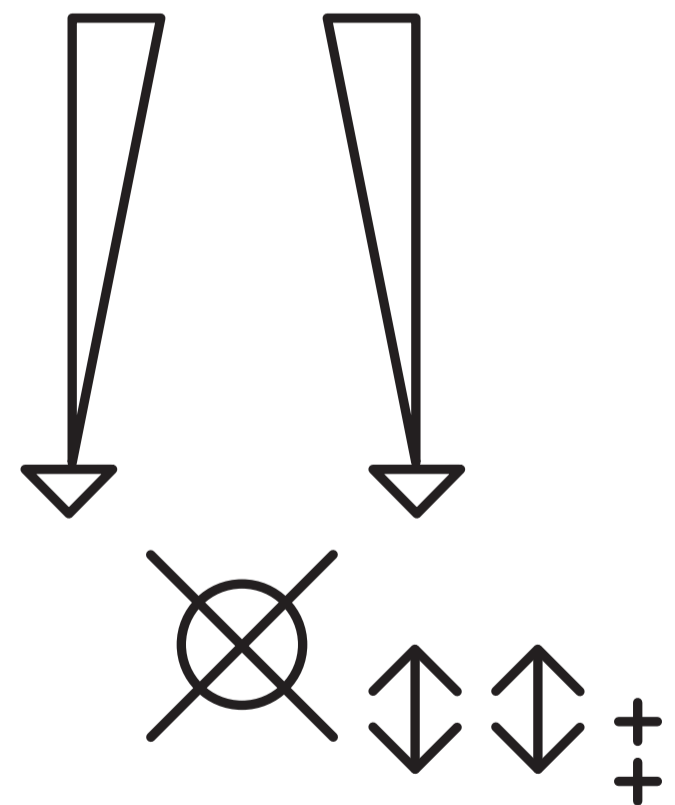
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(4.)



(5.)



(7.1.)

Index + Warm-up Annotations

The following index allows the reader, audience and spec-actors to follow along, from movement, to sign, to word and vice versa.

The symbol set is derived from 'Labanotation', a system of analysing and recording human movement, which was invented by Rudolf von Laban in 1928, labelled at the time as 'Kinetographie'.

These symbols serve as a translatable

visual notation reading system to the 7 'Warm-Up' exercises, from which 'Skeleton Argument' is constructed as a performance based workshop.

The physical exercises are based on 'Aikido' 'Warm-Up' routines, developed by Morihei Ueshiba as a 'way of unifying with life energy'.

We warm up together because someday we might fall into difficulty. By practicing awareness we teach our bodies to think for themselves and move through

difficulty with agility. Through an awareness of ourselves in relation to others, we might even land in a more desirable position than where we started.

(1.) Standing with feet a shoulder's width apart, hands above head, place one hand on top of the other, bring down and shake out in front of the stomach.

(2-3.) With this rowing movement we are made aware of our position within

the group and all move together towards our goal.

(4.) Circles to the side.

(5.) Circles over our heads.

(6.) Circling knees.

(7-7.1.) Stretching upwards, making contact between the ground and the sky.