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victoria gray
study room guide

You Want to Know About Specific Actions & Postures

Victoria Gray









really, the performance starts way before the actual audience, and i go through all of these processes of just stripping and stripping away, just my skin, really, i feel like i want to have less flesh, and so i wear nothing on top, my torso is really bare ... less layers of protection ... so, making a degree of vulnerability ... and the room was really cold because it was an old warehouse, an old metal workshop, and everything looked ... the ground was concrete and filthy and it was huge, and i remember the very beginning of it, i was so wired that i was physically shaking, i was trembling, and i sat down in the audience to start because i wanted to emerge from the audience, and i sat between these two men ... they didn't even notice i was there, and i just, really slowly, took my jumper off, it felt really soft, so that i was completely bare, my torso was completely bare and i was just trembling and i just sat there for ages and ages and they still didn't notice i was there, it was like i was invisible, and everyone was looking in the wrong place, but i knew that i was going to stand up and walk to the middle of the space, but i actually felt like i couldn't stand up ... my legs were shaking so much ... i think that my nervous system was getting itself ready to perform, and then, all of the movements really had to do with ... well, i was thinking about, like i said, the glands ... the glands are an especially sensitive point in the body, you don't even need to touch the glands but you can just send your awareness or your consciousness there and they're supposed to be like a threshold between different energetic states ... so, i was thinking about my ovaries especially, i was imagining them really tiny, like two almond shaped eyes in my pelvis, and all of the energy that i was producing in the performance was sort of being channelled through my ovaries, into and out of the glands ... my experience of it isn't comfortable, and it's very confusing as well ... it's almost as if when i

perform something, my arms, my torso, my legs, all of the various organs in the body, all become ... they detach into parts that are tangentially related but don't really make any sense ... so, like a computer where ... yes, where a computer is all pixelated or it's quitting out because the signals are getting crossed over ... i'm sort of thinking about producing all of this real confusion in the body where it's as if the arms, the legs and the torso are all moving independently, or are in different worlds, but i'm definitely ... maybe it's a paradox? but, i'm using my body and my consciousness to try and really split that up, and i'm thinking about ... when i say that i'm thinking about ... like, a piñata, when you smash it, everything falls out ... it's a bit like that, and yes, so ... do you want to know about specific actions and postures? ... ok, this is going to sound really raw, but it's almost like a set of instructions if someone else wants to do it ... so, i stood up and walked across the space, as i reach the farthest side i settle myself in front of the audience, and i kind of move my legs apart so they're in a wide parallel position, and i squat down so that my sit bones are almost touching the ground, and i'm in this ... like an animal, this, this squatted position, and i put my arms above my head, and i try to keep them there for as long as possible, but at the same time, i'm pressing my knees as if trying to open them out and that makes my body start to really shake, i feel my energy dropping down into my belly, and my bladder is full ... i did that deliberately, so that it stings ... and i feel it more because i'm squatted down, and my pubic bone is pressing on my pelvis, and there's four bones that a pelvis is made up of, two ilium bones on the left and right, and the sacrum and the coccyx at the back, the crest bit is the peak of the bone where you might rest your hands like on jutting hips, it's the nubbin that pokes out from under the skin, and i can feel my

sacrum bulging from my lower spine and my coccyx feels sharp ... so, basically, what i'm doing is producing all of this tension in my body so that the knees are kind of pressing this way and opening, but at the same time, i'm imagining there's someone on the outside of my knees and they're pressing them closed, and it makes my body start to shake ... like this ... and then that shaking and that effort starts to ripple through, up through the arms, and it goes to the hands, and when it reaches the fingers they tremble, and it's really involuntary, so i've set this point of tension in my knees in my squatting position to produce all of these little tremors that i can't be in control of, and i'm there for probably about five minutes, and it's quite painful but it's necessary to get that tension, and to get that resonance, and to get the resistance in the body enough that the body starts to tremble and shake, and i kind of lose ... i lose the control over what i'm doing, so my body is doing it without me wanting it, without me needing to do anything ... it's just moving for itself, and then, very slowly, i start to kind of, release ... i'm curving down to the floor, and i get my sit bones sat down and, really slowly, almost like when you put a baby down ... you know, you very gently lay it down ... i use my stomach muscles, and i start to try and think about releasing all of that tension, and as i'm doing this transition it's like i'm moving into another world, and my knees fold inwards, i always think it's like a foal, and it's satisfying when they touch, like two magnets drawn together ... and that first thing was an action, and it had its whole, kind of, universe ... and then this transition, really slowly to lying down with my back on the ground, it's cold ... and that takes me to another sense, so, when i'm on the ground, i've got my back bare and it's just flat... and my legs are wide open, almost like i'm in labour or something, and my skin is taut across my pelvis, stretched, like my hips

are two tent poles, and my heels are kind of planted into the ground ... it's quite a grotesque sort of figure, and my toes are really flexed back, again, getting all of this tension in the feet, and my head is looking through the gap in my legs, into the middle distance, and the same thing starts to happen ... i'm forcing my knees open, as if i want to split my pelvis apart, and i'm pressing and pressing and pressing as far as possible, but because of my limitations ... i don't really have very flexible hips ... so many injuries, they don't open as wide as i'd want them, like, there's an external force outside of my body that's trying to make the opposite force, it's trying to press my knees closed, despite ... and it produces the same kind of shaking quality, but different to the one before ... it's not as small, it's more like being on a berthed ship ... and my body is rocking from side to side, but not quivering, it's got more of an arc, and again, i'm not making me move from side to side, consciously going 'right, left, right, left,' there's a situation of tension and then the body is doing the rest of the work itself, i've wound the body so tight that it's so tense, so that it unravels in and for itself, a bit like pain, or a sort of feral fear, it's in and for itself, i've got no control over that ... there's something else moving it ... and i'm there for a while ... trying to think about moving from the ovaries, so that the ovaries are eyes and they want to see, and it feels a little bit like i'm trying to split my pelvis apart, so i, i take each hip, and really just cleave them apart like ground in an earthquake or something, like prising, but i feel a little less tight than that, and i'm slowly melting over to the point where i almost do a full side roll, and i'm balanced on my right shoulder, so it's just really the right side of my body that's in contact with the floor and my left hand is wedged between my legs, so it's holding my vagina and it's really squashed and gripping on this precipice ... i'm kind of just

balanced on that ... on the right side of my body, and i know that in that position, if i put too much weight forwards or backwards i'll flatten to the ground, either face down or on my back, but i don't want to do that so it's about being in a very vulnerable place of trying to find balance, and i'm hovering, and definitely on this threshold between really falling or staying where i am, and all the time my hand is holding onto my vagina as a kind of support, and my hand is really gripping ... not to myself, but it's almost as if i'm trying to pull my balance from that place between my legs, i'm really pressing up, so, my hands are pushing up like they're keeping something in, i don't know ... like when you need the toilet ... and they're sending energy up through the crown of my head, and that's helping, this resistance and tension is giving me a point of balance ... and i'm there for a while and the next thing that i do is i allow that to release ... so, each of these positions ... so far there's been three ... have been almost sculptures, but they're each different organisations of my limbs, organs, glands ... each of them like a different aerial or a different system, it receives things differently by being organised differently and having different problems, different tensions... and then i go ... i fall onto my back first, then onto my left side, and my legs fall open again, but at a right angle this time, like a half unfolded fan, and i put my right hand on my stomach, sort of cup it, and i'm breathing but the breathing is quite intense ...and my mouth is on the ground ... like this ... my head's angled down, and what i'm trying to do is to breathe into my ovaries and have the ovaries breathe that breath back out, and it starts off really quite slow... so i'm going like this, like fvvv, and it makes that sucking or gasping sound ... like an inhaler, i remember the sound sort of whipping around the room, and it was quite shocking actually,

because i didn't expect it to be so loud ... i'm very, at first, quick with it so it's like a whipping sound and i'm doing that for a long time, until ... i guess it's really difficult because you end up having no breath left and the sucking becomes really laboured, almost as if it's becoming a dragging sound, so after maybe three or four minutes there's this ... as i inhale, it produces all of these tensions inside, like my body is going to just burst, it's going to kind of exceed itself and it's going to expand, it's going to burst open, and when i'm breathing in i'm getting all the dirt from the ground, it's like all the dirt and metal dust is inflaming my lungs and aggravating, but i'm still trying to breathe as much air in as possible, and i'm aware of the people around me ... there was someone quite close to me at that point and she was sitting on the floor, and there was a woman sat on a chair above me with a baby in a sling, and i was really aware that she probably felt quite disturbed, it was quite disturbing anyway, so yes, i'm there ... and i'm just sucking in ... and again ... i mean i'm doing it now ... because when you breathe in so much you can only breathe so much air into the body, and there's only so many places where it can go, it's as if it fills all the gaps like eye sockets, between the rib cage, the hollow bit here at the collar bone, and you start to shake and tremble, and it feels quite dangerous, like you might burst your lung or that ... it's the edge of too much breath to the point where you could just explode, and then ... the next thing that... from that point i'm a bit dizzy actually, because it's a bit like hyperventilating or something, and in the process my mouth is open and my lips are on the ground, and they've softened and opened, and there's drool on the floor where i've been ... i know ... and then i go on my back and breathe the opposite ... so, i'm trying to let the air slowly out of my body, like when you have a balloon and you let the air out and it makes that

squeaking sound ... i'm doing that here... my legs and my feet are slightly lifted off the ground and they're hovering, like this ... like a coral reef ... and their movements are related to my stomach, so, my stomach is trying to be the strength to keep my feet off the ground, but it's not very strong and i can only last for so long so it becomes problematised ... and the legs are starting to move around to try and shift the effort, or i guess the pain, around the body, but it has this feeling of an out-of-body experience or ... quite alien really, this what my body is doing ... it's so simple ... you just set this little tension and then it'll produce all these strange movements where the legs are sort of swaying from side to side, and at the same time i'm trying to release that breath ... and i remember this because it comes out in a really strange sound, and it's like ... i was imagining it was as if a ... like, what would the sound of a gland be if it could make a sound or something? and it was coming out really softly, and it was making this sound of, ah ah ah, like this sound that, again, it doesn't feel like it's coming out of my body at all, but it's this weird sound ... so at the same time as my legs are doing this thing my voice is making this eerie, almost like a weeping sound of some sort, my hair is stuck to my face so you can't see my mouth, they said it was like ventriloquism, because you can't see where it's coming from, and it's that complicated, because i don't feel like the sound is by the lungs or breath or vocal chords, it's not of the breath, it's on the breath, it's separate from it, sitting on it, and it's only audible when the breath breaks, so, when i run out of air by wringing all my out-breath ... and all the while i'm aware of how strange it all is, and that it probably looks quite controlled from the outside ... and i guess, because to get the right tension, in order for these weird things to happen, there has to be a certain amount of discipline, but after that point, after the

point of traction where it's ready to be ... or like an elastic band, maybe ... when as soon as i let go, whatever comes, all of these movements, trembles, and sounds are really ... there's little control over what that is ... and so yes ... i stay there for a while until the sound really just sort of, just disappears naturally ... and then i roll over really slowly and lie face down, and people said i looked androgynous since, well inverted, because my chest is flat and so my back, it's bony as well, was like the front ... and the last thing ... which was something i'd wanted to do for a long time but hadn't done because it felt too strange, but i did it here ... for some reason it felt appropriate ... i rolled over onto my right side and curled into a foetal position, i can feel my bladder sort of drag to one side, and i took my left hand and put it ... so that ... before i had it on my vagina, this time i put it to my anus and i just held it there ... and it was just a really strange thing to do, and it felt bizarre and quite explicit ... but soft ... i was there, and it was sort of an uncomfortable moment but a good feeling to be there ... and i've been trying to make sense of it, really, why did i then want to go and put my hand on my anus? it's just ... it just felt really bizarre, but in terms of the embryo, the connection between the mouth and the anus is really strong, and the gut tract ... and so it's as if i'd spent a long time letting air out my mouth to then want to find, almost the ... it was almost like balancing things out, closing it up and resting the body ... yes, protective ... and i stayed there for a few minutes, it's soothing, and i'm sweating so my hair is stuck to my face and my back, it's got dirt stuck to it, round my mouth and chin, i could tell that ... and because i'm not sure when the performance ends it could have carried on, but that action seemed to do something where it made other people feel awkward, so i could sense that people started to move, or ... it was just enough strangeness

to break the performance, if that makes sense, and i decided then that it was time to end the performance with this, a kind of a question, an unanswered gesture ... and i could feel other people starting to move, and it felt natural to use that as my cue to stand up so i stood up and, just really slowly... there was a wet patch on the floor off my back where i'd been lying, and my back was sticky with sweat and patchy dirt and my socks the same, it sort of stuck where there was bone, like a pencil rubbing, and i remember not being able to walk, like, 'what happened?' ... even though ... the focus and attention and intention and awareness ... it's as if in parts i don't know what happened ... like, from being anaesthetised or something ... it's ... you have a sense of what happened or an impression or a feeling of it, but it's still ... it's not processed in the performance and things happened that you didn't expect and you've been shocked by things that have happened or things that you've felt ... lots of unexpected movements, the body has been moved around a lot ... against its will sometimes i think, and then, my jeans were filthy, and i moved really slowly back towards the audience to the seat where i started ... i put my jumper back on but it was difficult because of the sweat and just sat there for a while, my face felt neutral but i was still shaking, and it's taken me sort of two years to start to make sense of all of that ... what it was all about









Ballast

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