



N.A.A.T.O.

CLOWNFRONTATIONAL
TOOLKIT

OPPRESSED | RHYTHMS OF RESISTANCE | CLOWNING | THEATRE OF THE

This is a **TOOLKIT** for
ARTISTS & ACTIVISTS and those
who want to combine both. It is a big
and incomplete collection of tools,
EXERCISES, TIPS, QUESTIONS,
REMINDERS and **MORE.**

**GET INSPIRED, FORM TIES
AND ASSEMBLE YOUR NOSES!**

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OPPRESSED | RHYTHMS OF RESISTANCE | SOUNDPAINTING | CLOWNING | THEATRE OF THE OPPRESSED | RHYTHMS OF RESISTANCE

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CHAPTER 1

ORIGINS & PHILOSOPHY

of

N.A.T.O.

Nose Assembly for Tomorrow

We are a network of **ACTIVISTS & CLOWNS** who encourage creative, surprising, entertaining and disobedient forms of activism. The core of **N.A.To** lies in a practice of people collectively sharing **know-how**, experience and ideas. We merge different artistic **approaches** and **methods**, including **classical clowning, Theatre of the Oppressed, Rhythms of Resistance** and **Soundpainting**.

... SOUNDPAINTING |

... CLOWNING |

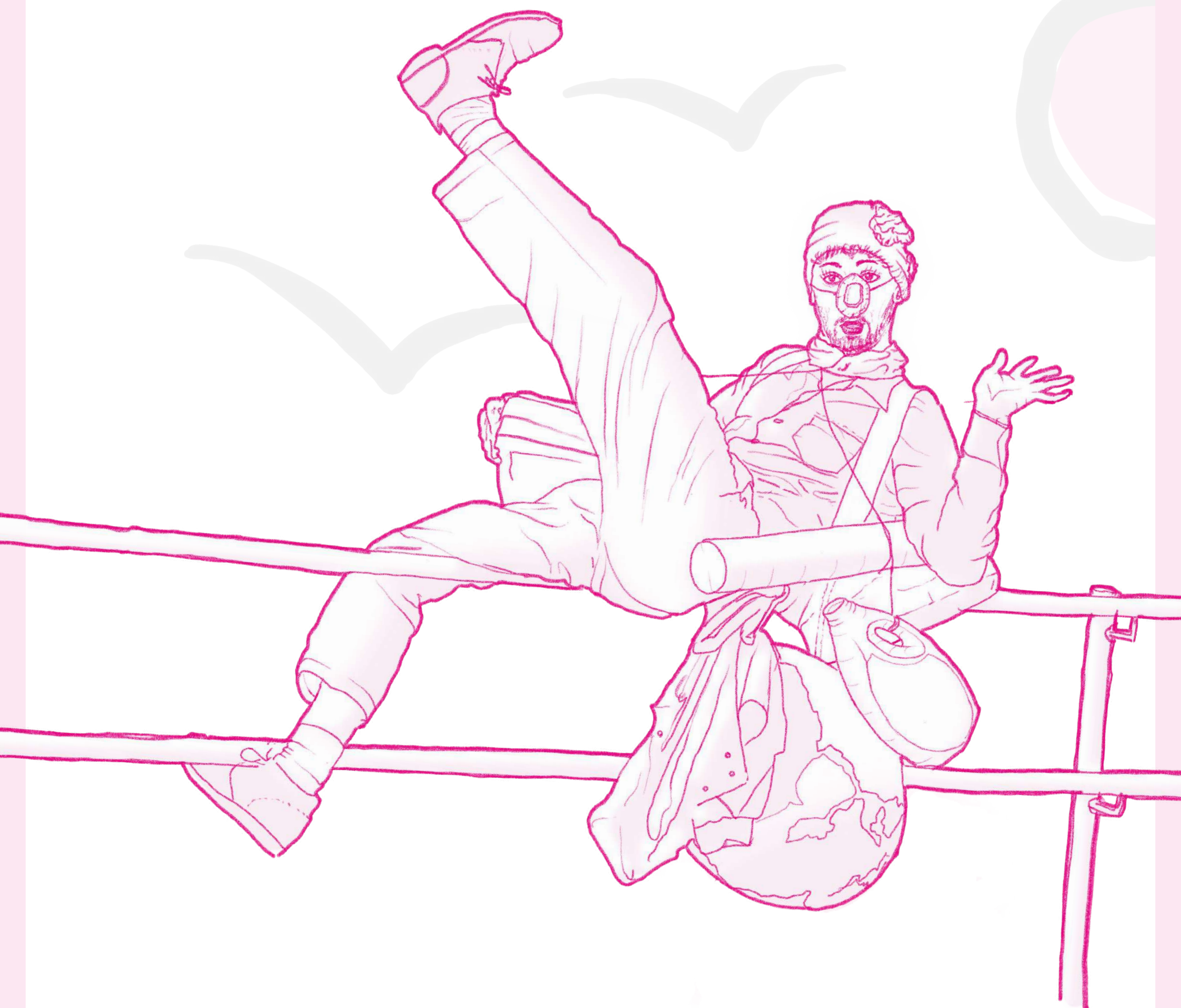
THEATRE OF THE OPPRESSED |

THEATRE OF THE OPPRESSED | RHYTHMS OF RESISTANCE | SOUNDPAINTING | CLOWNING

THEATRE OF THE OPPRESSED | RHYTHMS OF RESISTANCE | SOUNDPAINTING | CLOWNING

ORIGIN OF N.A.TOŸ

The clown **Atlas** originally introduced N.A.ToŸ as a card game in which anyone could put on a clown nose recycled from waste materials and discuss their plans to change the world. These first N.A.ToŸs already established some important aims, such as devising a ministry of laziness and making an explosion of harmony. Atlas also invented the **Gravity Strike**, a form of poetic protest, which has become a trademark practice in N.A.ToŸs methodology.



ASSEMBLY

N.A.ToY is organized around people coming together to share ideas, skills and knowledge of various performance methods, as well as planning public activist happenings and actions. We consciously create a radically welcoming space, in which mutual care and support are key. We work with plenums, peer-to-peer support, emotional and caring empowerment. Each assembly has a specific theme and is often connected to current topics that are currently present in climate or social justice movements or specific local or global events.

MERGING METHODS

We are enriched by the practice of combining a variety of performing methods and styles. We utilize aspects of **Theatre of the Oppressed** and reinvent them for clowning. We are also inspired by the collective organization methods of **Rhythms of Resistance** and borrow from them to inform our collective clown dis-organization. A group of clowns can be a school of fish, or it can be a collective act such as a line of people standing still across a whole continent. We are also exploring the possibilities of **Soundpainting**, a multidisciplinary, real-time sign language method for creating instant movement choreographies and/or sound compositions.

HOW TO ORGANIZE N.A.TO^Y

N.A.To^Y is an open source project, meaning that you are welcome to propose and organize a gathering. We have some important principles to guide N.A.To^Y organizers in holding such a gathering.

General/Logistics Planning:

- ▽ **Know your objective** - keep it clear and focused.
- ▽ **Know your target group** - describe the gathering as concretely as possible in writing.
- ▽ **Announce early:** Send out an early announcement “Save the Date” and include clear details about the event, workshops, and schedule.
- ▽ **Venue selection:** Ensure that the venue has appropriate spaces for workshops, accommodation, and communal dining.
- ▽ **Consider the season and weather** when planning. Winter/summer seasons affect the options for the program, schedule and participation.

Program Planning:

- ▽ Know your goal and offer **relevant workshops**.
- ▽ Encourage participants on the first day to **form small care groups** for mutual support and dedicate time in the program for them to check-in regularly

- ▽ **Flexible schedule:** Keep the program flexible, allowing for changes based on group dynamics and changing information or circumstances.
- ▽ Define which parts of the program are non-negotiable (**locked**) and which can be changed (**unlocked**).
- ▽ **Limit activities to 2–3 per day** to avoid overburdening the schedule.
- ▽ Include a (half) **day for rest** in the middle of the event.
- ▽ Dedicate **the last day for reflection** and check-out. Give everyone a chance to talk out their feelings and opinions.
- ▽ **Work in smaller groups** to reduce the strain of large group interactions.

Space Organization:

- ▽ **Resting/Quiet Room:** Provide a quiet space for participants to unwind.
- ▽ **Accessibility:** Invite participants to share their access needs and ascertain what changes may need to happen to ensure the maximum safety and comfort.
- ▽ **Defined roles:** Assign day managers, timekeepers, and meeting facilitators at least a day before and provide clear instructions as to the responsibilities of their roles.
- ▽ Designate **buddies for external guests** to ensure their needs are met without disrupting the autonomy of the group or its process

Daily Routine:

Daily routines help create an environment in which participants develop a sense of familiarity and safety, which supports them in determining and achieving their shared goals.

- ▽ **Daily check-ins:** Include a 30-minute organizers' check-in at the start of each day. Optional parallel check-ins for care groups.
- ▽ **Day manager rotation:** Rotate day managers and timekeepers daily to share responsibility.
- ▽ **End-of-day reflection:** Quick 3-minute check-out of the whole group before dinner to wrap up the day.

PRACTICAL TIPS:

- ▽ Send out **an information pack** with daily schedules ahead of time.
- ▽ **Printed schedules:** Provide printed schedules for all participants and make sure they are clearly visible at the venue.
- ▽ **Drinking water, snacks and trash bins:** Ensure water and food are available and recycling bins are in place.
- ▽ **Sound signals:** Use a gong, bell, or fun alternatives to signal group transitions.

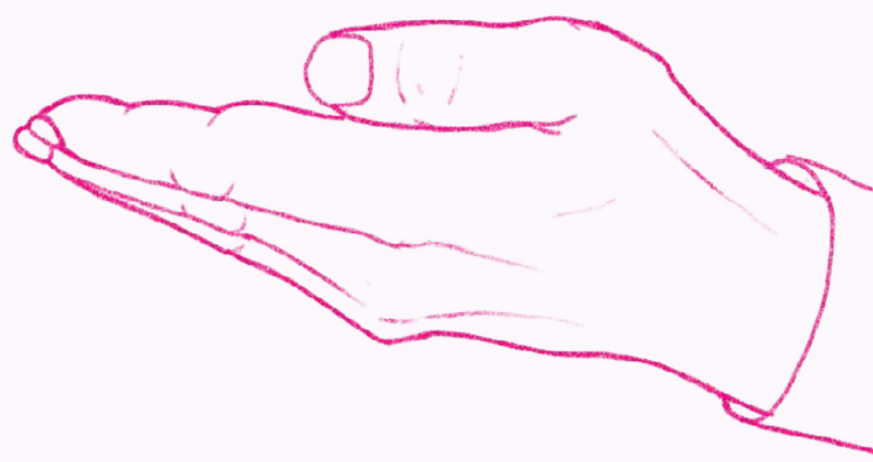
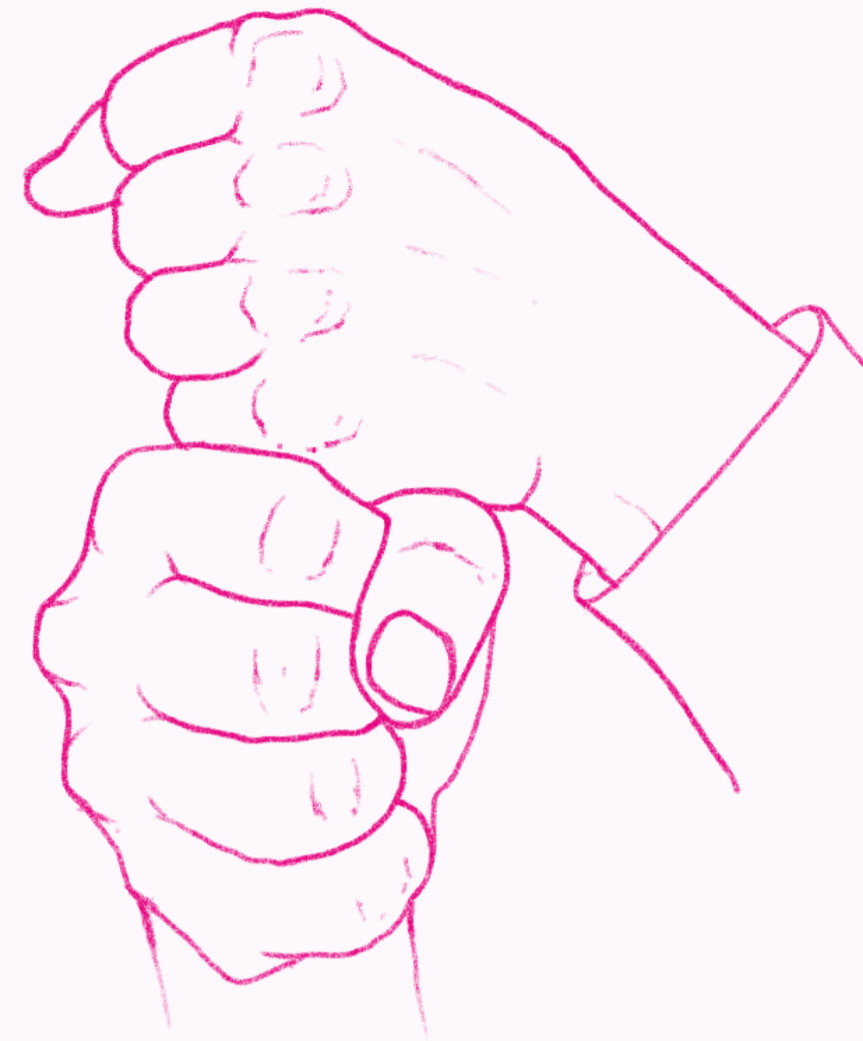
GRAVITY STRIKE

We advocate nonviolent poetic forms of political protest and civil disobedience. The Gravity Strike is a strike against everything that pulls us down; against social elements that repress us or take away our hope or sense of joy. The Gravity Strike may take many forms, both visible and invisible forms, individual or collective, funny or melancholic. Some past Gravity Strikes presented have included actions in the public space such as performing a **headstand in a trash bin**, dancing with pigeons, a horizontal walk, meditation, and a game introducing the emergence of a new solar system. It could also show up proper demonstration for the of frogs, lichens, and clowns, others.



CHAPTER 2

CLOWNING INSPIRATION



of

N.A.T.O.



CLOWNING IS QUEER | CIRCA | RHYTHMS OF RESISTANCE | THEATRE OF THE OPRESSED | MOTHERFUL WORLD | CLOWNING IS



OF THE OPRESSED | MOTHERFUL WORLD | CLOWNING IS QUEER | CIRCA | RHYTHMS OF RESISTANCE | THEATRE OF THE OPRESSED | MOTHERFUL WORLD | CLOWNING IS QUEER | CIRCA | RHYTHMS OF RESISTANCE |

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THEATRE OF THE OPPRESSED

was developed by Augusto Boal in Brazil in the 1960s. TO's guiding methodology was Paulo Freire's work [The Pedagogy of the Oppressed](#). The method aims to find ways for individuals or communities to actively and creatively resist the imbalance caused by the oppressor-oppressed relationship. TO is dedicated to understanding, preserving, developing, and renegotiating this experience.

The practice of dramatic representation is used here as a functional tool for understanding and addressing social issues, turning theater into a platform for conscious exploration of social and political change. TO actively engages the audience, transforming them from passive observers into active participants.

The method consists of theater exercises merged with physical games (gamesercises), image techniques, and specific improvisations. Different theater processes have developed within the methodology, including Forum Theatre, Image Theatre and Invisible Theatre.

In our N.A.To's gatherings, we have explored how Rebel Clowning and TO intersect, connect, and support each other.

At first glance, these two forms may seem quite different, but as we look more closely at the

fundamentals, we discover that they share a common goal of social change and transformation

We can underline four key points at which they intersect:

Active Participant

The clown engages directly with the audience, which serves as the clown's source of power.

TO invites the audience into the action and onto the stage, searching for solutions by way of mutual involvement.

Social Criticism or Confrontation

The clown challenges individuals to confront a particular perspective on the environment. The clown creates and expresses a form of "unreality" which is a satirical statement on the disintegration of reality.

TO addresses the oppressor-oppressed dynamics with objectivity, methodically presenting participants with an acknowledged social issue to be explored and resolved.

Creating Empathy and Awareness

The clown triggers emotional responses among audience members and invites them into new ways of perceiving.

In TO practice, individual and collective stories and experiences are revealed to, witnessed and reshaped by the audience.

Balance

The clown takes in their surroundings and offers something new. Clowns disrupt the status quo, offer unusual perspectives and strive for harmony. They can challenge oppressive dynamics by shifting the energy or atmosphere in a space, experimenting and “normalizing” unique ways of seeing and being.

TO focuses on reshaping the power dynamics between the oppressor and the oppressed. Its ideal is to establish a balance in which both parties can coexist with all needs met and without domination.

Points of Departure

TO examines the dynamics of “oppression”, including its formation, causes, stages and tools.

This analysis is multidimensional, considering spatial, social, temporal and linguistic factors, among others. It aims to detail the oppression as clearly as possible for deeper understanding.

Such foundational work strengthens the practice of clowning and the interventions of the clown. It enhances our knowledge of the phenomenon or subject with which we are grappling and develops our understanding of the content and roots of the struggle. For this reason, we believe that the core exercises and practices of TO provide a solid foundation for Rebel Clowning processes and actions.

Image Exercises

Our research involved TO image/sculpture-based exercises. These exercises helped warm up the body, collective imagination and dramatic sense, while bringing in the concept of “oppression”. Even in this aspect, TO is a valuable companion to Rebel Clowning.

As the project developed, our focus shifted toward integrating clowning with these sculpture/image exercises.

“Stations” — Sculpture Stops

One of the clown improvisations explores the relationship between “security” and “clown”. In this exercise, an actor plays the role of “security”, tasked with guarding a valuable object (which could be chocolate, a flower, or money—something the clown

desires). The “security” cannot leave their position and can only respond to the clown with “no”. The clown’s goal is to obtain this object.

During the improvisation, the audience could pause the action by giving a signal such as clapping to indicate an important or powerful moment. This clapping directed the creation of live sculptures capturing these key moments.

This approach led to the discovery of the “Stations”, which can be a tool for Rebel Clown groups.

We expanded this improvisation into a “police vs. clown group” scenario, an exercise in which clowns unexpectedly freeze in predetermined live sculptures/images during their interaction with the police or the audience. This “Stations” approach provided several benefits:

- ▽ An opportunity for “active resting”, allowing clowns to control and sustain group energy.
- ▽ Giving the audience time to process the images, deepening their impact. The static nature of the sculpture enhances the viewers’ perception process. The duration gives semantic depth and complexity to the phenomenon.
- ▽ These moments carry significant power and add meaning to the performance. Since they

are selected & rehearsed beforehand, they are impactful on their own and may be the most striking images of the action or performance.

Image Theatre

In another rehearsal, we added a theme to our image exercises. During our workshop in the city of Ostrava, which faces significant precariousness around housing and homelessness, we chose the theme of having a home.

Reflecting on this theme, we explored “real image”, “ideal image”, and “transition images” as suggested by Boal. Then we introduced a new element: the clown. We wanted to explore the question, “How can the clown influence the process of troubleshooting around housing precarity and homelessness?”

Participants could use their clown noses to suggest changes to the sculptures or join the images as clowns. Incorporating clowns into Image Theatre brought useful perspectives on the theme, offering the audience new insights. We then tested this exercise in Ostrava’s city square.

One of the key challenges we faced was controlling the clown’s energy. A primary discussion point was around whether or not it is against the clown’s nature to remain still like a statue. Some of us struggled as clowns with the “frozen-pause”

experience. On the other hand, a clown in a frozen state holds intense energy, which can be captivating for the audience. This state can lead to new meaning-making and experiences for both the clown and the viewers.

Forum Theatre and Clowning

While we were unable to test some important ideas due to time constraints, we propose that they hold great potential; for instance, including clowns among the audience in a Forum Theatre setting. Like other audience members, they would be able to step onto the stage and share their ideas and solutions for the challenges of oppression focused on in the performances.

With their vast imaginations and daring acts of exploration, clowns could be ideal agents of change in this context, presenting inventive solutions and thereby potentially expanding the range of strategies for resistance.

Conclusion

The integration of Rebel Clowning and the Theatre of Oppressed is a rich and transformative approach through which we have explored new dimensions of resistance and creative expression. This integration allows for a more comprehensive understanding of the concept of “oppression”, and “its manifestations and counter-manifestations” as Boals says.

SOUNDPAINTING

Soundpainting is a universal multi-disciplinary sign language for many kinds of artists (musicians, actors, dancers, visual artists, et. al.) and used as a tool for live-composing group improvisations. Since its creation in New York in 1974 by **Walter Thompson**, it has been constantly evolving and spread to a world-wide network of practitioners.

For clown interventions, Soundpainting can help structure and define the specific steps and group actions. Soundpainting can be used to compose instant performance pieces to communicate ideas nonverbally during actions.

The Soundpainting language currently comprises more than 1500 different gestures signed by the Soundpainter (composer) to indicate the type of material requested of the performers. The sign

language structures the signs in a very simple syntax:

“Who does what, how and when.”

The roles of soundpainter and performer originate from the classic orchestra setting with a conductor/composer and an orchestra. We believe that going beyond the inherent hierarchy would provide many opportunities for creativity and shaping performances. As the Soundpainting language can be learned by anyone, there are infinite possibilities, for instance, there could be multiple soundpainters at once, or invisible composers who are not recognized by the public, which would bring in more varied elements and more surprise.

Some challenges arose around how clowns might interpret the Soundpainting signs, since clowns do not share a universal language and many clowns may be unable or unwilling to obey instructions. Soundpainting is very vocabulary-heavy — there are far too many signs to remember! How to make it accessible and fun for those, like clowns, who have unreliable memories?

**Here are a few signs we tried and
deemed useful on the streets:**

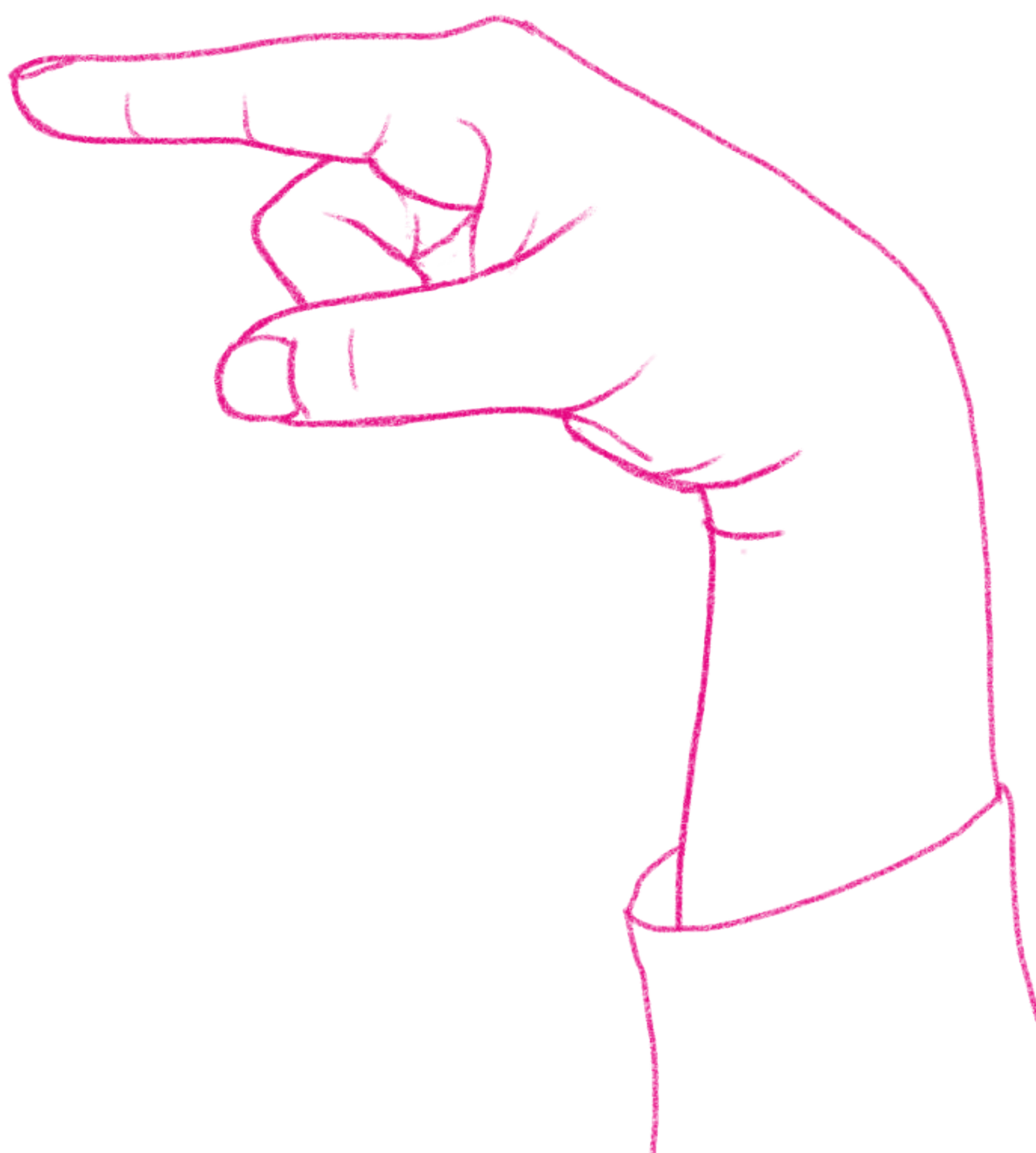
WHO-SIGNS:

WHOLE GROUP



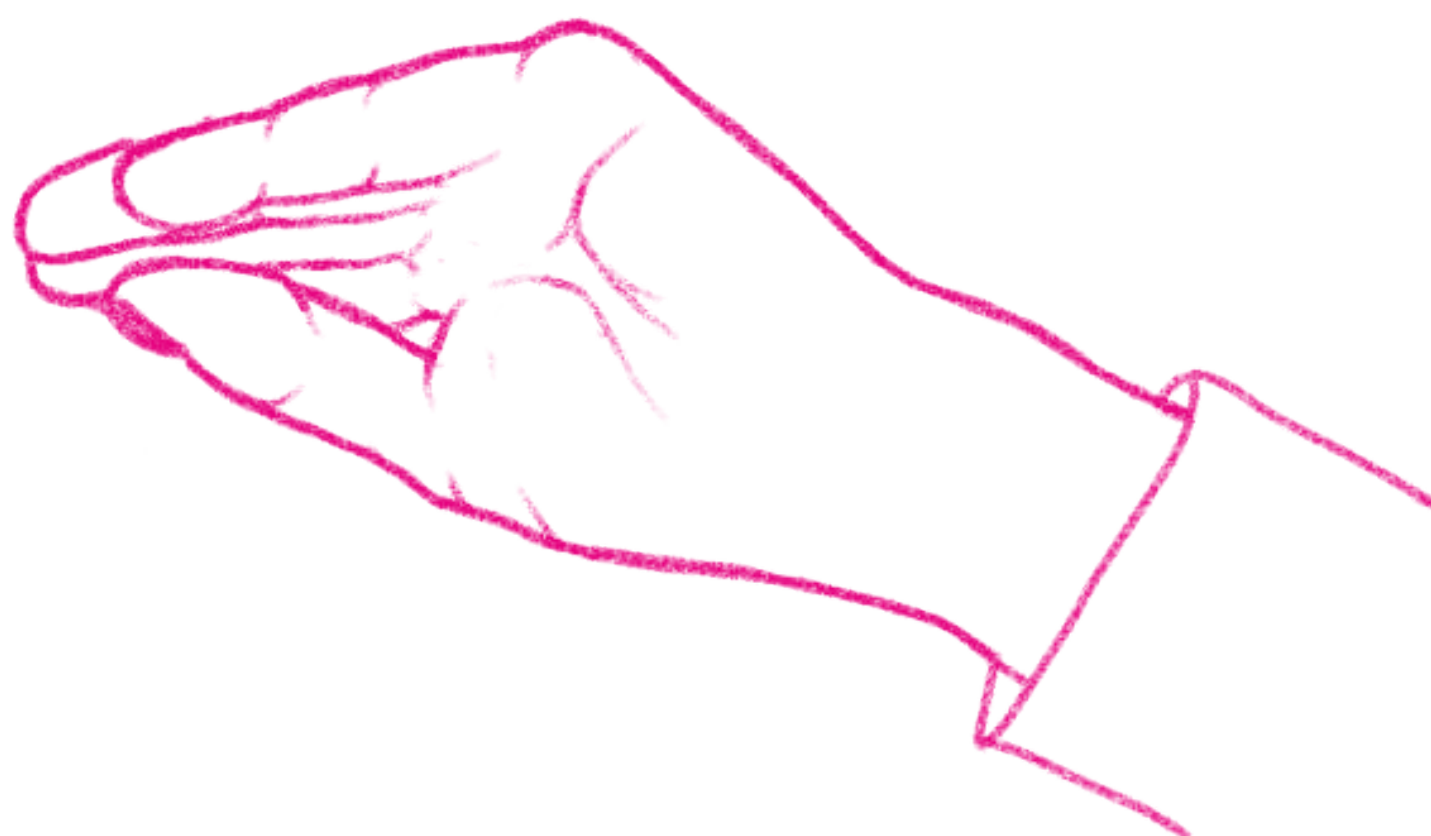
ALL ARE ADDRESSED.

YOU



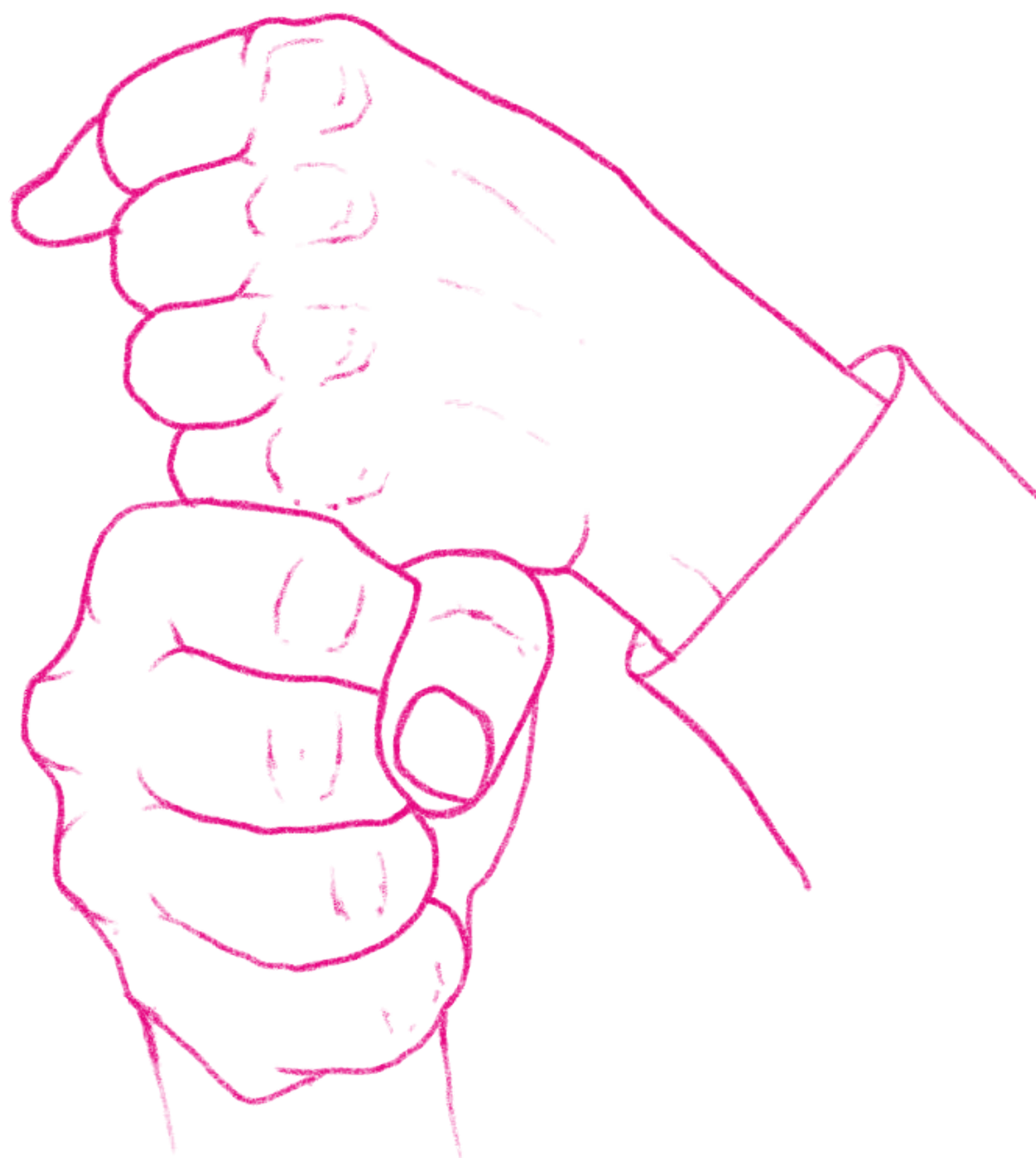
A SINGLE PERSON IS ADDRESSED.

REST OF THE GROUP



SOME MEMBERS ARE ADDRESSED SPECIFICALLY
ALL OTHERS CONTINUE WHAT THEY ARE DOING.

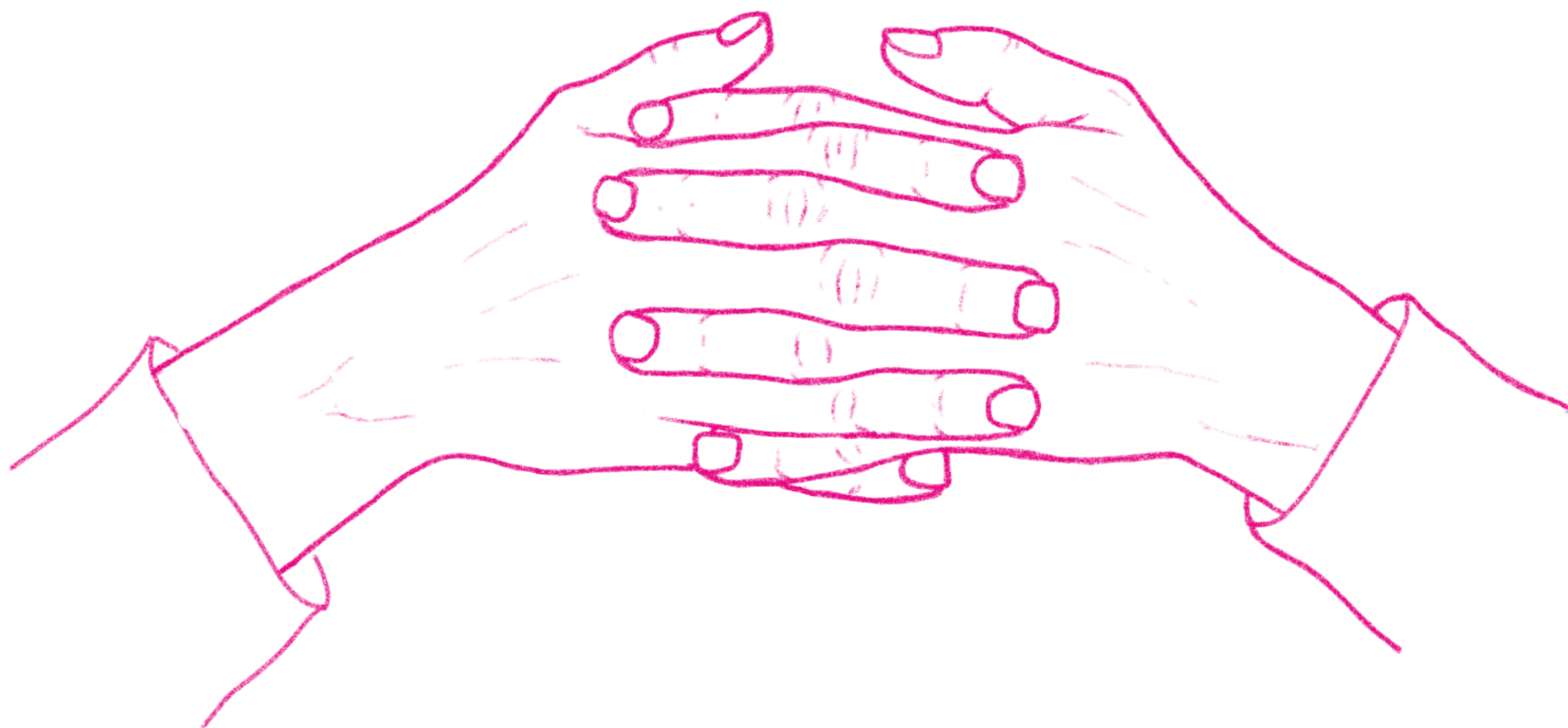
GROUP



MEMBERS CAN BE DESIGNATED TO SPECIFIC NUMBERED GROUPS
THE GROUP NUMBER IS SHOWN WITH THE FINGERS.

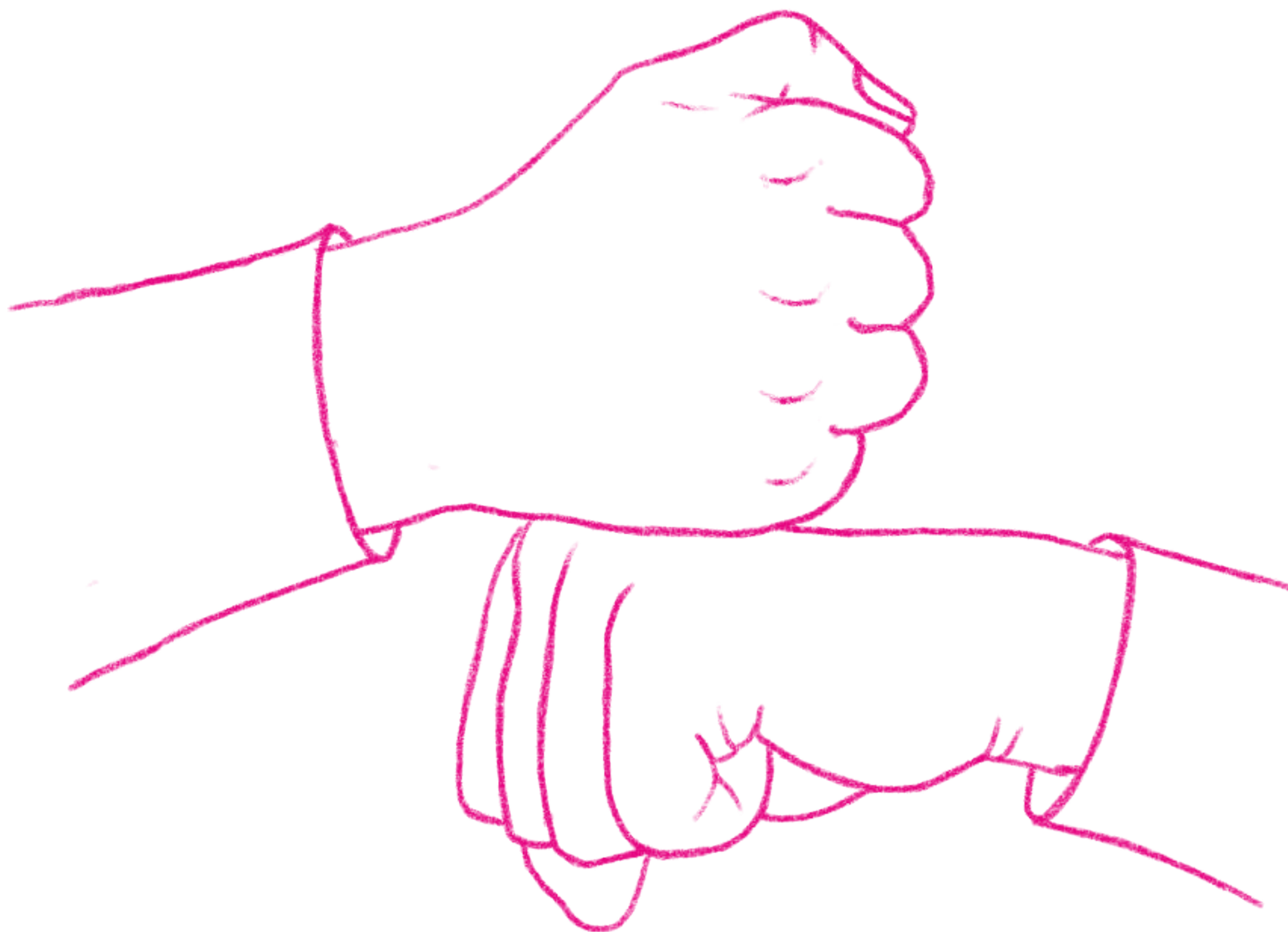
WHAT-SIGNS:

SYNCHRONISER



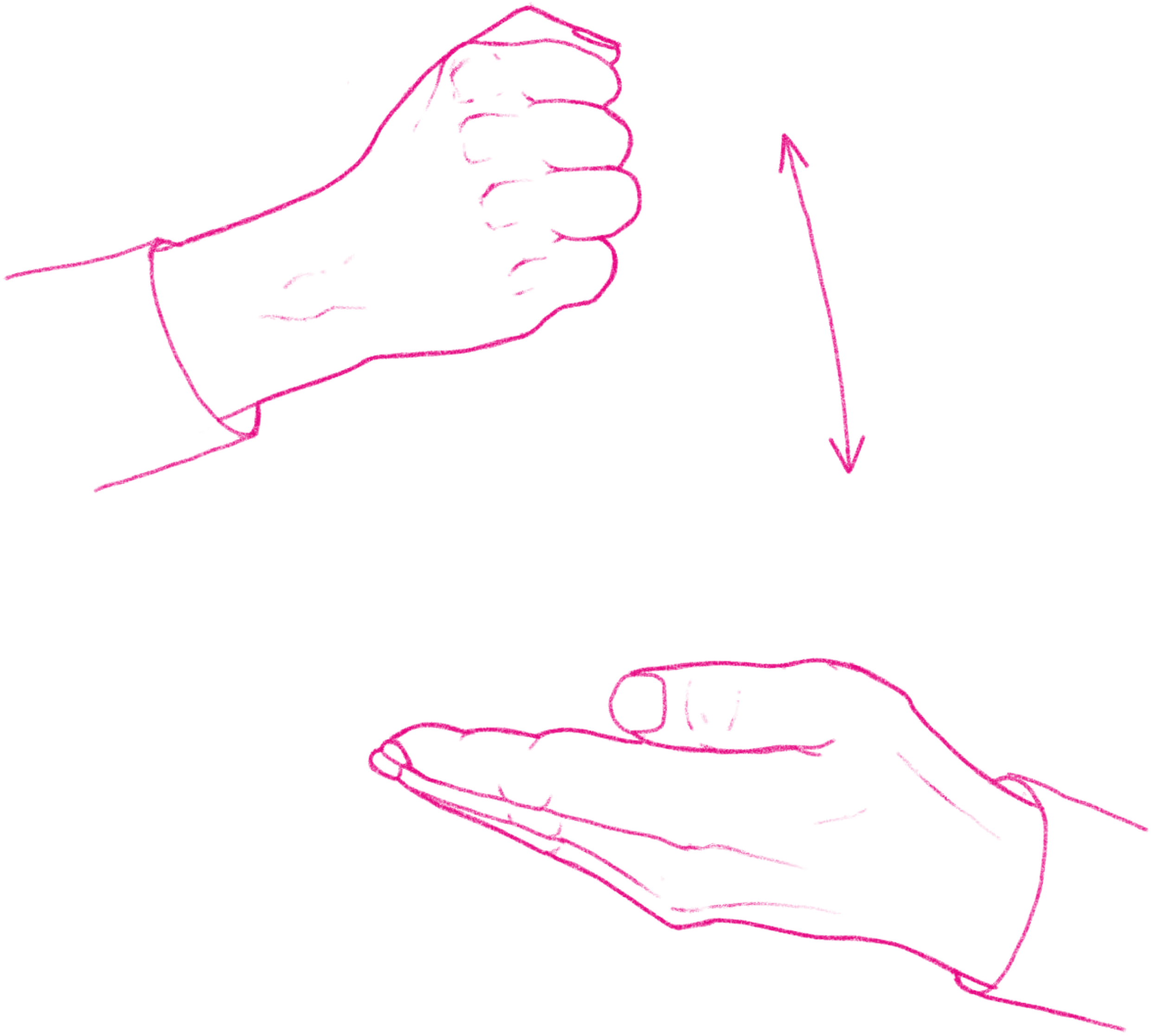
SYNCHRONIZE (IN MOVEMENT AND SOUND) WITH ANOTHER PERSON, EITHER INSIDE OR OUTSIDE THE PERFORMANCE GROUP. IT MAY BE A DIRECTIVE TO SYNCHRONIZE WITH SOMETHING OTHER THAN A HUMAN BEING, SUCH AS A TREE, A CAT, OR A CAR.

FREEZE



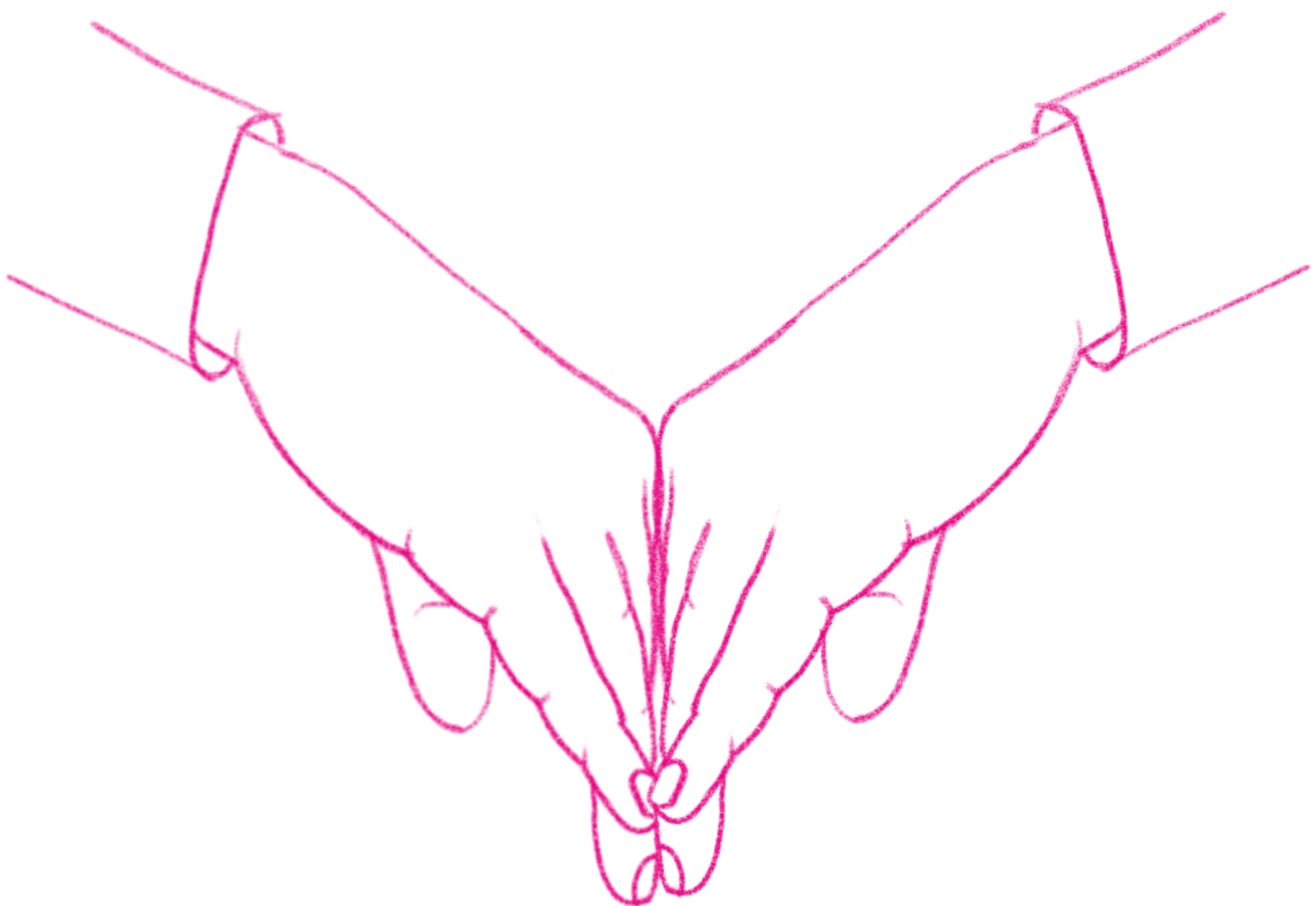
WHATEVER YOU ARE IN, FREEZE AND HOLD THE POSE.

STAB FREEZE



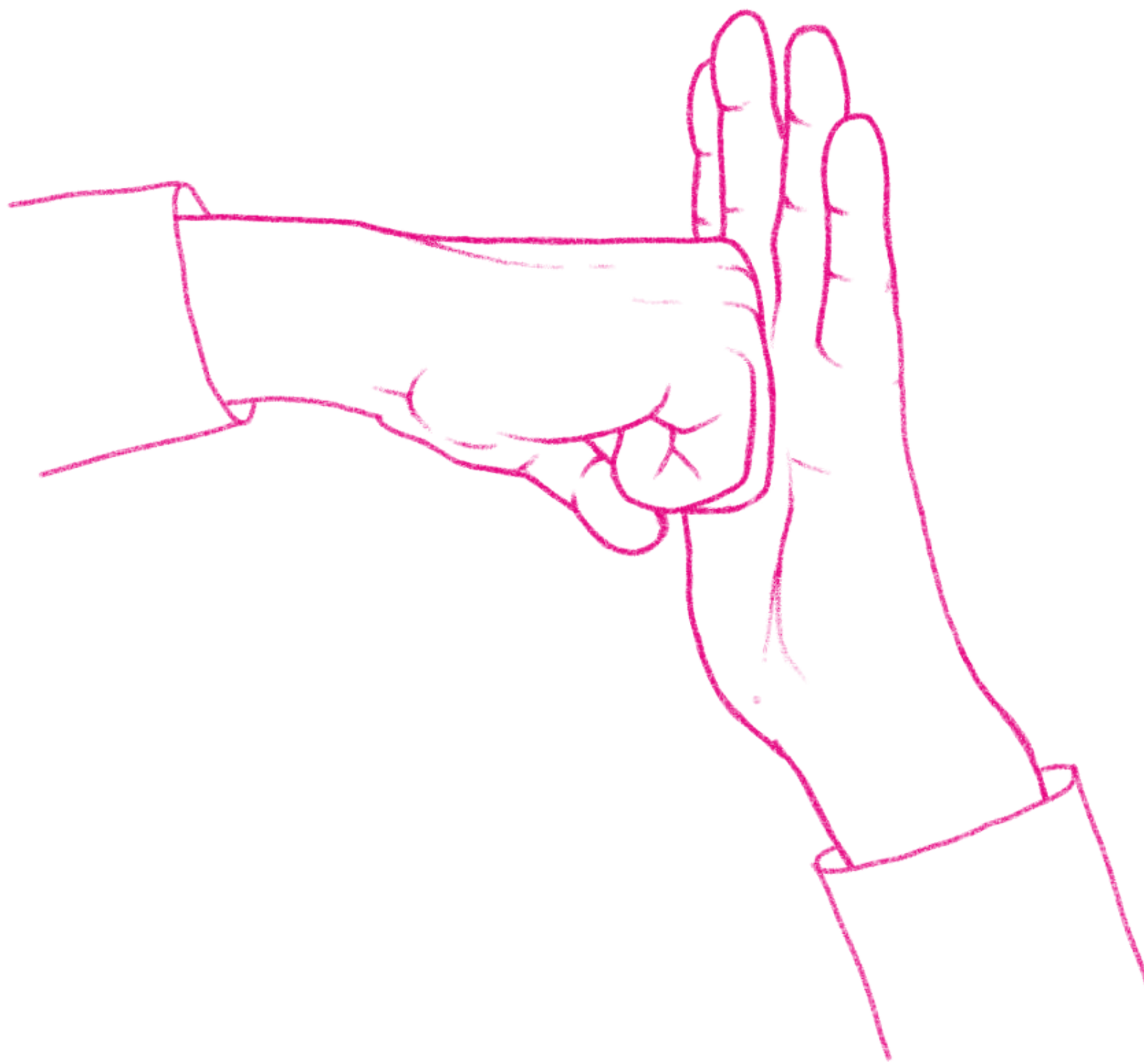
LIKE A GROOVE IN A VINYL RECORD, REPEAT THE LAST MOMENTS OF YOUR ACTION OVER AND OVER.

MINIMALISM



CREATE A LOOP CONSISTING OF VERY FEW ELEMENTS.

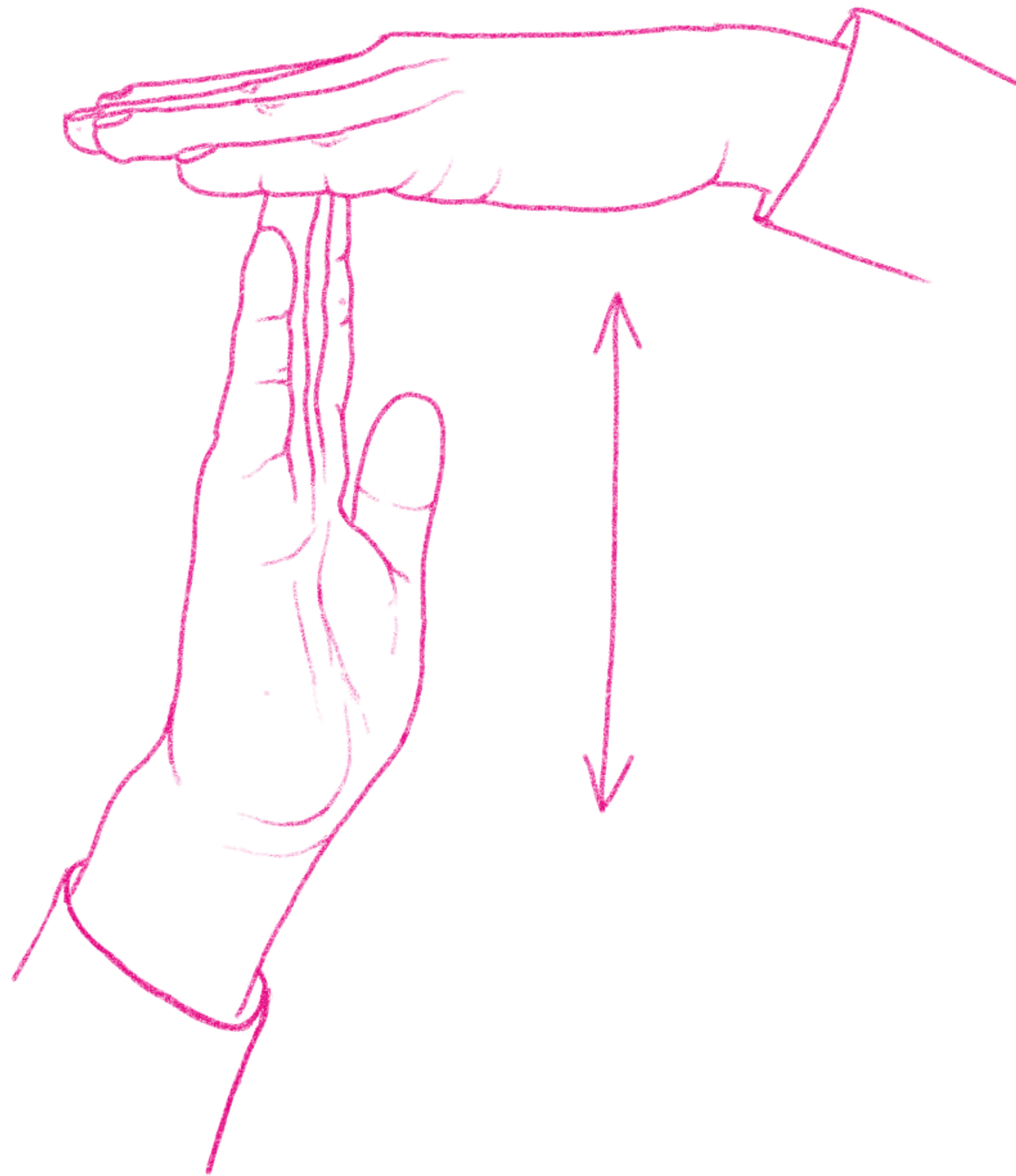
PALETTE



PALETTE IS LIKE A STORAGE BOX OF OPTIONS. THE PALETTE OF PARTICULAR MATERIAL AND DIRECTIONS ARE AGREED BEFOREHAND. FOR INSTANCE, PALETTE 1 COULD BE “SING HAPPY BIRTHDAY” PALETTE 2 COULD BE “BARK LIKE A DOG,” ETC.

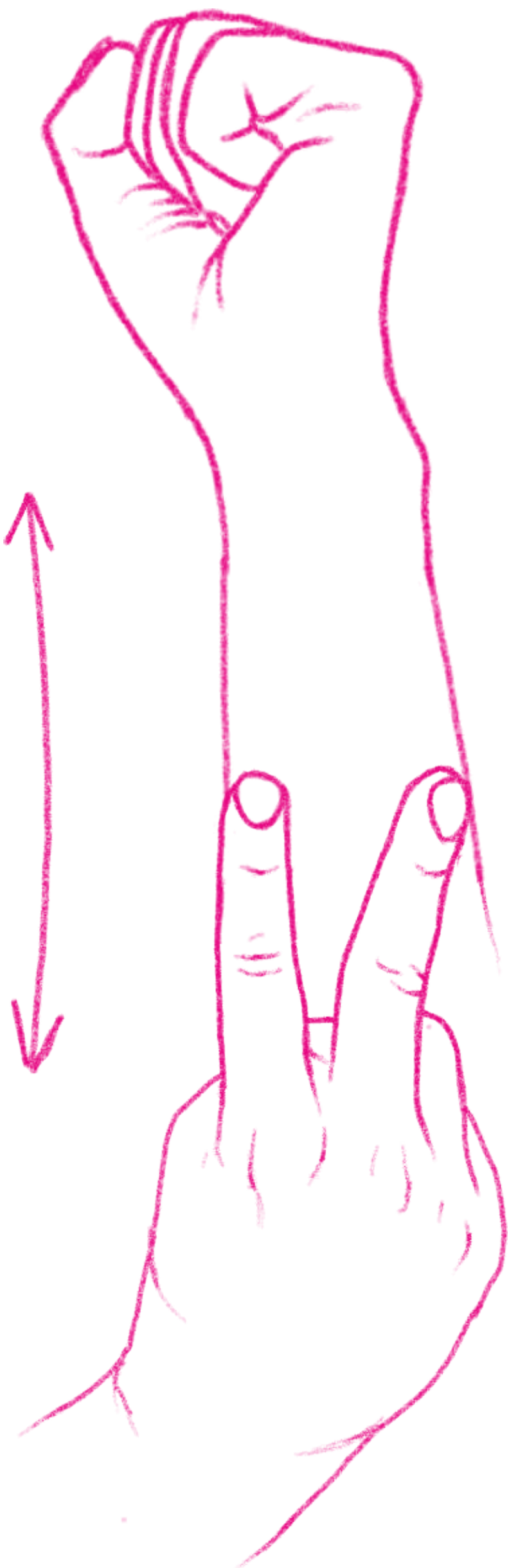
HOW-SIGNS:

TEMPO FADER



USING THE FOREARM, INDICATE FAST OR SLOW TEMPO.

THE HANDS FORM A KIND OF T.



VOLUME FADER

ALONG YOUR FOREARM, INDICATE HIGH OR LOW VOLUME. THE STABLE ARM FORMS A FIST.

CLOWNING AS A TOOL TO CREATE A MOTHERFUL WORLD

“The words I associate with mothering include: listening, and holding, and offering, and receiving. They would include feeding, nourishing, watering, and they would include changing, transforming, and I think the biggest mothering word is loving. We can do that in a relationship with each other, and this could be how we think about our relationship with the entire planet.”

— Alexis Pauline Gumbs
Mother is a Question
.....

Definition of mothering

- ▽ mothering as a practice that teaches another way to breathe, to relate to each other and to the planet.
- ▽ a transformed world in which mothering values guide us in our interactions.
- ▽ mothering understood as investing energy and care into something without knowing the outcome.
- ▽ mothering as a way of trusting the process.

Discovering the practice of mothering while creating N.A.To^o:

- ▽ Care for yourself and each other, create a space of mutual respect and open-mindedness.
- ▽ Reflection before, during and after a N.A.To^o on how the presence of children and other beings is possible.
- ▽ Value invisibilized work and the people doing it, care for their comfort and dignity.
- ▽ Who holds decision making power? Where, when will the event happen and how does this affect who has access? What is the cultural makeup of the organizers and participants? Who is missing?
- ▽ Consider that time and space and care are needed to deal with emotions and create a space in which this space is dedicated and care is a leading force
- ▽ Possible tools: check-in and check-out, plenum, facilitation of plenum, daily manager and awareness person/care manager, daily-reflection in small groups in the evening, cooking and cleaning together, flexibility of spaces.
- ▽ Don't overload the program, plan a radical resting day and stick with it.
- ▽ Transparency of organizational structure (paid and unpaid work; responsibilities).
- ▽ Summer camp or malleable organizing of time.

CLOWNING IS QUEER

Whether through its clown's goggles or a kaleidoscope, a clown sees and perceives the world differently. Clowns are queer. They challenge social norms, binary divisions and all forms of so called success. They disturb dominant power structures and celebrate in their own ways.

In *N.A.To*, we apply the two key elements of queer perspectives from queer clown Leo Hosp:

- ▽ **CELEBRATION** — cherishing marginalized experiences, fostering solidarity, care, and compassion, and centering joy.
- ▽ **DISTURBANCE** — challenging and dismantling power structures, resisting normativity, breaking down presumed norms, and providing alternatives.

Clowns can learn from the queering perspective in community building and being attentive to each other. This is very important when we are clowning together. Using the queering perspective, we can ask ourselves these questions:

- ▽ Who are we as individuals and as a collective in this space?
- ▽ How do we relate to each other and our ecologies?
- ▽ Who/what is present/absent, in/visible, not/welcome, not/safe?

- ▽ What is the dominant standard body, the dominant aesthetic in this space?
- ▽ How do we move/act in this space?
- ▽ How do we 'use' this space 'correctly'?
- ▽ Who is responsible for the space?
- ▽ Who cleans the space?

CIRCA

The Clandestine Insurgent Rebel Clown Army (CIRCA) emerged from the global anti-capitalist movement in the UK at the end of 2003. Their first actions, directed against the politics of George W. Bush and the UK role in Iraq, went viral and inspired dozens of self-organized clown activist groups worldwide. CIRCA aimed for a new creative methodology of civil disobedience, merging the ancient art of clowning with contemporary tactics of nonviolent direct action and consequently popularized rebel clowning as a form of protest.

Some principles from clowning allow for effective tactics (tactical frivolity) in protest. Here is a very incomplete list:

- ▽ Expose the absurdity of authorities.
- ▽ Undermine expectations of "activists".
- ▽ Reveal and invert hierarchies.
- ▽ Subvert the abuse of power.

- ▽ Use confusion to disarm/ de-escalate/slow down.
- ▽ Direct attention (particularly media attention).
- ▽ Embrace failure, empower the imperfect.
- ▽ Stay in connection and empathy.
- ▽ Bring joy and playfulness to protest.
- ▽ Prefigurative action: create the “world we wish for”.

CIRCA dissolved in 2005. Many other rebel clown groups in different parts of the world have continued the work and the lineage is still alive.

The core aim stays the same: use clowning to foster resilient, creative and caring forms of activism. Clowning is a complex arts practice that needs time to learn. It is not enough to put a nose on and act like a clown. The clowning practice demands personal transformative work. But it allows us to stay connected to ourselves while being connected to one another. We believe that clowning play and joyful actions enable sustainable, effective and experimental embodiment towards the more just world we wish for.

For more inspiration, look at the [Beautiful Trouble toolbox](#). You can find information about CIRCA and other resources there. Jay Jordan, one of the co-founders of CIRCA, continues to work with clowning and other artistic forms of direct action — see their work at [The Laboratory of Insurrectionary Imagination](#).

RHYTHMS OF RESISTANCE

Rhythms of Resistance (RoR) is an international network of percussion protest bands that play at demonstrations and festivals focusing on social and climate justice movements. They criticize and confront any form of domination, exploitation, discrimination or oppression, using tactical frivolity, Carnaval celebration and other forms of creative protest to channel their rage and indignation.

RoR uses universal sign language to coordinate their drumming and dancing during protest or direct actions so that people can easily join other RoR branches anywhere in the world or enlarge their groups. There is also a shared repertoire of songs and synchronized moves RoR performs to bring fun into resistance and joyfully, loudly and energetically call attention to important issues.

RoR principles, rhythms, signs,
breaks and dance moves can be found here:

<https://www.rhythms-of-resistance.org/>

We find these particularly useful for rebel clowning:

- ▽ everybody dance now
- ▽ shouting breaks
- ▽ ua-, oi-break
- ▽ cat-, goat-break

CLOWNING AS A TRANSFORMATIVE PRACTICE

Our colleague Julia created a documentary film [Clown as a way of healing](#) and is now researching the connections between clowning and healing for her master's thesis.

In the whimsical world of clowning, adults find more than just laughter; they discover a transformative journey through self-exploration and societal renegotiation. Clowning, with its emphasis on personal expression, challenges and reshapes individuals' relationships with societal norms, cultural expectations, and identities.

- ▽ *Artistic expression becomes a powerful tool for self-discovery and healing.*
- ▽ *Shared experiences within a clowning community foster belonging, mutual understanding and support, creating a space where individuals feel empowered to collectively challenge societal expectations.*
- ▽ *It becomes a profound exploration of self, a renegotiation of societal norms, and a communal celebration of individuality.*

Clowning can serve as a catalyst for social change. Through the frame of clowning workshops, socialized habits can be unlearned and new behaviors can be experimented with.

CLOWN ACTIVIST TOOLKIT

For more rebel clown inspiration, check out [Robyn Hambrook's clown](#) and follow the adventures of the nomadic rebel clown academy. The blog is a huge inspiration for action ideas and is full of tips and reflections of what works and doesn't work with street clowning. You can also find [an incomplete list of tools for the activist clown](#).

HOW TO OPEN DIFFICULT TOPICS: RACISM AND CLOWNING

During the first N.A.Toř in Brno, we explored the racist history of clowning. We had been contacted by an activist anti-racist group to brainstorm ways to ensure that our clowning actions would embody an anti-racist approach.

As a white-led group offering workshops and activities attended primarily by white participants, we are continuously educating ourselves in whiteness and white supremacist practices so that we can consciously enact an anti-racist approach in our work. Activist clowning is a practice that can challenge both the dominant misuse or misappropriation of the clown (i.e., the McDonald's clown upholding capitalist values and practices, or the trope of violent clowns in the context of horror films) as well as racist or depoliticized stereotypes perpetuated within clowning itself.

In addition to critical reflection regarding our own clowning practice, we also see that it is important to study and critically reflect upon the history of clowning and all elements that contribute to the understanding of a clown as a social entity or figure and its status today. In order to dissolve structures that sustain and replicate current forms of dominance, we need to find new concrete ways of clowning that reflect a contemporary context.

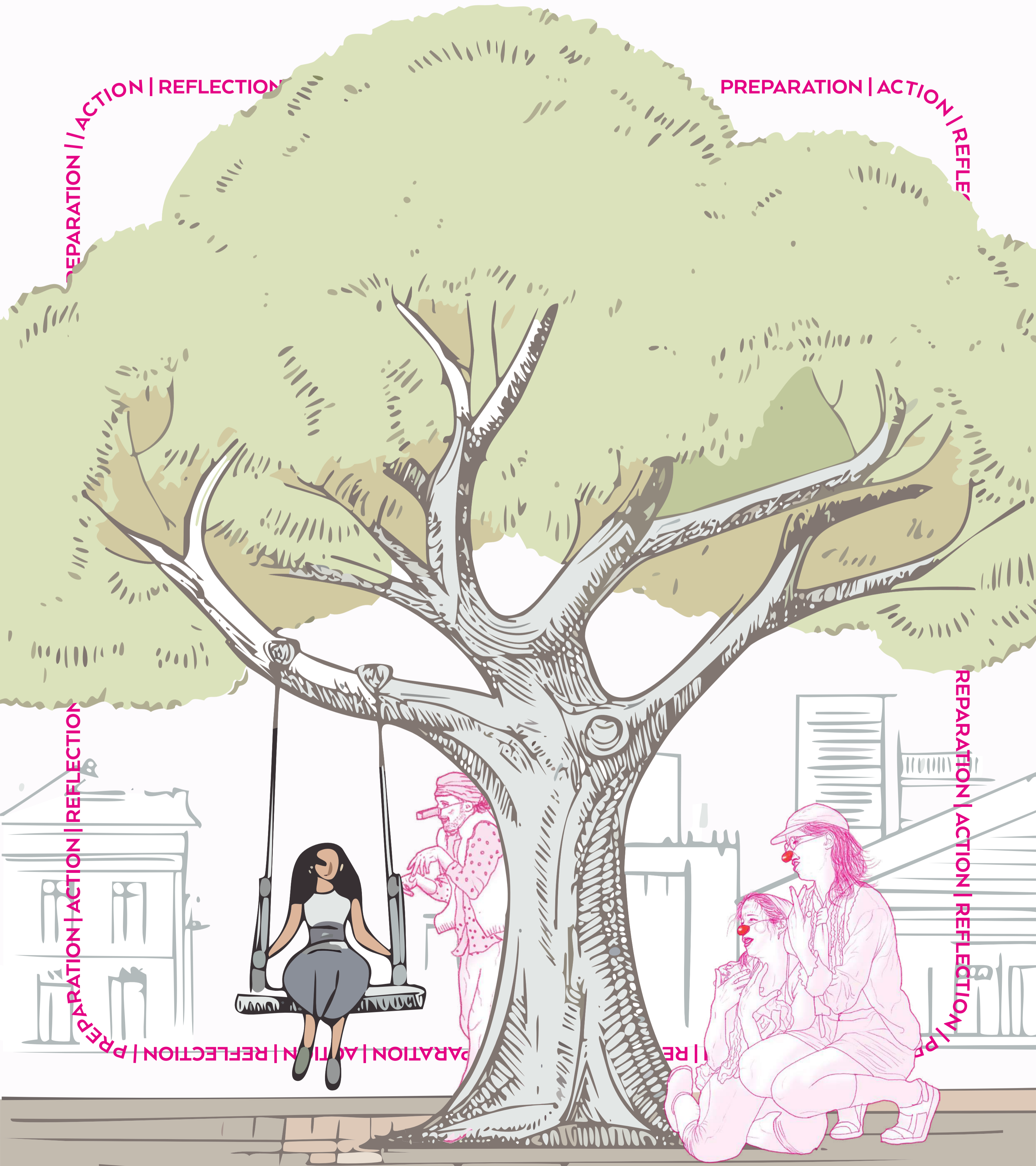
We feel it is important to consider:

- ▽ **Costuming** — what type of mask, nose, costume we are using? What social groups and contexts are considered funny and how is social location reflected in or expressed by our costuming?
- ▽ **Behavior** — what approaches do we use in interaction? Who feels safe in which public interactions? What kind of humor do we use? How do we reconfirm given structures and what kind of society do we sustain with the behaviors we display in a clown role?

Here is a [video essay on the racist history of clowning](#) as well as [an essay by Hesam Sharifian](#) on Iranian black face clowns. You can also find a rich literature about the history of clowning and reflection of black face.

CHAPTER 3

REBEL CLOWN EXERCISES



SHERIFF

The Sheriff exercise is used when a row of police officers stands or blocks a space at a demonstration. The best and safest is when cops are bored and have nothing to do. One clown takes on the role of a police officer — the Sheriff. The Sheriff gives orders to the actual police unit such as “Smile!”, “Be serious!”, or “Cry!”. The Sheriff’s goal is to elicit an emotional reaction from the police, who are mandated to maintain their poker faces. The Sheriff may overpraise the police reactions. The exercise works best when a row of clowns can join the police and follow the Sheriff’s instructions. The exercise can ease tension and bring a human feeling to the interaction between policemen and demonstrators.

REISSVERSCHLUSS/ZIPPER

In this exercise, a group of clowns slowly approach a police officer or line of police, visibly falling in love with the police (or another positive emotion of choice) with every step. They may bring a flower or another gift. The group waits for the police reaction. It is important to sustain the romantic tension between the clowns and police.

Variante: Standing in a line, they move like a zipper, one clown in the back moving to the front without

ever losing touch with the other clowns. They embody a desire for an emotional reaction from the officer. They have an intensive focus on one specific police officer, maintaining eye contact.

Normally, if a police officer reacts, it is a negative reaction or denial. At that moment, the whole group switches to crying and leaves in sadness (or other negative emotions), moving again like a zipper. After a moment, they can repeat and try to approach another police officer. It is important to keep big emotions in these exercises and sharp switches between them.

The exercise brings unexpected emotion to the demonstration – love and admiration. It underlies the contrast between the force of the police and the fragility of human beings.

SWARM

In this exercise, a group of clowns band closely together like a swarm of bees, moving as one organism. A clown in the front introduces a movement that is immediately imitated by all the other clowns. The clown in the front can introduce several movements (always paying attention not to be abrupt so that the other clowns can follow).

When the clown turns around ($90^\circ/180^\circ/360^\circ$), the initiative is passed to the clown who is now in front, who then directs the next group movement. This exercise works well with bigger groups of clowns on the street because their synchronized movements draw bystanders' attention.

ORCHESTRA

Everyone stands in line two by two. The first two clowns in line start playing an imaginary instrument (for instance, a trumpet) while marching. The rest of the line follows and becomes an orchestra of trumpets. After a couple of minutes, the clowns in the front move to the back and the next people in line decide on a new instrument that the orchestra plays while marching. In the advanced variation, each of the two clowns in the front play a different instrument, for example all the clowns on the left play the violin while all the clowns on the right play the drums.

This exercise works well with bigger groups of clowns on the street because their synchronized movements and sounds draw bystanders' attention.

FURTHER EXERCISES FROM COCCINELLE

These can be helpful in structuring an introductory clown activist workshop for beginners.

Name Games

Name games are ideal to get to know each other and attune with a new group.

This fun game takes about **10 minutes**

1. Do a round where everyone says their name and pronoun and names an animal or plant to express how they currently feel.
2. Pass an object (for instance, a ball) around the circle; whoever holds the object says their name and animal or plant again. Throw the ball freely among participants.
3. After a while, stop the first object and introduce a second object with a different color or shape or both, and before throwing it, say the name of the participant you are throwing it to. After most participants are successful at this step, reintroduce the first object into the circle.
4. After a while, gather both objects and introduce a third object. The recipient of this third object must say the name and animal of the person who passed it to them. Once most participants are successful at this step, reintroduce the first and second object into the circle. Stop when you have had enough.

Warm-up

A physical warm-up is helpful to start a clowning session. This one takes about **25 minutes**.

Short introduction:

- ▽ Check any injuries or boundaries that the group should be aware of.
- ▽ **Touch consent:** This warm up is not about physical contact but it can shortly happen during some movement improvisation. Establish basic principles — don't touch intimate body parts without consent, and don't cause pain or annoy others with something like pulling hair. Ask for any other specific touch that participants want to avoid.

Qi-gong coffee — slap with your palms:

- ▽ 9 times on your lower back.
- ▽ 9 times on the back of your knees
- ▽ 9 times on the outer side of your knees
- ▽ 9 times on the inner side of your knees
- ▽ 9 times on the front part of your hips.
- ▽ Repeat 4 times, finding a shared rhythm together. Try not to accelerate.
- ▽ At the end, let your arm hang in front of you to feel the resonance of the slaps in your body.

Counting and rolling:

- ▽ Starting from standing, roll your spine down from the top of your head towards the floor at a pace that enables you to count 16 seconds until you arrive at the final position of a forward bend. Stretch or bend your legs as needed and relax your neck. Return to standing with the same pace, counting again to 16.
- ▽ Repeat, counting to 8 seconds.
- ▽ Repeat, counting to 4 seconds and then 2 seconds, eliminating the resting time in the forward bend.
- ▽ On the count of 1, go down to the upward facing dog position, repeat twice and then come back to standing.
- ▽ Stay in cobra position and warm up your facial muscles by moving them around to make different faces. Slowly return to standing.

“Grimace” warm-up — make:

- ▽ Big mouth, big eyes
- ▽ Small eyes, small mouth
- ▽ Small eyes, big mouth
- ▽ Big eyes, small mouth
- ▽ Quicker random changes

“Grimace” world championship:

You are well trained professionals in “Grimacing” (making faces), meeting for a world championship. The competition is not about competing but just enjoying. Proceed as follows:

- ▽ Train on your own with your best practiced procedure.
- ▽ 1st round, count 3, 2, 1: best grimace, go!
- ▽ 2nd round, count 3, 2, 1: whole body grimace, go!
- ▽ 3rd round, count 3, 2, 1: whole body grimace with a nice sound.
- ▽ 4th round, count 3, 2, 1: whole body grimace with a nice sound, developing as you move around the space. You can encounter other Grimaces and have short interactions, inspiring each other. Find an end to the improvisation after about 3 minutes.

You can add some short voice warm-ups as well.

Welcome to N.A.To[✓]

Prepare enough noses for all participants.

See video tutorial for DIY trash noses.
.....

“Here are my treasures, my noses! Grab a nose. Don’t think too much. Just grab the first nose that attracts you. Fit the noses to your noses and ears, make sure your nose stays and doesn’t scratch. You can make the string shorter or longer. Welcome to the Nose assembly for tomorrow[✓]: N.A.To[✓]! N.A.To[✓] is an international assembly of clowns. When wearing this nose, you can feel more free to let out any emotions, you seek more eye contact and your curiosity is bigger. This is civil with the nose off. And when the nose rests on your forehead, it is the unicorn. To empower yourself. To feel more confident.”

The 3 Chairs

Frontal setting between audience and the three chairs. 3 volunteer participants go sit on the chairs with their noses off. From left to the right, one by one, each participant will:

- ▽ Look down and slowly put on their nose.
- ▽ Take a breath.
- ▽ Lift their head up slowly and look at the audience, observing each audience member individually.

- ▽ Let things/feelings happen. Don't provoke them, don't perform them, don't hide them.
- ▽ Look at their neighbors on the chairs next to them.
- ▽ Look back at the audience.
- ▽ Go offstage with their head down and take off their nose.

Do a short reflection round in popcorn style (anyone can comment in any order) focusing on what participants observed.

Break: 10 to 15 minutes

The police line

Create a line of 4 to 6 police officers in a line with clown noses down around their necks, facing the audience.

One by one the police officers will:

- ▽ Look down, put on their noses.
- ▽ Step out of the line.
- ▽ Turn around and look at the other police officers.
- ▽ Take time and choose a favorite police officer.
- ▽ Give them a compliment.
- ▽ Return to their original position.

Do a short reflection round in popcorn style (anyone can comment in any order) focusing on what participants observed.

Action Consensus

Sharing the foundations of the **Rebel Clowning**.
Action Consensus from our Swiss colleagues

- ▽ Police interaction
- ▽ Action organization
- ▽ Costume and makeup.
- ▽ Be aware of **black face history**.

Gravity strike circle

To build your clown's imagination, developing new personal Gravity Strikes can be helpful.

In a supportive clown circle (with noses), one by one:

- ▽ Go to the center of the circle.
- ▽ Using your voice or body or both, illustrate an issue that is currently pulling you down. The clowns in the circle support you by following your movements and tuning in to your physical and emotional state.
- ▽ Experiment together to find a suitable Gravity Strike that would counter this pressure.

Some specific Gravity Strikes we have developed:

- ▽ Shaking off the pressure of stress.
- ▽ To deal with overwhelm and lack of focus, do the octopus-dance in honey.
- ▽ To fight back against "rechsts(d)ruck" (right-wing pressure), go to the left.
- ▽ To overcome the fear of death, do the worm dance.
- ▽ ... make up your own!

SPACE

Before the action, checking the space may help your performance. It may be useful to research:

- ▽ Who feels at home in this space.
- ▽ Who holds power in this space.
- ▽ How other beings use this space.
- ▽ Whether there are any dangerous spots (high traffic, crowds etc.).
- ▽ Which spots would be good for performing.
- ▽ A possible location as the group's meeting point.
- ▽ Possible locations for resting and safe houses close by.

PREPARATION FOR ACTION

Whether performing in a group or alone, we try to prepare for different potential scenarios on the street. Having a backup for performers helps create a safer environment. Before the action, we aim to:

- ▽ Make sure we **try on our costumes** and agree on the character of the performance.
- ▽ Build **mutual trust and awareness** among the performers by spending time together, tuning into each other with exercises and establishing group rituals.

- ▽ Use a **buddy system** when performing in crowded areas. Buddies go everywhere together, look out for each other and decide when to finish the performance.
- ▽ Establish a **code-word** and back up plan in case of emergency/danger.
- ▽ Establish gesture / voice **signal to call in the whole group** — we meet, take off our noses and assess the situation.
- ▽ Keep a **civilian (non-clown) with us** to help with props or carry clowns' personal belongings, observe, keep the timing and ensure everyone's safety. They also may communicate with bystanders or authorities when necessary and intervene in moments of conflict.
- ▽ Determine a time and place at which the action will end.
- ▽ Determine a time and place for **debriefing**.
- ▽ Have a **list of actions** to remind us of our options for performing in the public space.

ACTION

During our actions, time flows differently and may feel both long and short. These general principles work for us:

- ▽ Continuously discover, play with and hone our clown character during rehearsals.
- ▽ Start the performance with **a group ritual**.
- ▽ Be **respectful and non-aggressive** to other people on the street.
- ▽ **Show skills** in your act like juggling, acrobatics or singing that let the public know you are an artist.
- ▽ **Observe** the people we meet and give them our attention.
- ▽ Balance personal impulses, staying connected to and focused on the group.
- ▽ Be aware of situation changes around us.
- ▽ Take off our noses when there is an emergency.
- ▽ Keep performances short and sweet.
- ▽ Continuously play with and rediscover our clowns during rehearsals.

REFLECTION

After every action, we debrief together. We intend to hold a safe space in which we can reflect upon our emotions, experiences and insights. Both smaller affinity group and whole group reflection sessions are important. Some topics are more easily addressed in smaller groups, others in bigger groups.

When reflecting upon the action, we ask ourselves:

- ▽ How did I feel?
- ▽ What worked for me/the group and what didn't?
- ▽ What can I take from the action for future performances?

SOME GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR WORKING ON THE STREET

- ▽ Organize clowns in a group, in which **each person feels safe**.
- ▽ Prepare well to allow for spontaneity and forgetting during the action.
- ▽ Organize big groups to emphasize concrete topics to the public.
- ▽ Use **interactive activities**: dancing, drawing with chalk, soap bubbles.
- ▽ Actively engage with passersby, ask them concrete questions, giving them gifts or exchanging nonsense objects.

- ▽ Do a group choreography, even simple synchronized movement.
- ▽ Play subtle movement games signaling through eye contact or not at all (for instance, changing seats in public transport).
- ▽ Ask people in public for solutions or support for absurd problems.

POSSIBLE CLOWNING ACTIONS

- ▽ Spontaneous dance clowning party (Tanzstelle statt Tankstelle).
- ▽ Singing a personalized song to an audience member.
- ▽ Creating living statues symbolizing a particular social situation.
- ▽ Imitating everyday social roles (conductor, police officer).





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N.A.T.O. 

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N.A.T.O.



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