No more mind games

SHIRT TRAX

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SECTION 1

1.1.

The Spring sunshine makes the blind a perfect glowing square, clearly much later than the twenty-three minute duration of the live recording I set in motion, as I lay on my friend's bed alone, drunk on vodka and tonic and giddy with big city kicks after the very . . . Manhattan evening I was taken on. It was dark, I was too full of it to take the subway back to Brooklyn, I remember the cab ride over the bridge, no dog to greet me as I unlocked the heavy steel door. I was laughing at Alan Vega complaining about not being allowed to smoke, there was booing . . . 'Frankie Teardrop' had been glitching over Brussels for hours.

I could not figure the time, but it was morning. I was alone because I was flying to Seattle later that day to meet my partner and the entourage to sell t-shirts and 7's down the West Coast. Immediately I started to smile, a spasm of excitement almost made me yelp; I would go for coffee, pack a bag . . . I could not think pragmatically as I started to recall last night's movements, meetings: we'd slipped into an invisible bar on a neglected Soho block to catch a sliver of polished abstraction. The crowd seemed less self-consciously 'highbrow' than at many of the gigs I'd played at more self-consciously 'highbrow' venues like . . . actually, there was just this one place that I had it in for: their set-up was pathetic considering the quality of acts it attracted. I'd been down to catch a rare gig by this Japanese power-guitar trio and the poor fuckers had to play through the most feeble PA imaginable; I'd been booked to play their 'experimental electronica' night, and was presented with a two-channel mixer, a beaten-up Discman on line 1, or my second 1210 on phono: I'd thrown a fit about how this was meant to be a cutting-edge event and how they had so much to learn from Europe's creative DJs who used their twin pitch-control CD players as a matter of course and how they should pull their heads out from their collective arses and blah, blah, blah . . . We were there for less time than it takes to order a drink, however; we had a birthday party to attend, people to see.

We arrived at the bar hosting Cindy's party well in time to catch the guy doing his live thing in the back room: As Andrew WK came on for his set I found myself at the front of the audience of party guests, a scary and hilarious place to be, so it turned out, as the long-haired guy in very metal worn black denim drainpipes, huge white basketball boots and ripped white t-shirt began his show, sort of shouting into his mic, while a backing track played off CD or something in the corner, blasting sort of shouty music. I remember him being extremely lively, destroying a school chair, which was pretty unnerving considering I was two feet away (crouching, trying to hide behind people's legs). I recall thinking it was complete genius. Apparently a friend was about to become his manager. I was getting a little drunk as we bar-hopped our way to some other party in an expensive looking TriBeCa loft. I was lapping it up, acting like a child in a . . .

. . . a band of children, guitars drums and all, on the silent TV were subtitled singing 'two lives on my Game Boy, so I'm still bottling along . . .'. I looked at my clothes I had slept in, happy to think that I was dressed so English; as I left my building to grab breakfast, a pack of Puerto Rican kids walking to school reminded me of the Louisida Vampires in downtown regulation hip hop topped with cosmetic fangs and feline contacts, reminding me in turn of 'It Takes a Nation of Millions . . .', putting $5 in the jukebox and playing it end to end, programming 1-5-0-1, 1-5-0-2, 1-5-0-3 . . . , doing my best impression of the intro for a table of friends, 'Let me hear you make some NOISE!', thrilled at my most often played record, the English accent, the first voice to be heard on the album; P.E. on Avenue A, so NY-fucking-C.

1.2.

I bought some nice headphones a few days before, so had recorded all the stuff I acquired last week and the promos I had been sent onto a handful of minidiscs. It would be the first chance I had had to listen to the new material. I was really pleased with the 'phones, so much better than the crap that came with the player itself, despite it being top of the range. They were perfect for this situation; they sort of folded in on themselves and could be zipped into a pouch. DJing with them might prove tricky, but for now, I could just plug in and listen properly. So before I left the Brighton apartment for the airport, as I packed my shit, I randomly segued all the

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stuff together and made a loose track list, spread over the bunch of little transparent coloured discs.

As my flight landed at Louisville airport at midnight Central Time, I disembarked with Chi-town gamblers and bloodstock 'experts', loudly greeting fellow track fans and enthusiastically remonstrating their hot-tips and sure-things for the next two days' racing. I took a cab from the airport to Central Avenue, unloading my luggage and letting myself in through the back door of my friend's low rise, idiosyncratically Dixie accommodation. The house was silent, as expected, since my host and numerous guests would be downtown soaking up some of the early Derby weekend action in some alien saloon. Exhausted from twenty-four straight travel hours, I pulled a beer from the huge, US style refrigerator and lit the joint left next to the welcome note and racecard for Friday's Oaks, the second biggest day on Churchill Downs' annual track calendar. Before anyone could return I slipped into the attic and pulled my bedroll over my still clad frame, choosing an unobtrusive and not already claimed space on the carpeted floor, folding my heavy British winter coat for a pillow.

I wake to a room of sleeping people, positioned with geometric efficiency, in the space with no ceiling as such, just two walls that sloped steadily to meet at a point in the middle. Midwest/cigarette and sermon belt-border sunlight woke and rose me as it burned through a small square hole in one of the two parallel surfaces in the attic. Drip coffee dripped downstairs, straight into the kitchen, and light and caffeine was more than I needed to follow it, no doubt into the proximity of my host who would have been, with familiar certainty, well into his day since he left to catch the first of the day's racing press and familiarise himself, if it was more possible to do so, with the day's field.

529 Central Avenue, Louisville is opposite – literally directly across the road from – one of the main entrances to the world-famous home of possibly the world's most famous horse race, these being Churchill Downs and the Kentucky Derby, respectively. This race would be taking place (and lasting a couple of minutes) at around 5 p.m. tomorrow, Saturday, when 150,000 people crowd into the old, once huge – Chicago-size – industrial city in Western Kentucky. As I stayed on for a few days watching my host's band rehearse for the following weeks' dates, I kicked up dust downtown, amongst the huge warehouses and rail tracks embedded in stone roads that lead straight into brick walls, long forgotten adjuncts to a countrywide network built for lonely, and lengthy, goods trains that you occasionally find yourself shadowing for miles along the desert's highways.

I was one of the first up – save, of course, my host as well as one of the video production guys sharing a futon in the attic corner. Walking straight into the kitchen it was apparently 8:30, and I greeted my host – sparkly eyed and a broad, excited grin – pouring myself coffee with half and half lighting a Merit before carrying them through the front room and on towards culture shock.

He handed me a fax from tonight's party organisers, as I pulled down my visor and stepped onto the front porch, a low wooden fence and a few feet of grass separating me from today's busiest street in the Midwest US, and with a view dominated by the twin domes not to mention acres of parking and streams of race goers carrying coolers, wearing obscene t-shirts and, most commonly of all having allowed the back of their hair to grow longer than either the sides or top. The information on the fax told me everything I needed to know about tonight's event, and was indeed very important, but was impossible to take seriously in the light of the events unfolding before me as I took my seat on the sheltered wooden porch staring slack jawed and ill equipped to deal with the slice of Americana unique to Derby weekend, Louisville, Kentucky, that paraded past me for the next few hours.

Between top-ups and replacement smokes I sat and veered wildly between the infectious excitement surrounding the horse-related events that kicked off this afternoon, and peak at tea time tomorrow – a buzz that crackled through the house continuously between the panic and outright paranoia of playing tonight's gig and the childish but irresistibly contrary image of a room full of deeply unsettled and undoubtedly aggressively offended white trash, their whole notion of what constitutes music violated by the fractured noise of Pita, the absurdly minimal tone and clip techno of Ryoja Ikeda, and, in the presence of the bizarre Mint Julep fixated circus that built in intensity around me, the increasingly perverted-sounding and potentially riot-inducing splintered polyrhythms of Farmers Manual. I contacted the promoter to see if we could organise a chicken wire screen – if not a fully electrified maximum security death row style fence between tonight's performers and the sunburned, drunk and potentially extremely dangerous crowd of pig-fucking wife beaters who could innocently wander into the venue. I had been rescued from a beating by my sound engineer a few years previous, a mere thirty seconds into my set – the elegantly scuffed silence apparently too scuffed for this guy – a chance, therefore of getting my 'ass whooped' was well within the realms of possibility: odds of 3–1, I was cheerfully told, lengthening only by the inclusion of a Tortoise number (Dave Pajo being a Louisville hero with his legendary former band Slint); a guitar would be helpful, real drums at least. As the delicious incongruity of abstract European electronica in the heart of middle America started to sour, I cracked into my first can of Bud . . .

I was picked up by one of the organisers at around 5 p.m., before the last race and well before the mass exodus from the track to every hotel room, motor home and premium-rate rented accommodation in the city. By this time I was laughably drunk having pulled one can

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of beer after another out of the huge plastic bin filled with cans, ginger ale and ice that sat in the shade by the back door and never seemed to be less then brimming with the flavourless brew that could be drunk like fizzy water. My nervously leaving for the venue was a major event at the house, since I had barely moved from the porch all day, hopelessly trying to come to terms with the scale of Louisville's annual carnival: I was too drunk to clean myself up, or even change clothes and it proved a source of great amusement to the house guests, and especially the band members, that I had to get my shit together to play a show in a few hours. I was jeered at as I tried to get in the wrong side of the huge Lincoln (only realising my mistake when I found the steering wheel in front of me) and, after having the promoter guy carry my flightcase for me, had to make him return twice for stuff I had forgotten to pick up. That all my housemates would be at the gig was a dead cert: they could hardly concentrate on the TV coverage of the track in anticipation of watching me make an ass of myself, this time in front of a crowd of rowdy strangers. While I had wanted to play a show in Louisville, especially over Derby weekend, since I first visited the town, suffice to say I was seriously regretting the whole fucking thing.

Upon arrival I stumbled into the rear entrance of a building whose characteristics escape me and tried to act as professionally as possible given the terrible circumstances. It was only when one of the crew produced a near fist-sized bag of Colombian that things started to look up: immediately waiving my fee in exchange for powder, I staggered into the dressing room to work my way through the huge pile in front of me. At once, the show was back on: I started to think of the sickest set my materials would allow me; I began to drink again, something I had foregone hours before. The venue looked fantastic: pure hicks-ville with all the trimmings. I looked and sounded so out of place it was beautiful, I had met the other performers; a nervous wigga would be spinning some straightforward drum and bass, while a genuine Californian hippy also supporting quasi dreadlocks would play a set consisting of what was known in Britain (about ten years previous) as 'trip hop'. I was billed after the headline Stereolab-clones. Oblivious to my surroundings I swung into action. Time to hand over came sooner than I expected, and I ducked backstage, knowing I would have to answer for my audio crimes shortly as I was tracked down to follow the evening's entertainment with the gang from 529. In the meantime I flipped the top off a bottle of Bud (naturally), cast my eye over the Derby Day field and forgot all about everything else.

1.3.

The anonymous double doors, set well back from the overlooked street just a couple of feet into the borough of Hackney, promised even less than the impossibly neglected 4-storey industrial space they had fed with unfortunate Victorian labourers in the building's nascent function, seemingly around the same time as it saw its most recent cosmetic work. Beyond these doors it was filthy; stone steps leading to a low ceilinged and uneven basement, no street level but more heavily worn stone steps leading to a small landing, furnished with a comically lengthy couch, a narrow, diminutive doorway through to a small, dark featureless box. More steps took you to the top of the building, an (apparently unisex) bathroom crowning this wonderful space. We loved it, it was perfect, ideal. It was the only venue that would do.

As an added bonus it was two minutes walk through tree-lined streets, bordered by sketchy sink-estates, from the apartment deep in the triangle formed by Old Street and City Road. Our monthly party found easy funding, and we would have little involvement with the administrative work that invisibly oiled the cogs of such events, save the occasional digital handshakes that led to the aesthetic programme, that would receive low-key promotion via the usual routes.

I found it easy to avoid listening to the contents of my flight case, the constituents of my impending set, by dropping it in at the venue as the PA crew worked. This left me hours to relax and sink into the couch adjacent to the flat's huge lounge windows. My girlfriend was currently bingeing on Krautrock, so had recently acquired a lot of CDs of the early 1970s German rock music: there were still entire discs in the *Faust* boxed set that had not been touched, while others would play continuously through the first floor apartment. The recent release of all three Neu! albums on CD was a boon: the smooth motoric pulse of drums and guitar would play at volume from one album to the next, interrupted this particular Friday by Earth's live sub sub-pop rumblings, and Spiritulized's gospel overtones, before the Go Gos, Blondie and the Ronettes. A clutch of Can albums would kick in, *Tago Mago* starting the relay; My Bloody Valentine preceded the Stooges, Link Wray and a live bootleg of the 13th Floor Elevators in Texas, then Madonna, The Beach Boys and the Talking Heads – generations of sonic adventurers punctuated by pop, as my girlfriend refused to let any of the intermittent guests go near the stereo, no matter how much they protested (which they did, ferociously and frequently).

I was confidently well acquainted with the facilities in the booth upstairs, and while we had left the flat late, I still had some time to kill. We walked through the doors as the wine and valium kicked in. I ducked into the dry ice crawling upwards towards street level as I entered the building, preferring to get lost in the anonymous basement, the 'dance room', for a few minutes rather than inevitably have to make small talk upstairs. The shroud of mist, lit blue from the back of the room and bass-heavy boom of DJ Assault suggested pole dancing and crack just out of sight, while seeming

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to cloud the throbbing dance floor's inhibitions until they became indistinct, lost. The porno-electro rush sped-up rumble making Disk's wild narrative scratching sound even more intense As the rhythm was held by the swirling, repetitive hum, the unmistakable rolling, coiled bass fizz of Aaliyah's 'Try Again' fed into the mix, and the crowd rippled and spun: models behaving badly, house heads and techno raving madly; noise freaks, faded *MC5* shirts pushed past *Pleats Please*, monochromatic rags and 300-dollar imported *Nikes*, denim-world girls cadge damp fags off suit, vest and dusty sneaks: boozers, losers and substance abusers; punks, drunks and junkies . . .

I guess I should have been on upstairs by now so climbed through slumped figures to our room on the building's first floor. In fact, I got to listen to the last few minutes of the two Italian guys cheerfully mixing off old cassette Walkmans, looping minidiscs and hand-carved vinyl lock grooves, stabbing at pocket-sized samplers. Still reeling from the atmosphere downstairs, I was looking forward to playing a new set for the crowd who seemed clued up and appreciative. The headline act, some friends doing a one-off live thing, would follow me and as I slid into the booth to open my flightcase, a guy from a Scandinavian arts magazine asked me for a ten-track resident's playlist to accompany a review of tonight's event. Unwrapping my headphones I scratched down the first few records I could think of (see the table).

SECTION 2

2.1. *nite truckin'* (alternative title *nate truckin'*) (see figure 1)

This performative work is an exploration of the 'Shirt-Trax set', depicted as a series of eight translucent glass cubes. Each cube is $6 \times 6 \times 6$ feet and contains a vacuum-formed model of two figures. The figures inside are formed in white plastic and lit from the inside using blue light. Notice that they are stooped over as if at an imaginary musical surface. The cubes are arranged in a grid of 4×2 in a darkened space. On the surface of each cube a grid is etched that denotes a decreasing logarithmic scale. Each cube is placed on a concrete plinth that holds the cube approximately two feet from the floor. A speaker is concealed inside the plinth that regularly emits a sound in relation to the grid of the corresponding cube. As the scale of the grid expands, implying a closing in on the subject, we observe a distanciation of the two figures.

2.2. *music of white origin* (see figure 2)

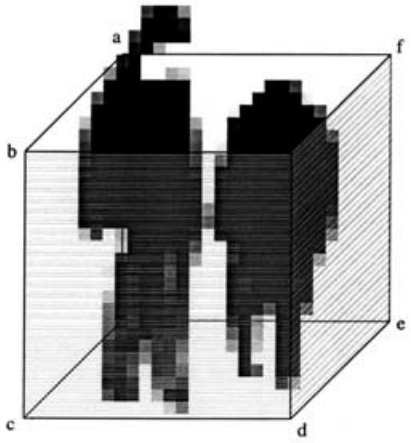
Subjects were asked to perform a simple set of mechanical tasks, in this case to assemble a cube from a series of 'misdirectives' or illegally encoded instructions. The following operations were observed in clinical trials on a cross-section of subjects. Data recorded included the distances between corners, the angles at which plains intersected, and time taken to 'complete' given tasks. This data was then mapped to a set of parameters which controlled the output of algorithmic systems, and in turn these were mapped to synthesis parameters. This process, known as 'dismorphic composition', was first used by Shirt and Trax in 1997 for 'good news about space' (or 1999) and is intended to displace the 'action/event continuum'. By placing emphasis on a 'dis-conjoining' of the purely metaphysical from the merely mechanistic, Shirt and Trax problematise the relationship intentionality and creativity, and hence the belief in the artist as being in control of technology.

Table

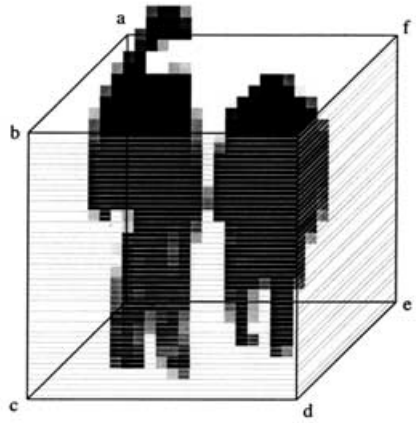
TENDER LOVE	'What Is Intensive Care?'	(Airbag)
COOL MOTIF	'Livin' Supa Large'	(Pigmental)
AL PRAZOLAM	'Parts 1–4'	(Sticks & Footballs)
YARVIS MONG	'Monger and Schorter'	(Nasty Nip)
AGUAPARK	'Eternal Flume'	(Krowdpleezah)
MULTIPACK	'Always/Enjoy'	(Red and White)
DARK EXCELLENCE	'Tiredness Can Kill'	(Nu-Rock Causes)
WEEKEND HEKLA	'Raw Wings'	(Tribal Mick's)
THE MOODY STAFF	'No'	(At Your Convenience)
THOMPSON & VENABLES	'secular musics of the north east'	(Building Bridges)

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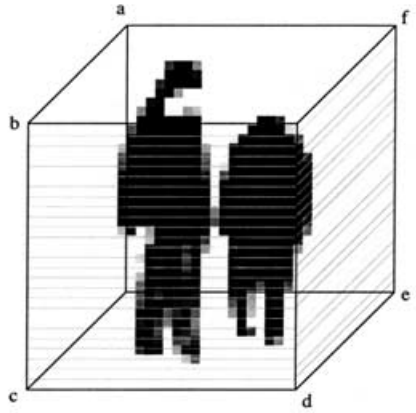
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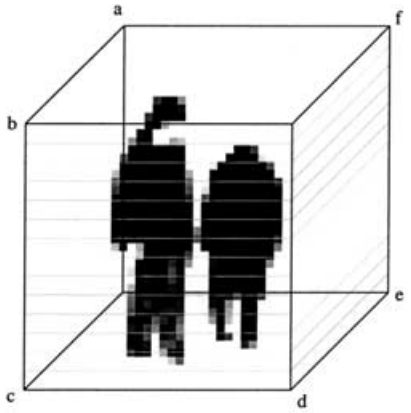
Cube1,
The number of gridlines on this cube is 1.000000E+02. The size of the figures inside the cube is 6.000000E+00 feet. The tone is 1.000000E+04hz, which repeats every 1.000000E+00 seconds. Each burst lasts for 1.000000E-01 second.



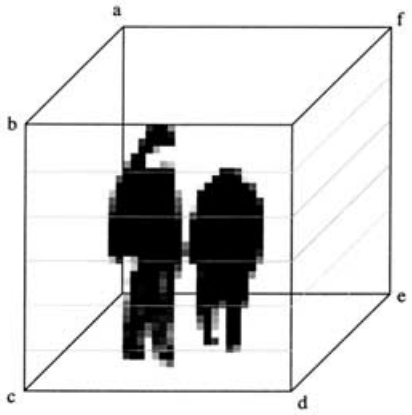
Cube2,
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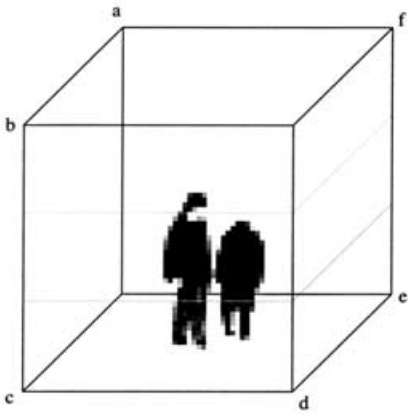
Cube3,
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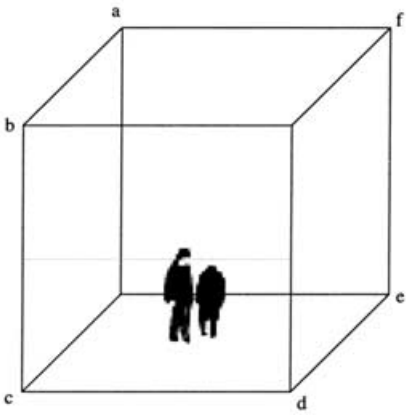
Cube4,
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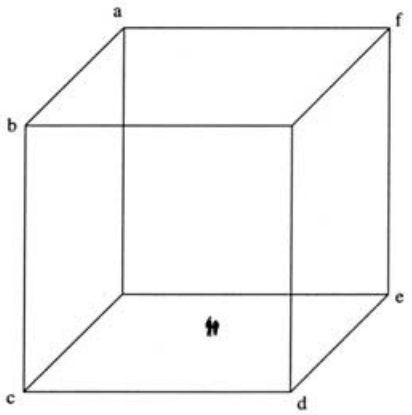
Cube5,
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Cube6,
The number of gridlines on this cube is 3.125000E+00 . The size of the figures inside the cube is 1.875000E-01 feet. The tone is 3.125000E+02hz, which repeats every 3.200000E+01 seconds. Each burst lasts for 1.000000E-06 second.



Cube7,
The number of gridlines on this cube is 1.562500E+00 . The size of the figures inside the cube is 9.375000E-02 feet. The tone is 1.562500E+02hz, which repeats every 6.400000E+01 seconds. Each burst lasts for 1.000000E-07 second.



Cube8,
The number of gridlines on this cube is 7.812500E-01 . The size of the figures inside the cube is 4.687500E-02 feet. The tone is 7.812500E+01hz, which repeats every 1.280000E+02 seconds. Each burst lasts for 1.000000E-08 second.

Figure 1

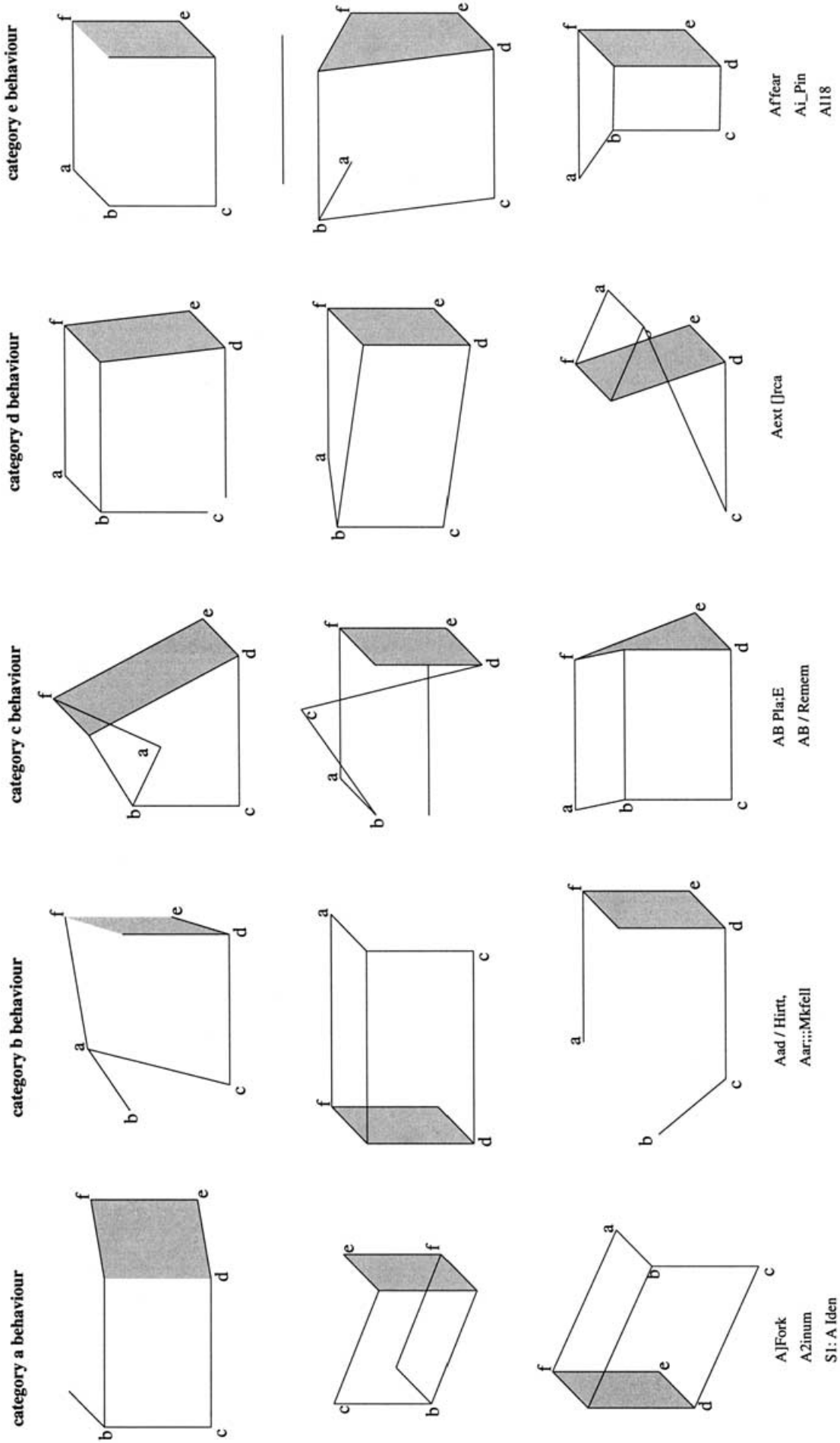
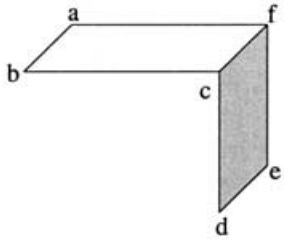


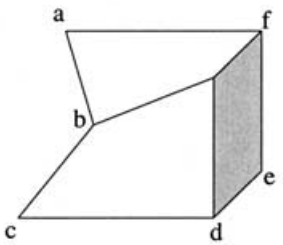
Figure 2

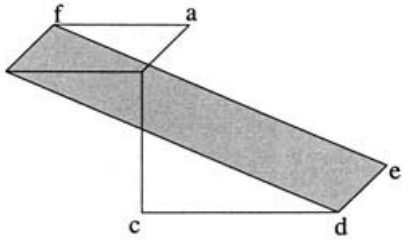
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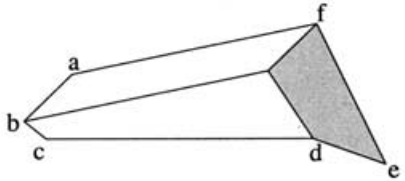


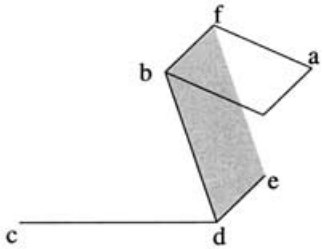


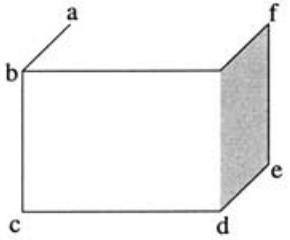


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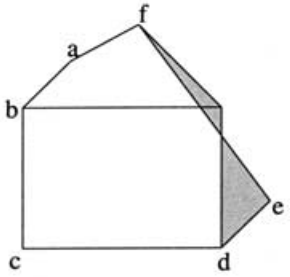


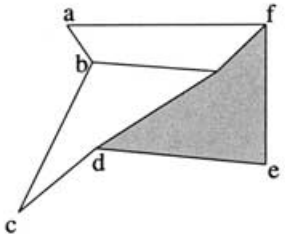


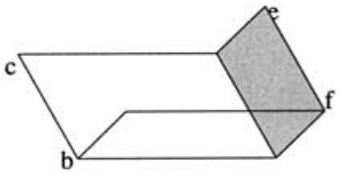


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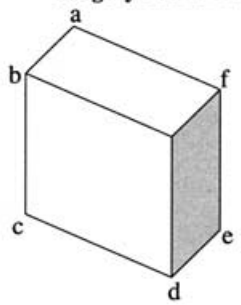


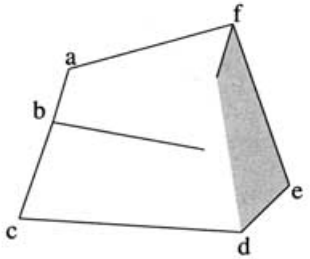


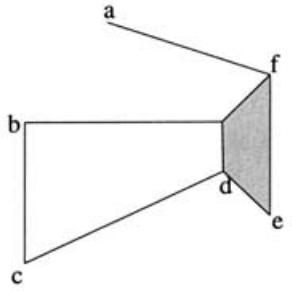


Atrax
B: Parent

category i behaviour

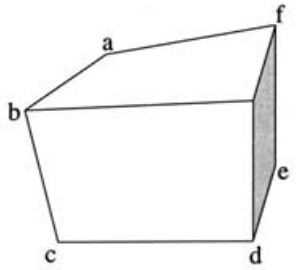


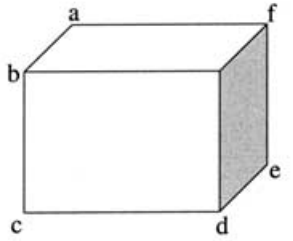




Bac-
Bb'idol
Bell

category j behaviour





CRTL