

Signs of Thinking

by Johanna Reed

Adam and Eve hang from a thorn, back to back.
I want them to face each other.

—*Leonard Cohen*

PREFACE—

Instead of robots, humans. Instead of machines, bodies. Instead of screens, faces. Instead of logic, poetry.

NOTES—

This piece was created for Anatomy Riot, “Performances Inspired By Machines.” The prompt was:

How would people appear if you were transported to a near future time where all machines were invisible? Or to a distant past where, suddenly stripped all gadgetry, you were left only with muscle memory and oral history? How do aging systems respond to the transposition of more recent technological metaphors and customs onto non-technological environments? By re-considering or eliminating the presence of machines from the environment, the works in this show reveal adaptive or misplaced behaviors that refer to modern technology using the most basic human apparatus.

It is two people trying to have a conversation with a small machine between them. “Machine,” in this case, means a 35-mm slide projector;

a 35mm slide of a little image; a few poems from the 1910s and '20s;
language, spoken and written; the failings of memorization; the way two
people move together; the body; and love.

CHARACTERS—

Two sisters, or people who otherwise love each other.

For the first performance, performed June 13, 2011, the characters are
RHIA and HANNA, played by Myrrhia Reed and Johanna Reed,
respectively.

COSTUME—

RHIA, white T-shirt, black skirt above the knee, barefoot.

HANNA, white T-shirt, black skirt below the knee, barefoot.

Both wear their hair down, no makeup, and have text written in sumi ink
on their hands and forearms.

PROPS—

Slide projector

Slide

Book of Tsvetaeva poems



RHIA and HANNA walk onstage. RHIA carries a slide projector. HANNA holds a book of poems by Marina Tsvetaeva. RHIA turns on the projector, shining an image of one slide onto HANNA's hand. They both do their best to keep the image in the center of HANNA's out-turned palm.

They move around each other slowly, in motions and gestures of small thinking.

HANNA reads a poem from the book, once through, as they move. RHIA, who has never heard the poem before, recites it back from memory.

This exchange happens for three or four poems. After RHIA recites the last poem, she turns off the projector and HANNA closes the book. They face the audience, hands raised and palms turned outward, and nod their thanks. They exit.