

**Heather Gold**

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### **Interactive performance**

Is one way to describe what I do. Other terms I've used include freestyle comedy and story DJ. It's using personal storytelling, humour, improvisation, conversation, communal activity and other techniques to create a relatively quick sense of intimacy and connection in the room. In traditional theatre the story is the means. I'm exploring ways to make it the end as well, so that the catharsis is not somewhere over there on stage but inside of everyone in the room. What if the performance were not about someone who is a baker, but is unfolding as I bake with everyone right now?

This entails adapting to the audience and encouraging their participation and energy as a factor in the show. It also means being as genuine and authentically oneself as possible. There are a host of little tricks and techniques I'm learning as this path unfolds. For example, I've found that if I "go first" it makes it much easier for others to open up as well. This authenticity means means being imperfect. In public.

The commons is shrinking quickly in this nation, with conversations, academic and otherwise, happening more and more between folks who already agree with each other, listening to more of what they already think. Performance has the opportunity to strengthen bonds as they can bring folks together who are different, or already in disagreement. "Creating the space" has everything to do with whether or not we'll truly be able to explore disagreement, or just talk at each other.

My work aims to create live, intimate community by exploring universal subjects that connect us. My interactive plays create community through the performance: To use humour, personal storytelling, and most of all the audience themselves to create a deep sense of connection and inclusion. Unlike most stand-up comics or audience participation shows, I never make comedy at the expense of the audience. I create a space for them to shine.

### **on business**

There's a big difference between a strip club and sexual intimacy. I think we're after the business difference too. How often are pr/ SEC filings, marketing and branding and advertising an exercise in stripping? Even when showing everything, allowing in/exchanging nothing. The business world more than any other has, sometimes silently and sometimes in memos, asked us to leave our whole selves outside the door and bring only the "efficient" piece of our minds to the task at hand. It takes a whole person, especially the ungraphed and un-Powerpointed parts of our humanity to have fun, to play, to be open. Those things are necessary for real community and creativity to occur.

Video games, then music and now television are all involving interactive elements in part because people are interested **in each other**. Performance has always been a way of having a unifying collective experience. I've been taking elements and principles I learned from a variety of worlds, including the Net and applying them to live performance. And it's an ongoing lesson. I try to approach performance like software. I don't expect it to be completely finished and I know that I will learn something new from the audience every time.

Business, driven by technology and market-need is becoming a more holistic enterprise. It is beginning to intellectually understand his mindset (ie Cluetrain) but know a lot more about changing their technology than themselves. And it's people that businesses exist to serve, not the other way round. Live performance has an opportunity to do help us do what our Congress, towns and perhaps our real courts are failing to do: Be a public space in we can be whole together. This is theatre as the new commons.

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**What opens people up? What assumptions am I working from?**

- inclusion
- everyone is welcome
- other people are funny
- its great if other folks get laughs too
- story is how we create meaning
- everyone is interesting when they're present / authentic
- vulnerability is necessary for connection