COOPER

Contents

Cover: *Cooper*, Adam Wynn, 2021

Chapter One:

Tommy who?

Thomas Frederick Cooper was a Welsh magician and comedian from the 1940s to the 1980s and is regarded as one of Britain's best loved entertainers. His performances were comprised of comedy and magic tricks- tricks that would more often than not go wrong.

Despite giving off the impression of perpetual bewilderment, Cooper was more than capable of performing all the tricks successfully, and was even a member of the prestigious Magic Circle. He walked, in his size 13 shoes, a thin line between performing a trick intentionally incorrectly, and simultaneously, not revealing to the audience how the trick was done.

Cooper never wrote a joke. He would source material from across the United States (attending shows, watching television in his hotel room and listen to radio shows), taking material that he deemed suitable for his act. He later (reluctantly, as Cooper was an incredibly frugal man) subscribed to an enormous catalogue of joke books which would act be the foundation for alot of his stand-up.

In a pre-internet age, it would be an onerous task trying to find someone using ones material. Cooper rarely, if ever, credited performers or writers for any material he used. With that said, anyone familiar with a Tommy Cooper routine will tell you that no matter where or who the material came from, or what its original state was, the end result (Tommy's version of the joke/song/trick) would have a unique spin.

On April 15th 1984, Cooper suffered a heart attack, and subsequently died, while performing on the variety show *Live from Her Majesty's* which was being broadcast live to millions of viewers across the world. Believing it to be part of his act, the audience laughed and applauded. For someone who gave their life to entertain, it could be considered the perfect curtain call.

Using Tommy Cooper as 'the vessel of exploration', I have been able to interrogate the notions of ownership, appropriation and 'the copy' - how one 'thing' can become another 'thing'.

I have worked in an artistic purgatory; deconstructing language, documenting artefacts and splintering decades of footage to create new 'things' through recycling film and sound - offering copies, or snippets, of history.

Different people will connect with these 'things' differently, and that's okay. I am not pushing an agenda; much like a joke can hit or miss, I hope that the viewer/listener/person interacting with the 'thing', either in a physical space or online, can draw their own conclusion to what the fragments of history mean.

On April 15th, 1984

The London Palladium was the scene of Tommy's show once more

It was a full house and he had the crowd eating out of his hand

Everything, as usual, seemed completely unplanned

In what seemed like a finale Tommy dropped to the floor

Causing the room to erupt in laughter and applause

Curtains closed, lights went up, there was no encore

Everybody left their seats and headed for the door

Unbeknownst to them they had witnessed Tommy Cooper's death

He had given his all until he had nothing left

Now please note, at the moment that this entertainer died

Even with a room full of people not one tear was cried

Much less, they rose to their feet and they laughed and clapped

Now tell me one fucking thing that's more beautiful than that...

Cos' I'm sure I can't think of one.
[1]

Be lazy like a fox

Don't keep reinventing the wheel. Take something that works,
copy
adapt
give credit
and
share

[2]

DAILY Mirror

New game starts today!

BINGO

WIN £100,000

★ See Page 21 ★

Monday, April 16, 1984   17p

Tommy   The last moments

By GEORGINA WALSH and NOREEN LYNCH

COMEDIAN Tommy Cooper died last night after collapsing in front of millions of TV viewers.

As he lay on the stage, the curtain came down and compere Jimmy Tarbuck and others rushed forward to try to revive him.

Tommy, 62, who had a history of heart trouble, was nearing the end of his act on the ITV show Live From Her Majesty's.

A showgirl helped him on with a massive cloak and Tommy stretched out his arms, then slumped slowly backwards to the floor.

As he lay there, the TV audience heard him breathing heavily as though he was asleep. There was laughter because they believed it was part of his act.

Ambulance

But then a hand came through the curtains and pulled them around him. The programme went into a commercial break.

Millions see star collapse on TV

Tommy, you were magic

See Page Seven

Struck down   The moment of tragedy seen by millions—last exit of a great comedian—as Tommy slumped to the floor.

A star with the greatest trick of all—making people laugh

Tommy, you were magic

Tributes to gentle giant of comedy

HE was the man with the magic touch—the clown in the famous fez who earned a very special place in the nation's affection.

By GEORGINA WALSH and NOREEN LYNCH

Fame

THE HUSBAND: Tommy and his wife Gwen.

Heroes welcome for golden duo

Bingo! A day to remember

WINNER: Joyce

Bikers in licence mix-up

'A three year guarantee on a Sony video? Whatever would I do with that?'

fig.1   fig.2

fig.3   fig.4
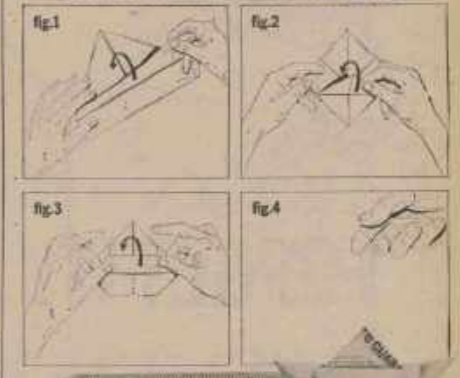
Buy a C20, C30, C40, or C9 video recorder from a participating Sony dealer before May 19, and he'll give you a comprehensive, 3 year guarantee, absolutely free. And if you don't think of a good use for it, all that it's likely to do for three years is sit in a drawer and gather dust.

SONY
Whatever will they think of next?

[Fig.1]

This fellow knocked at a door and said, 'Hello - is Charlie in?'

The woman replied, 'Charlie died last night'

The man said, 'He didn't say anything about a pot of paint, did he?' [3]

Have our notions of originality really changed so much? Are we less original than our predecessors, unable to summon works ex nihilio — out of nothing — as 'real artists' used to? [4]

[Fig.2]

[Fig.3]

[Fig.4]   [Fig.5]

MY TEETH ITCH

Have you ever died a death on stage
in front of an audience?

Oh yes, I have, oh yes. I won't tell you the
name of the place, but I have died.

sey Interview, 1983

[Fig.6]

LV/T

London Weekend Television

19th April 1984

Joe Kerr
Painters Department

cc   Peter Cazaly
      Len Goff

On behalf of the Company could I once again, express our
thanks and gratitude for your iniative and efforts in
trying to revive Tommy Cooper after his collapse on stage.

The nurse has also asked me to pass on her admiration and
sincere thanks for your assistance and support.

Mike Southgate
Head of Studio and
Location Services

[Fig.7]

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Figure 1
Walsh, G and Lynch, N. 1984. *Tommy The Last Moments.* Daily Mirror [Online]. April 16th 1984.
https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/BL/0000560/19840416/001/0001
[Date accessed 4th June 2022]

Figure 2
Steamboat Bill, Jr. 1928. [Film]. Charles Reisner. dir. USA. United Artists.

Figure 3
Cooperama. 1966. [TV Series]. Mark Stuart. dir. UK. ABC Television. *Tommy Cooper – The Very Best of Comedy* DVD 2010.

Figure 4
Goddard, T. 2009. *The Best of Tommy Cooper*. [Video]. YouTube.
https://youtu.be/oTY6TxXsK-o
[Date accessed 4th June 2022]

Figure 5
belfast jack. 2017. *Tommy Cooper Kracker Bread Vintage British TV Commercial*. [Video]. YouTube.
https://youtu.be/A6J9T9rsJc8
[Date accessed 4th June 2022]

Figure 6
ITV Channel Television. 2015. *Tommy Cooper Interview in Jersey – 1983*. [Video]. YouTube.
https://youtu.be/W3Nt_RLQbgg
[Date accessed 4th June 2022]

Figure 7
Kerr, J. 2019. *I tried to save Tommy Cooper's life the night he died*. Wales Online.
https://www.walesonline.co.uk/news/wales-news/i-tried-save-tommy-coopers-15677344
[Date accessed 4th June 2022]

[1]
Pip, Scroobius. 2008. *Angles*. Angles. [CD]. Sunday Best Recordings.

[2]
WikiHouse. 2018. *WikiHouse 10 Design Principles* [Online].
https://principles.design/examples/wiki-house-10-design-principles
[Date accessed 4th June 2022]

[3]
Fisher, J. 2006. *Tommy Cooper – Always Leave Them Laughing*. UK. Harper Collins UK.

[4]
Shore, R. 2017. *Beg, Steal and Borrow: Artists against Originality*. UK. Lawrence King.

Chapter Two:
Abracadabra

In popular culture, *Abracadabra* is a magic word used commonly in stage magic tricks. Its origin is ambiguous. If all sources were to be accepted as truths, *Abracadabra* is a Hebrew word of Egyptian, Greek, Persian and Syrian descent.

Regardless of origin, the common belief is that it has the ability to protect and cure people of disease when (depending on source) inscribed on an amulet or written on paper and suspended from the neck with thread. [Fig.8]

As ambiguous as the genesis of *Abracadabra*, Tommy Cooper opted to mumble his way through 'incomprehensible incantation of dubious foreign extraction that might have been spelled 'Zhhzhhzhhzhh'. [5]

There isn't one example of him uttering the word.

Through the decades of footage, I have catalogued all of Cooper's 'magic words' as isolated audio clippings. I experimented with dictation software [6-9] which documented the unintelligible language and spectrogram generators [Fig.10a-10d] to produce visual work informed by the fragments of audio.

The final itteration of this work is an interactive, motion-triggered audio installation powered through a pair of Raspberry Pi computer monitors, speakers and infrared motion sensors [Fig.11 and 12], which produce one of twenty-seven Tommy Cooper 'magic words' at random when activated.

...as if by magic.

[Fig.8]   25

♪ ABRA-ABRACADABRA ♪

[Fig.9a]
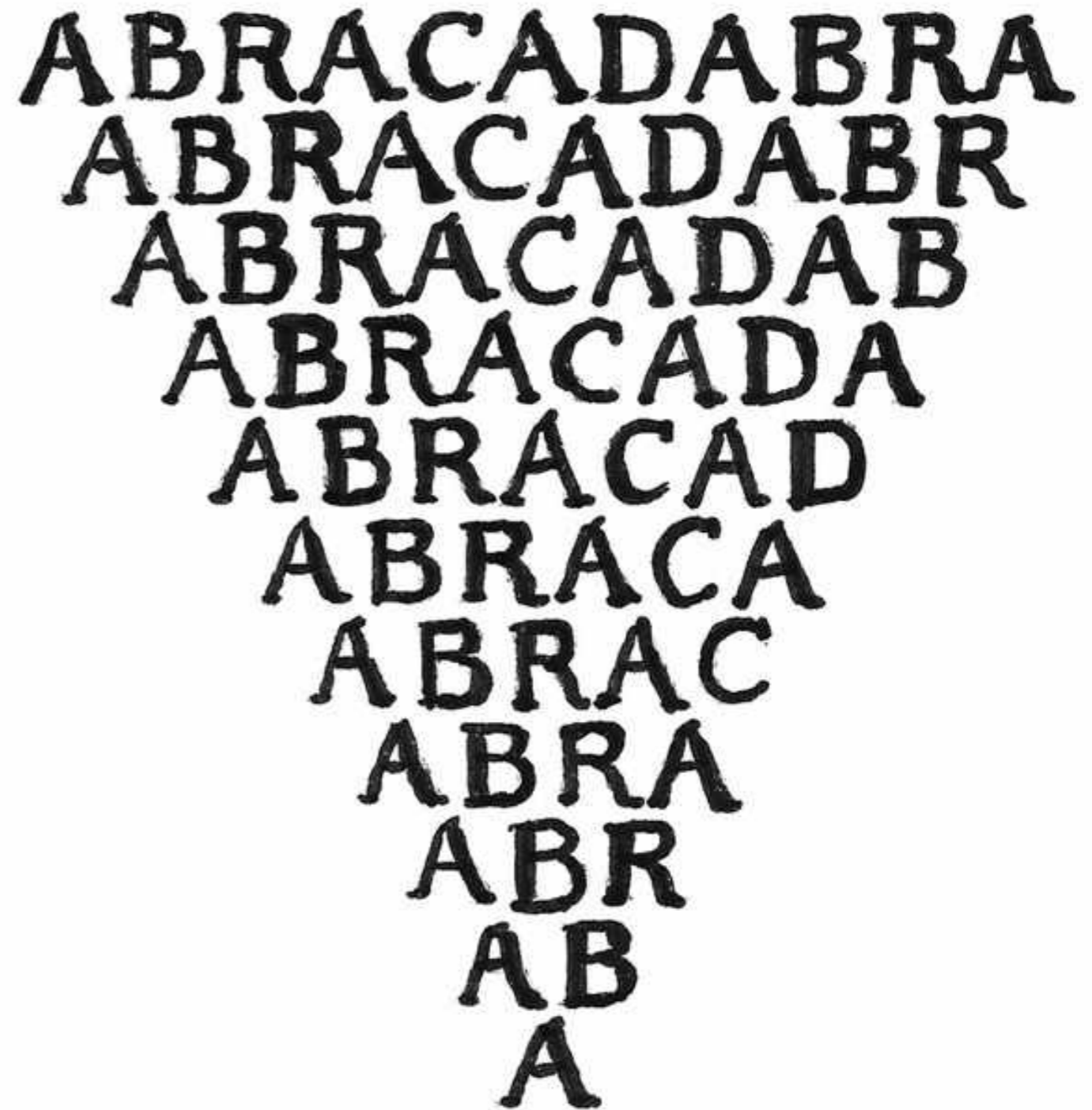
♪ ABRACADABRA ♪

[Fig.9b]

♪ ABRA-ABRACADABRA ♪

[Fig.9c]

♪ ABRA-ABRACADABRA ♪

[Fig.9d]

33

I don’t do what?
Do I have?
This is all out of
my job.
Back to the, Don’t
Put It Down
Like the Wind.
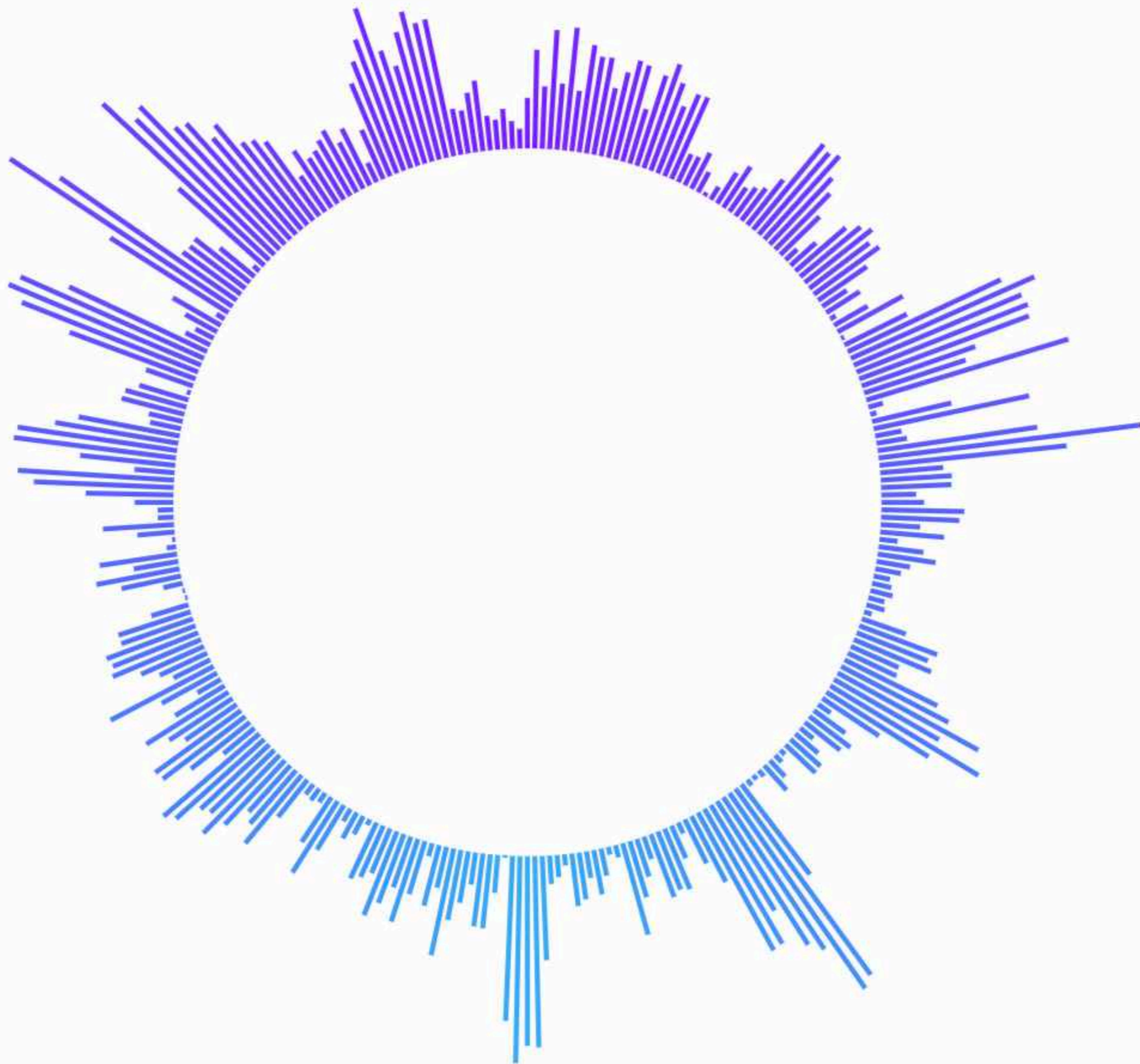The halawa.

Shit. [6]

just music

hot dog

Mama fuck did you do to the damn like the why the whole Allah?[7]
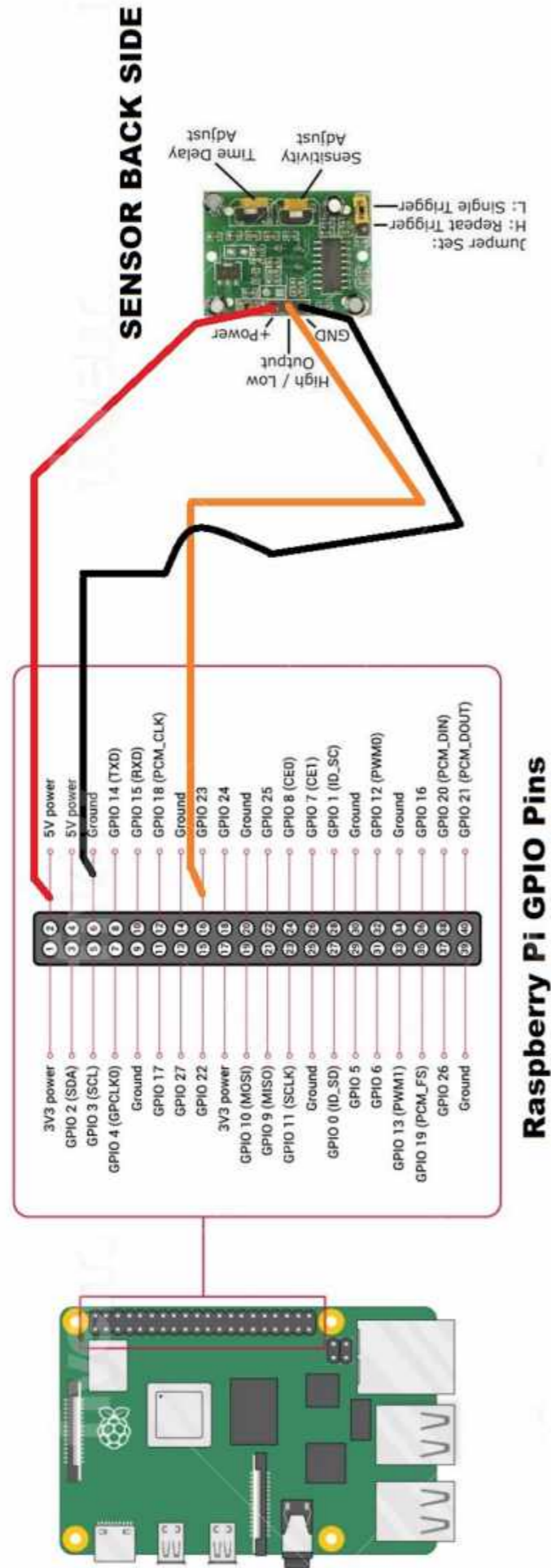
Hello.

To hold up forever to wow war.

The. [8]

Ah hello to

George world

Hartley law was

to hold on to
why how

to hold my
Jehovah
Jehovah right
to the hole
Allah Hawa [9]

[Fig.13]

[Fig.11]　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　[Fig.12]

SENSOR BACK SIDE

Time Delay Adjust

Sensitivity Adjust

L: Single Trigger
H: Repeat Trigger
Jumper Set:

GND
+Power

High / Low
Output

Raspberry Pi GPIO Pins

5V power
5V power
Ground
GPIO 14 (TXD)
GPIO 15 (RXD)
GPIO 18 (PCM_CLK)
Ground
GPIO 23
GPIO 24
Ground
GPIO 25
GPIO 8 (CE0)
GPIO 7 (CE1)
GPIO 1 (ID_SC)
Ground
GPIO 12 (PWM0)
Ground
GPIO 16
GPIO 20 (PCM_DIN)
GPIO 21 (PCM_DOUT)

3V3 power
GPIO 2 (SDA)
GPIO 3 (SCL)
GPIO 4 (GPCLK0)
Ground
GPIO 17
GPIO 27
GPIO 22
3V3 power
GPIO 10 (MOSI)
GPIO 9 (MISO)
GPIO 11 (SCLK)
Ground
GPIO 0 (ID_SD)
GPIO 5
GPIO 6
GPIO 13 (PWM1)
GPIO 19 (PCM_FS)
GPIO 26
Ground

```
import RPi.GPIO as GPIO # To use Raspberry Pi GPIO PINS
import time  # to generate delays
import pygame  # for music control
import random  # To randomize the files
    #_____

# Board Pin no. 16 is configured as input
GPIO.setmode(GPIO.BOARD)
GPIO.setwarnings(False)
GPIO.setup(16,GPIO.IN)

Trigger_state = 0
To_Play = 0
#_____
# music package initialization
pygame.mixer.init()

LIST_1
=["a.wav","b.wav","c.wav","d.wav","e.wav","f.wav","g.wav","h.wav","i.wav","j.wav
","k.wav","l.wav","m.wav","n.wav","o.wav","p.wav","q.wav","r.wav","s.wav","t.wav
","u.wav","v.wav","w.wav","x.wav","y.wav","z.wav","1.wav"]

        _____


def play():

    global To_Play


    pygame.mixer.music.load(To_Play)
    pygame.mixer.music.play()



while True:

    time.sleep(0.1)
    Trigger_state = GPIO.input(16)
    if Trigger_state == 1:

        To_Play = random.choice(LIST_1)
        play()
        time.sleep(2)
        #-------------------------------------------
completed-------------------------------------------------------
```

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[5]
Fisher, J. 2006. *Tommy Cooper – Always Leave Them Laughing*. UK. Harper Collins UK.

[6]
Abracadabra - dictated through *Recorder* [Android App].

[7]
Abracadabra - dictated through *Otter* [Android App].

[8]
Abracadabra - dictated through *Write by voice* [Android App].

[9]
Abracadabra - dictated through *Speech to text* [Android App].

Chapter Three
Sleight of Hand

The poor image is an illicit fifth-generation bastard of an original image. [10]

Sleight of Hand is a video collage comprised of Tommy Cooper hand gestures, sourced from recordings between 1970-1980 converted to digital files.

When performed, these movements are made with varying intentions (misdirection, emphasis, description, clues); all of which are lost through the cropping and zooming of the clips.

These grainy snippets of action offer a visual avenue of fragmentation - each hand singularly appearing and disappearing on screen. Language is lost, colloquialisms put to one side.
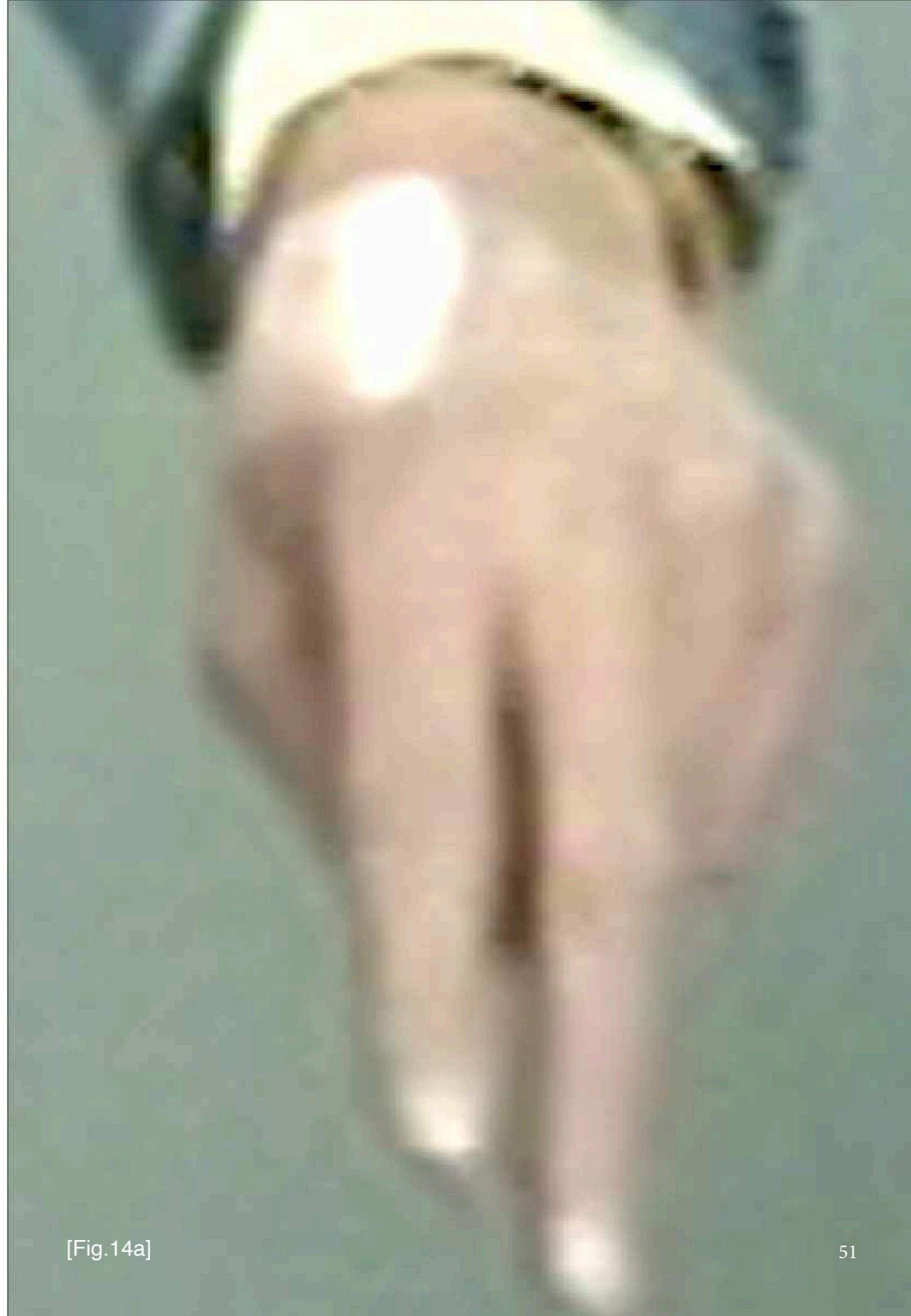
Some movements are smooth
Some erratic
Some are graceful
Some are awkward.

Every word you say, every gesture you make, every thought your mind hosts has already been said, made or thought of before. Hundreds of thousands, millions, billions of times before; more times than you have the mental capacity to imagine. [11]

...the image is without expression. It doesn't represent reality. It is a fragment of the real world. It is a thing just like any other—a thing like you and me. [12]

There are no original, new inventions because even the smallest part of the product is made out of something already existing […] and every art piece is a variation of a work by a known or unknown artist somewhere in the world.[13]
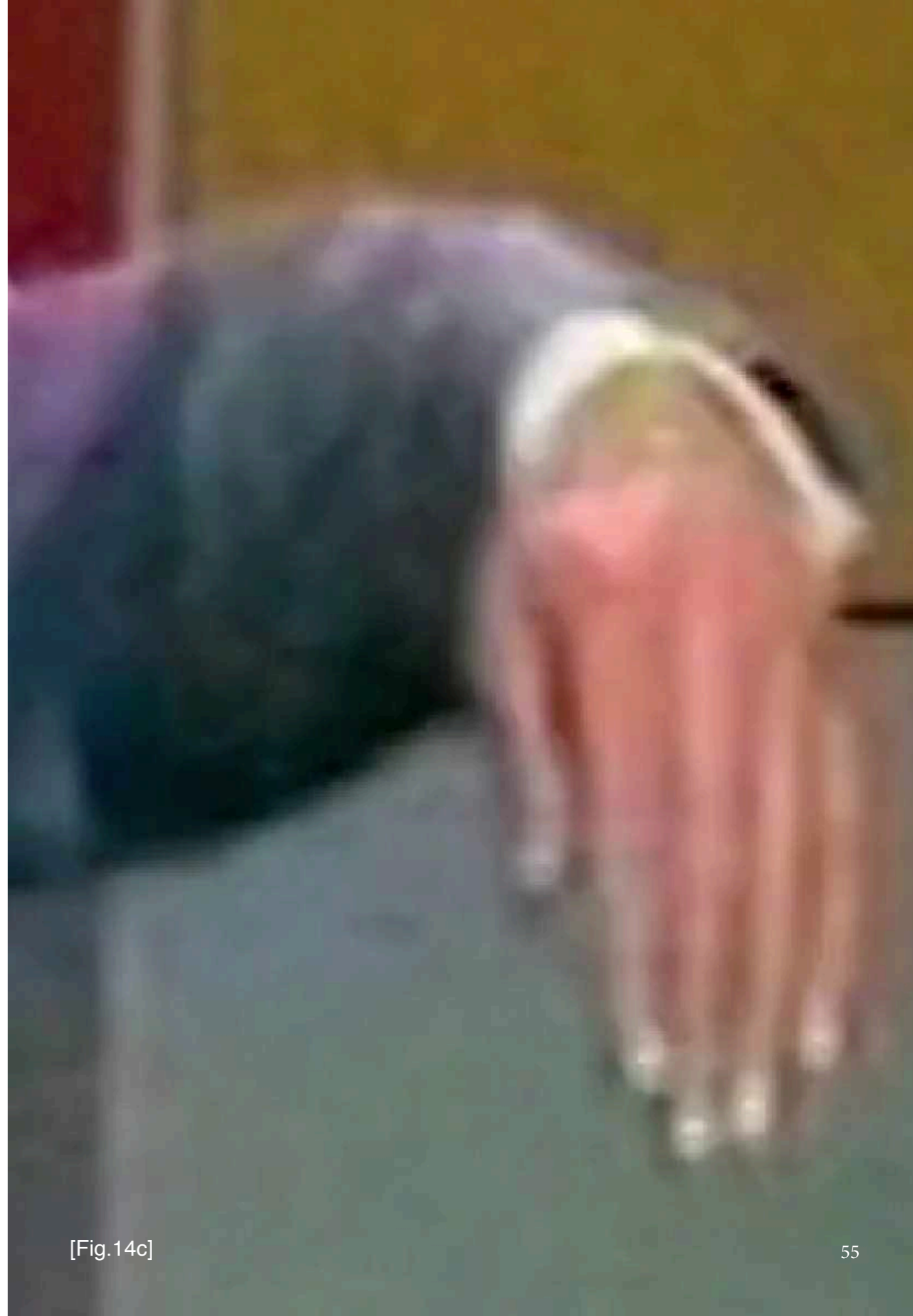
[Fig.14d]

[Fig.14e]

The game is, always to give people something that they recognise, but that might not entirely make sense to them. [14]

Figure 14a-14e
Wynn, A. 2020. *Sleight of Hand*. [Video]
https://vimeo.com/524344491
[Date accessed 4th June 2022]

[10]
Steyerl, H. 2012. *The Wretched of the Screen*. Germany. Sternberg Press.

[11]
Shore, R. 2017. *Beg, Steal and Borrow: Artists against Originality*. UK. Lawrence King.

[12]
Steyerl, H. 2012. *The Wretched of the Screen*. Germany. Sternberg Press.

[13]
Lazic, S. 2017. *Is Authorship in Art a Victim of Approproation?*. [Online]
https://www.widewalls.ch/magazine/authorship-in-art
[Date accessed 4th June 2022]

[14]
Arcangel, C. . 2014. Whitney Stories: Cory Arcangel. [Video] YouTube.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FA-viDSAf82M
[Date accessed 4th June 2022]

Chapter Four:
Still Life

Even though Cooper would appear bumbling and uncoordinated, his attention to detail in preparing for a performance was infallible:

His absorption in the preparations for a performance was legendary, never leaving a single thing to chance […] A stagehand once commented 'Tommy's no fool. He knows where every single bit of gear is. It's like a space-launch countdown.' His son Thomas, who in later years helped his father with this chore, once said that Tommy knew where everything was blindfolded.[15]

S*till Life* sits somewhere between an archive, an assemblage and a 'vanitas' arrangement. Recreating all the props that were on Cooper's table in his final performance.

[Fig.15]

[...] the still life is a fictional system corresponding to a structure of desire, within which it has its own singular codes of meaning and codes of representation. [16]

The conventionally "inanimate" material condition of the objects of a still life, and the fact as well that they are fictions, encourage the artist to take infinite liberties in their representation and interpretations, and to invent or obey subtle semantic and formal codes in order to project their mute yet eloquently symbolic messages. [17]

We live in a world with enough stuff in it. I don't feel like contributing to that pile of crap. [18]

'...the issue [...] does not hinge on the quantity of objects, but on a mysterious quality of displacement. Displacement is not synonymous with decontextualization, for in this instance both objects are more or less decontextualized, transplanted from one realm of experience to another.' [19]

[Fig.16a]

[Fig.17a]

[Fig.16b]
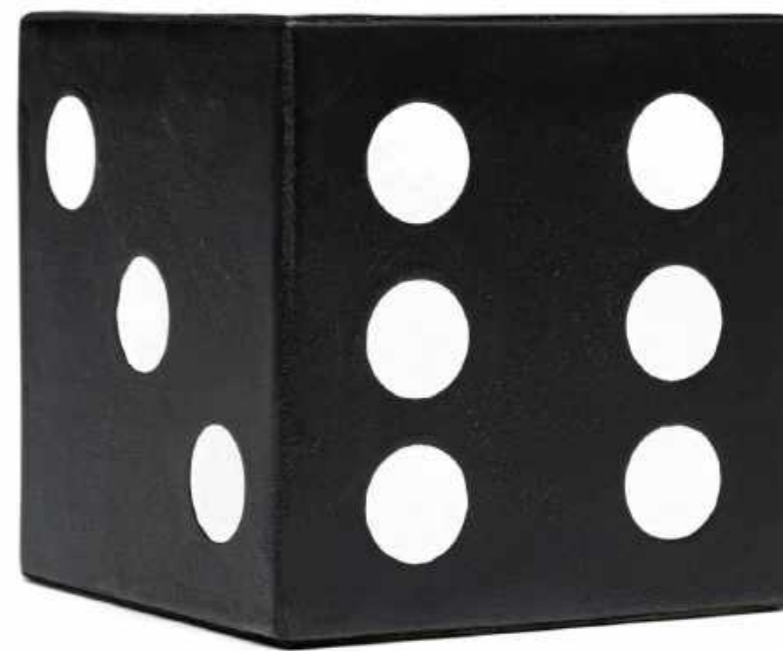
[Fig.17b]

00:25:36:13

[Fig.16c]

[Fig.17c]

[Fig.16d]

[Fig.17d]

Props for play

Props for dropping

Props for comfort

Props for success

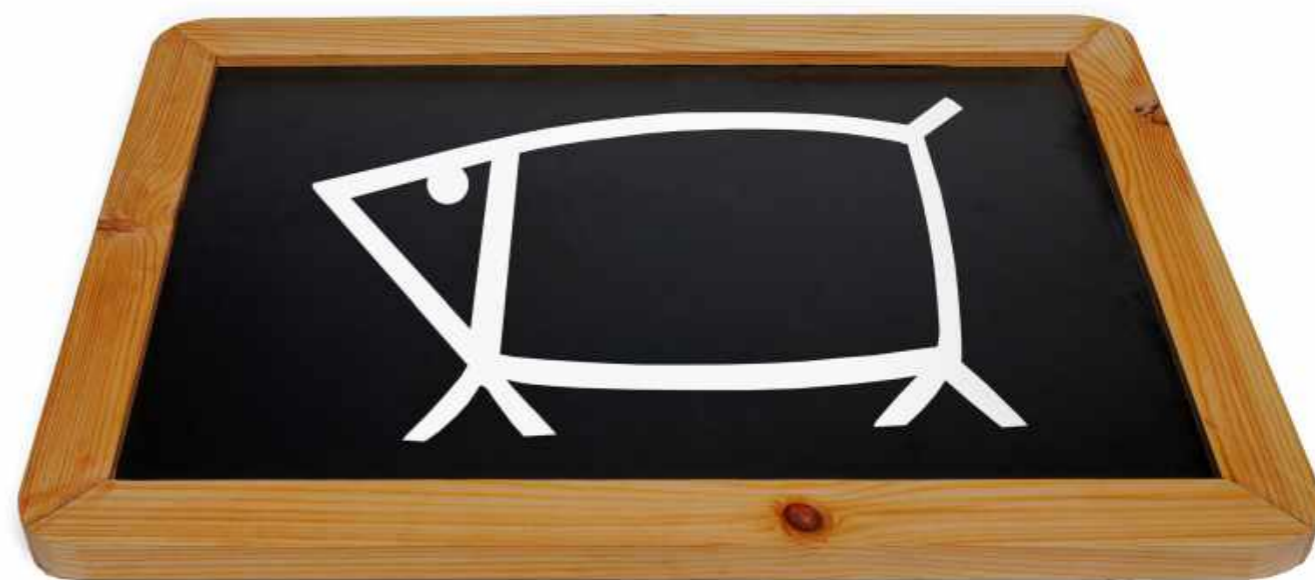[Fig.16e]

[Fig.17e]

00:26:52:17

[Fig.16f]

[Fig.17f]

81

00:28:15:06

[Fig.16g]

[Fig.17g]

83

[Fig.16h]

[Fig.17h]

Index

[15]
Fisher, J. 2006. *Tommy Cooper – Always
Leave Them Laughing*. UK. Harper Collins UK.

[16]
Rowell, M. 1997. *Objects of Desire: The
Modern Still Life*. USA. Museum of Modern
Art.

[17]
Rowell, M. 1997. *Objects of Desire: The
Modern Still Life*. USA. Museum of Modern
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[19]
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modern/christian-marclay-clock

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watch?v=BdEhKTlCU30

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https://thecomposingrooms.com/research/
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art-the-search-for-a-definition/

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therefore_i_am

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