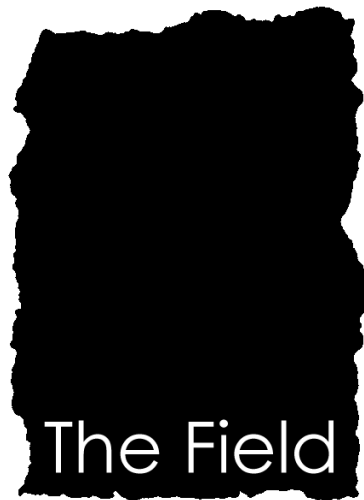


Fieldwork

The Facilitator's Guide + Addendum (2019)



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GUIDE CONTENTS

As a facilitator, you'll need to be familiar with what it means to be a workshop participant – showing work and receiving feedback – as well as your special role as a facilitator. What follows are four sections that describe:

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I. INTRODUCTION TO THE FIELD + FIELDWORK

Fieldwork is The Field's longest-running, core program. This workshop, usually ten weeks in length, was developed to address the need of artists to receive feedback about their work before putting it in front of the public. Outside of Fieldwork, artists typically develop their work in two ways: either they develop pieces in isolation, or they turn to a few close friends or peers for feedback and support. Fieldwork provides artists with an alternative – a group of other artists who are neither friends/peers, nor a public audience.

The goal of Fieldwork is to give artists developing original work an accurate reflection of their art as it's developing. In addition to learning how their work is coming across to others, artists develop their ability to give feedback, build a community of artistic peers, benefit from a deadline structure within which to continue creating, find collaborators and performers with whom to work, and witness other artists' struggles to achieve artistic clarity and career goals.

Meeting once a week, Fieldwork provides this laboratory for any working artist — ranging from those making their first works to veterans in their disciplines. Used with dance, theater, performance art, text, music, film/video, and multidisciplinary work, the workshop has been shown to be adaptable to a variety of disciplines and formats. One of the founding principles of Fieldwork is that it is not curated— any interested artist is able to participate. There are two primary reasons for this. First, most communities have ample curated opportunities - such as produced showcases and competitive grants; The Field believes it is important to provide a place for all interested artists to develop their voices without the fear of being rejected for trying out new ideas or taking risks. Second, by not curating who can participate, Fieldwork also values diversity – this challenges participants to be open in their viewing and feedback, and to learn more about how their work affects a range of people. Non-curation provides a baseline of opportunity for any artist; many artists involved in Fieldwork have gone on to be produced by established theaters and win grants and other opportunities for their work.

Each year in New York City alone, more than 200 artists generate over 500 new works through Fieldwork. Our affiliated sites across the US and in Japan serve another 150 or more creative artists in the development of their original works. This network of sites, the Field Network, has grown each year, either by word of mouth, or through artists familiar with Field programs who relocate and wish to begin a site in their new locale. While each site chooses which Field programs they would like to provide, all sites offer Fieldwork. The permutations of Fieldwork that have developed due to the various sites adapting the program to their local community and its needs has affected how Fieldwork is practiced everywhere.

II. FIELDWORK STRUCTURE + GUIDELINES

GOALS OF FIELDWORK

1. Provide artists with a safe place to present their work and receive feedback in terms that are constructive, challenging, and nurturing.
2. Re-energize artists in relationship to their art by having others respond to their work and provide new perspectives.
3. Break through the isolation of working as an independent artist by joining other artists who are also in development.
4. Participate in an on-going deadline structure to facilitate productivity.
5. Develop artists' abilities to articulate clearly what they perceive in others' works.

1. Workshop Format

The structure of the workshop includes showing all work first, then gathering in a circle to give feedback about each piece in the order it was shown. If time allows, the group can engage in open discussion. This structure works for the following reasons:

- Artists can ask their performers/collaborators to come at the start of the meeting and be sure they will be able to leave within a short while.
- Time management is easier; once all the work has been shown, the facilitator can divide up the remaining time equally for feedback.
- Showing all the work first and then giving feedback puts distance between looking at the work and talking about it. This creates time to digest the experience both for the watchers and the artist. The facilitator can encourage participants to take notes if they are concerned about the lag between seeing a work and giving feedback.

2. When to Show

Different participants will use the group in different ways. For example, some improvisors have used Fieldwork to work on a short piece each week. Others will only show once or twice during a 10-week session. As facilitator, you can let the group know the range of options and keep track of showing patterns. If a great deal of work is being shown, you can check in with participants to see if they want less work shown so there can be more feedback. Another situation that sometimes requires intervention is when an artist wants to show longer work (say longer than 15 minutes). In this case, the facilitator may have to schedule this with the group. Balancing the individual's need for feedback while making sure the group feels fair can be challenging, but usually works out in the end.

3. What to Bring

The artist should bring in as many elements of the piece as possible. This ensures the most comprehensive and accurate feedback. If someone shows a solo in silence, sits down, starts to get feedback, and then states: "I forgot to mention it's a group piece for four dancers with music and I'm dressed as a carrot," this information will confuse the issue of feedback. In general, participants can only comment on what they see, not on what's in the artist's mind. The more elements of the work the group sees, the more relevant the feedback will be.

4. No clapping!

Although it may seem weird at first, Fieldwork does not involve clapping after people show. Clapping can make artists feel as if they are part of a competition (who gets more/a stronger response) and can also distract from the immediate response to the piece. Instead, the group provides recognition for the work through honest, enriching feedback.

III. FEEDBACK PROCESS

There are two parts to the feedback process; giving and receiving. Each participant, along with the facilitator, will be in both positions, at one time or another, during the workshop.

Giving Feedback

Feedback in Fieldwork extends from a simple directive for those who are watching the work: talk about what you see. “What you see” isn't as limiting as it sounds! It includes participants' gut reactions, moments of clarity and moments of distance, comments on structure, movement, text, emotional content, historical/cultural context, aesthetic choices, other artistic elements, and much, much more. So, comments like “I had the thought that the piece was intended to affect me emotionally. Mostly, however, because one figure seemed to dominate the others, I found myself thinking about the current political climate,” are completely valid and important for the artist to hear. Even comments like, “I checked out for long periods of time when I was watching because the music was so soothing and evocative for me...” may highlight exactly what the artist intended (or not). By example and group discussion, the facilitator encourages feedback givers to broaden their viewing abilities, to challenge the depth with which they approach and talk about work, to delve into the assumptions they bring to different kinds of art.

As facilitator, you can encourage participants to make leaps as feedback givers by saying what you saw as clearly, succinctly, generously, and humanely as possible. One of the most valuable things about Fieldwork is that it brings people together who have very different ways of seeing themselves, art, and the world. It's helpful to remember that what is different from what another artist or convention might recommend can be what makes art unique and potentially strong. For example, one conventional narrative in theater is: “boy meets girl, boy gets girl, boy loses girl, boy gets girl.” An artist may choose to subvert this in any number of ways; the job of participants in Fieldwork is to be open to these re-imaginings and provide feedback that embraces the artist's point of view. In other words, try to make the world of the piece your world for the moment – although it is also fair to acknowledge that all our feedback is situated in our own circumstances, experiences, aesthetic preferences, and the like. The goal of Fieldwork is never to judge the art as good or bad, but to reflect back to the artist what was in the work. Artists choose what they do with this information. Finally, it is important to consider where the work is in the process (idea stage, first showing, performed already and being revised); this can also inform your feedback.

A note about questions. On a social level, questions are a way to begin a conversation or test the waters before diving in with something more definitive. Because the goal of Fieldwork is to give the artist information, participants are asked to find the statement behind the question and make this comment instead. For instance, if a viewer would like to ask, “Did you mean for the music to start abruptly in the second section,” the viewer could instead offer the piece of feedback: “I was

startled when the music came on during the second section...it felt abrupt...but then it also went with the dislocation the character seemed to be feeling throughout the piece.”

One area that can get tricky is the provision of suggestions. Some groups have found that hearing suggestions is very helpful. Other groups find them intrusive. It is usually most helpful if the feedback giver says what was seen *before* making a suggestion. For example, if a participant wants to make the suggestion that the artist fully explore a particular movement, that participant may say first/instead, “I saw that each time the work approached an intense emotional pitch through this movement, you seemed to back off and introduce the next movement sequence. I felt disappointment each time that happened.” This is in contrast to saying, “I think you should do that movement phrase a lot more.”

Receiving Feedback

The basic rule when receiving feedback is the artist showing does not speak about the work before or after it is shown. Even though there is much dialogue in Fieldwork, artists will never have the opportunity to speak directly about the art that they bring to the workshop. There are two reasons for this. First, the members of the workshop function as blank slates or mirrors. If the artist explains the piece is about gender issues, then participants may look for the gender issues or try to avoid seeing gender issues so they can see what else is in the work. If group members are naïve to the artist’s intent, they are more in line with an actual audience and can give back to the artist what they saw (regardless of what the artist may have hoped they’d see). This ensures that the artist’s work is seen for what it is. If no one saw what the artist intended, then the artist can decide what needs to be done. In this way, artists retain entire control of their work because other group members do not know the artist’s actual intent. Second, preventing artists from talking about their work helps to avoid defensive reactions: “Oh, no, that’s not it at all.” “You didn’t get the fact that I...” “It’s really about...” Many artists have said that Fieldwork is one of the hardest places to show work. This is because the artist shows without the trappings of a theater or distance that exists in a formal performance. In addition, because the work is often unfinished, artists can feel especially vulnerable showing it to others. Finally, after performing the work in this stripped-down environment, artists sit with the people who just saw it, and make themselves open to hearing what came across. For these reasons, Fieldwork can be challenging – but by the response of artists, this structure has been proven a valuable tool to help artists grow and attain clarity in their art.

EXCEPTIONS TO THE NO-TALK RULE

- Introducing performers.
- Giving program information like the title of the work, music credit, etc. (Note: some Fieldwork groups do opt for not disclosing even this information – you can discuss this with your group at some point.)

- Asking a question for clarity: “Which time my performer crossed upstage?” “What do you mean when you refer to the structure as non-linear?” (Avoid questions like, “Didn’t you see that my non-linear structure was a denunciation of authoritarian regimes???”)
- If some area of the work wasn’t spoken about at all, the artist may want to ask for some specific feedback: “Does anyone have feedback for me about the music?” However, the fact that no one spoke about the music can be a response itself.
- Some Fieldwork groups allow artists to ask for feedback about one aspect of the work, such as the second section (because they feel the first section is finished). This is another variation that can be discussed with the group at some point.
- Some Fieldwork groups allow the artist to tell the group that the work is going to be presented shortly, such as the coming weekend. This helps the group limit feedback to aspects that can be addressed within a short time period, such as performance quality. Other artists may be performing the work in the near future, but still want to get full-bodied feedback. Again – this is something that the group can discuss.
- Last, artists may stop the feedback when they feel they’ve heard all they can process at the moment. If this is the case, the artist can simply say, “I’ve heard enough feedback for now. Thanks.”

There are a few things you may want to suggest to the group at some point with regard to receiving feedback to help make it easier to experience. First, artists might find it helpful to repeat some version of this mantra: “They’re giving me this feedback to help my work go as far/become as strong as it can.” Second, suggest they write down what’s being said. This way, if they feel overwhelmed in the moment, they’ll have something to refer to later in their process. Third, point out to the group that not all feedback will be helpful right away. Some of it – maybe a large portion – will go on the shelf and only later prove to be relevant or useful. Last, you can assure participants that receiving feedback gets easier over time; artists develop their capacity to take in more information from the group without feeling defensive (if that’s an issue). Each member will have many chances over the course of the ten weeks to practice these skills.

Reassure the artists that if people don’t see what they intend the first time not to worry. They will have other opportunities to bring the work back and show the group how it’s developing. Also, it’s fair to acknowledge that participants in a group often will contact one another outside the session to share more information, suggestions, and the like. These hallway, elevator, coffee, and phone encounters are places where artists and feedback givers can interact more freely.

Open Discussion

Open discussion can be a chance for groups to explore any aspect of Fieldwork or the artistic process. For example, several pieces shown in a group may have failed to create a compelling atmosphere, while others created strong atmospheres. “How is an atmosphere established in a work?” could be a discussion topic that ensues. Open discussion is a constructive way to make use of time when the work shown and feedback that followed is short. Discussion also helps artists connect in a dialogue outside of feedback. Finally, another use of open discussion is dealing with problems – this will be explored in the next section related to facilitator responsibilities.

IV. THE FACILITATOR

As a Fieldwork facilitator, you have a crucial role in the outcome of the Fieldwork process. While most groups will run themselves, this often occurs because you have introduced the process in a benevolent, generous way, and have maintained the integrity of the workshop via kind, light-handed, and timely intervention. Facilitators are not teachers, but peer artists who act as guides in the Fieldwork process. They ensure the environment is supportive and challenging, and that all artists get their fair share of stage time and feedback. If facilitators clearly explain the guidelines for showing and feedback, and exemplify them with their own conduct, the group most likely will run well.

FACILITATOR QUALITIES

- The ability to approach all kinds of artwork - a variety of aesthetics, cultural origins, level of development, points of view, disciplines, performance abilities, and the like - with an equal amount of interest and respect
- The ability to give insightful, inspiring, honest, constructive feedback
- The ability to take feedback with grace and openness
- The ability to be aware of group dynamics so that they can be managed in the service of providing a safe place for artists to take risks in showing their work
- The ability to maintain a low profile so that the focus is off the facilitator and on the work, other participants, and the process
- Familiarity with the Fieldwork structure, ideally through being a group participant during past sessions

Responsibilities of a Facilitator

Facilitating feedback can be challenging; even with an established approach, problems can arise. Throughout the process, a facilitator's greatest challenge often has to do with balancing the impulse to intervene with the need of group members to find their way organically into the process and feel positive about their contributions. Because group members, especially early in the process, may have trouble maintaining the feedback guidelines, a facilitator might feel it necessary to stop the process after each and every infraction of the "rules." While this may help group members learn the feedback process, it may also make group members hesitant to give feedback for fear that they will not be doing it "right." Err on the side of allowing people to participate and feel their way into the feedback process, even if they don't do it perfectly at first. As a facilitator, you typically have multiple weeks to help the group get deeply into the feedback process of Fieldwork. The only time you would intervene right away is when the safety of a group member feels compromised, such as when someone is blatantly attacking a peer by saying the work is worthless, or

the like. Otherwise, figure on directly intervening two or three times during the early sessions, and only every so often during later sessions. The responsibilities of a facilitator can be divided into four categories:

1. The First Meeting
2. Administrating the Group Process
3. Moderating Feedback
4. Engendering Open Discussion

The First Meeting

The first day of a new workshop is usually hectic and exciting. Performers might be warming up, there are new people to meet, artists who need to hear the guidelines, and a lot of work to show (artists should be encouraged when they call to sign up to show during the first or second group meeting). All of this can add up to a frenetic pace. Following is a list of things that are good to do at the first workshop.

Remember that Fieldwork is in the doing; try to cover the following in the first 15 minutes of the workshop so that the group can move on to actually doing Fieldwork, as opposed to talking about it:

- Go over the structure of the workshop including how the scheduling is done and tips for showing work and receiving feedback. Be sure to mention the guideline about artists not talking about their work.
- Ask who will be showing and set an order, usually allowing pieces with outside performers to go first. Ensure everyone that they can show work at any point in its development, no matter how “messy” or unfinished it might be.
- Show the work, suggesting that participants take notes about their feedback as they are watching.
- Gather in a circle and have people introduce themselves by saying who they are, a little about their background and what they are interested in getting out of the workshop. Be careful they don’t start to talk about their work. If they do, gently ask them to pause and remind them that if they continue to talk about their specific piece, they will receive feedback that won’t be as helpful to them. The facilitator can opt to go first and set an example: “Hi, my name is Han and I’ll be facilitating this workshop. I’ve been a playwright for about 11 years, but lately I’ve also been into writing monologues that I perform to music I write. Since this is a newer direction for me, I’m hoping to learn more about how this work is coming across to others, so I’m really psyched to be a part of this process with you all.”
- During introductions, send around a sheet of paper to collect information for a contact sheet.
- Give feedback on each of the pieces.
- Give out the Fieldwork Basics handout after you’ve explained the guidelines (or at the end of the first session, or not at all, if you don’t find the handout helpful or necessary).

- If necessary (meaning that there is a lot of work/long work/people who opted to wait to show due to time constraints), work out a showing schedule for the next week.
- If artists are concerned about any area of the ground rules, ask them if they'd be willing to try out the rules for the first three sessions, and then revisit them at that point. If the consensus of the group at that later time is to modify elements of the process, then the group can discuss the issue at that point.

Administrating the Group Process

In order for workshop participants to focus on the work and feedback, facilitators are charged with handling the logistics involved with running the group. First, it is important for the facilitator to attend regularly and promptly. Since Fieldwork is about showing work in a vulnerable stage, it requires trust and stability. Participants look to the facilitator to provide this structure and safety. When the facilitator has to miss a group, letting the other group members know ahead of time and finding a qualified substitute is helpful to group cohesiveness (and models what others should do if they'll be absent). Schedule and relay information regarding the logistics about the group (for example, if a session will occur at a different time or location) and about the concluding showing of work (e.g., when, where, time limit, program notes if a part of the showing, etc.).

Dividing time is one of the main aspects of running a Fieldwork group. Although generally about half the workshop time is taken up with looking at work and the other half with talking about it, sometimes, the work shown can take up an hour and half of the group's time, leaving a scant 30 minutes for feedback on perhaps as many as 6-7 works. At other times, there might be only 30 minutes of work shown, leaving an abundance of time. While too little time forces feedback givers to be concise, too much time can lead to feedback givers trying to dredge up something original to say or being so nit-picky that the feedback becomes less useful. This is fairly easy to spot and can be handled by you saying, "Why don't we move on," or "One last comment?"

Most often, feedback about a piece ends organically. When this point is reached, generally after most have commented and there is a brief natural pause, as facilitator you simply say, "Let's move on to Angel..." The need to intervene in the process with a well-functioning group (aside from saying, "Time's up, we'd better move on to Angel...") occurs perhaps once every three or four weeks – not a common occurrence at all. In general, if you do interrupt, do it with a light touch. Being singled out by the facilitator in front of the group can be an embarrassing, negative experience for that group member - something to be avoided. As a facilitator, you will gain experience of guiding things along in these situations.

Other responsibilities include:

- Informing latecomers and new comers of the guidelines.
- Keeping track of time ensuring each artist gets an equal amount of attention.

- Deciding, along with the group, whether performers can stay for the feedback. (Some groups like performers to stay because they enjoy sharing the process and performers often become group members in the future. Others don't want their performers to hear the feedback).
- A long pause before the group dives into feedback on a new piece is quite common because people are collecting their thoughts and ideas. As facilitator, you can acknowledge this early in the process so the artist doesn't take the silence as a comment. You might say jokingly "You are now experiencing the Fieldwork pause, the longest moment of your life that only comes before getting feedback."

One final note. Sometimes artists will fixate on the performance at the end of the 10-week session at the expense of the first nine weeks. It is important to de-emphasize its importance; the performance is only one-tenth of the process; the other nine-tenths is where most of the learning, growth, and networking will occur.

Moderating Feedback

The major points to keep in mind as the facilitator include:

- Encouraging thoughtful and articulate feedback through example, not by teaching via a dominant voice in the group.
- Being aware of and work to ensure that the feedback is balanced and diverse.
- Encouraging workshop participants, through example and "feedback about feedback" discussions, to take risks as feedback givers.
- Limiting feedback if it becomes unproductive or the artist appears overwhelmed.
- Commenting on each piece shown, or acknowledge that everything you had thought to say has already been covered.
- Dealing with group and individual problems as they arise, either in the moment or one-on-one if that is more appropriate.

One of the facilitator's tasks, typically earlier in the workshop process, is to dissuade artists from blurting out what their intentions are with their work. Often a simple question can help with this: "I'm sorry, let me interrupt to ask, are you sure you want to tell us this?" or offering a reminder, such as, "We won't be able to give you objective feedback if you continue..." It's also often helpful to remind artists that they "respond" to feedback by bringing the work back to the group in a future Fieldwork showing.

Keep an eye out for times when it seems like the group is aiming its feedback at the artist, rather than the work itself (the latter is the goal). As facilitator, use language that demonstrates this when giving feedback, and try to be vigilant about the language used by other feedback givers. For example, if a work is a monologue with movement and the text could be interpreted as making light of PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder), make certain the feedback is directed at the character and not the artist: "I felt the character you were portraying was making fun of the impact of

traumatic experiences, which made me want to tune out.” Instead of, “You’re insensitive.” This distinction is important because participants need to bring in all kinds of materials to try out and know that the facilitator will keep things from getting personal.

In a similar vein, sometimes a piece pushes a lot of buttons and people react with anger, giddy laughter, or some other unusual response. It is the facilitator’s responsibility to ensure a safe environment. If someone is not getting the proper respect or you sense the artist is under attack, then it may be appropriate to step in saying something like, “I’m feeling uncomfortable with the tone of the feedback that’s being given. Remember, we’re here to talk about what we saw, so let’s focus on that.” Then go on to give some feedback to balance out what has already been said.

Facilitators need to be aware of the tenor of feedback so they can gently re-direct the flow of things when necessary. For example, sometimes the feedback gets stuck in one area. As facilitator, you might say, “I think that we have heard a lot about the music, does anyone have something to say about another aspect of the piece?” Or if everything said is in a positive vein, then the facilitator could make a comment that challenges some area of the work. Similarly, if all the responses are on the negative side, the facilitator may choose to step in and give feedback on the positive aspects of the work. Another way of balancing involves varying the order in which you, as facilitator, give feedback, especially avoiding always going last or first.

Engendering Discussion

When tough issues arise, such as disagreement related to ground rules, personality conflicts, and the like, the best thing to do is frame the issue in its broadest (and least personal) terms and give the issue back to the group to discuss and process. If some participants dominate the discussion because they are more verbal, an open discussion about how feedback is going and how members feel about their own performance as feedback givers will put the group in the position of dealing with the problem instead of the facilitator. It may be discovered that talkative people in the group aren’t a problem for the group at all. In general, it is good to have a “feedback on feedback” session halfway through the workshop so that artists can have a chance to talk about the impact of Fieldwork on their process and the quality/tenor of feedback given by the group.

Open discussion can also be used to:

- Solve problems such as feedback being too supportive
- Explore the role of suggestions in feedback.
- Discuss larger issues related to creating art, the business of being an artist, or how art functions in the larger community/culture/locale.

FIELDWORK GUIDELINES – THE BASICS

The primary goal of Fieldwork is to provide structure and support for an artist's process. Fieldwork approaches this goal by providing artists with a place to: show work and get feedback; develop their abilities to see work and put their reactions into useful comments; combat the isolation that comes with being an artist; have a weekly deadline structure; meet other artists as peers, potential collaborators and/or performers; and to participate in discussions with other artists.

STRUCTURE OF WORKSHOP

- Show work
- Gather in a circle
- Give feedback about each piece in the order it was shown
- If time allows, engage in open discussion

TIPS FOR GIVING FEEDBACK

The goal is to give honest, generous, specific feedback about your experience of each piece. The core of this is to reflect back to the artist what you see. This can include:

- What struck you, surprised you, distanced you, and/or confused you
- The structure and its relationship to the work as a whole
- The social, cultural, political, and/or the historical context of the piece
- Your emotional responses
- Your understanding of the work's intent

Whenever possible, it's helpful to provide examples to support your comments, as well as take time to state the obvious, which is sometimes very helpful to an artist who may be too close to the work. Fieldwork also helps participants to expand their abilities to view and consider all types of work.

TIPS FOR SHOWING WORK AND RECEIVING FEEDBACK

The goal is to receive specific information about how your work is coming across to different viewers. To facilitate this:

- Show your work without any preambles or explanations
- If you like, provide any information that would be in the program (e.g., the work's title)
- Remember your role is to receive the feedback and retain your autonomy over the work. To do this, absorb the feedback by refraining from responding to comments or defending your work; feel free to take notes on the feedback you receive
- Be sure to get clarification on a specific comment if you don't understand what was said

- Consider after all the feedback is given whether you want to ask about a neglected aspect of the work, such as the music or the costume
- Revel in the amount of information you've received and use it to help further your artistic vision

ABOUT CLAPPING, SUGGESTIONS, AND THE FACILITATOR

We don't clap after seeing a piece; we provide recognition for the work via feedback, rather than applause. The use of suggestions is something that each group (and artist) handles differently. Most groups avoid suggestions because they can short-circuit the artist's role as creator and problem solver; rather, participants can offer the thought that sparked the suggestion. Remember that it's possible to connect with the artist after the workshop to offer other types of feedback/suggestions. Finally, the facilitator is not a teacher, but a peer-artist who acts as a guide to the Fieldwork process, making sure the environment remains supportive and challenging.

VI. ADDENDUM

The Field Today

The Field endeavors to remain critically engaged and responsive to the needs and issues affecting 21st century artists. Under the leadership of Executive Director, Jennifer Wright-Cook, and Deputy Director, Shawn René Graham, The Field and the Field Network are currently in a period of reflection and action to ensure Field programs are truly inclusive and actively grapple with unconscious bias. In 2017, the Field participated in The Racial Equity in the Arts Innovation Lab in which they worked with 60 other New York City-based arts and culture institutions to develop skills and strategies for interrupting racial inequity within their organizations, and positively affecting their audiences, stakeholders, constituencies -- as well as staff and team members of color. In March 2018, The Field revisited the Fieldwork Guide to better reflect its commitment to providing a safe, inclusive space for artists of all racial, cultural, and social backgrounds. This is an ongoing process and your input is welcome.

As The Field has grown over the past 30 years, it has remained true to its grassroots origin and artist-centered mission to strategically serve the myriad artistic and administrative needs of independent performing artists and companies who work in the fields of dance, theater, music, text, performance art, and multi-disciplinary art forms. Continuing, the commitment to non-curation and inclusivity, all Field Programs are open/non-juried. Ultimately, the goal is to create a vibrant cultural community that *authentically* and *intentionally* includes resilient and self-determined artists and makers of all identities.

Poised at the intersection between knowledge and practice, Field programs can be divided into Artistic and Management services. Artistic services help artists create more effective, communicative art. These initiatives include: Fieldwork peer-oriented feedback groups and performance festivals. Management programs support artists and companies from the most emerging to mid-career. Programs include: skill-building workshops on fundraising, touring, etc; fiscal sponsorship to enable artists to receive grants and contributions; and Member News a listing of grant deadlines and opportunities, to name a few.

Fieldwork is a core program and a foundation on which many other Field programs are based. The organization's current focus on equity and diversity is a natural extension of the policy of non-curation, which was a direct response to the art-making climate of the 1980s and 1990s. Reflecting this same responsiveness, The Field's recent pivot to focus on equity and inclusion is a direct response to the art-making climate of the 2000s.

Part of the Race Forward work involved taking a deep look at The Field materials and language. Namely, we looked for coded language and silent references to the lifting up of white Eurocentric aesthetics around style, structure, design, body type, etc. This addendum is a result of the interrogation and revision of Field language, however, it is not a replacement for the original Fieldwork Facilitator's Guide. In fact, we stand by that

Guide in a profound and deep way. Ultimately, we may merge the two documents, but for today the idea is that they enhance one another. Inevitably there may be a little repetition between the two. We hope that the combination of a very slightly revised Guide and this new addendum will provide a full understanding of the origins of The Field's unique process of feedback and the radical potential that the method still holds today.

Fieldwork Values

Practice Openness Seeing More Diversity Authorship

Practice

Fieldwork is a practice. No one is perfect at it ever. It is a place to practice looking at and talking about art. The skills we practice in Fieldwork are more important than ever in our present culture: to listen harder, look deeper, perceive more, and engage with another's point of view.

Openness

Fieldwork offers the opportunity to work towards expanding your art-viewing aperture (or aesthetic range) to take in a wider palette of work and reflect back informative, honest and useful feedback. Part of the rigor required here is to enter into a variety of different works with equal generosity. Accept the premise of the piece- its world, aesthetic, racial, cultural or social perspective - and then give feedback from within that place.

In giving your feedback to the artist, it is important for viewers to consider how their own race, gender, and cultural background might affect their understanding of the work. If the work annoys or bothers you, dig around in your own experience to see why. We often tend to be pulled towards work that shares our own aesthetic, and pushed away from work, which challenges our aesthetic. If you find yourself disliking an aspect of the work, focus your attention on what was happening in the piece, rather than on your opinion. Comments like, "I checked out for long periods of time when I was watching the second section..." may be exactly what the artist needs to hear or what they intended. Be honest and rigorous about your own reactions. Investigate your perceptions, particularly if you have an impulse to direct or fix an aspect of the work. Often underneath that impulse is an observation that would be much more informative for that artist to hear.

What if you are struggling to find something to say, or you find the work challenging or you just didn't "like" it? In Fieldwork, you will definitely encounter unformed, raw, nascent ideas that are not fully fleshed out, boring sections, work that is difficult emotionally, politically, or personally, as well as work which is not your cup of tea. This is good; this is the goal. People come to Fieldwork to share that work so that with your comments it can *become* fully fleshed out, clear, strong, and powerful, even if it never becomes *your* cup of tea aesthetically.

Seeing More

Part of why we don't clap in Fieldwork is so that we can stay in the open, receiving place longer. Applause instantly shifts us into an audience praising a performance, whereas we want to stay in the lab, analyzing or decoding an experiment. See if you can interrupt that judgment process of the brain and before deciding whether or not you "liked" the piece, or thought that it was "good," stay with what you saw in the work, investigate what and how it communicated.

Perhaps one of the most important aspects of the Fieldwork Guidelines (and definitely the hardest to stick with!) is not making suggestions or directorial comments. It is natural for viewers to quickly jump from what they saw to recommendations for improving the work. By not allowing these suggestions, viewers have to stay with the work that was actually shown; this allows them to dig deeper into its strengths and weaknesses and find more to reflect back to the artist.

Diversity

One of the most valuable things about Fieldwork is that it brings people together who have very different ways of seeing themselves, art, and the world. The more diverse the group is in terms of age, gender, race, sexual orientation, education, discipline, style and experience, the bigger the range of information the artists will receive about how their work is communicating to a broad audience.

Fieldwork is a strong and nimble form that has worked in a wide range of situations: creative workshops, residencies, arts therapy programs, in schools and in prisons. The container of Fieldwork is strong and can hold a wide range of work in every conceivable genre, from those making their first works, to those making their 50th, those with only the slenderest glimmer of an idea shared in under a minute, to those who want feedback on a polished hour long piece. Fieldwork offers a unique and valuable opportunity to practice equity and inclusion within an arts context.

Authorship

Every artist is in charge of her/his/their own work. One of the most important tenets of Fieldwork is prioritizing each artist's authorship. Artists are both in control of their artistic vision and responsible for achieving it. Because the viewers do not know the goals of the piece, it's not their place to tell the artist how they want them to make their piece. But most importantly, much more information will be conveyed if they ask themselves why they wanted to make a suggestion and explain that to the artist.

Viewers will not agree in their feedback, but Fieldwork is not about consensus, in fact the opposite is true - all of the voices and perspectives are valid and valuable and it is up to the artist to decide in which direction to take their work.

Additional Thoughts for the Facilitator

Facilitators are not teachers, but peer artists who have had specific training and experience in the Fieldwork process. Most facilitators have participated in several groups, possibly co-facilitated a group and then received further training from The Field. Because of the integral role of the facilitator, The Field administrator's choice of whom

should fill this position is important. These additional thoughts are meant to help administrators, Network site leaders and potential facilitators ascertain whether or not the candidate is a good fit. Facilitators should have:

- A commitment to equity and inclusion with a proven ability to create a space that engages people across difference.
- The ability to facilitate cultural framing and address cultural bias as needed.
- The ability to intervene in micro- and macro-aggressions within the group when/if it is needed.

Facilitators should use a gentle touch and should be prepared to actively intervene on any and all aggressions towards participants from historically marginalized groups. At any point, if an artist feels like the feedback is biased by race, gender, culture, they should definitely speak up and the facilitator should intervene to ensure that the viewer has an opportunity to re-state their comments so that the artist's work and vision is addressed respectfully. For example, a facilitator could say something like "That comment is sitting a little funny with me, could you please re-phrase so I am clear on what you are saying?" Since artists are encouraged not to respond to feedback they receive in the moment, this does not mean they are *silenced*; they are free to ask clarifying questions, to ask about an aspect of the work not addressed in feedback, and to respond themselves or with the facilitator's support to any comments that don't feel right.

Facilitators are supported by the administration of The Field in NYC, and if in other cities, by the Network Manager. They are also peer artists who are managing their own identity, needs, and artistic practice. The facilitator - particularly a facilitator of color - is not expected to hold the emotional labor of the workshop or feedback that negatively impacts them. The facilitator can and should contact the Network Manager or to other facilitators as need be for any support, issue or concern.

Consider Creating a Community Contract

It is important for each participant to consider how their own race, gender, cultural background etc. might help or hinder their understanding of the work and their participation in the group. It is **strongly** recommended that the group create a **community contract** at the beginning of the session and refer to it as needed throughout the sessions to support **racial and cultural equity for all participants**. Participants may refer to the agreed contract as they see issues arise. This community contract may include the following considerations and any additions the group agrees to add:

- Speak from your experience
- Listen for understanding
- WAIT (why am I talking) - be mindful of the time and space you occupy
- Brave Space (recognizing the humanity in everyone and the right to be respected, and bravely step up if that's not happening)

Discomfort may not necessarily mean wrong. Remain curious about where quick reactions and thoughts are coming from.

Facilitators can also consider the community agreements from the Center for Equity and Inclusion, based in Portland, Oregon: stay engaged, speak your truth responsibly, listen to understand, be willing to do things differently and experience discomfort, expect and accept non-disclosure, and maintain confidentiality. Alternately, another way to think about the Fieldwork process is that the participants are creating a micro-community by committing to a covenant of presence, attention and confidentiality.

Feedback on Feedback

If time allows, usually in groups that run for at least six sessions, it is a great idea to have a mid-session conversation in which the group can check-in on the workshop's progression and feedback; this is sometimes called "feedback on feedback." This can be a great time to encourage viewers to improve and deepen their viewing and feedback skills and to gently remind folks about any guidelines that are not being followed. The facilitator can make general comments about the type of feedback that has been given and possibly give some examples of ways to improve feedback, for example showing how to re-phrase a suggestion into an observation. In the context of this open discussion about feedback, the facilitator can make some points without calling out any individuals or putting anyone on the spot, which can be humiliating. This feedback on feedback is also a time to check in on the group in terms of micro-aggressions to ensure that the group feels respectful and equitable.

Different Fieldwork Models

While the classic Fieldwork workshop is 10 sessions with an informal performance at the end, there are many different formats in operation such as introductory free sessions, fishbowls (in which the Fieldwork group does their thing with a larger circle of observers around them), and any number of sessions with or without performances. Some Fieldwork groups are folded into residencies, such as at Earthdance where it is practiced daily for 10 days, or the NEW program in Portland, which has four sessions over a six-month choreography residency. Another group of artists in NYC used Fieldwork to present a significant portion of their entire body of work, at one time, on video and received feedback on the whole of it.

Since Fieldwork is practiced across the country, many groups have come up with their own unique adaptations and idiosyncrasies. Some groups are always in a time crunch with many artists showing and little time for feedback. For example, if 10 people each showed five minutes of material in a two hour group that will only leave seven minutes of feedback for each person, hardly enough for all of the nine artists to give their feedback. So several groups have adopted time saving techniques such as knocking on the floor or snapping fingers while someone is giving feedback to indicate that you agree with that comment. Some artists find this a valuable technique, allowing them to get more information in a short amount of time. Others worry that it puts pressure on the artist by creating consensus about feedback. Groups can decide together, with the facilitator, what works best for their group.

UPPING THE ANTE - ideas to improve & deepen feedback in Fieldwork

- Give all of the work shown your undivided attention.
- Look for the strongest moment.
- Share what you perceive to be the artist's intent behind the work.
- Ask yourself: "What was original about the work?"
- Consider how the work is affecting you.
- Challenge your language to meet your experience of the piece.
- Accept the premise of the piece- its world, its aesthetic - and then give feedback from within that model.
- Be as generous as possible in your feedback.
- Reveal more about the piece than yourself through your comments.
- Give feedback that an artist can take back to the studio and use to work deeper/ move forward.
- Vary the lens through which you view the work.
- Ask yourself, what did this work mean to me?
- Specifically target the moments where you "fell out," were confused, lost the character, motivation or intention of the work.
- Specifically target the moments that felt crystallized, satisfying, took you forward in the work, created more knowledge of the artist's intention.
- Notice what kind of feedback is useful to you in your process. Give that kind of feedback to others.

About Suggestions

They creep into our language all the time even when we are making a conscious effort to keep them at bay. It is pretty common in Fieldwork groups to hear "I wanted to see" as part of the feedback; this is a gentle type of suggestion, which can mean different things. Here are some examples of suggestions and ways to rephrase the language to be more precise, to give more information to the artist, and to avoid directing their work.

A direct suggestion: "You should cut the last part with the chair."

A more precise rephrasing: "The last part with the chair felt long and I didn't get what it added that wasn't already said earlier in the work."

Another direct suggestion: "I think you should be more emotive in your performance."

A more precise rephrasing: "I realize that I expected the work to get to a certain level of emotional tension, which it approached every time you held the prop, but it never did and each time that happened, I felt disappointment."

A sneaky suggestion: "I could watch that section with the fabric for longer."

A more precise rephrasing: "I was so engaged for the fabric section; I was caught off guard when it ended."

The Field Network

The Field Network was established in 1993, in response to requests by individual artists across the United States for Field programs, most notably Fieldwork. The Network has

grown each year, either by word of mouth, or through artists familiar with Field programs who relocate and do not find the artistic infrastructure and support systems in their new locales that sustain them as artists. This growth of The Field Network is a natural development based on the organic flow of artists who live, visit or study in New York City and then settle in other parts of the country. Currently the Network consists of 10 sites across the United States, with locations in both urban and rural areas, administered by both individual artists and arts organizations.

Each Network site is free to adapt the Field's programs to fit the unique geography and culture of their city. Many sites partner with local non-profit organizations, producing venues, state arts councils as well as colleges and universities. One of the qualities of Fieldwork that makes it work so well in a wide range of communities is its flexibility. Across the country, Fieldwork sessions are offered in single, weekly or monthly sessions and as part of residencies and performance opportunities. At the core of every site are the artists, sharing and developing their work and gaining support through peer feedback.

Setting up a new site begins with an interested potential facilitator getting trained in the Field's feedback method. This can happen in several different ways; the potential facilitator can travel to New York City to train with Field staff, or a Field staff member, facilitator or Network Manager can travel to the potential new site's location to train one or more new facilitators (if funding allows). These new sites are supported by both The Field in NYC and the Field Network Manager, whose role is to facilitate communication and strengthen connections between existing and new sites, as well as offer support and share best practices. Field Network sites are required to pay nominal dues to The Field in NYC, fill out report forms on their activities and participate in capacity building conference calls. In return, they have the opportunity to travel to the Field Network Conference, which is sponsored by The Field and held in different cities every other year.

Given the natural ebb and flow of a changing arts ecology, Fieldwork sites emerge and recede across the US and Europe. This ebb and flow reflect artists' needs, the capacity of Field facilitators to maintain sites, and the broader socioeconomic forces at play in different communities. Historically, there have been Network sites in dozens of cities across the US and in Europe. In 2019 there are active sites in Tampa, Atlanta, Boulder, Chicago, Houston, Miami, Milwaukee, Seattle, Salt Lake City, Portland and Washington DC. Previous sites include Berlin and Amsterdam.

The Field Network Manager is currently Jen Mitas, based in Portland, OR and she/they can be reached at networkmanager@thefield.org.

Addressing Racial Bias in Fieldwork

In 2018 leaders at The Field in New York worked together to identify how to make Fieldwork sessions more race explicit and make space to address racial bias as and when it arises. Here are two key problem areas identified by Field staff and the processes to address them:

1. **Problem: The emotional labor of our facilitators is real.** We need to support them more, check in more, listen more, and pay them for check-ins and debriefs. **Process:** We are baking in regular check-ins and debriefs to our facilitator engagements, and we are adding money to the budget to support this work.
2. **Problem: We need to be race explicit.** Our public-facing Guidelines had not intentionally and authentically included artists of color. **Process:** We added more inclusive language. For instance, we included the following text to the Guidelines used by all participants, and made them available on our website: “If you feel like the feedback is too much or is biased by race, gender, culture or other -isms, the facilitator will lead the group to ensure that the artist’s work and vision is centered authentically and respectfully.”

To be clear: these additions/ changes to Fieldwork are not being made in order to “get more artists of color in Fieldwork”. **The goal of these measures are to ensure that artists of color feel intentionally and authentically seen, supported and engaged.**

Other things Fieldwork facilitators can do to help facilitate race conscious Fieldwork that The Field New York has recently implemented:

For Facilitator:

Facilitators can read through Guidelines with the participants verbatim at the 1st session and at any public showings. Facilitators can ask participants to introduce themselves with name and pronouns at 1st session and at any public showings.

Throughout the Fieldwork session facilitators can:

- Check in with each other (if there is more than one facilitator), the network manager or another peer. These can be a chance to process generally and address any interpersonal or institutional racism in the space, room or structure;
- if necessary, the facilitator can check-in directly with FW artists and/or artists of color in particular if need be (email or call is fine).

For Artists/Participants:

Fieldwork facilitators can:

- For new participants: pre-session call and check-in with them about what will happen at first session, any questions, share the Guidelines; intentionally discuss race explicit language and our values – “do you have any questions about this work? Does it resonate with you?”
- Check-in throughout session with artists if need be; particularly with historically marginalized artists, artists of color, or artists new to Fieldwork.
- Review any evaluation questions or comments with artists directly if need be.