

H⁰w T⁰ Sh⁰w Up? is a perf⁰rmance pr⁰gramme that takes place in Amsterdam, and began as a c⁰nversation questi⁰ning the relati⁰nship between the spaces we ⁰ccupy, the characters we play, and the w⁰rk we make. This questi⁰n presents an ⁰pp⁰rtunity t⁰ w⁰rk al⁰ngside artists wh⁰se practices are entangled with ideas of self and bel⁰nging, and wh⁰se w⁰rk takes the f⁰rm of text and the live event. Since 2016 the pr⁰gramme has w⁰rked with artists and writers t⁰ expl⁰re perf⁰rmance as a s⁰cial arrangement and m⁰de of publishing. Foll⁰wing w⁰rds written and sp⁰ken al⁰ud, H⁰w t⁰ sh⁰w up? creates a space t⁰ test where the breath is headed.

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Joanie fumbled with the latch as the doorbell rang again, trilling in her ears as the door swung open. Betty filled the entire frame, reddish blow-dried curls undulating about her face and framing her tremulous stare. A face-off. Betty stared at Joanie, couldn't believe her gorgeous eyes. "You're a mess, Lucille. A goddam mess". She steered her back inside the house, closing the door behind them with one swift and forceful kick of her elegant heel.

Manoeuvring Joanie was a difficult task, given that she was entirely resistant to being manoeuvred and that one of her legs seemed unable to bend at the knee. It had started by putting Joanie to bed, trying to unpin her hair and remove her make up. The silver had proved stubborn, and Betty had given up scrubbing for fear of hurting Joanie, or marking her — admittedly very even — complexion. How she ended up in Joanie's bed, in Joanie's nightdress, smoking Joanie's cigarettes, she wasn't sure. Betty was only sure that she'd wanted to keep her warm, away from the cameras, the visitors. In the beginning conversation was reluctant, both unused to sharing genuine feelings of any kind, but after a while Joanie gave in, aware of the numbness creeping closer to her face — her neck kept flopping now, like a baby lamb's, and it had to be propped up by Betty on the headboard. Sometimes they'd stay up talking, comparing tales, giggling, as the room filled up with cigarette smoke. But they had to stop when Joanie's mouth began to freeze. Her tongue was the last to go, and Betty kept it wet as long as she could, dribbling the last of the whisky from her glass past the silver lips.

This was not what Betty had expected from life, that's for sure. But no matter. Despite the scrapes and grazes she got from kicking Joanie in the night she was glad, always glad to wake up next to someone. Or something, as she had started to say to herself. But the bed was sagging on the right side. Joanie's side. And the silver had run through to the mattress, even though Betty changed the sheets each morning, scrubbing the ghostly marks left by Joanie's body with a bar of soap in the bath, because the washing machine just couldn't shift them.

The stains continued to spread like tree branches, creeping out toward the seams of the mattress, and she never doubted that when they came to the edge they would stop, no, they'd carry right on, snaking patterns across its underside. It was Joanie, digging her roots in. Leaving traces, teasing her.

Confetti Holly Childs

Not a myth but a theory:

Weeks later, Hyacinth opens chat to concede that “метафан”, pronounced “metaphan”, is likely a genericized trademark, like Xerox, or Roomba. Maybe when our bodies get to 98.5% plastic, everything will have completely different meanings, like a fluctuating market that can transform legal tender into confetti and then, in some rare cases, back again. Like wearing jeans in a money grab segment on a game show, but your pockets are just painted on so there's no way to maintain possession of any of the cash you've grabbed, and attempting to go for more notes means risking the loss of what you already hold.

So maybe I need to go back to the beginning.

In a puddle near the edge of town, silver confetti floats amongst gold in three distinct shades, most of it seemingly repurposed, subtracted from sheets of metallized cellophane, maxi confetti, big stuff, the kind that gets shot out of cannons. Inscribed with snippets of text, in a mix of letters, cyrillic, cursive, kanji and latin, as well as symbols, all burnt out of the plastic metal, so that all that's left is see-through cellophane pictures: a bull, a flower, a star, wings, and if you zoom in — say into a photograph you've taken of the confetti in the puddle, smaller than what can be perceived with your eyes, further complications arise, heavily distorted by the glare of the sun — you'll find more details, all curlicued and twisty, not so much prewritten as discovered. Orange-red leaves that fall into the puddle in real time make a fourth shade of gold dotting the water.

“I mean they all are fragments of some sort of... no?” An industrial buzz audible alongside two voices inflected with an inexplicable southern twang, origin unclear, speaking in unison, nattering in harmony, casually reinforcing each other’s feelings. The two voices resonant structures – their bodies – can be seen reflected in the puddle, confetti haloed, their hands extending phones in turn, pointing opposite directions, towards our futures. Let’s call one voice Gully and the other Hyacinth.

Cellophane is a 100% biodegradable biobased polymer, a plastic. A portmanteau of “cellulose”, which is cellophane’s primary constituent, an organic compound derived from cell walls of green plants and “diaphane”, meaning transparent: cellophane is clear and shiny. Cellophane is derived from plant matter, and though it breaks down over time, it can’t really be described as an “environmentally friendly” product, as a highly toxic element, carbon disulfide, is usually used in its production. In some parts of the world, cellophane has become a genericized trademark, with a wide range of bioplastic and petroplastic films and products being casually, though erroneously, referred to by consumers as cellophane.

But this confetti cellophane in a body of water maintaining its form over an extended period doesn’t really ring true. I suppose I’ve genericized cellophane too. As I play the puddle scene again, then again – four tones of gold and a silver, soaking perhaps for days, four hands reflected, guiding our stars – it seems more likely to be metallized biaxially-oriented polyethylene terephthalate (BoPET), that is not biodegradable but that is often recycled into lower grade plastic products. After being cut into small pieces and washed with soap and water, BoPET plastic is melted into pellets known as “nurdles” that can be recombined to create items such as carpet, dog raincoats and outdoor furniture. The generic term for BoPET is Mylar, and like all PET plastics, its universal resin identification code is a “1” surrounded by three arrows chasing themselves.

Each nurdle is a node in a global hyperobject, a plastic megastructure distributed across all continents and oceans, in the air, and along our digestive tracts. This confetti puddle, chromed paperwork shredded. Burnt upon BoPET just to be cut, cut to be thrown, to celebrate what? Is there a recoverable backstory to these sheets of metallized plastic cut to confetti, thrown to land and stick in the water? Were these symbols always just to be cleaved, made obscure, a code? If not, what original purpose did these texts emblazoned on three golds and a silver serve? Like jeans run through 1,000 rough-cycles with a barrel of stones, is the end result the simulation of a rough and tumble denim beforelife?

But back to the puddle, to the hands mapping our futures. The clues gesture towards some kind of proof that can’t be measured objectively. In the courtyard of a non-profit international educational institute funded by an oligarch, confetti flecks all surfaces. Right now I’m sliding back to the second paragraph for images, looking for collated evidence of the patterns in the confettis’ drift, into all nooks of the exterior, searching hard drives when I know exactly what I know: gold and silver BoPET, swept into corners, grouped with salt, with ice, alongside cigarette butts, adjacent to bottle tops, at times

catching buttons. As if Joanie made up the unwilling half of a cardigan. For fear of tearing both dress and bedcover, she remained tentatively on the edge of the bed, arms goose-pimpled from the cold wisps of air sneaking under the window frame. Her fingers moved over bead after bead after bead across her lap. She counted: 12, 13, 14... 50, 51...87, 88, 89, 90, 91... Her hands were so very cold that Joanie could no longer feel the sharp points of the beads. Somehow, the cold made her eyes heavy, and her gluey lashes stuck together each time she blinked, which had the effect of making her look as if she were moving in slow motion.

What tedious restraint, and a frustrating amount of work to get free. She wasn’t ready yet. Now her lashes were so firmly gummed together from blinking that her eyes wouldn’t open again. So, allowing her chin to sneak down onto her chest, she slept. As her chest heaved up and down with surprising vigour the straps of her dress strained, cutting into her shoulders, and the stitches around the beads grew tight and, finally, popped. The beads unravelled one by one in quick succession, clicking as they hit the floor, pooling around Joanie’s feet – a glittering moat.

When she woke she was on the floor, her legs folded neatly beneath her and her left arm lifeless at her side. Its weight caught her by surprise and she heaved it onto the bed frame, twisting to unhook the one thread still attaching her to the woven bedspread, its flowers wilted from their attempted escape.

The dress was ruined, but only from behind and, Joanie reasoned, not many people would be looking at her ass.

The doorbell rang, and, lifting her hand to smooth down any stray hairs, Joanie slipped a robe over her shoulders and trod gingerly down the carpeted stairs, left arm bouncing against her side. Pausing at the mirror half way down, she was confronted with the attempted escape of a fake eyelash, flapping against her cheekbone. She was having trouble moving downwards with any control, her feet kept slipping on the carpet, almost sliding from one stair down to the next, her left arm refusing to rise and grip onto the wooden banister. Joanie decided to turn around so that her right arm could hold on to the rail, steadying her, and she could tread carefully backwards down the staircase. Her progress was slow, but she was enjoying the strange theatricality of the movement, imagining reaching the bottom and turning with a flourish to face the front door.

When she did reach the bottom of the stairs, Joanie gently lifted a heavy diamond necklace from its velvet case on the side table, enjoying its cool surface as she slung it around her neck, managing to fasten the clasp at the back with one hand. She then slid the earrings in, completing the set. Picking up a can and vigorously shaking it with her right arm, she wedged it under her left so she could pull off the cap. Its sharp scent, floral and neat, hit the back of her throat as a cloud of silver floated down to sit on her already silver waves. The final, final touch. Quite a picture she was too, with her arm numb up to her shoulder now, and a tingling about her neck that suggested the numbness would soon travel upwards.

increasingly unreceptive to changes in temperature, light, and the touch of a hand.

Her hair was fixed hard as a beetle shell and sat as if it were an extension of the skin on her face— that is, smooth and grey, but strangely crisp. The sharp beads that covered her dress dug into the skin beneath her armpits, their faceted glass circumferences producing a mild but persistent itch, small red indents invisible under their surface. The entirety of her was squeezed, pinched, strung together. Admiring the way her face powder had already made a home in the wrinkles around her eyes, she turned from the window, leaving a cloud of fragrance.

The room, her room — usually so comforting, familiar — seemed on this important evening to antagonise Joanie. Her body was awkward, not wanting to bend at the hip when she sat at her dressing table, such that she felt as if she'd grown without realising it (impossible). The lights seemed no longer capable of illuminating her face and its changing landscape, instead falling flat on her grey complexion, doing nothing to reassure her.

As Joanie worried at the hair at the nape of her neck, for a strand had come loose from its whole, its silver lacquer faded with each tug of her fingers. What an entrance she would make! Her feet felt heavy, and it was a struggle to wedge all her toes into the point of her shoe; it was like they were multiplying with each push. Toes everywhere they shouldn't be. Joanie kicked the heels aside.

She was taking this evening very seriously; a selection of metallic-hued cosmetics sat in a line on her dressing table, all inside tight plastic wrapping. One by one, Joanie sliced each packet open with the sharp edge of a silver nail. She started with an eyeshadow palette, noticing the satisfying click as it opened; pressing a hot fingertip into the brightest shade of silver to assess the effect on her skin.

The silver shadow seemed to spread beyond where Joanie's fingertips applied it to her eyelid, and her pupils became stark next to their exuberant outline. This was matched with a dense lipstick, the look of which reminded Joanie of a particularly thick saucepan bottom. Sad that nothing more glamorous had come to mind, she soldiered on. Joanie's an actress. One of the best. But as she administers the final touches she admits to herself that she's gone too far. A spritz to finish. "One more spritz!", she says. "One last spritz to finish!" A quick, high laugh escaped her.

Wiggling her bare toes into the carpet weave, its usually luxurious texture became indistinguishable from any other kind of floor, in that she could no longer feel the softness of the fabric against her heels or its warm strands between her toes. As if the bottoms of her feet were numb.

As Joanie sat on the bed for a momentary rest that she hoped would galvanise her, she realised too late that the beads on the seat of her dress had attached themselves to her bedcover. They clung to the silk weave of lotus flowers, thread looping over each one like clasping hands, or loops

razzed haphazardly by the caretaker's birch besom, lifted into the sky to fall again into corners. Kənfɪ'ti, pronounced with emphasis on the last syllable, because though notionally Italian, the word actually spread via French, while in Italian confetti is called coriandoli, and in Italian sugar coated almonds are called confetti—I think I can describe it better in memories than conjured via images.

It'll get everywhere. Through strong winds, blizzards and highly improbable heavy island-rains thousands of kilometres inland, the confetti will float neatly in the air, kept afloat by next to nothing. Sometimes iced, usually in corners, and under the bleachers where we sit, casually scrolling our individual feeds if the weather is conducive to glove removal, if our phones will stay alive; lithium ions slow down in cold temperatures, diminishing the flow of electricity. And if our phones die, we'll make games to replace socials like touching our noses together while slipping around on ice.

In the springtime, it's a clear puddle. In winter it's completely frozen, with a pocket of slurpee right down the bottom where the fish survive. In the summer it's dry with everything that was thrown into the water when it was water solidified in sediment. In the autumn, Gully was in one of those big clear plastic balls on this puddle, wet again, it's raining, the ones that let you walk on water. Prone to fear of the future and the wasteland of the past, Gully reveals a mental model for zooming out: "Don't think about where u want to be in 1 year, or 5 years, 10 years, or 20, or 30, but in 40, or 41 years from now, where do you want to be?"

The maxi confetti in the corners is junk. Non-coding DNA comprises about 98.5% of human genetic material. Trillions of microbeads—nurdles recategorised as "plastic resin pellet pollution" once they've exited the domestic realm—are discharged from households every single day; down sinks and shedded: small dots of plastic in toothpaste, exfoliants, filaments in clothing, decomposing over lifetimes, millennia. You're swamped in curls of non-coding DNA data that punctuate or pad your genetics, accounting for 98.5% of your script, accounting for the not theorised but actual particularities of your features, but also repeated strands with little variations like trials, like flourishes, like bars in the song your DNA just is, without having to perform, your complicated genome linking you with hundreds of thousands of years of some things changing, while other things stay the same. On the other end of the scale, the Floating Bladderwort, a carnivorous water flower, is believed to have the lowest percentage of non-coding DNA of all the complex, multicellular lifeforms, the smallest genome ever. It has a minimal root system that looks like a cartoon starfish branching into smaller cartoon starfishes at the end of each of its tips and minimal variation between its stems and its leaves. With only 3% junk DNA, having apparently deleted the rest, it looks like curls of butter floating up above a star. It lives in ponds and puddles.

Early in the development of distressed denim, "stone washed jeans", garments designed to be faded before they've been worn were washed for hours with pounds of pumice stones, a time consuming, energy inefficient and environmentally destructive process that often also randomly damaged

jeans in ways that could not be predicted or controlled. Cellulose is the major component of not just cellophane, but also cotton, the primary material used in the manufacture of jeans. In the early 1990s it was discovered that cellulose enzymes isolated from a fungus then placed into bacteria could be used to attack the cellulose in exposed cotton fibres in denim, breaking some of the molecular bonds so that dye particles could be deleted from the denim surface, while the interior of the cotton fibers would be left intact. Biostoning jeans. Stonewashed look without the damage.

How to delete non-coding DNA? Probably not consciously. I'm scanning online retailers to find the perfect confetti, as modelled in the puddle at the edge of the city, the one I've been trying to describe. Metallic BoPET, but this time in 6 shades, one for each side of a Rubik's cube. Ideally also preprinted and shredded: distressed, fragmented, riddled with codes, half-cut stone washed ripped-knee passwords, credit card details, full names sliced in two, like the prototype. Maybe with a new password every day. I ask Hyacinth to talk to me about "the puddle scene" as though it was in a movie we both sat through and not just our lives. He responds, "like this?" sending a link to olx.ua, a global online marketplace headquartered in Holland, with "метафан" prefilled in the search bar, returning a solid two dozen results for метафан, averaging around 60 грн/kg.

Метафан, метафан, метафан. Of all words in all languages, this is the one word that understands what I see in the puddle. But what is the origin of such a word? Is it a portmanteau of metal and cellophane? A conjunction of metaphor and the profane? A metazoa-hydrophane chimera? Метафан. My best false friend, because what would lead me to imagine that any non-English word would be a unique blend of two English words that doesn't already exist as a compound word in English?

"Confetti, in English...", Hyacinth responds, dots preceding him. "That's Italian, right?" More dots. "Well, метафан sounds like chemistry, like something in the realm of, like, sodium hexametaphosphate. It sounds technical. To be honest, it sounds ... intense." ... "In fact, I'd say, it probably sounds as unexpected to you as it does to me as a native speaker."

"Does метафан... mean something?"

Known colloquially as Graham salt, sodium hexametaphosphate is a chemical compound used as an emulsifier in edible non-foods such as artificial maple syrup, imitation cheese, whipped toppings, packaged egg whites, roast beef, fish fingers, fruit jellies and canned milk. Graham salt is also added to dog food for its potential to reduce the buildup of tartar on dog teeth. Recent studies have found that around 90% of table salt brands sampled globally are contaminated with microplastics. The most common microplastic found in salt sold for human consumption is PET plastic, but in fragments too small even for a simple "1" surrounded by three arrows to be impressed upon them.

"What's the special occasion?" Gully asks.

The 35th Academy Awards

Rosie Haward

Betty knows that after this I'm done. The last hurrah of a show horse, a final parade up and down the track, trotting and clicking and whinnying (a whimsy), letting them tie ribbons in my mane, letting them tell me what a good, pretty, strong show horse I am. Then off I go.

Silver's my colour, don't you think? The metallic glint sets off my eyes. That glint's gonna get you, gonna draw you in, then your eyes will slide down and contemplate the whole of me, my shape, sucked in and kept tight like sausage meat in its skin.

I'm shivering in anticipation of my face turning to silver. It will be the silver of chocolate coins, though, these are always a disappointment to me. The sharp halves of foil peel back to offer something so grim, so flavourless... Maybe I'll be an angel then: jewels gaudy like tinsel upon each of my fingers, arms spread like wings, stage lights my halo...

A sickly mist hovered just past her window frame. Damp looking, it clung to front doors and car windscreens, obscuring the vision of those who, doubting its persistence, stepped outside.

Joanie's eyes travelled to the edge of her reflection. This was tricky, for she did not know quite what she was. The membrane between her and the rest of the world, where her skin and clothes made contact with the air, had become confused, and she filled up her Joanie-sized space differently now;



“To spray the sky, creating information clouds that hover for seconds to minutes at a time. I want to believe that the shape and density of these tumbling explosions will be visually exciting, and, that by presenting deep things as though they are shallow, once the contents settles, there will also be the possibility of stumbling upon answers in piles of BoPET splashed across the scene.”

“For what purpose are you buying the метафан?”

“Datasets flatten specificity and hallucinate shared aspects of experience that individual users may not relate to at all.”

A banner at the top of the online store announces, “Dear Clients! Since the main factor in determining prices is the dollar exchange rate which is currently very unstable, all prices are updated twice a day, are relevant at the time of purchase, and do not require clarification from the manager. Thank you. For now!” Items twist across the heading banner like a Rubik’s cube solved and unsolved in an endless stream: fog fluid, blue метафан, pink метафан, a метафан cannon, a snow generator. Another dimension, trying to recover from the past.

One day in 1967, about one hundred dollars in single bills thrown by a group of hippies in the visitors’ gallery shut down the New York stock exchange for some minutes over lunch. “Never having thrown money before”, Bruce Dancis, one of the hippies involved in the action, recalled, “I was amazed at how long it took for the bills to waft down to the trading floor, one floor below us.” The stock exchange’s functions were put on pause as brokers and traders diverted their attention away from brokering and trading and towards grabbing at the dollar bills that floated down to them from above.

Like wearing jeans in a money grab segment on a game show, but your pockets are just painted on so there’s no way to maintain possession of any of the cash you’ve grabbed, and attempting to go for more notes means risking the loss of what you already hold.

In steeply inflating economies, coins generally do not fare well, as the real value of the metal used to manufacture the coins can very rapidly overtake their ascribed face value. In hyperinflationary situations, coins may be illicitly melted down and sold in other territories for more than they can get as legal tender. Notes that lose their face value in the same situations can be redenominated, stamped, often with a new much smaller face value, often literally with the word “new” marked in front of the currency name to differentiate it from its old same but different value, usually with a few 0s knocked off the end.

Teddy Coste

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