

Wire Walking Manual Introduction

The purpose of this manual is to document and make available to a wider audience my work on self learning in the art of funambulism. It describes techniques and equipment I have come use through my journey which incorporates building, researching and playing. I am not formally trained in the art of wire walking and have not been trained by an experienced master. The techniques and equipment described in this manual therefore should not be taken as “the way,” but deemed a way, a way by which I have come to love and practice this ancient and seemingly magical art of walking on ropes.¹

This manual begins by describing the materials and techniques needed for rigging a low wire. It is on this wire that methods of balance and motion can be refined, and later can be utilized on a high wire. The next section of the manual contains instructions for the erection and use of my high wire apparatus with a safety net. Although I have designed and built my own structure, it is not in the scope of this manual to describe the fabrication of this apparatus. This is work to be taken on by a skilled and experienced welder and fabricator. However, I have included stories and reflections on my experience of this process. If a reader desires to erect a high wire using this manual, much has been left to their own ingenuity and creativity. He or she should seek out other sources and employ sound judgement. It is not a step by step manual documenting each action, material, and detail from beginning to end. Such a work would be beyond the scope of this paper. More importantly it would be irresponsible for me to create such a work, as the structures I have built have not been through a process of professional engineering and vetting. Instead I have created them in response to a desire, and inner initiative to find a freedom through action and practice. They have been “engineered” by studying nature and the structures of man while absorbing relationships in scale and proportion. I have used this information to create — through my own intuition and judgement — a structure which supports my practice.

The manual includes a section describing the actions of balance and my philosophy on training methods and mental attitudes I have found best to develop balance and refine an integration of action and thought. A section is also included which describes my safety nets, and considerations in their construction and deployment.

This is by no means a treatise on the art, but rather a record of my exploration into funambulism. For someone using this text as a guide to begin a journey onto the wire, it should be understood that anyone undertaking the construction of rigging which will support his or her life should have ample experience in the field of rigging and this manual can be no substitute for this.

To practice the art of the high wire one must have a full desire to do so. It is not an art to be pursued without a full commitment and volition. If one’s desire and love is not for the action and practice, but is instead toward a mental projection or of accolades or success, the difficulty of the

1. Sarah Schwartz, *Circus*, P.B.S.

art will soon discourage this endeavorer. One must place oneself in the space between life, love, and death, for it is here that the magical journey awaits!