



1040 U.S. Individual Income Tax Return

For the year January 1, 1995, to December 31, 1995, attach tax year beginning

Use IRS label. Other: Sanctuary of Faith
Present your address (street, apartment, or rural route)
City, town or post office, state, and ZIP code

Presidential Election Campaign

Do you want \$1 to go to this fund? Yes No
If joint return, does your spouse want \$1 to go to this fund? Yes No

Filing Status

Check only one box

- 1 Single
- 2 Married filing joint return (even if only one had income)
- 3 Married filing separate return. Enter spouse's social security no. above and full name here
- 4 Head of household (with qualifying person). (See page 5 of instructions.) If the qualifying person but not your dependent, write child's name here
- 5 Qualifying widow(er) with dependent child (year spouse died \geq 19) (See page 6 of instructions)

Exemptions

ays check box labeled self or other

- 6a Yourself 65 or over Blind
- b Spouse 65 or over Blind
- c First names of your dependent children who lived with you
- d First names of your dependent children who did not live with you (see page 6)
- e Other dependents

If you do not have a W-2, see page 4 of instructions

7	Wages, salaries, tips, etc. (Attach Form(s) W-2)	7
8	Interest income (also attach Schedule B if over \$400)	8
9a	Dividends (also attach Schedule B if over \$400)	9a
9b	Excess	9b
10	Taxable refunds of state and local income taxes, if any, from the worksheet on page 8 of instructions	10
11	Alimony received	11
12	Business income or (loss) (attach Schedule C)	12
13	Capital gains or (loss) (attach Schedule D)	13
14	40% of capital gain/loss elections not reported on line 13 (see page 9 of instructions)	14
15	Other gains or (losses) (attach Form 4797)	15
16	Fully taxable pensions, IRA distributions, and annuities not reported on line 17 (see page 9)	16
17a	Other pensions and annuities, including rollovers. Total received	17a
17b	Taxable amount, if any, from the worksheet on page 10 of instructions	17b
18	Rents, royalties, partnerships, estates, trusts, etc. (attach Schedule E)	18
19	Farm income or (loss) (attach Schedule F)	19
20a	Unemployment compensation/insurance. Total received	20a
20b	Taxable amount, if any, from the worksheet on page 10 of instructions	20b
21a	Social security benefits (see page 10). Total received	21a
21b	Taxable amount, if any, from worksheet on page 11 (see worksheet)	21b
22	Other income (list type and amount - see page 11 of instructions)	22
23	Add lines 7 through 22. This is your total income	23

Adjustments to Income

(See instructions on page 11)

24	Moving expenses (attach Form 3903 or 3903F)	24
25	Employee business expenses (attach Form 2106)	25
26	IRA deduction, from the worksheet on page 12	26
27	Keogh retirement plan deduction	27
28	Penalty on early withdrawal of savings	28
29	Alimony paid (wider's last name and year month no)	29
30	Deduction for a married couple when both work (attach Form 1040)	30
31	Add lines 24 through 30. These are your adjustments	31
32	Subtract line 31 from line 23. This is your adjusted gross income. If this line is more than \$11,000 and a child lived with you, see instructions if you want 25% to favor your other child.	32

Adjusted Gross Income

through 7 ranges on this track, and if it is an example of a computer boy was unable to his great change, but not, both his parents and both grandfathers and one paternal maternal uncle, and his ot. Draw the path

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FALSE MEMORY SYNDROME

The Memory Theater of W. David Hancock

But you are real, Uncle, and your hat is real. And your mustache is real, your feet are real, your trousers are real, your heart is real and your feelings and thoughts are real. A whole, real uncle. Even your leggings are real, and the buttons and your words. Real words!

—Tadeusz Rosewicz, *The Card Index*

W. David Hancock makes a theater of objects. Not objects like those that lead us back to the world of the theater, such as the toy swords in Stuart Sherman's eighteen-minute *Hamlet* "spectacle" or Richard Foreman's baroque elaboration of skulls and clocks and strings and Hebrew letters, but objects that tug us away from the stage to the offstage world of the banal and the commonplace. This is a theater of first-degree things, as Heidegger, one of the hidden mages behind this theater, defines them in *What Is a Thing?*: "A thing in the sense of being present-at-hand: a rock, a piece of wood, a pair of pliers, a watch, an apple . . ." To borrow, or fracture, a term from Weimar aesthetics of seventy years ago, this perverse dramaturgy might be thought of as a "*Neue Dinglichkeit*," a New Thingness. But the things at the center of this theater are not some kind of material opposite to a theater of metaphysical mystery. In his two "thing" plays so far produced, *The Convention of Cartography* (unpublished) and *The Race of the Ark Tattoo*, Hancock's commonplace objects stir in the spectator the same sense of mystery that Heidegger pointed to in his 1935–36 lecture series on things. "Everyday things" have not only the known face of the commonplace, he said, but a "face we have hardly comprehended."

Hancock calls his things "relics," or sometimes "amulets": they may be old cigar boxes, abandoned medicine cabinets, animal cards, preserved butterflies, lost buttons, frayed maps, decades-old issues of *Popular Mechanics*, poems written in pencil on yellowed motel stationary, postcards, more postcards. They are all objects whose sly effect is to lead away from the illusionism of the stage to the reality of the world.

Hancock takes particular interest in seedy Midwestern provinciality, circa 1950, a period especially vulnerable to nostalgic projections of authenticity. But the aura of authenticity around his objects is not exactly the one that Walter Benjamin evokes in his meditation on art in the age of mechanical reproduction. In the second part of *The*

Storycard, Frontera production. Photo: Bret Brookshire.

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Convention of Cartography, Hancock's "museum" is filled with objects whose real-life pasts overshadow their present art contexts. Similarly, the objects of *The Race of the Ark Tattoo* are presented not as art but as junk shop commodities. They insist that they are untransformed by theater even as they require a stage debut to make good the claim.

It is not only their everyday pretheatrical past that asserts their authenticity, however; it is their scale. The horseshoe crab, the old demonstration eyeball from a high school biology lab, the stained box of bird gravel, the postcard showing an East European bathing beauty, the butterfly paperweight, and the boxes in which some of them are grouped with accompanying texts are all too small to register from stage to spectator in even the most intimate of theatrical settings. Resisting collective scrutiny by the collective, demanding individual scrutiny by individuals, these things undermine the make-believe of theater. In *Cartography* and *Ark Tattoo*, both of which include a lecture and a display of objects, the spectators themselves are constructed by the theater event not as theatergoers in search of illusion but as individuals with a discriminating appetite for the authentic. Yet Hancock's spectator is certainly a relative of the spectator I have described elsewhere as one who, given the chance, will surge past the conventional barrier between spectator and spectacle to enter the show with the avidity of a shopper. Indeed, the first part of *The Race of the Ark Tattoo* is a flea market.

The pretheatrical "authenticity" of Hancock's objects stands in sharp contrast to the mediatized theater commonly associated with postmodern culture. The work of Mabou Mines and the Wooster Group, John Jesurun, John Moran, and others may seem perfectly in sync with the "loss of the real" that Jean Baudrillard writes about so terroristically. Hancock's reverent (if Sisyphean) cultivation of actuality represents an opposite response to the loss of the real. During the ironic speech about the "real" in my epigraph, Rosewicz has his phlegmatic hero (named Hero) take out a real footbath and wash his "real" uncle's real feet with real water, as if to suggest that we need to bring *real* reality into the theater to counter, or perhaps to prove, this alarming slippage. The contemporary site-specific performance movement shares some of the same motivation.

But Hancock's theater has a mysterious fictionality not shared by other forays into the real. For one thing, sooner or later the spectator realizes that what Hancock creates on the basis of his old and discarded objects is an elaborate illusion of authenticity. When he himself plays Bill the Curator in *The Convention of Cartography*, the casting feels right because the piece seems transparently autobiographical. (Like the novelist W. G. Sebald, Hancock purports to display authentic photographs of his characters. But suspicions stir. Well . . . it *could* be autobiographical. In part. *Some* parts. His story has at least the *feel* of authenticity. It *points* to authentic worlds. Or to vanished worlds which, in the haze of nostalgia for their disappearance, appear to have been authentic. . . .) But finally we encounter mystery and authenticity at another level entirely, the level of Hancock's aching fascination with the retentions and losses of memory. In *The Race of the Ark Tattoo*, objects chosen by the audience trigger elaborate

FALSE MEMORY SYNDROME

narrative histories from the lives of an adoptive son and his foster father. In *The Convention of Cartography*, the mysteries of memory transcend the retrieval of history and approach metaphysics.

In New York, *The Convention of Cartography* was performed by the playwright in a rustic two-room wooden house hidden behind a brick building on West 17th Street. Seated in a small room that has no "set," only a desk and a video monitor, the spectators meet the Curator, who explains that when he was fourteen he ran away from home and began to travel the country with a former building custodian named Mike. Mike takes up the life of a drifting poet and folk artist who combines commonplace objects in crudely constructed assemblages. He scatters his poems and cigar box art across the country in shops, homes, gas stations, behind vending machines, under highway overpasses. Bill grows up and loses track of Mike, but years later searches him out, and still later retraces the country collecting Mike's art. The story he recounts includes videotape of the now dying Mike, as well as hundreds of objects, maps, and poems.

Just as Mike is a boxmaker, a kind of Grandma Moses version of Joseph Cornell, the story itself unfolds in boxes within boxes. If Bill is tracking and memorializing his friend the lost or dead Mike, Mike on tape and in his art is frequently tracking his lost wife, Ida, who left him to travel the country (until she was incarcerated in a mental hospital), because she was in turn following, or followed by, a figure she calls her Demon. In the museum display adjoining the lecture room, the spectator pushes an audio button and hears Ida's faint recorded voice explaining the demon's mystical effect on her sense of history: "You have to understand with me, that there's a secret black liquid behind everything I say. This liquid originates in my brain. It flows from me to my past. It connects me to everything I've ever seen and every place I've ever been, so that I see everything all at once." Mike expands the thought in one of his poems: "My chromosomes are the depository for all human experience."

Hancock's theater is a memory theater built as a fire wall against the loss of the past. At times the memorializing impulse passes from the obsessive to the parodic. The Curator in *The Convention of Cartography* has created an exacting "museology" in which every display is numbered and annotated. For instance, "Exhibit #43 TN.77?/p" means that the exhibit was the forty-third box he found, that the poem (p) was found in Tennessee and was probably (?) made in 1977. Each exhibit bears notes from Mike or curatorial legends. Note from Mike: "Amulets I found in the glove compartment of an abandoned Rambler station wagon at a rest area in Nebraska on April 4, 1968." Or from the Curator: "Mike made this box for a retarded adult in upstate New York named Bob Cortina, who lived with his grandmother and worked in a fiberglass factory in Plattsburgh." The parodic edge never erases the pathos, however. Going through the museum I was stunned by the transmogrification of junk into "relics." Unlike most American playwrights or performance artists, the museum made it clear that Hancock was not interested in youth, beauty, and sex. (He was not even interested in race, class, and gen-

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der!) He was interested in the life of old things and old people. His museum was dedicated to exhumed shards of ordinary life, retrospectively precious in this peculiar triumph over disappearance.

There are many ways to think about this highly original and suggestive theater. Hancock's work could be seen as a new kind of postperformance art, one that has learned the lessons of bodily hereness and real-life specificity of performance and festooned it with a fictional elaboration and complication that points back to the elsewhere of theater that performance art has left behind. In addition, lines of contact spring up not only to Heidegger, Benjamin, and Cornell, but to Raymond Roussel's avant-garde theater of nontheatrical objects and anecdotes of the 1920s, Michel de Certeau's study of everyday life, Douglas Crimp's "ruins" of the museum, and the growing body of theory on representations of age and aging. However, I want to place his theater in yet another context, that of the Renaissance memory theater.

Despite Frances Yates's magisterial study of the Renaissance memory theater, *The Art of Memory* (1966), the very idea of these theaterlike memory-fixing structures is strangely unknown to many students of theater—although I should add that I know of two theater pieces that have been created out of Yates's memory theater material, one by Matthew Maguire at LaMama in New York, the other by Mel Andringa in a performance space in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, where Hancock's *Race of the Ark Tattoo* was first presented. (Hancock never saw the Andringa performance.) It had been a classical idea, going back to Greek orators, that prodigious feats of memory could be achieved by speakers who undertook the imaginative exercise of furnishing their minds with architectural models to whose various parts—columns, arches, niches, and so forth—they could assign the particular pieces of learning and rhetoric they needed to summon to memory. Latin accounts of such elaborate Greek memory devices found their way into medieval literature on memory. The technique survived into the Renaissance, when some of the most learned mages of the hermetic-cabalist tradition attempted to translate this prototheatrical spatial system of memory into actual theaters that would serve as the repository of occult cosmic knowledge. The fullest and clearest surviving example in the literature was the memory theater of Giulio Camillo, which contemporary accounts say he built twice, once in Venice, once in Paris for the king of France. The structure was an amphitheatrical cabinet, large enough for perhaps two individuals to stand in. It contained figures and ornaments and a host of small boxes or drawers that would hold all esoteric knowledge according to an elaborate ascending system of abstraction.

Unlike Andringa or Maguire, Hancock does not refer to the Camillo theater, but his objects and boxes are memory devices in two senses: they draw the audience's own associations with similar lost life, and, for the performer, they function like the drawers or arches of the Renaissance memory theater. Each one "stores" a piece of the narrative, which can then take a different order at each performance without becoming derailed.

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Hancock's theater has more in common with Camillo's cosmic cabinet than with twentieth-century memory plays like *The Glass Menagerie*. At the practical level of mnemonic booster device, Hancock's theater, like the Renaissance memory structures, creates itself, speaks itself, tells its stories, through the choice and order of physical objects. But that is memory theater only at a technical level. There is the further question of what these memories suggest.

Hancock's theater is almost metastatically inclusive. In the ceaseless orbits of travel his text describes (one meaning of *cartography* in the play's title), every town, highway rest stop, and roadside motel is, like Camillo's drawers, a repository of memory. Every box constructed by the fictional Mike is similarly a repository of once-lived life. Like the Renaissance memory theaters, too, Hancock's is a metaphysical theater, concerned with the interconnectedness of beings across all time, and with the mysterious vitality of inanimate life. Yates's metaphysical description of Camillo's theater as a "vision of the world and of the nature of things seen from a height, from the stars themselves and even from the supercelestial founts of wisdom beyond them" might do as well for Hancock's.

At every performance, there are spectators who think that Hancock the writer ran away at fourteen with a guy named Mike who made the things on display. But of course Hancock's memory theater consists of fictional narratives wound about obdurately real objects collected by the playwright in his hauntings of thrift shops and yard sales. Each thing carries with it the aura of real-life associations but also occupies an important node along the fictional narrative chain. At the end, Mike philosophizes on tape: "You base your entire life on specific memories, and you really can't even be sure if they ever happened. That's why I built the Incubus Archives. The Incubus Archives is a museum where memories are displayed just as they were in the initial moment of conception. . . ." Hancock's plays reset the hands of time. They bring their real-life associations to his stage, then are "born again." At the moment of conception, he creates false memories of real things, and true memories of false histories.