



Physical

Exercise

This publication is made on the occasion of *Physical Exercise*, a live durational performance by Steacy Easton on June 30th, 2024 at Factory Media Centre in Hamilton, ON.

Notes or Prescriptions

Ben Robinson

The title of Bruce Nauman's performance Dance or Exercise on the Perimeter of a Square hinges on that conjunction – the or representing a spectrum between artful movement and pure exertion. With Steacy Easton's Physical Exercise, the or is elided, but that second word is shadowed by an alternative reading, a more compulsory or corrective kind of movement – perhaps Punishment?

Here, the repeated bouncing of the red ball recalls the latent masochism and humiliation of the school gymnasium, the roundness of the required reps ringing with the voice of the disciplinarian, the clinician.



Far from a simple historical gesture, Easton's performance is a total resituating both in time and context of Nauman's methodical and exaggerated movements. Gone is the choreographed ease of the dancer in favour of the unpredictable dyspraxic body, the regularity of the metronome's four count extended into the slow accumulation toward one hundred.

And where the screen starts to dissolve the longer one watches Nauman's meditative steps, with Easton it remains insistently present (in all its high-definition glory). You are invited to watch, but only from the far side of the double mirror with all its threat of corruption and implication, leaving us to wonder, who exactly it is that is being corrected here?

Left: Bruce Nauman. *Dance or Exercise on the Perimeter of a Square (Square Dance)*. 1967-1968

Steady Easton is a writer and visual artist, originally from Edmonton, who has lived in Hamilton for more than seven years. They have written on gender, sexuality, and country music for publications including Slate, NPR, and the Atlantic Online. They have books on Tammy Wynette for University of Texas, an upcoming volume on Dolly Parton's White Limozeen for Bloomsbury's 33 1/3 series; and an erotic kunstlerroman for Coach House, Daddy Lessons.

They have shown work in Hamilton, Toronto, Montreal, Alberta, and New York. They have made durational performance art in Hamilton, Toronto, and Halifax. Their work is in public collections in Edmonton, Burlington, and Hamilton; plus in the library of the National Gallery of Canada. They were the 2022 Artist in Residence at the Martha Street Studio in Winnipeg.

Ben Robinson is a poet, musician and librarian. He lives in Hamilton, ON on the traditional territories of the Erie, Neutral, Huron-Wendat, Haudenosaunee and Mississaugas. His first book is *The Book of Benjamin* from Palimpsest Press. His second, *As Is*, is forthcoming from ARP Books.

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Factory Media Centre is Hamilton's not-for-profit artist-driven resource centre for film, video, new media, installation, sound art, and other multimedia art forms.



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