

SHAPE

Before, after and in between each section – breathe, stretch and shake out tension. Suggested exercises for this are: Deep, slow breaths – lifting the arms on the inhale, lowering on the exhale; Hanging forward for full release of the back; Shaking out the body – as in the Vibration exercise.

These can be done briefly throughout this exercise to avoid build up of tension in the body while exploring and holding extreme positions.

During this exercise, keep the focus on the discovery of SHAPE and the creation of forms in space – rather than the motion itself. On discovering a “satisfying” shape, take time to hold that shape – giving it a life as a sculptural form in space and bringing presence and definition to that form. Also explore subtle alterations that can be made from within that form.

Curved / Rounded

Start standing straight with the weight planted equally on both feet, take a moment to breathe and establish an earth connection.

Beginning with a focus on the torso only, explore ways of forming curved lines in space with the torso – as though trying to “surround” (or partially surround) a round volume of space. One can also imagine trying to surround balls of different sizes – with the front, then the back and the sides of the torso – and other angles, planes, facets in between.

The limbs can be introduced only as extensions of these shapes.

Now bring the focus to the arms. Explore ways of using the arms to surround space and create curved forms. Then do the same with the legs. (Although the knee is a hinge joint which really only has the capacity for varying degrees of angles – work with the imaginative CONCEPT of roundness and surrounding volumes of space with the legs to produce curved forms.)

Now, still standing, use the whole body to explore and discover rounded shapes. Keep the intention of “roundness” going through every transitional movement; there are no real “transitions” as such – as every increment of motion introduces new form. As you find shapes that feel satisfyingly “round” to you, take time to hold them in suspended stillness, breathing presence into that sculpture.

Explore possibilities of level (high, mid-level and low) while standing, then transfer the weight onto other parts of the body to explore rounded shapes from the floor.

Straight / Angular

After taking a moment to release tension from the body, start again standing straight with the weight planted equally on both feet, take a moment to breathe and establish an earth connection.

In contrast to the concept of roundness and surrounding space – use gestures that “cut through” space like a blade to discover straight lines and angles.

Begin with focusing on the torso only and stay strictly within the limitations of only creating straight lines. Then isolate the arms to create straight lines piercing into

the surrounding space and clearly defining the hinges of the elbows and wrists to cut sharp angles into those lines.

Then isolate the legs to explore possibilities of line extending from hip joint to sharp angles with knee and ankle joints.

Then include the whole body with varying levels of height from standing and from the floor.

Take your time; accept that there are severe limitations in keeping the purity of line and work as creatively as you can within those limitations. Stay true to the form. Cut through space to explore straight lines and angles and whenever you discover a shape that feels satisfying in its line, hold that form in stillness to give it a few moments as a living sculpture.

Twisted / Serpentine / Coil

After taking a moment to release tension from the body, start again standing straight with the weight planted equally on both feet, take a moment to breathe and establish an earth connection.

The approach to exploring twisted shapes is much more internally motivated than rounded or straight shapes – which initiate with an awareness of their respective relationships to space. Twisted shapes begin deep in the body and emerge into the surrounding space as form.

Using the same progression as the previous sections, begin with the focus on initiating twisted coiling shapes with the torso only, then with the arms, the legs and then combining the whole body to explore twisted shapes on different levels.

Some images that inspire these forms to emerge are those of serpents, of coils and of creeping vines.

Avoid the tendency to become a "can of worms" while exploring these forms and make sure to take time and space to shift gradually through each increment of transition, mindfully aware that every increment is a new shape evolving from the last. On discovering yourself in a satisfying twisted shape, stop and hold that shape, suspend it in time and space as sculpture.

INTENTIONS:

The goals of this exercise are to isolate the purist possible formats for the concept of shape in the body and to work with each one individually within its limitations to discover all the possibilities it will allow a given body.

Once the awareness and discipline to maintain these "pure" forms has been achieved, the artist then has this powerful tool of defined shape in space. This equips them with the ability for using this tool in decisions of aesthetic and psychological impact.