

## **The Signification Game**

From Omer Keinan, 01.03.2024

### **Preparation: The Eye Game**

**Practitioners:** 2 and up

**Roles:** Performer and Guesser

**Set-up:** This exercise uses the Major Arcana of the Tarot deck as they are powerful symbols that suggest strong associations.

### **Structure:**

Open two cards from the deck and examine them.

Sit or stand comfortably, facing each other.

The Performer secretly chooses one card, closes their eyes, and focuses on it.

When they are ready, they open their eyes, softly transmitting the card to the Guesser, who then guesses.

Repeat several times, swapping roles. It is pleasant to guess correctly.

Tip: We are less interested in the potential magic in play.

Rather, in the delicate interplay of pre-expressive and expressive performance. Attending to the articulation of the gaze through movement and imagination.

Open an additional, third card.

Go back and forth, swapping roles for a while longer.

### **Notes:**

For newcomers to the decks, I suggest using the Rider–Waite Tarot or Tarot of Marseilles for their recognizable and simpler iconography. I usually use the Thoth Tarot, which I find richer and more alluring.

I've been playing with three variations:

- i. Performer starts with their eyes closed, transforming their gaze as they open their eyes.
- ii. Guesser starts with their eyes closed. Performer prepares their gaze and then invites Guesser to open their eyes.
- iii. Performer and Guesser both have their eyes open. This transformation is more difficult, and far more interesting.

An inspiration for this exercise is from the episode “Puff Pastry Pizza” of the TV-series *Please Like Me* (season 3, episode 7), in which Tom and Claire play the made-up game penis-or-no-penis: one person thinks of something, and the other must guess if they're thinking about a penis.

This exercise comes from the creation process of *Purgatory* in the summer of 2019. In the piece, we improvise with the audience, approaching them rather directly and playing with discomfort. The Eye Game trained us in communicating our intentions precisely and efficiently to the audience members we were approaching, and gaging if they'd be willing to participate in whatever mayhem we had planned. It was also useful in awakening the facemask and embodying the “demons” we developed with an anchor in imagination and fantasy.

## **The Signification Game**

**Practitioners:** 3 and up

**Roles:** Performer and Guessers

**Set-up:** This exercise can use the Major Arcana of the Tarot deck, or the Action Cards attached below.

### **Structure:**

Open three cards from the deck and examine them.  
Sit together on one side of the space.

One at a time, a practitioner secretly chooses a card and steps into the space. Becoming the Performer, they enter the space and embody the card, attempting to convey it to the Guessers.  
After a set amount of time, shorter with each round, the Guessers guess.

Tip (before trying): The Performer can start slowly, attending to the card and inviting it to evoke imagination and sensation. What does it mean/do to you? Gradually, they explore those images/sensations through movement.

Go for one round, roughly two-minutes each.  
Then, two rounds, roughly one-minute each.

Tip (after trying): Attend to the accumulation and iteration of the attempts. Particularly when the timeframe shortens, it is helpful to draw on and affirm the particularities of previous embodiments / interpretations. Together, we are making a sort-of language or symbolic-order.

One rounds, roughly thirty-seconds each.  
One round, the Guessers guess as soon as they can.

### **Notes:**

It is useful to have some musical backdrop. I like putting Ulla's Hope Sonata on loop.

For keeping time, I suggest using the stopwatch function on a phone. One of the guessers can keep time, simply raising their hand to signal that time has passed; the performer continuing to work until all guesses have been made. I find the sound of and finicking with a beeper irritating, although it can support and more rigorous frame.

Another tip (after trying): You might also notice how the performative territory of the cards – the ways that they are signified – can overlap. Attempt to distinguish between them by collectively specifying the embodied-signs: a certain quality of effort, body part, shape, gesture, voice, relation to space, rhythmicity, and so on.

If you'd like to go further, you can play with articulating and elaborating the symbolic contents of the cards through the embodied-signs. For example, whatever particularity you developed for The Moon can be explored what else it can do/feel/mean. You can also play with embodying multiple cards / signs simultaneously.

For additional activations, you can increase the intrigue by opening additional cards – at the beginning or as you go. It is also helpful to, from the get-go, attend to embodying the cards in relation to common-codes, "obvious" or accessible ways which can get the symbolic-order running and allow more time for its multiplication/deconstruction.

This form is contiguous to party games such as charades and notes: Each person writes down five names of well-known, common-sense people – celebrities, famous

cartoon characters, mutual acquaintances, and so on. The notes are gathered into a hat. The group divides into two teams. Each round, one member from one team has one minute; they draw a note and perform it, moving onto the next if their group guesses correctly, aiming to collect as many notes as possible. At the end of each round, all notes are gathered into the hat and reused. Most version use three rounds: 1. Describe the person on the note without saying their name. 2. Repeat using only one word. 3. Repeat using no words, only movement. When I play this with artist friends, we add: 4. Repeat, making only sound while facing away from the group.

**PRAY**

**BEHAVE**

**WANT**

**SHARE**

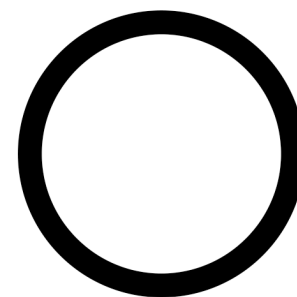
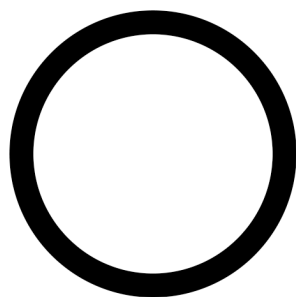
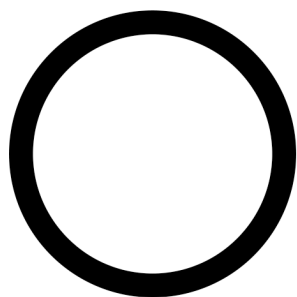
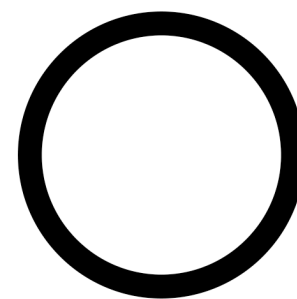
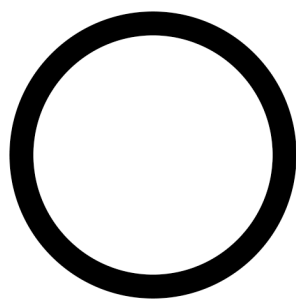
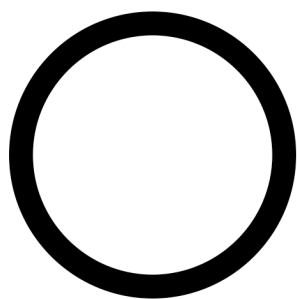
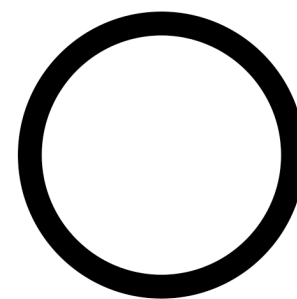
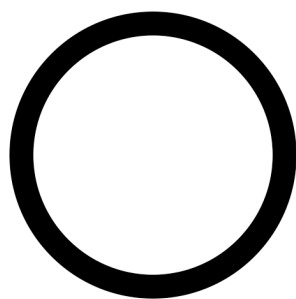
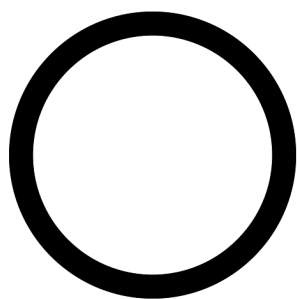
**PLAY**

**PANIC**

**PRETEND**

**USE**

**GO**

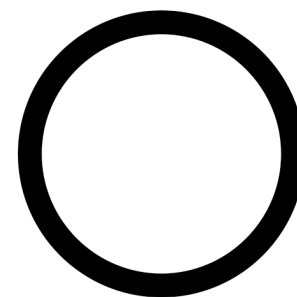
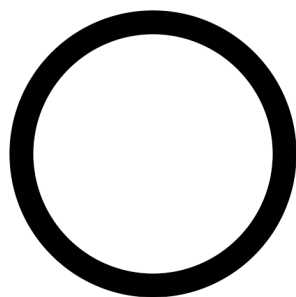
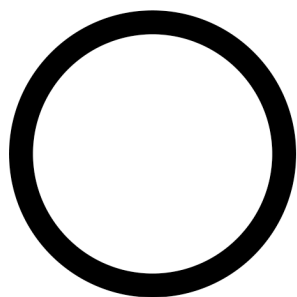
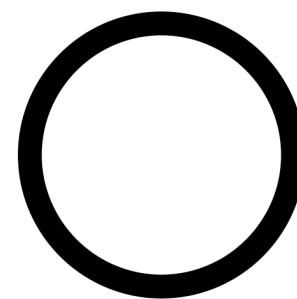
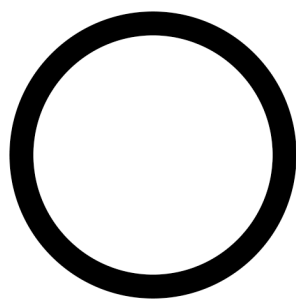
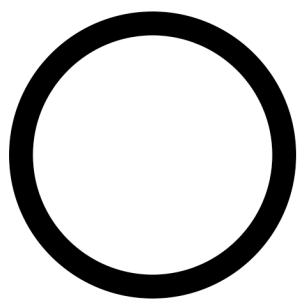
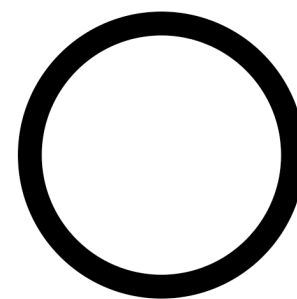
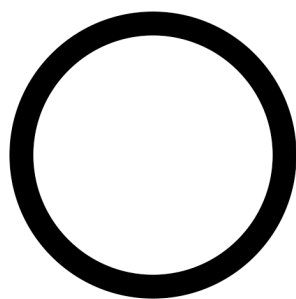
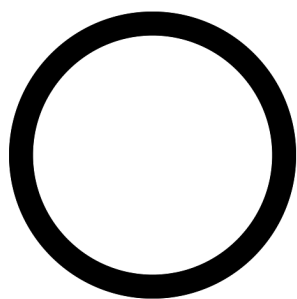


**FEAR**

**CONFESS**

**EMBRACE**

**HELP**



**LOVE**

**NEED**

**RESPECT**

**SELL**

**ENJOY**

**DESTROY**

**HARM**

**REMEMBER**

**EAT**



