

HAIKUGAMI

Ralph Kerle

the
New School
of Business
Poetry

A two act
play in three
movements

The setting in which the play is to occur:

As a finale to a learning environment, such as a conference or workshop presentation in place of individual feedback forms that act as the basis of a qualitative and quantitative data collection for statistical analysis.¹

This play forces the truth to be told.

Mis En Scene (Important Publishing Detail)

This work must be published in 'the font' shown as 'the font' speaks on behalf of the text and does not want to be misrepresented. Similarly 'Space' is very strict when being placed and must not be misrepresented.

Instructions for PowerPoint are included as accompaniment to the performance.

Movement One -- Origami

A Monologue to the assembled poets (everybody)

(PowerPoint slide comes up with Haikugami logo on it)

(Lights up...Standing in a warrior pose influenced by Aikido and Zen Meditation)

The monologist: (shouts) **Haikugami** (pronounced High_Coo_Army and takes a deep breath for effect, pauses and relaxes)...is a new school of business and organisational poetry that combines the ancient Japanese arts of haiku and origami to produce the emotional and aesthetic truths of work.

(In a loud exaggerated phonetic vocalization - very reverent) Ah! Ah!! O - rig - ami! Origami. Repeat after me. Ah! Ah!! O - rig - ami! Ah! Ah! Origami.

(build to crescendo with audience -- a deep bow from the monologist to finish)

The Monologist:

It is generally considered Origami began in China in the first or second century and spread to Japan sometime during the sixth century. Origami (pronounced or-i-GA-me) is the Japanese art of paperfolding. "Ori" is the Japanese word for folding and "kami" is the Japanese word for paper. Origami.

Origami, initially a cultural pursuit for the rich because of the scarcity of paper became popular in the 15th century as a way of representing the natural order of things.

It was considered good luck when one received a gift specially wrapped using origami.

The first known instructions were published in 1797 under the title 'The Secret of How To Fold 1000 Cranes'.

However as in all good narratives, this is only half true! There is a different perspective to be had! East Meets Middle East or Middle East meets East as you might have it!

The Moors brought paper folding with them to Spain when they invaded that country in the eighth century. The Moors used paper folding to create geometric figures because their religion prohibited them from creating animal forms. From Spain it spread to South America.

As trade routes developed, the art of origami was introduced to Europe and later the United States around 1900.

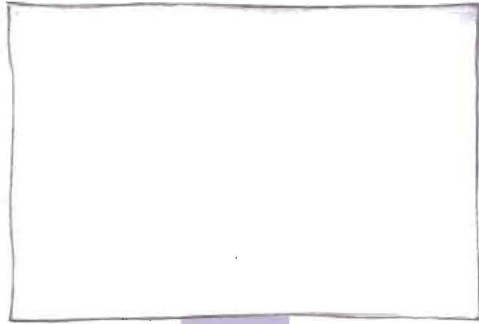
So you see, origami is universal! A preoccupation with hands and minds from the beginning of civilisation.

Let us now experience paper folding in a Western contemporary sense.

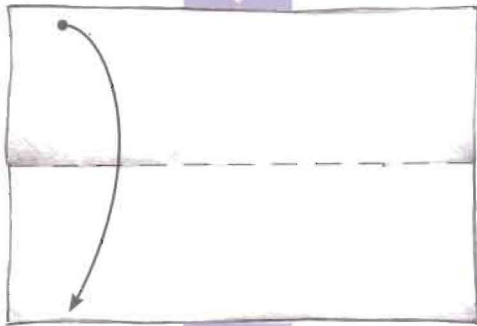
(The monologist now instructs assembled poets in the modern form of Western origami influenced by the work of the great Paul Jackson and his text 'Best Ever Paper Planes that really fly - with 50 more stickers')

Once finished, please place your origami down on the table carefully.

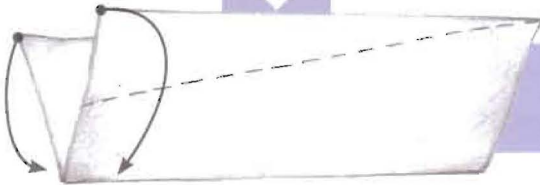
Plans for Constructing <<The Haikugami>>



1



2

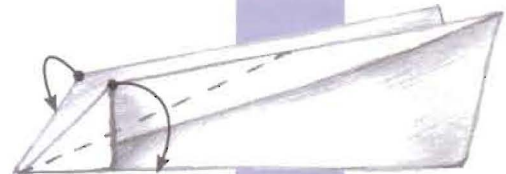


3



4

To perform, balance <<the Haikugami>> in the throwing hand and thrust forward with nose pointing slightly upwards.



5



<<The Haikugami>> is a new innovation in the traditional and ancient art of origami. To obtain a performance of Haikugami, the performers need to pay special attention to the construction of Haikugami.

Use A4 (210x297mm) paper for a fine and subtle performance -- foolscap may be used if necessary.

Movement Two - Haiku

The monologist: (In a loud pronouncement very reverently and pidgin like) High_koo!! Haiku!

Basho Matsuo is known as the first great poet in the history of haikai (and haiku). He was greatly influenced by the 4th Century philosopher and thinker Tchouang-tseu (pronounced chow -ang -su) who denied the artificiality and the utilitarianism, seeing the value of low intellect.

He asserted that things seemingly useless had the real value, and that it was the right way of life not to go against the natural law

(Monologist faces audience as he recites the poem)

The risk assessors are in attendance
On stage there is no control
Release the unspoken words

(Staging Instructions - PowerPoint Scenic Backdrop is revealed. Black text on white background designed by contemporary artist, Dot Point as the monologist recites reverently the instructions on haiku writing to the audience).

The purpose of haiku writing for the business poets is:

To create an emotional response in colleagues by presenting what caused them emotion rather than the emotion itself

>> to write about their reactions to stimuli rather than those things that caused their reactions

>> to write in the present tense so their colleagues can experience the same feelings they felt without having to explain them

Careers careen
Doubt is an acceptable response
Afternoon tea time.

(Staging Instructions - PowerPoint Scenic Backdrop is revealed. Black text on white background designed by contemporary artist, Dot Point as the monologist recites reverently the instructions on haiku writing to the audience)

The business poet must understand

The strict form for writing haiku is that it contains three lines, first and third lines of 5 syllables, second with 7.

Using languages other than Japanese - for example the English language, permission is granted for flexibility in the number of syllables per line.

The most important characteristic is how the writing conveys through implication and suggestion, a moment of keen perception and insight

Importantly the text does not state this insight but implies it

The use of words such as 'beautiful' or 'mysterious' that interpret experience should be avoided

The use of words that objectively convey the facts of which can be seen, heard, smelt, tasted and touched is the proper convention.

(Staging Instructions - PowerPoint Scenic Backdrop is revealed. Black text on white background designed by contemporary artist, Dot Point as the monologist recites reverently the instructions on haiku writing to the audience)

In writing the lines of the haiku, the business poet should juxtapose two elements over the poems three lines.

In good haiku, the two parts create a spark of energy like the gap between a spark plug.

When the connection is realized by the reader you have a spark of realization, an "aha" moment

Delegates present papers
Content is dense
I sip water slowly

Poets, I now ask you to take your origami and to write your first line of haiku on it.

On completion you are to launch your origami across the space.

Poets, collect a piece of origami that is near you that is not yours and add a 7 syllable line, juxtaposing a thought against the first line

On completion launch this origami across the room.

Again, Poets collect a piece of origami that is near you that is not yours and add an ending 5 syllable line.

Begin!!!

(Staging Instruction: Allow for chaos, mess, laughter and high spirited play not previously seen since childhood. Do not interrupt!!)

Movement Three

The monologist: I now ask for a volunteer to read a poem...

(Staging Instructions..Allow at least three or four delegates to volunteer to read poem. Do not stem the flow as each delegate suddenly wishes to participate. Finally collect the haiku remaining on the floor as they contain powerful insights.)

Bow to Audience and then take warrior pose influenced by Aikido and Zen Meditation.)

The monologist: Good poets, the truth abides!!! Join me...High Coo Army!!

The End.

The Context

'Haikugami, the New School of Business Poetry', evolved out of a reaction to evaluation. I wanted to improve the quantitative methods of feedback participants are routinely asked to give when completing a public workshop or in-house training programme.

Corporate and conference clients naturally seek confirmation that their executive training or conference speech dollar has been well spent. And they want to know immediately, at the close of the programme or presentation.

An example of a traditional format involves participants circling a number on a scale between 1 through 5 to select among descriptors such as: 5. Exceeded Expectations Significantly, 4. Fully Satisfied/Surpassed Expectations, 3. Satisfied/Met Expectations, 2. Somewhat Satisfied/Met Most Expectations, and 1. Unsatisfied/Did Not Meet Expectations. All this method really provides is a hidden qualitative assessment that the workshop either failed or succeeded. It offers nothing more to learn!!

Even where the opportunity is allowed for anecdotal feedback, the responses are hyperbole and cliché, e.g., "...The best workshop I have ever attended... This profoundly changed my life ...Provided insights that I will take back to my workplace and apply...". These comments are then usually regurgitated - not by the participants or the event organizers-- but by the speakers or facilitators themselves, using them to promote their skills and triumphs.

My work with executives on creative leadership is designed around arts-based processes and experiences -- creative writing, improvisation, ceramics, sculpture, visualizations. Arts-based processes in organisations and leadership development are typically the first time participants have ever experienced any learning, discussion, or instruction of this nature. It is an impossible task for an individual undergoing this type of process for the first time to make immediate sense of it in the context of their own lives, let alone

organizationally. Arts-based processes are difficult to make sense of even for artists!

So I began to search for something more engaging, more expressive, more creative and less linear to give a collective voice in the moment to participants engaged in a learning experience.

The first product-ideation workshop I attended, in 1999, was led by Arthur B. Van Gundy, Professor and Chairman of Human Relations the University of Oklahoma. Van Gundy, a leader in the US Creative Problem Solving Institute and a pioneer in the development of organisational creativity and innovation skills development, has spent his life searching out and developing novel creative-thinking skills exercises. In a Van Gundy workshop, you can expect to become a childlike participant, having fun whilst producing insightful and novel outcomes.²

The purpose of his workshop was to 'redesign the torch'. Van Gundy simply took a sheet of A4 paper and

asked us to follow his instructions. Within minutes, some 200 senior American marketing executives were writing new usages and design features on carefully constructed paper planes, launching these missiles across the room to their fellow participants to catch and add to the initial concept before sending them again on a new trajectory.

The spontaneous energy, laughter, and play were infectious. The design concepts, when read out, were revolutionary. A combination mobile phone, key ring and flashlight, voice-activated when misplaced, offered miracles for someone as absent-minded as myself.

This was the first time I had seen the fun of the theatre rehearsal room operating in a business context. Here was William Burroughs's cut-up Beat poetry of the 60s in action. I was joyously reminded of his famous phrase, 'When you cut into the present, the future leaks out'.³

Fast-forward to 2006.

Ted Buswick, oral historian, poet, archivist, and Director of Publications for The Strategy Institute, the Boston Consulting Group, brought to my attention his work with Clare Morgan, professor of English and creative writing at the University of Oxford 'proposing poetry as a vital means of opening new thinking spaces and maximizing intellectual capital'. With the assistance of Morgan, he created the Boston Consulting Group Friends of the Poetry Project as a way to investigate the relationship between poetry and strategic thinking; at that time, the initial meetings had just been held.

Buswick's perspective is 'poetry's nonlinear approach to language, sensitizes listeners to nuances of language and the element of emotion in communication. Poetry develops nonlinear thinking by, among other things, improving our ability to deal with uncertainty and ambiguity. Reading poetry can help one think strategically because it teaches by analogy and is the most condensed form of expression.'⁴

The poetic potential inspired me to think about how I might include it in my own work. Reading poetry is too sedentary for a former Brechtian-influenced political cabaret owner. My populist art calls for creative action and audience participation.

Delegates in my programmes would have to -- and could! -- create their own poetry!!

Research on methods of teaching poetry revealed Haiku as both highly complex, yet relatively easy to explain. Three simple lines of pre-determined length (5, 7, 5 syllables) could quickly create powerful text filled with tension, ambiguity and meaning simultaneously.

Combine haiku with an innovation on the traditional and ancient art of origami in the form of Professor Art Van Gundy's paper plane ideation methodology and, voilà -- 'Haikugami' was born -- delegate created haiku as presentation and workshop evaluation with meaning!!

Why Haiku?

Edwina Pio in 'What's Stopping You? Find out through Haiku'⁵ identifies haiku as a powerful method of facilitation when an organisation, its leaders or managers are experiencing blockages in areas such as organisational change, project indecision or simply as a review mechanism.

Her research findings suggest haiku provides three main effects. The first she calls the Thanatos Effect. Haiku in this instance provides insight to tensions and faults in strategies resulting in new framing and quick action to reshape the flow and movement of an organisational change process. The Eureka Effect occurs when the poem reveals an epiphanous moment - "aha" often accompanied by levity. The Limbo Effect is when an organisation and its employees are blocked and there are matters unspoken. Haiku offers the opportunity for these words to be coaxed out and for the flow of communications to recommence. With Pio's use of haiku, individual executives are called upon to write the haiku.

My methodology on the other hand requires group involvement. Writing haiku in groups places the emphasis on speed of capturing a thought in the moment rather than on individual reflection, calculation and careful word selection. This removes any doubt or questioning of one's personal artistic capability. The haiku simply happens through osmosis.

'Haikugami' can be created in any context in an instant, losing none of its impact or heuristics working within these constraints. It invariably affirms and clarifies the unspoken, speaks the ambiguities within the group and opens the way for more positive questioning and exploration of an issue or theme.

Tradition requires 'Haikugami' to conclude with a public reading of the haiku created by the participants. Participants listen as their combined literary efforts are reflected back to them distilling moments of insight, difference and friction devoid of the usual polemic.

The haiku contains meaning in its own right for its creators - those who deserve it the most, the delegates!

The programme facilitator no longer needs be present. Her work is done.

The first presentation of Haikugami occurred at the Australian Institute of Company Directors Conference, Gold Coast, Queensland Australia, November 2006 and the attached selection of Haikugami includes those created by the 64 delegates that were in attendance at the premiere. Recent applications involved feedback on an international master class held in Singapore exploring creativity and physical movement across cultures.

Hand written 'Haikugami' now adorns the walls of the new Digital/Web 2.0 division of Deloitte Australia as an aesthetic articulation of its business strategy and direction. //

NOTES

1. This script can be adapted to suit whatever context the actor and his client/audience chooses.
2. <http://www.thinksmart.com/2/speakers/idealbrainstorming.html> provides a good outline of the Van Gundy workshops.
3. From his BBC audio recording entitled 'Recalling All Active Agents'. For all Williams Burroughs recordings: <http://wc01.allmusic.com/cg/amg.dll?p=amg&sql=33:0xfrxvyrldde>
4. From a summary of the Arts and Business Council of New York: Metlife Foundation National Arts Forum Series 'Incorporating Creativity Arts-Based Training in Business' 05/05/2004 http://www.artsandbusiness-ny.org/professional_development/metlife/2004/002.asp
5. 'What's Stopping You? Find Out Through Haiku' by Edwina Pio PhD <http://www.workplacespirituality.info/Haiku.html>

A Selection of Haikugami drawn from two performances of Haikugami

Written and performed by 64 delegates at the Australian Institute of Company Directors Conference, Gold Coast, Queensland Australia, November 2006.

When I make time to think
I think about what I can change
What changes me

I am creative
But could be more
I am too old

My business can change
The freedom of the blank page
I need emptiness to create

Teaching creativity
Takes time more than words
And ideas take flight

Stimulating thoughts
Creativity is inevitable
Opening eye

Change is good
Creativity like an open flower
My petals are open

Creativity is passion
Pictures spoke differently
Art is educative

The ideas are key
How to implement them
Creativity rules!

I see the beacon
Art can be illuminating
I see darkness

Let your thoughts flow
And pigs may fly
A new reference point

I analyze dumb things knowing this
analysis is useless
It leads me to make paper airplanes
The dumbest ideas can be success

Change is ideas
Some ideas make common sense
What a good idea to change them

Written and performed by 37 delegates at Public Relations Institute Meeting held at the Sullivan and Strumpf Art Gallery, Paddington, NSW Australia.

Comparing tastes
Art enters through the back door gently
Challenging old ideas

People are open
The blue sky has no ceiling
Doors are closed

A lot of personal reflection
I opened my mind to new ideas
They flowed like water

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