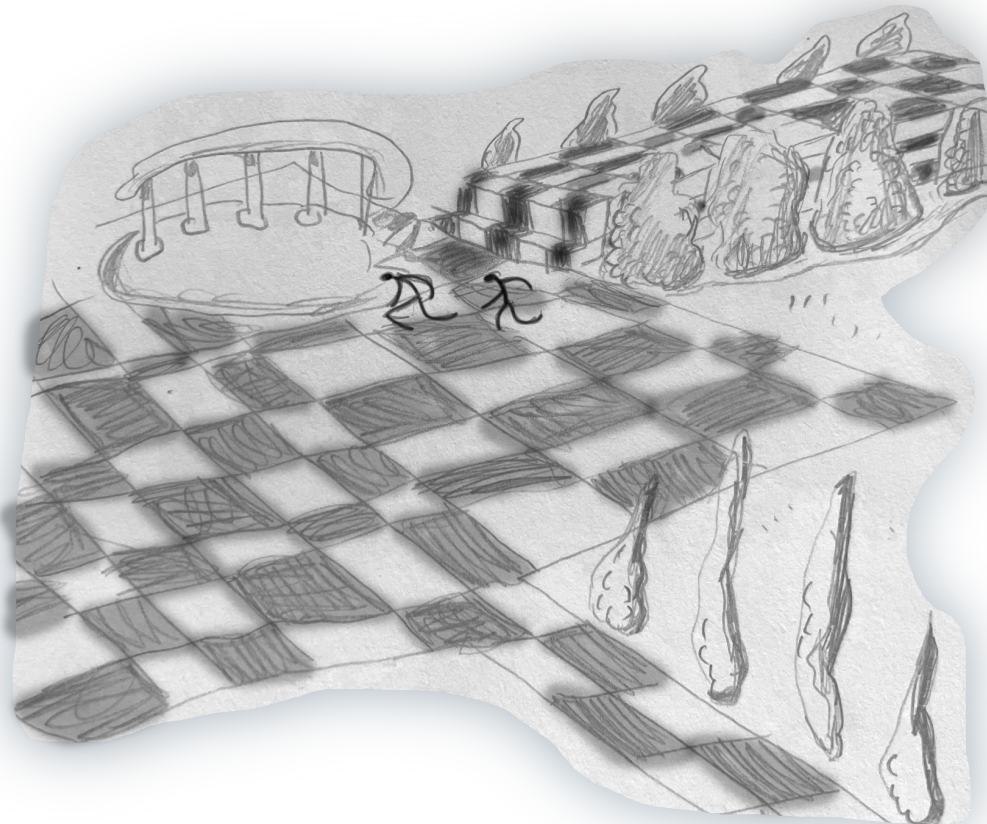


Military and Performance Art: A Strange Dream of Spatial Politics

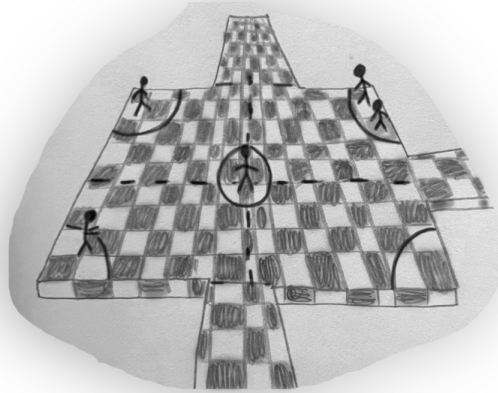
This essay is one of two, Phantom Animation is the second. Both are written accounts of theories I dreamed and considered in the days following a stroke in the ICU. In this dream, the following text was read out loud by an unidentified voice. I wrote it imperfectly from memory although the ideas are intact. I tried to capture his manner of speaking and drew the diagrams close to how they were shown to me, in black and white.

In the public sphere, one may encounter a group of costumed and masked individuals arranged in such a way as to cause alarm. There might be many of them, yelling, gesturing or beckoning. Yet, it should be clear which bodies are members of the militarized state and which are artists. Two key distinctions can be made between them if all else is the same: the ability to exit and full attempted self disclosure.

The performance artists seen here will take over a public space, the park. You can see them running past the hedges to the gazebo.



There are several options for the performers in this space. There are walkways that direct the flow of traffic, and then there is the gazebo that serves as a kind of stage. The environment can be broken into quarters, corners, and center as shown below.

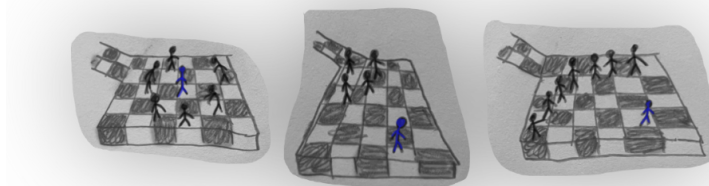


Performance artists will have their backs nestled into a corner or stand in center such that traffic flows around them. In a performance space such as a gazebo, traffic can move past or linger to watch. All exits and corridors of traffic are available and unobstructed. Their body posture signals to others, “you have the option to stay or go, pass as you will”.

The line of the group's performance (should it traverse through the space), will also not cross through the bodies of the populus, who retain their physical integrity. There is a sense of space in which the exchange of view takes place, empty air that facilitates the respect of the other as a democratic agent.

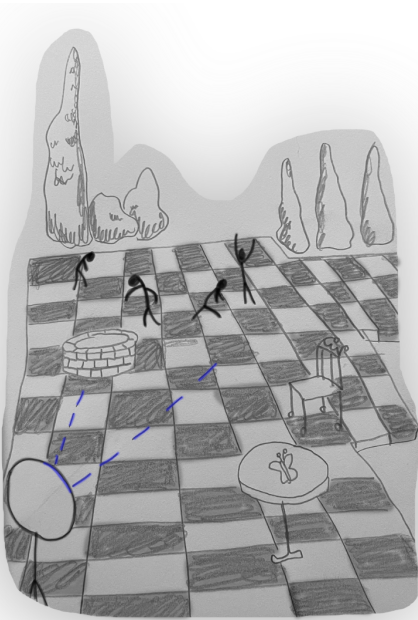
Consider now that this group of people forms a line, cutting across the entirety of the park. Or stands in a crowd in front of the exit, leaving only the way you came as an option. Consider that they surround you. These formations, which ignore the democracy of quarters, corners and center, have taken *the half* or *the whole*. This in all likelihood is the military.

This group chokes off exit routes, interrupts the flow of pedestrian life, and builds itself as an impenetrable wall.



Should a performance artist do any of these things, the performance is a risk to social well being and is un-democratic or fascist.

The second difference between the military and the artist is full attempted self disclosure. You are walking in a courtyard, and you see a group of bodies engaging in a formation. The formation feels unsettling, like you have never seen before. You seek information. Approachability is the hallmark of disclosure. Most commonly the artist self discloses through creative (as opposed to tactile) costuming, creative movement such as dance, or leaflets and the presence of a receptacle for tips. Should none of those appear, and the performance fashion itself realistically, the populus should have the right to verbally state “I don’t visually recognize this as a usual occurrence in the community, is everything okay? “. That request should be acknowledged by the performers through widely understood gestures such as a wink, head nod, or dialogue.



These good faith pauses, even very small ones, ensure that the art serves public life.

If any public performer does not attempt to disclose or break performance to render aid, they are the military.

These differences in spatial politics reveal a groups' relationship to public life. They mark the boundary between Military and performance art, fascism and democracy. Art should always serve democracy, and not the forceful hand of state.