

## AFFINITY

MID-STAGE, 4 CHAIRS: A THRONE MADE OUT OF PAPER, A GREEN VINYL BEANBAG CHAIR, A CAST ALUMINIUM REPLICA EMECO U.S. NAVY CHAIR, AND A PINK PLASTIC 'TAM TAM' STOOL.  
A WOMAN SPEAKS TO THE AUDIENCE, SHE IS NOT SEEN, ONLY HER VOICE IS HEARD:

In the beginning  
there were no chairs.

Rather,  
chairs are ad hoc, circumstantial things:  
We find them where they are, use them and move on –  
A fallen tree or a rock – part of the world around us;  
we make chairs with a gesture: when we sit on a tree or rock  
it *becomes* a chair.

The oldest *manufactured* chairs in existence are Egyptian and they date from 3,000 B.C. Made of wood, painted and encrusted with jewels, these are the property of the Pharaohs.

In societies that govern by consensus, chairs are not used to denote power and status; everybody sits on the ground.

By the 18<sup>th</sup> Century, in Europe, chairs are seen as equalisers. Offering a chair to a visitor, regardless of her social standing, is such an ingrained convention that the last words of Lord Chesterfield on his deathbed are 'give Dayrolles a chair.'  
At this time, a chair depicted as lying on its side or upside down in a drawing or painting, signifies social upheaval, civilisation in disarray, chaos.

The chair,  
a tool, which gives ease to the legs and comfort to the spine,  
has been, over the centuries, redesigned, adapted, repaired and improved.  
We human beings have not outwardly undergone such radical changes. But in our minds we have the power to do so.  
If we can think of chairs as tools and tools as extensions of ourselves, then let's allow our thought to have an ethical as well as utilitarian, dimension.

So, for the time being, and for the purposes of this performance, let's make no distinction between aluminium, polystyrene, vinyl, paper, flesh, blood and bone.

#### A FOLLOWSPOT ILLUMINATES THE THRONE.

This throne is made of magazines, catalogues, manuscripts, junk mail, bank statements, books, receipts, newspapers, notes to an abandoned master's thesis and rejected grant applications all balled-up and glued together.

This throne is more of an *idea* of a kind of chair:

It would not do to actually sit on it.

But then, all these chairs began life as an idea, and since we are talking about ideas, please feel free to conceive of yourself sitting comfortably in any or all of these chairs; it is your mind that will put you there and support you.

Try the beanbag chair:

#### THE FOLLOWSPOT MOVES FROM THE THRONE TO THE BEANBAG.

Invented by a team of Italian designers in the late 60's, the first beanbag chairs are made of leather and have a headrest.

This one is fashioned out of vinyl and does not have a headrest.

It is manufactured in China. Still, it is very comfortable, and, like the original, is stuffed with small, foamed polystyrene pellets.

Polystyrene is discovered in 1839 by Eduard Simon, an apothecary in Berlin. He distills the resin – called styrol – of the Turkish Sweetgum tree into a sticky substance that hardens without oxidation.

About 80 years later, German organic chemist Hermann Staudinger theorizes that heating styrol starts a chain reaction that produces macromolecules. This leads to the substance receiving its present name, polystyrene. In 1931, I.G. Farben begins manufacturing polystyrene hoping it will be a suitable replacement for die-cast zinc. I.G. Farben hold several patents integral to the industrial-scale manufacture of polystyrene; they also hold the patent to Zyklon-B.

Several billion kilograms of polystyrene are manufactured every year. During the war in Vietnam, scientists at Dow Chemicals find that adding polystyrene to Napalm makes it burn much hotter and more

sticky, thereby making it difficult to remove from burning houses and children.

Chairs are like us in that they have backs, arms, legs and feet. Chairs are extensions of our own bodies – tools.

The beanbag chair is a very adaptable tool in that it can assume many shapes and has proved to have many uses outside those usually reserved for chairs: Children with sensory-integration problems respond positively to sitting in beanbag chairs, and doctors recommend beanbag chairs for patients recovering from back surgery.

In the main, Chairs provide rest and support thereby facilitating further work or relaxation.

This is what is meant by ‘tool’:

Where a tool meets the body, the body is extended further into the world.

The telescope extends our eyes into space, a rock, when thrown, concentrates and extends the force of our fists out into the world, and when an edge is developed, a rock becomes a crude knife enabling our hands to cut wood and flesh. Fire is a tool, too. It offers light for seeing into the darkness and heat for cooking and metallurgy.

Speaking thereof, here is a replica Emeco 1006,

THE FOLLOWSPOT MOVES FROM THE BEANBAG TO THE EMECO CHAIR.

also called The US Navy chair. It is made from cast aluminium and is very popular with the designers of cafes and restaurants.

Aluminium is the third most abundant element in the world – after oxygen and silicon – and the most abundant metal in the earth’s crust. About 8% – by weight – of the earth’s solid surface is Aluminium.

Because of its strong affinity with other elements, aluminium is rarely found as aluminium, rather, it is found as an ore. Bauxite – a ferruginous aluminium hydroxide – is the most common aluminium ore. While relatively easy and inexpensive to dig-up as bauxite, aluminium is very energy intensive to produce.

During the reign of Napoleon the 3<sup>rd</sup>, aluminium is more prized than gold. Now, it is estimated that there are over 80 kilograms of aluminium in the world for every man woman and child.

The Emeco 1006 is commissioned in 1942, by the U.S. Navy, for use on their warships: the contract stipulates that the chair must be strong enough to withstand a torpedo blast to the side of a Destroyer.

It is rumoured that the seat of the Emeco 1006 is modeled on an impression formed in clay of Rita Hayworth's naked bottom.

An original Emeco 1006 chair costs about \$500 and is made in the U.S. out of 80% post-consumer recycled aluminium. This chair is a reproduction made in China, it costs \$80.

A stool is a chair without a back.

This is the Tam Tam stool.

Designed by Matteo Thun, in 2002, it is made from injection-molded polystyrene.

The Tam Tam stool is modeled on The Sika Dwa – The Golden Chair – of the Asante People of Ghana.

THE FOLLOWSPOT MOVES FROM THE EMECO CHAIR TO THE TAM TAM STOOL.

The Asante have carved out of wood variations of The Sika Dwa for over 300 years. This style of chair is more than a piece of furniture: it is an attribute of office to be used by leaders at all levels of society.

At the Asante Kingdom's founding, all the clan leaders are gathered and The Sika Dwa is summoned down from the heavens by a high priest and alights in the lap of Osei Tutu – the man who is to become the first king of the Asante people. Since then, The Golden Chair has been the symbol of Asante Federation. The Sika Dwa bears the nation's identity: clad in pure gold, it is kept in a place known only to the king and his closest associates.

In 1896, Sir Frederick Mitchell Hodgson, the British governor of what the British call the Gold Coast, demands to sit on the Golden Chair. This outrages the Asante, who are already openly hostile to British attempts at ruling them, and they begin to prepare for war.

The British welcome this response because they are interested in provoking a conflict with the Asante as a pretense under which the Empire may take control of Asante gold mines. In 1900, after several years of cross-border raids, and covert hostilities, the War of the Golden Chair is engaged. It is the 5<sup>th</sup> and final war between the Asante and the British Empire.

The Asante, because of their involvement in the slave trade, are better armed than most African nations. Still, they are no match for the British Army.

Beheadings, rape, torture, and the destruction of property are tactics employed by both sides. The British lose just over 1000 men, while the Asante suffer around 2,000 men, women and children dead.

Thoughts, acts and words make the world.  
Violence un-makes the world.  
Violence destroys agency and reduces communication to the expression of mere power.

The 'Tam Tam' chair is offered in 7 colours, Green, blue, red, white, orange, grey and fuschia. The manufacturer has embossed an explanatory text on the underside of the seat, it reads: 'Tamtam tribal archetype – tamspirit power is the dream of colour – tam earthmother rhythm tamtam.'

Civilisation itself is a vast artefact; civilisation is both the made world and the ideas that make the made world:  
These chairs and these words, are all part of this made world, a world we make together.

THE FOLLOWSPOT GOES OUT.  
THE STAGE IS DARK.

LIGHTS COME UP ON 4 NAKED PERFORMERS EACH HOLDING A DIFFERENT POSE.  
THE POSES ARE DIFFICULT TO MAINTAIN, EVERY 3 TO 5 MINUTES THE PERFORMERS MUST REST.  
ONCE RESTED, THEY GO BACK TO THEIR POSE.  
AFTER 20 MINUTES THE LIGHTS GOES OUT.

THE STAGE IS DARK.  
THE FOLOWING WORDS ARE PROJECTED ON THE BACK WALL  
ACCOMPANIED BY SOUND.

we take them off the street  
wake them as they sleep  
drag them from boats  
out of classrooms and factories  
he liked my cooking  
we tie their hands shackle their feet  
her smile made me smile  
we bind their arms cover their eyes  
put them in cars trains planes trucks  
she liked cats  
crushed together we drive them away  
asking questions demanding answers  
leave them naked chained to a wall  
she was an architect  
bound to a chair  
stuffed in a closet  
in a room filled with sewerage  
with rats with insects  
he made me laugh  
we scrub their bodies until they bleed  
shave their heads  
give them new names clothes  
he loved to sing  
throw them down stairs  
kick them in the ribs and the stomach  
hit them with  
a cane a club a hammer a gun  
we burn them with cigarettes and torches  
he was a painter  
put electrodes on their teeth  
rectums and genitals  
in a room too hot too cold  
tell them to stand  
she was dancerc  
make them kneel hit them when they move  
when they don't move  
when they answer  
when they don't answer  
tell them their friends and family are watching

are standing on a chair  
a rope around their neck  
are dead  
he spoke to me in french  
we whip them until their knees buckle  
tear off their fingernails  
drill holes in their teeth  
she was a doctor  
brand lacerate scrape at their skin  
with sticks  
with knives  
ask them questions demand answers  
she was dependable  
grind salt shit sand  
maggots into their eyes  
mouth ears  
into their cuts  
kick at their bruises  
he was a teacher  
hurl them into the wall spinning  
stamp them into the ground  
club them with chairs books  
hammers fists  
she read books in the bath  
record their cries  
photograph their cuts  
their bruises  
poison their food  
she had a crooked smile  
crush their feet and fingers  
make them dig a grave  
eat dirt  
drink urine  
eat shit our shit our spit  
he smelled like a forest  
burn their hands  
feet genitals mouth  
puncture their skin with needles knives forks  
glass sticks  
he was my husband  
beat their legs buttocks  
arms with chains rocks  
make them sing songs

he liked to hold my hand  
rape them with rocks glass  
fists knives sticks  
show them videos of their children  
playing  
their wives working  
their husbands shopping  
their parents waiting  
outside  
she was my daughter  
we pretend to be doctors  
give them medicine  
bandage their wounds  
administer contagion  
hang them  
upside down  
he was my son  
flood their ears  
with noise feed  
them rotting meat  
deny them light  
food water warmth  
leave them standing  
sitting kneeling hanging  
the cries and shrieks of others loud  
their hands tied  
she was a student  
legs broken eyes infected  
in a tub of ice water  
we put plastic bags  
over their heads  
loud noise shatters  
eardrums  
we force them  
under water  
parade them naked  
tear at their flesh with pincers and sticks  
she loved to cuddle  
tie them to the ground  
feed them rocks  
sand cinders  
again and again we ask  
we demand

yelling  
they tell us not to hurt them  
they beg for mercy sleep  
cold water insects down their throat  
up their nose rectum vagina  
we kick slap hit whip burn beat  
demand question lie  
deny them  
sleep solitude society  
we promise that this will never end  
we take them off the street  
wake them as they dream  
teacher  
drag them off boats  
in chains tie their hands  
bind their arms cover  
their eyes  
put them in trucks trains planes  
crushed naked chained tied to a tree  
parents  
stuffed in a box  
on a bench  
in a stadium  
unable to move  
crowded bodies sewerage  
rats insects wire brush  
bleed shave heads  
architect  
take clothes  
names leave  
cold down stairs kick  
stomach ribs face burn  
teeth rectum testicle kneel naked  
beat move don't  
move don't  
student  
answer they answer  
friends family lie dead  
standing on a chair rope  
painter  
neck whip buckle drill  
brand scrape  
answers salt

shit sand maggots  
eyes mouth ears cuts kick  
bruises hurl wall spinning  
stamp grind club  
dancer  
hammer record photograph  
poison crush dig drink  
eat shit spit burn  
writer  
hands feat heads  
tear skin needles forks legs  
buttocks arms chains rocks  
vagina sing rape fists sticks  
knives children wives  
husbands parents doctors poison wounds  
contagion hang  
cut tear testicles  
ears noise rotting food water  
standing sitting kneeling  
broken eyes infected bags  
head blood shatters eardrums  
under water flesh pliers parade naked  
demand tell hurt  
beg alone sleep  
cold water rats insects  
nose ears anus penis  
vagina hit kick cut  
whip burn beat  
bodies shatter  
mouths  
eyes  
ears  
hands  
say  
see  
hear  
feel

THE THEATRE GOES DARK,  
THE SOUND FADES AWAY.

END.