Tino Sehgal

*How is it possible to work with Tino Sehgal's ideas and concepts in practical work*

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How is it possible to work with Tino Sehgal's ideas and concepts in practical work
In this thesis I explore how Tino Sehgal’s ideas and concepts can be used in practical work for a theatre practitioner as myself.

My approach is practice-as-research, based on experience from a workshop lead by Louise Höjer - one of Tino Sehgal’s close collaborators - combined with reviews and opinions written about the artist and his work.

The first part of the thesis explains what theories I use for analysing the gathered material. The second part explores this material and in the tired part I gather together the elements I have found, in order to make it possible to work with Tino Sehgal’s ideas and concepts in practical work.
List of content

1. Introduction..............................................................................5
2. Chapter A.............................................................................6
   2.1. Practise as Research.........................................................6
   2.2. Postdramatic Theatre.........................................................7
3. Chapter B.............................................................................9
   3.1. Tino Sehgal.......................................................................9
   3.2. No material, no documentation........................................10
   3.3. Louise Höjer....................................................................11
   3.4. The workshop..................................................................11
   3.5. Game 1 and Game 2..........................................................13
   3.6. Three pieces by Tino Sehgal.............................................14
4. Chapter C.............................................................................18
   4.1. Starting points, locations and key issues.........................18
   4.2. Reactions and comments from the open lesson..............19
   4.3. Apply to practical work.....................................................22
5. Conclusion...........................................................................25
6. References...........................................................................26
1. Introduction

In order to answer my question, I will look into reviews and opinions written about Tino Sehgal and three of his pieces. These will serve as data for me to get to know the artist, his work, ideas and concepts. This because, one aspect of Sehgal’s concept, is that he under no circumstances produces any material in connection with his work, this includes documenting it. There are several opinions on what genre Sehgal's work falls under, mostly his pieces are referred to as theatre or performance art, but this he strongly disagrees with. He calls his pieces Constructed Situations and coins his art as visual art. Because my background is theatre, I will look at Sehgal's work through Hans-Theis Lehmann’s writings on postdramatic theatre, as a platform for me; a theatre and performance maker.

In November last year, I attended a workshop with Louise Höjer, one of Tino Sehgal’s close colleagues. The workshop is titled Composition and is based on tactics developed through the Judson Dance Theatre, Xavier Le Roy and Tino Sehgal.

I will discuss what is discovered from the found data and the practical experience in Höjer’s workshop to become more familiar with how is it possible to use Tiny Sehgal’s ideas and concepts in practical work.
2. Chapter A

In this section I will look into what post-dramatic theatre is, according to Hans-Theis Lehmann, but first I will look into what practical research requires according to section “Practice as Research: Transdisciplinary Innovation in Action” in the book Research Methods in Theatre and Performance, in order to incorporate my practical experience.

2.1. Practice as Research

What first attracted me to Tino Sehgal’s work was Louise Höjer. Höjer resonates a strong understanding of space in connection with individual discovery; a characteristic I felt very drawn to. Reflecting on the experiences the work in the workshop provided me with was my education, my growth, but Höjer’s vast understanding and confidence in Sehgal's work, made me want to examine Sehgal more and incorporated this investigation with the practical experience I had already achieved. (Starting point, explanation follows on the next page).

“Practice as research (PaR) indicates the uses of practical creative processes as research methods (and methodologies) in their own right, usually but not exclusively in, or in association with, universities and other HE (higher education) institutions”

There is not one right way to use PaR, but as the quote above says, one's practical experience can not stand alone for this task. The practical knowledge must go into discussion with theory. Furthermore, according to section “Practice as Research: Transdisciplinary Innovation in Action”, when analysing practice-as-research material, you need to do some hands-on research, meaning you have to be a part of the work practically or in some way be close

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to it in experience. For the analysed material to be of any value, you need to put it into a focus, and the clearer the focus is, the better.\textsuperscript{2}

There are five more elements that need to be taken into consideration. These are called Starting Points, Aesthetics, Locations, Transmission and Key Issues. Applying these elements to what you are researching is not always easy, actually it appears to be a rather complex to make them match at times. The meaning of these elements are:

- Starting Points: where do you ask questions and/or where is your interest aroused. Set out to find answers for these.
- Aesthetics: figure out and define what it is you are dealing with, for example within which genre or genres of art is the PaR situated - art is often woven in to many different things, is this relevant or not?
- Locations: where is it physically located and is it of essential meaning or not?
- Transmission: how can it be transmitted, what happens to it if it’s transmitted poorly or wrong or differently. What does it need and not need?
- Key Issues: what are they, what question do you not consider fulfilled or wrongly answered in connection with the above mentioned elements?\textsuperscript{3}.

Starting points, location and key issues are the elements that will assist me the most in this thesis, accompanied with my estimation on what factors in Höjer’s workshop are needed in order to find possible way to use Sehgal’s ideas and concepts in practical work. In Chapter C I will collect the above mentioned elements and discuss them in connection with other discoveries.

\section*{2.2. Postdramatic Theatre}

Hans-Thies Lehmann’s, professor of theatre studies, term postdramatic theatre is a relatively new description. He published his book “Postdramatic

\textsuperscript{2} ibid, page 64

\textsuperscript{3} ibid, page 65 - 67
Theatre” in 1999 and it was translated from German into English in 2006, not even 10 years ago. As it is written in the introduction:

“To practitioners, the term ‘postdramatic theatre’ may in the end be just another ‘describing word’, as Forced Entertainment’s Claire Marshall says in interview about the term postmodernism: ‘you don’t set out to make a postmodern (or postdramatic) piece of work’.”

This might be true for most of us, but I will to situate Sehgal within my own field - a field Sehgal himself would never willingly place himself in. Lehmann doesn’t refer to what might be the obvious meaning of the word postdramatic. After the drama. The focus is actually not on the drama factor per say, rather on the how the text - which traditionally is considered the heavy point in theatre - is used, not at the necessarily most dominant factor. In my own words I describe it as to rather to be focused on producing a reaction for the audience, than staying true to the text aka the experience for the audience trumps the theatre practitioner’s loyalty towards the text. This is part of what Lehmann calls “The new theatre”, that amongst other things is collectively put together of “heterogeneous styles”, many different styles of art.

In short, I perceive this term “postdramatic theatre” as a description on all live performance art. With this in mind I can refer to Sehgal’s work as postdramatic theatre, but I must admit that I have failed in making a deeper connection between the two and will therefore not do so.

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5 ibid. page 26
3. Chapter B

Here I will introduce Tino Sehgal and his unique way of working without producing any physical material, there within absolute no documentation (starting point) of his pieces either. I will introduce his collage, Louise Höjer. her workshop and the practical experience I gained from attending her workshop, as well as give a description of the three pieces I have chosen to focus on in this thesis, “This objective of that object”, “This progress” and “These Associations”.

3.1. Tino Sehgal

The Berlin based artist, Tino Sehgal, was born in London in 1976. He studied economics and dance in Essen and Berlin\(^6\), and before he went solo, he danced in the companies of both Xavier Le Roy and Jérôme Bel, choreographers, both considered experimental in their work.\(^7\)

Tino Sehgal’s works are of visual and conceptual kind (aesthetics) that take place in institutions such as museums and art galleries (location). He creates what he calls Constructed Situations, which can be described as interactive situations between the performer and audience.\(^8\) Sehgal prefers to call his performers for interpreters - maybe because he so persistently does not connect his work with either theatre nor performance art - and maybe in order to free his work from these labels, he has chosen his own artistic titles. To me, this indicates that Sehgal’s performers interpret what happens in the constructed situation when the audience, or visitors as I will call them from now on, enter the construction.

\(^6\) [http://www.thefreelibrary.com/No+pictures,+please%3A+Claire+Bishop+on+the+art+of+Tino+Sehgal.-a0132554959](http://www.thefreelibrary.com/No+pictures,+please%3A+Claire+Bishop+on+the+art+of+Tino+Sehgal.-a0132554959)


\(^8\) [http://www.mitpressjournals.org/doi/pdf/10.1162/DRAM_a_00398](http://www.mitpressjournals.org/doi/pdf/10.1162/DRAM_a_00398)
3.2. No material, no documentation

In a western material existence and in todays society of easy access to information, it is noteworthy that Tino Sehgal is strictly against all documentation of his work. In every form that is, “including written agreements or certificates of authenticity, photographs, videos, sound recordings, scripts, transcriptions, wall labels, catalogues, and even press releases” according to curator and scholar, Elizabeth Carpenter’s article “Be The Work”.

By doing this, Sehgal stays committed to his opinion that there is simply enough stuff in the world, we don’t need to put more in it. But how is this even possible in practice? One can think that in today’s society, the common opinion is that if something is not documented, it hasn’t happened. But if we look at our history as human beings, much has actually survived throughout time; stories, dances, poems, plays, customs, laws, prayers - in our memory and has been passed on through spoken word. Or simply by repetition and thereby manifesting itself in our memory.

Absolute no documentation doesn’t just serve as a radical and extreme part of Sehgal's concept, which alone makes him very different from every other established conceptual contemporary artists. Sehgal sees potential forgetfulness, carelessness and disagreements, that no documentation almost certainly will bring upon him, as qualities for the an organic and inevitable change, that happens to every repeated live performance work of art. In Carpenter’s “Be The Work” he is quoted saying that “there will be a “continuous involvement of the present with the past in creating further presents instead of an orientation toward eternity…”, which I translate in to that Sehgal trusts his constructed situations to provoke whatever the reality is at a given time and therefore, one can maybe say, no documentation might even be a success for his concept.

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10 http://www.walkerart.org/collections/publications/performativity/be-the-work

11 ibid.
I find it very interesting to use only memory as a tool, not just for the actual performing of a given constructed situation - which of course can't be done without memorising - but for the rehearsal process as well. The only possible way to exchange information and "direct" interpreters in to a construction, is hands-on verbal communication (key issue). I suspect it produces something special within the process that has affect on the outcome.

3.3. Louise Höjer

Louise Höjer’s close collaboration with Sehgal started in 2006. She has a background in philosophy and was working on a doctoral thesis, before she decided to get really involved with Sehgal’s work, “allowing her to explore philosophical topics in a more pragmatic way”\(^{12}\). One might say that Höjer is a living archive of Sehgal’s works and processes, and has data that covers almost 10 years.

3.4. The workshop

I attended Höjer’s workshop with 16 other theatre students at the Norwegian Theatre Academy in Fredrikstad, Norway (location), where I did my exchange studies in acting, fall of 2014.

The general aims of the workshop where:

"…focus on an understanding of general principles of composition and skills, in working within the performing arts in their nature as a composition of various elements. The students will learn to create productions and produce components through analysing their generated staged material and improvisations. They will learn how to develop the different elements of an artistic work into dramatic compositions and productions. The aim is for the students to learn how to use conceptual and formal principles of composition independently and with others"\(^{13}\).

And the workshop’s specific aims where:


\(^{13}\) Taken directly from the Term plan of ACT 12, class of 2012 at NTA
“Using tactics developed through the Judson Church Theatre and contemporary dance such as Xavier Le Roy or Tino Sehgal, the students will learn how to work with game structures and how to manipulate the dynamics of group activities, thereby gaining a broader sense of what constitutes dramaturgy and compositional understanding.”

I will only bring forth exercises and tasks which I find relevant for how is it possible to work with Tino Sehgal’s ideas and concepts in practical work.

For basic spatial awareness, intuitive development of dramaturgy and for gathering the group as a unity, we did exercises A: choose two people and try to keep the same distance between you and them at all time and B: improvise with sounds made with and/or by the body, in darkness, with focus on harmonies and disharmonies, following them and breaking them up.

After every exercise we discussed what we noticed. The discussions were always thorough, Höjer guided the group with examples she noticed in the work, to tune us in on how attentive we needed to be. Höjer often talked the dramaturgy she could see in our improvisations. According to the Apple Dictionary, “dramaturgy is the theory and practice of dramatic composition” - in the workshop it was connected to how to manipulate a situation so it doesn’t stop developing without it being intensional.

The exploration we did on game structures in this workshop proved very fruitful for the ability to construct situations later in the process. I don’t find it necessary to elaborate the term “game structure” in any other way than how Höjer so simply did it: “it is what you can and can’t do within a decided frame”15. We sometimes applied consequences to the structures, if rules where broken, and sometimes we felt the need to incorporate a judge in order to keep the chosen frame intact, but these two elements where not always needed. We played several different games in order to understand where

14 ibid.

15 Notes from the workshop.
game structure can lead you to, what it can provide you with, but the open lesson at the end of the workshop, was the biggest eyeopener for the importance of knowing the structure you design.

In the workshop, there was especially one game structure that fascinated us. It was the Handball + Football game where - the obvious - these two games are put together and played simultaneously. Two balls, four goals, four teams: team 1 and 2 handball, team A and B football.

At first it took great effort to focus on playing both games simultaneously. Being a part of two teams, working for both of them, but against half of them, only using hands for one ball and feet for the other, constantly analysing the situation to find opportunities to achieve victory.

In connection to my question on how to work with Sehgal's ideas and concepts, the game demonstrated, in practice, the value of focus and power a good structure can have.

The workshop was two weeks long, all the time we worked in an empty white box (location) and as already mentioned, the workshop ended with an open lesson, where we performed three constructed situations generated by ourselves, for the school’s students and teachers. We organised a discussion after the performances, so we could get the extra knowledge of knowing what the visitors experienced in our constructed situations.

I will describe Game 1 and Game 2, and refer to them in connection with the three pieces by Sehgal, I have chosen to focus on in this thesis.

3.5. Game 1 and Game 2

In Game 1 every interpreter - six of them - choses one visitor, as the visitors walk in to the space. When this visitor moves, the interpreter has to go towards a random visitor near or far. When the chosen visitor stands still, the interpreter has to move away him/her. If curtain visitors (in this case the two exchange students in the class) laughed, the interpreters clapped and chose a new visitor to “dance” with. This was layer one of the game structure. Layer two was verbal interaction that began 10 minutes in to the constructed
situation. While active on layer one, the interpreter would whisper as neutrally as possible to a visitor that “Loriana\textsuperscript{16} has noticed you”, or “can you go and tell Loriana that Johanna has noticed her” and would then leave without making eye contact with the visitor. The piece was 25 minutes long.

In Game 2 the time frame for the constructed situation was pre-decided to be 30 minutes and then it was over. The visitors entered the empty space and the interpreters - five of them - started talking to them individually quite soon. Gently, but intently. Each interpreter had a goal, to be the first one to gather every visitor wearing scarves, or boots, or with long hair and so on. They could not reveal their goal and needed to manufacture a feeling of commitment between the visitors in their group, because chances were that other interpreters would try to “steal” them. If an interpreter managed to gather every visitor in the room with the pre-decided characteristic or item, the interpreter would shout “this is organised” to which all the other interpreters had to respond by chanting “this is organised, this is organised” as they moved towards the “winner”. After a while together, the interpreters would begin from the beginning again.

Time ran out during the open lesson, so we didn’t get to experience the while structure.

3.6. Three pieces by Sehgal

As mentioned earlier, I will refer to previous explained constructed situations, Game 1 and Game 2, as I now will discuss three of Sehgal’s works. These three works have sharp and decisive verbal communication between the interpreters and the visitors, natural movement combined with choreographed movement and game structure in common.

Curator and scholar, Elizabeth Carpenter explains in her article “Be The Work”, that Sehgal’s piece “This objective of that object” (2004) takes place in

\textsuperscript{16} We used names in the game, because we knew all the visitors. Details like these would have been changed if we performed outside of our institution.
an empty gallery space, where both the interpreters and the visitors are free to move around. The interpreters - five of them - are triggered to move when a visitor enters and while this movement is going on, the interpreters form themselves in a loose circle around the visitors, whilst breathing heavily and not making eye contact (Game 1). At a standstill, they start chanting something in a low volume that increases and gradually the sentence becomes audible: “The objective of this work is to be the object of a discussion”. There is silence for a moment and if no visitor has a reaction to this, the interpreters fall down to the floor all at once. This is the end of the situation and the interpreters get up to repeat the structure from the beginning. But if a visitor says something, if there is a comment from someone, the interpreters react (Game 1, the clapping) energetically and respond “We have a comment! We have a comment!” followed by “Who will answer? Who will answer?” to which one of the interpreters responds “I will”. A conversation can now begin, where the interpreters answer the questions asked or talk about them and the comments that are made, as an art critic would do. They also have the opportunity to speculate on the cultural aspect of the comments, but if a question is asked that the interpreters have heard before, they reply “It is a question that we have heard before!” and wait for a comment on that or maybe a new one.

If not a new visitor enters the space (key issue), which would immediately dissolve the situation and everything would start over again, the discussion would carry on until the interpreters take the initiative to stop it (Game 2). To do so, one interpreter says a long “So…” to activate this decision and the rest would agree by saying “So-no-more-comments, so-no-more-comments”. All but one interpreter now leave the space. The one remaining is free to answer any of the visitors questions in a more normal way, and if asked, can reveal the name of the artist, the title of the piece and the year the work was created.

http://www.walkerart.org/collections/publications/performativity/be-the-work Be the work
I find this piece interesting because of the many factors in the game structure that have to take place in order for the dramaturgy to continue.

According to art critic Holland Cotter’s article “In the Naked Museum: Talking, Thinking, Encountering”, Sehgal’s piece “This Progress” (2010) happens inside the form of the Guggenheim Museum in New York and two sentences: “This is a piece by Tino Sehgal” and “this piece is called “This Progress”. The museum had been emptied for other art works, only Sehgal’s piece was precent18.

The visitor enters the museum and is greeted by a child. This child is the first of four interpreters that the visitor meets on the journey up the Guggenheim ramp, as they embark on a discussion about progress, initiated by the child interpreter’s question: “what is progress”. The next interpreter this same visitor meets is a teenager, the third maybe mid 30 and the fourth possibly around mid 60 years of age. The switch between each interpreter is neutral and possibly choreographed as timing. The fourth interpreter stops the journey somewhere on the ramp, by neutrally saying “this piece is called “This Progress” and leaves the visitor to him-/herself19.

This constructed situation fascinates me for it’s frame and build-up to be left alone after taking with progress in the for of four ageing interpreters and walking spiralling up, a clear metaphor to what todays society wants progress to look like. A piece I wouldn’t hesitate calling a postdramatic theatre piece.

According to senior lecturer in theatre and performance studies Fintan Walsh, in his article “Touching, Flirting, Whispering: Performing Intimacy in Public”, for “These Associations” (2012) the space itself is the first thing he highlights. It was presented at the Tate Modern in London and it covered “a five-story-high concrete commissioning venue, with 3300 square meters of floor space”20.

18 http://www.nytimes.com/2010/02/01/arts/design/01tino.html?pagewanted=all& r=1
19 ibid.
20 http://www.mitpressjournals.org/doi/pdf/10.1162/DRAM_a_00398
This is one of his larger works. Other than the large space, there are 70 interpreters involved and he worked with them for over a year on this piece (key issue).

This piece begins on the ground flour where people enter and exit the building. The 70 interpreters are of different ages, from teenagers to seniors and have different occupations in life. In a string of what looks like spontaneous happenings, meetings and situations, the interpreters have conversations with the visitors, but they are choreographed. The structure was invisible in this piece, but who was interpreter was not always clear for the visitor. Speed is incorporated, fast to slow, but constant movement. The conversation, when visitors got the opportunity to comment, was about peoples relationships to cities, mainly how people are not in control of this relationship. Every now and then, the interpreters got together in groups, talked about something most visitors could not understand and then dissolved again. There where no answers and no indication that the visitors should or needed to take part of the constructed situation.

This piece is interesting for its size of it in interpreters and the amount of time Sehgal worked with them. It tells me that Sehgal does not work alone, not with such scales.

I find that these three performances represent Tino Sehgal quiet well and also how many different shapes a constructed situation can have. There are some obvious connections between these three and Game 1 and Game 2, especially natural and choreographed movement.

\[\text{21 ibid.}\]

\[\text{22 ibid.}\]
Chapter C

Tino Sehgal is an artist you can look at from many different angles and dive in to researching many different aspects of his work. For example his connection to economics, his political awareness, the fact he makes dematerialised art or the issues of sustainability to only mention a few. For this thesis, I am focusing on the structure more than the content of Sehgal’s pieces, because although the content is very interesting, I can’t use the it per say in itself to figure out how it’s possible to use Sehgal’s ideas and concepts in practical work. This said, the content is in such close relationship with Sehgal’s concepts, it will never be completely left out of the discussion.

In Chapter B, I talked about the work that was done in Höjer’s workshop and the three pieces by Sehgal. I will now discuss what I think is needed in order to work with Tino Sehgal’s ideas and concepts in practical work, by gathering my starting points, locations and key issues from PaR and look in to the reactions generated and reported from the workshops open lesson.

4.1. Starting points, locations and key issues

As I said on page 6, Louise Höjer was the reason I really got interested in Tino Sehgal and his work. Höjer’s working method for this workshop was extraordinarily well executed, it resembles a constructed situation in itself. We the group were visitors and Höjer was the interpreter, in the way Höjer gave us space to work in our mind. Thoughts were racing in the beginning, it was often complicated to follow in practice and furthermore, the people in the group demanded time to feel safe. This might be considered strange, in an environment where people are used to work with one another and know each other well, but this was the reality and it wasn’t ignored. What baffled me most of all, was that Höjer didn’t treat it as a problem either. The group found it’s dynamics in it’s own active pace.

My curiosity is very much aroused by the fact that Sehgal just doesn’t document his word, end of discussion. But I question this in practical terms
that it can work for any other artist but Sehgal. Although I find the memory
factor of it interesting and after only seeing it as time-consuming and de-
manding, the more I think of it, this might be the case in the beginning of a
process. In the long term, this might present itself effective for a group or team
of developers.
On this factor, in order to use it in practical work, my conclusion is that you
just really really have to like to talk.

What does it mean that Sehgal’s pieces are situated in institutions such as
museums and galleries? First that comes to mind is that it’s clever and safe.
It’s a similar picture to Sehgal not denying the market economy, but refuses to
put more material in to society, pragmatic.

4.2. Reactions and comments from the open lesson
One way of trying out your constructed situation, which from now on will be
referred to as CS, is by inviting people into it. Just like in other creative work,
by doing this you get to test what you have designed, what effect it has, does
it need adjustments or do some unknown aspects pop up.
In our case, we got the opportunity to do just this at the end of Höjer’s
workshop. Prior to the open lesson, we had run the CSs for each other and
made adjustments accordingly, but it’s a different thing to to include people,
who don’t know the process, although it does matter that the people who
attended the open lesson were students and teachers at the Norwegian
Theatre Academy. NTA is not a traditional theatre school and are people there
use to an experimental work environment and how to address non-traditional
work-in-progresses. This said, what surprised me the most during the
discussion with the visitors was how completely lost many had been, in both
our CSs, but still very few of them has found it boring.

Let’s begin with he experience Game 1 gave the visitors.
People knew when and where our open lesson was, so we opened the door
and let them in with - we already in the room - and provided no introduction to

Page 19 of 26
what was going on. Just like Sehgal. The visitor expressed excitement, wonder, confusion and waited. It was awkward. After a while some visitors bravely asked what was going on, but got no answer. Some left the room to see what that created, but still no answer. Visitors sat down on the floor, leaned against the wall, moved around in different speeds, stood still - it only produced movement and occasional clapping.

Many visitors felt alone in the CS. They weren’t encouraged to talk, they didn’t feel they got any attention and some even felt left out side, but not of what. When the whispering started, “Loriana has noticed you”, or “can you go and tell Loriana that Johanna has noticed her”, things got excited to a short while, but the loneliness, frustration, awkwardness, confusion kicked in even harder, when they experienced no eye contact. This made many feel ignored, down right lied to and visitors felt suspicious grow: are they making fun of us? Who’s actually in this workshop... All in all, not the best feelings were generated amongst the visitors, but very strong feelings.

In this CS, everyone including the interpreters, became very sensitive. The visitor read in to every little detail they noticed, because such was the CS. For example did not every interpreter have the same performative quality, more were neutral and some were more or less acting, but were unaware of it, it was an instinctive reaction to the strangeness going on. This I find very interesting and relevant to my question, it reveals the power that a Constructed Situation can have and how little you actually know of its effect without trying it on visitors who don’t know the form and/or the process.

Another interesting remark to the generated feelings of the visitors, is that many of these reaction are the same as reported by Claire Bishop, Laura Collins, Holland Cotter, Arthur Lubow and Danielle Stein, authors of the written reviews and opinions I have referred to in this thesis.

Game 2 generated reactions and emotions very opposite of Game 1 and it began already in the transaction between the two: an alarm went of, the visitors “fell out of character”, everyone could breath again as they exited the space. The doors opened again for a new CS and the visitors were ready. The
atmosphere was tense with excitement that was expressed through nervous laughter and big listening eyes. It was sort of encouraged as well, the interpreter greeted the visitor and asked her to join the interpreter “over there”. Group were soon formed and basically the visitors took over. Very early in this CS did the interpreter loose control and realised they hadn’t designed a “stop bottom”. This became a discovery on group dynamics.

The visitors felt they made a promise to their “group leader” and they stuck to this promise in different way: one group developed a camaraderie similar to very enthusiastic sport fans and all reason went out the door, one group became very intimate and actually left the space to get away from the load sports fans, one group became tactic and wanted to know what “their leader” needed in order to “win”, which never was implied verbally as a goal. There where also some individuals who never go incorporated or selected - they formed their own group and felt left out together.

This experience was for many again intense and for some down right brutal. One visitor experienced being pulled in two directions, but he wasn’t given the opportunity to chose where to go, the groups argued with each other about him and tried to lure him, or as happened more than a couple of times, physically pull him, into their group. It was so aggressive that the interpreters didn’t even manage to announce that the game was over.

This experiment strongly suggests that you needed to be aware of what has happened before visitors come into a CS, in order to design a structure that can handle it.

After workshop, I was aware of how constructed situations can function as a research method, on for example social behaviour in different contexts. Meaning that a constructed situation as a form does not only belong in the arts, it can intwine every discipline or be used without artistic references in every discipline.
4.3. Apply to practical work

Knowing how to work with game structure, is in my opinion one of the best idea from Sehgal to apply to ones own practical work. It is a tool where you can create a chain of events tied to certain rules, you create yourself. It’s a frame where you can try out topics and themes in a physical space, and even more interesting, you can start your work with game structure. By this I mean you don’t have to start with saying what you in the end want to be saying, there is a good chance you will have a fresh, genuine result on difficult topics, such as politics for example.

Game structure will help you if you want to make constructed situations, this is for sure. It can be regarded as a choreography if you want, but the actual game element of it is interesting to investigate with, because you forget about the art for a while. This I find refreshing for the process, that the actual physical structure and movement is free to develop itself without the watchful eye judging and asking if it’s right or not.

Try it out with people, get their opinions and analyse it what you experimented as well. The reactions and comments from the open lesson strongly indicate that it’s not necessarily a feel-good experiment you will give the audience, but it has the potentiality to provoke. I would emphasise on giving factor space.

Now, alongside working on sharpening your practical understanding of game structure, it is important to sharpen your understanding of space, as we did with exercises A and B, described in Chapter B.

The value of the first exercises you do with a group of interpreters, serves to the actual execution of the final work. I sometimes forget my body-in-space knowledge that I have from working as a performer and when making a constructed situation, you have to be very aware of providing this basic knowledge to those who will perform.

All of Sehgal’s work is stored in memories as established in Chapter B. His own, Höjer’s and everyone else who has been in the presence of a Tino Sehgal piece. In order for Sehgal to pass it on to his interpreters, he has to
talk and I can imagine there being a structure in how he communicates - just like Höjer during the workshop, reflection and sharing verbally all the time on what we experienced. Exhausting for such a big group - I think these groups can be smaller in real life or maybe a rotation system can keep it fresh. To any degree, this communication factor that comes with the no documentation, is demanding. I stated in Chapter B that I suspect it produces something special within the process and that is has affect on the outcome. I really do, I think the heavy responsibility that Sehgal puts on memory and on verbal communication is a huge challenge for our time. What does it actually mean to do this? It must mean that Sehgal trusts his method and if I am to use it, this concept in practical work, it will be time consuming to a level I am unaware of at this point in life. To me it’s more of a romantic wish and longing to work like this. I strongly doubt the practical side of it.

Now, if interested in going all the way with absolutely no material production, including no documentation, I would suggest you be a group and not an individual. This concept is truly demanding and best would be to be 100% aware of what it demands, for example constant dialoging with people about what it is you do, possible rearrangement of your communication habits, intense meetings, training in communication skills and memory skills and insisting on training others these elements.

It also requires strategy, Sehgal has for example found a place that works for his art. His work needs to be done in museums and galleries, providing him with a clear focus of where his communication needs to be directed. But of course, one can also be inspired by this concept and apply it in a less than 100% way. Reduce the use of physical material, experiment with using less and less, question the amount of material you use. Maybe you don’t drop documenting entirely, but think about what it would mean for your work, if you chose no documenting or simply couldn’t document it. How would memory and verbal communication skills come in handy for you? And consider how much these qualities would benefit you in general?
5. Conclusion

To get familiar with Tino Sehgal’s ideas and concepts can be a bit messy. Although there is a lot of written material to find about him today, I would at any time say “and then you should try and see if you can attend a workshop with Louise Höjer”, because that’s where you can get hands-on experience in trying this work on your own. A practice-as-research method fits very well to any question concerning “how is it possible to us (...) ideas and concepts in practical work”.

I think by working with game structure in practice and analysing it, will bring you closer to understanding how Sehgal designs complex pieces such as “This Objective of that Object”, “This Progress” and “These Associations”. Communication is key in Tino Sehgal's concepts, as it is the only way he passes his work on, but in practice this responsibility can be shared, by not working as an individual but in a group, as a group. Like Tino Sehgal and Louise Höjer.

Tino Sehgal’s constructed situations can function as a research method, on for example social behaviour in different contexts. It can be intertwined to every discipline or be used without artistic references or purposes in every discipline.
6. References

Bishop, Claire. “No pictures, please: Claire Bishop on the art of Tino Sehgal”. In Artforum International, May 1, 2005 http://www.thefreelibrary.com/No+pictures.+please%3A+Claire+Bishop+on+the+art+of+Tino+Sehgal-a0132554959


