

How To Do It Yourself

Thesis

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree Masters of Fine Arts
in the Graduate School of The Ohio State University

By

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2017

Abstract

Within this document you will find the instructional artwork *how to do it yourself*, annotated with instructions. You will then encounter an account of the practice at large, and treatments of the two works shown in the 2017 Urban Arts Space Exhibition *THESIS: me and my army and for now*.

for yourself

for M.E.

for my army

for them

for they

for we

for us

for Alex O. for Rebecca E. for Rebecca R. for Isabel H. for Emma K. for Sally

for now

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How To Do It Yourself

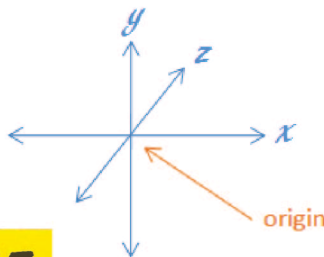
First. Get stuck in/on one or more words, images, events, or situations. Second. Research and identify the conditions you have not yet learned to live with. Third. Name them until they ring true or false. Fourth. Equip yourself to take them at their word.

1. GET STUCK IN/ON ONE OR MORE WORDS, IMAGES, EVENTS, OR SITUATIONS.
2. RESEARCH & IDENTIFY THE CONDITIONS YOU HAVE NOT YET LEARNED TO LIVE WITH.
3. NAME THEM UNTIL THEY RING TRUE OR FALSE.
4. EQUIP YOURSELF TO TAKE THEM AT THEIR WORD.

Figure 1. *how to do it yourself*

1.

1. Begin every piece of writing with the numeral “1” followed by a period.
2. Construct your own origin myth.
3. Recognize that the only non-mythic origin is a mathematical construct.
4. Reassure yourself with this gesture towards order, reason, and control.



GET

1. Use the Imperative voice.
2. Use any voice you damned well please.
3. Avoid any unnecessary language and conjunctions, unless they introduce or are used in a vernacular or colloquial expression.
4. Avoid gerunds.
5. Shun your passive voices.
6. If you encounter one, order it around, before someone else does.

GET STUCK

1. Introduce the words, images, events, or situations into conversation, though they are not called for.
2. Refrain from mentioning them during conversations in which they are called for.
3. Wake up from dreams about them feeling like shit.
4. Have trouble performing basic tasks.
5. Go out of your way to deal with them.
6. Go out of your way not to deal with them.
7. React bodily in a manner incommensurate with your mind's perception.
8. Rigidly control your caloric intake.
9. Rigidly control your music and moving image intake.
10. Talk amongst yourselves.
11. Do not get the joke.

1. GET STUCK IN/ON ONE OR MORE WORDS, IMAGES, EVENTS, OR SITUATIONS.

Figure 2. Get stuck in/on one or more words, images, events, or situations.

2. RESEARCH

1. Push all your tender buttons.
2. Try pushing them for a while.
3. Record the results in your largest handwriting with the largest pen you've got.
4. Go to the darkest place you know.
5. Hold your courage close.
6. Wait for everyone else to leave.
7. Trust that every one that stays with you is you.
8. Describe the conditions you see, not those you think you see.

IDENTIFY

1. Look at them this way.
2. Embrace they/them for their fluidity.
3. Embrace you/we for our authority.
4. Go by they/them/you/we, in singular and plural.
5. Try to have fun with them.
6. Go out to social gatherings and get to know them a little better.
7. Ask them questions about themselves.
8. Feel free to work on them and other conditions at the same time.
9. Role-play.
10. Wait a few hours, days, months, or years before introducing them to your friends, family, colleague, and Internet.
11. Create a new list when there is too much cross chatter.

THE CONDITIONS YOU HAVE NOT YET LEARNED TO LIVE WITH

1. Ground yourself in dates, weather, water levels, and soil conditions.
2. Take note of your gender/sexuality presentation at the time.
3. Make sure to mention it if you did, said, and/or wore anything indicative of your gender or sexuality.
4. Please, be as specific as possible.
5. Calm down.
6. Get all the facts.
7. Quarantine the narrative using a liberal amount of numerical and material specificity.
8. Bracket the use of proper nouns.
9. For the moment, keep them real.

2. RESEARCH & IDENTIFY THE CONDITIONS YOU HAVE NOT YET LEARNED TO LIVE WITH

- #. When you are not sure of the rank of a condition in the Order, use a number sign “#” to indicate that it is worthy of ordination.
- #. For a while, imagine that #condition as a categorical, indexical label as well as unique to its settings.
- #. Include conditions you want for your future, but have not yet learned to create.

Figure 3. Research and identify the conditions you have not yet learned to live with.

3. NAME THEM

1. Translate a non-fictional, unlivable condition into instructional language.
2. Use pronoun confusion and other indexical misdirection to complicate and/or pun subject(s) and object(s).
3. Use pun, metonymy, apostrophe, periphrasis, personification, synecdoche, and zeugma to pivot meanings of words and clauses in the instructions.
4. Use phrases and expressions you've heard your whole life, but it's hard to say where from.
5. Keep them short.
6. Keep them brave.
7. Keep it up.

THEY RING

1. Remain able to read the instructions as creative non-fiction.
2. Become able to read the instructions as speculative fiction.
3. Repeat the instructions.
4. Feel your blood in your veins.
5. Hear the words ring out in your head.
6. Read the words out loud to hear them in your voice.
7. Wonder what they could mean.
8. Wonder where they came from.
9. Wonder where they are going.

TRUE

1. Write a set of instructions.
2. Read them in your voice.
3. Hear them ring true.
4. Take them at their word.
5. Take the instructions literally.
6. Give supernatural powers to figures of speech.
7. Make an incantation of every pun, metonymy, apostrophe, periphrasis, personification, synecdoche, and zeugma.
8. Embrace your role as a conduit for phrases, expressions, and body language that may be foreign to you.
9. Note the alchemical results of indexical misdirection.
10. Revel in them.

OR FALSE.

1. Write a set of instructions.
2. Read them in your voice.
3. Hear them ring false.
4. Make them a sign.
5. Take their words for it.

3. NAME THEM UNTIL THEY RING TRUE OR FALSE.

Figure 4. Name them until they ring true or false.

**4. EQUIP YOURSELF TO
TAKE THEM AT THEIR
WORD.**

Figure 5. Equip yourself to take them at their word.

THESIS

I make work compelled by things that matter, things that exhibit their matter, and the signifiers that connect these matters. That is, I work with words to map the intersection of emotionally, politically, or personally charged content with natural physical processes like ice melting, tongues drying, and fists clinching. This emotional, physical, and mental labor manifests as signage, video, actions, and equipment, guided by instructional texts.

Things that matter which I've addressed include sexual violation, apathy about global warming, illusions of safety, and the role of movies in forming my gender-identity. Things that exhibit their matter that I've used include the elasticity of my tongue, 300lbs of ice, scissors, and the heat of the concrete of a Southern summer sidewalk.

Most recently, I've blended strategies of conceptual art, speculative fiction, and reenactment to queer the way words build reality. I construct a set of instructions to describe a problematic reality. I then deal in the small shifts in language that instigate large shifts in perspective. A new proposition of reality can then be constructed through signage, objects, documents, and other trappings of institutional confirmation. By posting signage that suggests forgetting, I can sustain a topic in conversation. By building tools to become a fiery actress, rather than let myself be cast as the sexually assaulted character

she plays, I can shift outrage felt at the casual commendation of the movie *A Clockwork Orange* to joy felt at a queer burlesque show.

For the three-channel video work *me and my army*, I wrote 6 instructions, which I interpreted literally to the effect mentioned above.

1. See *A Clockwork Orange* when 12 years old.
2. Try to forget the scenes of sexual assault.
3. Fail.
4. Come across many men who admire it for its art.
5. Become Adrienne Corri.
6. Give them back twice as good as they gave.

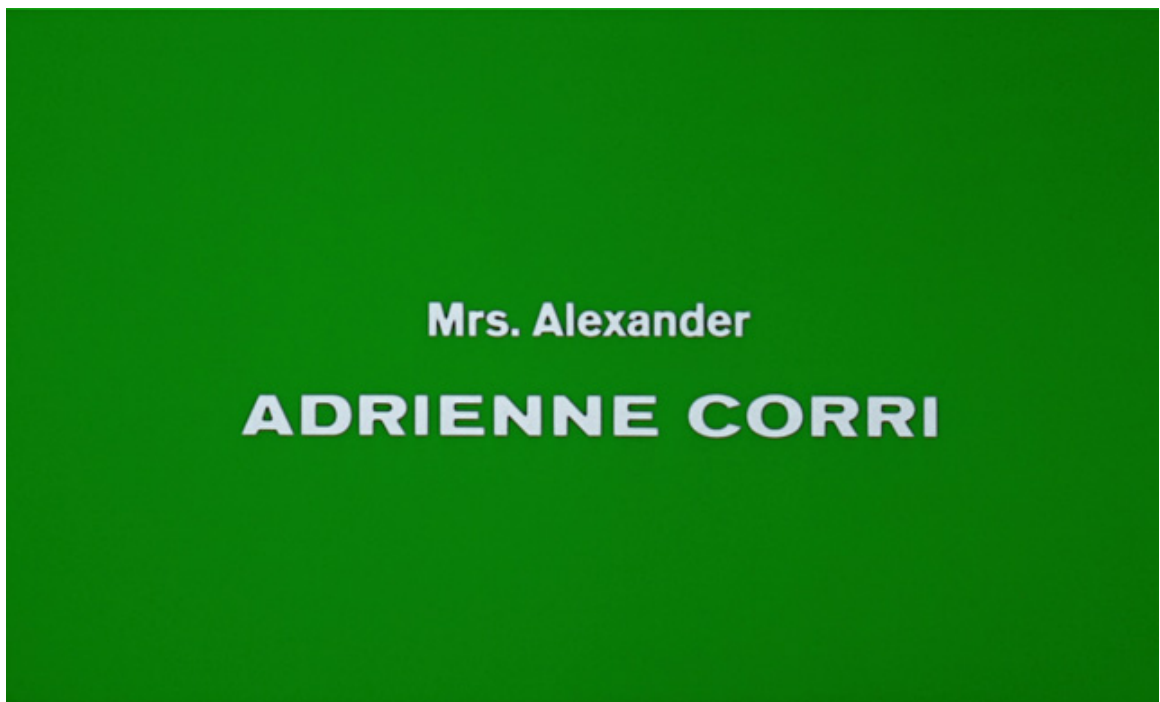


Figure 6. Adrienne Corri's title card in *A Clockwork Orange*

When “Become Adrienne Corri” replaced “Become Mrs. Alexander,” the elements of the scene that haunted me became tools for rewriting the scene. As conceptual entrepreneur Martine Syms would put it, the tools of character, action, and setting became tools for “a more hardcore ethos of self-determinacy.”¹ The ritual of getting in costume for the four-day shoot became her dressing ritual, Jeanne Dielman’s dressing ritual, Shirlette Ammon’s dressing ritual. The husband’s typewriter became her typewriter, Adrian Piper’s typewriter, Su Friedrich’s typewriter, Octavia Butler’s typewriter.

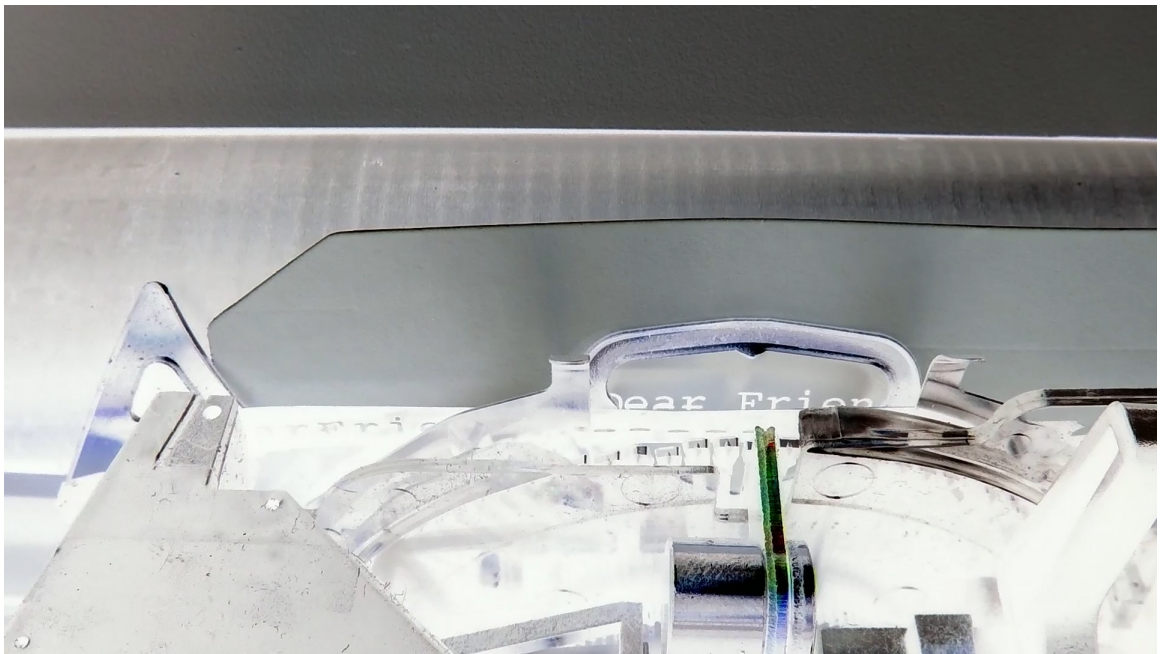


Figure 7. Typewriter, shot in the style of Su Friedrich's *Sink or Swim*, with the text that opens Adrian Piper's *My Calling Card*.

The assailant’s scissors became her scissors, Jeanne Dielman’s scissors, Yoko Ono’s scissors. The holes in her clothes became VALIE EXPORT’s holes, Beili Liu’s holes.

¹ Korek 2016

The assault weapon became her assault rifle, Betye Saar's assault rifle, VALIE EXPORT's assault rifle. The choreography became her choreography. The song became her song.



Figure 8. The title typeface is Standard CT Extended Extra Bold, and Standard CT Extra Bold. These and the background colors are lifted directly from *A Clockwork Orange*.

I claimed the graphics, typeface, and sound from the opening and closing credits of *A Clockwork Orange* as my platform to (re)name my history (bell hooks, Le Tigre): the left contextualizing, the right (en)listing credits. I used a green screen not to place the actress somewhere she was not, but to make all places somewhere she could be. I used frontal framing to place the audience as viewed, as well as viewer.



Figure 9. Frontal framing plays on the shot-reverse-shot form used in continuity editing to cast the subject in strong opposition to the subject at whom they are looking. In video art works like Martha Rosler's *Semiotics of the Kitchen* it implies a TV audience.

I used editing to temper the performance of resistance with the performances of absurdity, of necessity. I used Dana Birnbaum's technology transformation to exchange tools, as comic relief, but also to recast these events of resistance into Jeanne Dielman's endless maintenance.



Figure 10. She wraps socks as Christmas presents.

The video—while filled with humor, power, and occasionally delight—still loops. The actress still performs the tasks of wearing, removing, wrapping, packaging, peeing on socks. The actress still performs the tasks of cutting, bearing, revising, re-sewing clothing. She, like a real victim of sexual assault, cannot escape the narrative entirely. While Adrienne Corri, perhaps, was not bothered by her two-minute role or four-day shoot—so long as she got paid, so long as she could mock “Sidney” Kubrick and Malcolm McDowell, so long as she could send Stanley Kubrick her character’s red socks for Christmas—she never escaped her body’s part in the film. 45 years after the film’s release, her obituaries are dominated² by discussion of the *A Clockwork Orange* role. *me and my army* foregrounds the spirit of Adrienne Corri when it half-mockingly,

² Corri’s Obituaries are 9%, 30%, 36%, 45%, and 48% about *A Clockwork Orange* in The Guardian, The Scotsman, The Telegraph, The New York Times, and Legacy.com, respectively.

half-sincerely appropriates the sonic spectacle of film to open upon the actress missing a button.



Figure 11. The opening scene, with dramatic music from *A Clockwork Orange*, contrasts with the act of missing a button while getting dressed.

The comparative levity of this moment complicates the militant goals apparent in acts of training, acts of equipment, and acts of remembrance required to induct, or be inducted to, an army of feminist critique. It is not simply to build a world with less misogyny, but to propose a world in which women can laugh off misogyny with impunity.



Figure 12. She laughs, while singing *Singin' in the Rain*.

On the opposite side of the gallery, and of the proverbial coin, is the work, *for now*, which is less easy to laugh at or with. With monumental scale and placement, the text carries authority of the planned and permitted, the authority of public visibility and use of a scissor lift. *for now* is also written in the typeface Interstate, developed for its legibility on large highway signs, and used primarily by governmental organizations.³



Figure 13. Three interior views of *for now*.

In each of the three instructions, the words are easily read and the meanings easily assumed. The combination of any two of the three, however, undermines most assumed meanings. In the first, “Hear about plans to build a wall or fence to keep your home safe,” the entity doing the planning, “your” opinion about this plan, and the scope of “home” are variable in implication, but—given the weight of words like “home,” “safe”—they are guaranteed to register in the viewer’s mind. In the second, “build a memorial to the idea of a safe home,” “safe home” clarifies slightly. It is more likely to mean something on a personal, rather than national, scale. “A memorial,” however, opens the potential scale back up. Is it a personal memorial? An official memorial? Are you building a

³ At this particular time in history, when “wall” and “fence,” used in a public setting combine to imply a protectionist foreign policy,”1...” has a specific weight in the social imaginary. I am interested to see how this shifts over time.

memorial because “the idea of a safe home” has died? Are you building it to remember that idea? Or to consecrate forgetting?

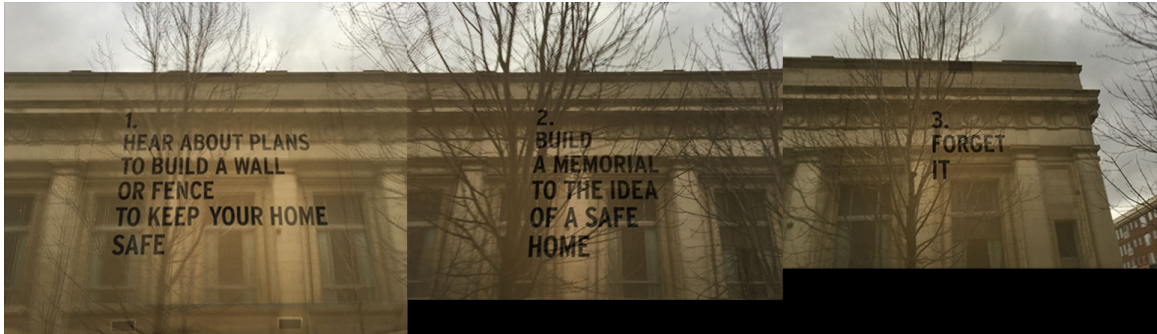


Figure 14. Exterior view of *for now*, buildings across the street reflected in windows.

Finally, the “it” in “forget it” can be a reference to the memorial, to the safe home, to the idea, to the plan, to the wall or fence. “Forget it” can be meant ironically, as a call out to those who’ve already forgotten. “Forget it” can be an order from the state, asking us to accept the status quo. “Forget it” can also be a mantra, for those overwhelmed. It can also be the prerequisite to a call to action. “Forget it” could be the start of a new list or of a new era.

1. Forget it.

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Appendix A: 25-word summaries

me and my army
January 2017
Still from video
9 minutes / 15 years

Re-imagine the experiences of the actress Adrienne Corri — most famous for her role as a rape victim in Stanley Kubrick's *A Clockwork Orange* — through the remembrance of actions from historical works of feminist art.

for now
January 2017
vinyl text
11' x 70'

A memorial to the artist's last moment of belief in safety: when 6 years old, before the Oklahoma City bombing on April 19, 1995. A memorial to the artist's last moment of confidence in the idea of home: when 27 years old, before November 8, 2016.

hold my tongue
May 2016
variable-channel video/performance with head-mounted camera
20 min

Individuals are knowingly recorded while they unknowingly re-enact and rewrite an event one-on-one with the artist, led by cards that are both disclaimer and instruction.

Mid-reenactment, the participant holds the artist's tongue while she describes an event of sexual violation. The reenactment performance ends when the participant does not hold the artist against a car.

IVE CHANGED
April 2016
ice, thread, performance
1 hour

The artist and 20 friends carried 10 50-lb ice letters I, V, E, C, H, A, N, G, E, D into the Olentangy River, where the artist held them against the current until they melted.

there there

August 2015

single-channel video loop of performance, concrete sidewalk, water, ice cream

5min

Created for the Byrd Polar and Climate Research Center, this ephemeral sculpture / text-performance explores lines between frustration and apathy when confronting issues like global warming.

Appendix B: Wall Text (Urban Art Space: THESIS)

for now

sarah goetz

vinyl, lift, windows at street level

When six years old, understand the force of 3175 kg of ammonium nitrate fertilizer, nitro-methane, and diesel fuel, diffused by the distance of 9 city blocks.

When twenty-six years old, understand the force of a .357-caliber handgun, diffused by 3 human bodies and 464 miles.

When twenty-seven years old, understand the force of 236 lbs holding a Cross Century II Black Lacquer Pen with a Porous Point and 23kt gold accessories, undiffused.

me and my army

sarah goetz

3 channel video, 9 minutes, scissors

A Clockwork Orange is a film most well known for a scene in which the antihero sexually assaults a woman known as Mrs. Alexander, while jauntily belting out *Singing in the Rain*.

The scene was constructed so that the viewer would identify with her husband.
The movie was constructed so that the viewer would identify with her perpetrator.
Her gender was constructed so that a female-bodied viewer would identify in her body.
The credit sequence was constructed so that the viewer would be left with “*Singing in the Rain*” in their mind.

When watching, or speaking of, *A Clockwork Orange*, I became Mrs. Alexander. When watching, or speaking of, *A Clockwork Orange*, she/I became my wife.
When watching, or speaking of, *A Clockwork Orange*, she/I became my victim.

When hearing, or singing, *Singing is the Rain*, it happened again.

Is it uncommon to relive events in which your body played no part?

Adrienne Corri was an actress most well known for her role as Mrs. Alexander, in the 2-minute scene of sexual assault in which her clothes are cut off. She spent the rest of the scene, and most of the four-day shoot, in nothing but red socks.

Adrienne Corri insisted that she get paid, regardless, when Stanley Kubrick asked, “What if we don’t like her tits?”

Adrienne Corri described her roll as “Debbie Reynolds, to [Malcolm McDowell]’s Gene Kelly.”

Adrienne Corri renamed Stanley Kubrick “Sidney,” just to annoy him.

Adrienne Corri gave Stanley Kubrick red socks for Christmas.

In this work, I invoke Adrienne Corri’s spirit.

In this work, I induct Adrienne Corri into the army I carry.

With this work, I no longer become Mrs. Alexander or her rapist.

With this work, I become Adrienne Corri and her wives.

Appendix C: hold my tongue: The Set-Up, The Equipment, The Script

hold my tongue

The Set-Up

- 1] Invite The Participant to “do a performance work” with you.
- 2] Upon acceptance, schedule a time to pick them up in The Car in a place that belongs to them, i.e., house/studio/office.
- 3] Inform The Participant in advance that the performance will start immediately when you pick them up.
- 4] 30 minutes in advance, order The Cards, put on The Dress, find The Gloves, double check battery and storage on The head-mounted Camera and The external Sound Recorder.
- 5] At the scheduled time, arrive and park.
- 6] Wear The Dress, The head-mounted Camera, and any other weather appropriate clothing.
- 7] Put The Gloves in one pocket of The Dress.
- 8] Put The Cards in the other pocket of The Dress.
- 9] Turn on The Sound Recorder and The Camera.
- 10] Do a syncing clap.
- 11] Walk to door of The Participant’s space.
- 12] Knock.
- 13] Do not speak aloud at all. Gesture if necessary.
- 14] When they greet you, immediately present The Participant with the first card.
- 15] Take it from there.

hold my tongue

The Equipment

- The Participant
- The Cards (10)
- The Gloves (2)
- The Camera
- The Sound Recorder
- The Car

hold my tongue
The Script

Front_1) By participating in the following performance — in which you will be given instructions on card much like the one you are holding now — you confirm that you are entirely responsible for your own safety and well-being. If you feel, at any point, that your presence

Back_1) Your hands and sounds will be recorded.

Front_2) or role in this work moves you beyond your comfort level, could potentially influence your art practice negatively in the future,

Back_2) Follow me.

Front_3) constrains your personal or career mobility,

Back_3) Sit in the passenger seat of my car.

[get in The Car]

Front_4) offends your notions about the limits of your individual self as you know it,

Back_4) I'm going to tell you a true story that happened here.

[drive, search for a secluded space to park]

Front_5) uses power — including your own power— against you in any unexpected and disturbing manner,

Back_5) Put on these gloves.

[Give The Participant The Gloves from the pocket of The Dress]

[Park The Car]

[Take off seatbelt, turn to The Participant.]

Front_6) casts you in a part you find contrary to your nature,

Back_6) Hold my tongue.

Front_7) I understand that you might need to engage with me less,

Back_7) I will remove your hand(s) when I play my part in the story.

Front_8) doubt the validity of all interactions that have occurred between us,

Back_8) Hold my tongue again when I fall silent.

[tell The Story in The Car while The Participant holds Your Tongue]
[when you reach a part of The Story where you first speak, pull away from The Participant]

“You kissed me!”

[tell The Story in The Car while The Participant holds Your Tongue]
[when you reach a part of The Story where you first speak, pull away from The Participant]

“Let’s at least hug.”

[tell The Story in The Car while The Participant holds Your Tongue]
[when you reach a part of The Story where you first speak, pull away from The Participant]

Front_9) or purge any influence of my actions from your work or life.

Back_9) Let’s at least hug.

[get out of The Car]

Front_10) I will not hold it against you.

Back_10) Do not hold me against a car.

[Hug]