

# Artist Spotlight: BIG SHOW

As a tradition, every fall the SIM department students work together to organize a large scale production typically known as BIG SHOW. The show spans multiple days and spaces, including the Godine Family Gallery, the North 181 installation and practice room, the first floor North Collins Hallways, and the Pozen Center. Big Show incorporates a week long gallery exhibition, pop up exhibitions in N181 and the Hallways, and a one night live show in the Pozen Center. Featured here, Anya Talatinian was one of the artists selected to show in the Godine Family Gallery exhibition with you rebuilding/me rebuilding/you rebuilding/me. Anya Talatinian is an interdisciplinary artist based out of Roslindale, Massachusetts. They are currently studying in the Studio for Interrelated Media department at Massachusetts College of Art and Design. In May of 2018, Talatinian sat down with Marissa Cote for a conversation about performing, eating together, and the ways we become connected and disconnected to one another.

*Marissa: you rebuilding/me rebuilding/you rebuilding/me and Incidents of Starting, are these both from big show or all school show?*

Anya: They're from everything. Those are old. Lately I've been doing less work with bricks and moving more toward these.

*It seems that generally, in print, sculpture, etc, the work is thinking about building a lot of the time, whether it building bread, or building structures-*

Or like building a set, or building a world. I guess that's just what art is, building.

*I think so, but I think it's particularly pronounced in your work. Because you physically build things, so the rest of your work gets read as building as well because you have that context.*

Yeah, I think that recently everything has been related to these play type things, and less of the instruction or food. I wrote a few plays recently that I've been trying to get in the works, which feels really amazing. It still feels like community, community theater. Even the oven requires other people to happen.

*Can you talk about your process for generating works that are improvisational? In a lot of ways those works, such as monologue shmonologue and rebuilding are out of your hands once they're performed or living in a space. You as the maker lose a fair amount of control over them while also compelling a lot of people to finish them.*

I've been thinking about that improvisation thing, especially in relation to *rebuilding* from Big Show. In these scripted things, I'm taking them home and reading and acting out in my kitchen. Even though they're scripted, everyone performs it just a little bit differently, and I think the most beautiful parts for me comes in the things that people can't help but do- those habits we get into that make it, and that are performative in a way.

*What's an example of that?*

Like the inflection of your voices, words that you say frequently, things that you do with your hand- a lot things we don't think about but that you see someone reading something scripted those natural habits come out. That makes it really interesting for me, when people bring their own spin to what I'm doing. It's out of my hands a

little bit. I enjoy that, I think I like a certain amount of control in these things- which is where the script comes in- but i enjoy when people take it and interpret it and do something. I don't get offended if they see this as something completely different than how I see it.

*Do you think the scripts and plays are something through which you're trying to communicate something else? Do you write a play with the intention of communicating a thing? Or, is simply the act of putting on a play, and seeing those ticks come out of people more interesting than the actual content of what they're saying?*



*monologue shmonologue*, Anya Talatinian and Lids Birthday, All School Show 2018

Sometimes I feel like that is true. I write from what I know, from

personal experience. Almost all of the things in here I've said, or have been said to me, or are things that have happened to me. I feel when they are put in this format somehow they become a little bit more universal than me just sitting here and telling you my experiences. When you can take this in your own hand and in your own voice

“You’re eating food that hasn’t been touched by other people. Are we more distant from each other now? Because we’re eating microwaved TV dinners, or not sitting at the kitchen table and looking at each other face to face, or sitting in front of the fire, or standing around the stage saying words that aren’t ours but are still communicating.”

THE PLAYERS

**YOU** : CONSUMER , PRODUCT , PRODUCER  
: ACROSS 6000 YEARS  
: WITHOUT CONTROL

**FLOUR** : A MEAL OF POWDER OR GROUND WHEAT  
: FOR YOUR BREAD  
: THE PRODUCT THAT REMAINS AFTER SIGNIFICANT THRESHING, CRUSHING, GRINDING (ABUSE?)

**WATER** : 60% OF YOU  
: 71% OF EARTH

**YEAST** : SINGLE CELLED MEMBERS OF THE FUNGUS KINGDOM  
: NOT UNLIKE YOU, DIGESTS ORGANIC COMPOUNDS AS A SOURCE OF ENERGY, THE BYPRODUCT OF WHICH IS RELEASED AS A GAS

**TIME** : SHIFTING, COMING, GOING

excerpt from *Incidents of Starting*, 2017

it becomes more relatable. I think I just can't stay away from this need for things to be functional in some way, not in the way an object is functional but in something you can actively participate in, participatory functionality. I find myself getting most excited by that, when people participate.

*Can you talk about what inspires these works? I think they are built off participation, and they're built off community, those are all themes that I see. But I'm wondering what in you has been personally inspired to want to make work about community, plays, etc*

I know that it all comes from my upbringing, and it all stems from food and sitting at a table. I think in my family food is the thing we all bond over. Much of time there's not a lot to talk about when we're sitting around a dinner table and eating. We're already talking about the next meal.

It also goes back to the growth of food. The roots of food and the roots of how we sustain ourselves are a community initiative, or multiple people coming together and putting effort into a single thing, like sowing the seed and harvesting the wheat. It has to be done in tandem, in a kind of dance, in a scrimmage. Life feels like a play.

*I think about meals as a play, those mediated time frames where everyone kind of has their role. Do you feel like you're investigating familial structures or structures in the way we find ourselves knowing other people through the work and through the play as a way for people to think through those things?*

Yes, even the dinner table to me feels like a stage. Everyone has their seat at the table- that's your moms chair or your brother's chair and you go towards the same ritual thing. This kind of can feel like a it's the same, this to me is the same.



*Who Done It?* A Collaborative Play in a Day by the Studio for Interrelated Media, lead by Anya Talatinian and Lids Bday, 2018



Top: *monologue shmonologue* 2018 Bottom: *Proof: A Community Bread Oven*, 2017



*It's like those ticks!*

Yeah, those things we don't think about. Like this one [*rebuilding*] is putting together a piece of ikea furniture. This becomes the instruction manual, "you put the this thing on top and that thing, and then, I don't know. What do you think of that? I'll try anything once!" You gotta open this scenario when you're trying to figure something out with someone else, and you're scratching your head and everything's falling over.

*I think of grasping for communication through subtext and not really talking but this idea of, one can't not communicate. So you're always in conversation whether that's with words, or where you sit at the table, if you choose not sit, you know? That's something. So even when you're baking bread people are just gathering around to eat bread, it's like you're still conducting a play.*

Yeah, and the oven almost became a stage in and of itself. When I think about it was the act of making bread or making food and giving it away to other people, but it was just as much me sitting and tending the fire and someone coming and sitting next to me and just telling me about their day and about their life, or about a memory that they had sitting in front of the fire with someone else. That's a play too.



Top: *Blind Motion Score*, 2017 All School Show, Pozen Show  
Middle: *Proof: A Community Bread Oven*, 2017  
Bottom: *you rebuilding me rebuilding you*, 2018



*It's interesting what happens when you take on the role of provider, especially when you're in a meditative position yourself and you're open to people. The way that people are able to open up and end up having a conversation with you when you make space. I think it's just about making space for people.*

Making a seat for somebody at the dinner table. I have trouble with talking about these things. I find that I don't really understand something until it's done things. I've been doing so since the beginning of my time here. Do you remember that piece it was my first year of SIM, *Blind Motion Score*?

*I loved that piece.*

That feels just as related to the oven, and the bricks, and the plays . I can't quite put it into words.

*But again, it's communicating. It's literally stumbling around, attempting to communicate, which is what I think we all secretly feel like we're doing, just blindly pressing forward and finding ways to talk to one another when we can't use words. I think it's super relevant. It's a different form but you're pushing against the same walls. Yeah, it's interesting to think about that in relation to building with bricks. When you think about the work from the perspective of a brick that's interesting in and of itself. It's there the whole time and it's seeing people talking to one another through making, alterations, and building over time even though they never sit with each other face to face.*

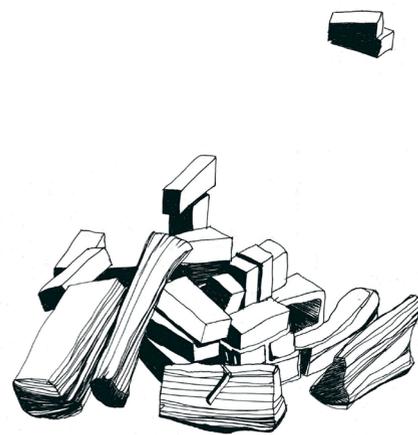
Or like in *Incidents of Starting*, thinking about the the players in one scenario, these things we interact with daily, as characters. The flour is something you're manipulating that also is manipulating you in a way, and provides you with something. It's interesting to think about bricks listening and hearing what you have to say.

I'm thinking about bread, and post World War II, the industrial boom that happened. In suburbia, how growth was so encouraged, but it's this kind of rapid growth that's so fast. We want it now! I want to be bigger and stronger now! And how wonder bread is this thing- think about that saying "you are what you eat" and then think about ingesting something that has never been touched by human hands. Think on that separation that comes even if you're not aware of it, but eating a piece of processed bread that's only been touched by machines. Do you in turn become more separated from other people when you're eating food that hasn't been touched by other people? Are we more distant from each other now? Even though we have the internet, we have these amazing technological resources, are we more distant because we're eating microwaved TV dinners more or sitting alone? Or not sitting at the kitchen table and looking at each other face to face, or sitting in front of the fire or standing around the stage and maybe saying words that aren't ours but are still communicating in a certain way. Are we more separate now?

I feel like that's what I want to get out of this work, is a sense of connection, a feeling of connection to people. Then these things all become the tools for that or the medium for that. Sitting and reading the script together back and forth becomes a medium for communication, just as not saying anything but both tearing off a piece of the same loaf of bread, or ingesting the same thing, a tie grows around yourself and another person.

**Marissa Cote +  
Anya Talatinian**

(LAUGH)  
 YOU KNOW  
 WE COULD  
 PUT THE ON TOP OF THE (LAUGH)  
 AND THEN (HEAD SCRATCH)  
 WHAT DO YOU THINK OF THAT ?  
 I'LL TRY ANYTHING ONCE  
 (COUGH)



Top: screenshots from the livestream of *Proof: A Community Bread Oven*, 2017 Bottom: excerpts from *you rebuilding/me rebuilding/you rebuilding/me*, 2017