Throwing Gestures. Protest, Economy, and the Imperceptible

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Throwing Gestures. Protest, Economy, and the Imperceptible

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— Florian Bettel, Irina Kaldrack, Konrad Strutz

Contents

p. 4
Acknowledgements

p. 9
Throwing Gestures.
An Introduction
Florian Bettel, Irina Kaldrack,
Konrad Strutz

p. 21
Modeling the Gestural
Irina Kaldrack

p. 51
Konrad Strutz, *Gestures of Labor.*
An Artistic Contemplation

p. 65
Naive Physics.
Gestures of Intuition
Stefan Rieger

p. 79
Florian Bettel, *Contextualizing Praying*
Bodies—Gestures and the Military

p. 89
With the Gestures
Where We Feel Charge
Justine A. Chambers in Conversation
with Laurie Young

p. 105
At the Center of Attention—
Gesture, Police, and
the Commodification
of Protest
Florian Bettel

p. 135
Timo Herbst, Marcus Nebe,
Play by Rules

p. 161
Symbolic Gestures
in Contemporary Protest
Movements
Riccardo E. Chesta, Zoe Lefkofridi

p. 183
Laurie Young, *Ambit*

p. 201
Artistic Gestures—
Political Gestures
Alexander Koch in Conversation
with Timo Herbst

p. 213
Exhibition Views

p. 245
Gestures of an Exhibition
Anna-Lena Wenzel

p. 259
Timo Herbst, Irina Kaldrack, *G20*

p. 293
Pain, Befallen-ness, Conflict, Mediocrity. Dark Entanglements for Artistic Research and Critique in Digital Cultures
Martina Leeker

p. 315
Irina Kaldrack, Tobias Schulze, *Dancing Fists*

p. 325
Artistic-Scientific Complicities. *The Entanglement between Gesture, Media, and Politics* Project from an Empirical-Cultural Anthropological Perspective
Stefanie Kiwi Menrath

p. 347
Biographies

Throwing Gestures. An Introduction

Florian Bettel,
Irina Kaldrack,
Konrad Strutz

2020 was defined by the spread of the new coronavirus, COVID-19, lockdowns in various shapes and forms, border control policies, the perpetuation and escalation of social and economic crises, social distancing, and the use of a broad variety of digital tools to connect with other people. In Global North societies, at least, social distancing regimes have required new modes of communication and community. Streaming, video conferencing, and the myriad modes of working from home have exacerbated the entanglement of leisure, work, private, and public spheres. At the same time, new economic players have entered the field and privately owned providers have expanded their influence, even in publicly funded sectors like education and healthcare. At the intersection of these sketched lines is the gestural: a wave as part of a video greeting, rounds of applause from balconies, attempts to replace handshakes with the elbow check, and so on.

A video that enjoyed short-lived international attention at the end of March, "Dean Allyson Green's Dance Video," exemplifies the intersection of some of these dynamics. It features Allyson Green, choreographer and dean of NYU's Tisch School of the Arts in New York, dancing to R.E.M.'s *Losing my Religion* in a webcam clip she ostensibly produced herself. The video opens with Green close to the camera fiddling with mouse and keyboard. As the song starts, she starts backing away to execute her first gesture. Still stooping, she drops her arms in front of her body, forearms raised, her palms towards the ceiling. As Michael Stipe sings "Now I've said too much," Green shrugs, raising her eyebrows. The gesture can be interpreted as a deflection, an abdication of responsibility. Green dances for the next couple of minutes, sometimes looking directly into the camera, sometimes looking away. A floor lamp and sofa are in shot. There are pictures on the wall, a chest of drawers, and on a bookshelf with miscellaneous other items.

What is the context, the origin, and the reception of this video? The school, part of the private New York University (NYU), had been closed and teaching reorganized for distance learning due to COVID-19 measures. As a consequence, some students demanded tuition refunds. They argued that online training and online teaching were inadequate, particularly for dance and performing arts, and that there was no access provided to spaces or technical resources. After some initial communication between the student representatives and the school administration, Green sent an email to students explaining that she had no authority to refund tuition fees and attached her *Losing my Religion* video.[1] The video was shared on Twitter, where it went viral. Students said it was "tone deaf" and "embarrassing"[2] and the dancing was called out as awkward and bad on social media. Green argued she had wanted to reach out to students using her "most authentic mode of expression," which "has always been dance." To Green, the R.E.M. song was "a piece that [...] speaks to frustration and disappointment, and that helped see me through the loss of 30 friends to AIDS, another difficult period for artists."[3]

Gesture in Focus

The dean's video and the debate it ignited parallel some of the pressing questions discussed in this book. Firstly, the weight of gesture, or to be more precise, the new awareness of gesture in media. Green responded to students' demands with the gesture of making and disseminating a video. She chose the medium of video and with it the opportunity to convey the gestural as her "most authentic expression." The close articulation between media technology, self-promotion, and private expression directed at and intended to strengthen a specific community (the university students, administration, and faculty) is structurally similar

1 "NYU Tisch Students Demand Tuition Back, Dean Responds with Dance Video," NBC New York, March 27, 2020, www.nbcnewyork.com/news/local/nyu-tischs-students-want-tuition-fee-back-amid-coronavirus-shutdown-dean-responds-with-dance-video/2346626/. Students' arguments can be found in an open letter, which was, however, only drafted after the video had already been published: docs.google.com/document/d/1ojQdHz6OfpJ8ixpBXzalnjpYrtgnuKDPHZpSZvHCkgg/edit.

2 Sarah Cascone, "Students at NYU's Art School Are Demanding Refunds of Their Tuition," Artnet News, March 27, 2020, news.artnet.com/art-world/nyu-tisch-tuition-dean-dance-1817856. And Eli Yurman, "An Open Letter to Tisch Dean Allyson Green: Please Stop," NYU Local, March 23, 2020, nyulocal.com/an-open-letter-to-tisch-dean-allyson-green-please-stop-72785d5a86c1.

3 Sarah Cascone, "Students at NYU's Art School Are Demanding Refunds of Their Tuition," Artnet News, March 27, 2020, update, news.artnet.com/art-world/nyu-tisch-tuition-dean-dance-1817856.

to the use of social media apps. However, since universities are part of an institutionalized and, in general, strictly hierarchical environment, Green's gesture missed the mark. She created and shared a video to comfort her "friends," but the students saw her as the dean, the authority who ought to address their financial distress. The friendly but idle gesture was not the reaction they had pushed for.

Secondly, the video (and the ensuing debate) put the focus squarely on issues of inequality, economy, and privilege. According to Green, the intention behind the video gesture was to strengthen the community of students and create an (emotional) link between administration, teaching staff, and students. But this (personal) connection and community building on an affective level was an inadequate response to the students' economic pressures. The debate is not about community building, but about the relationship between individuals and institutions—and the political economy of that relationship. Clearly it is imperative to differentiate who is making the gesture, with what motivation, and from which position (of power).

Thirdly, Green's video highlights developments that were already observable in *longue durée* well before the pandemic, but which had been masked by other discourses. Students commented online that Green's gesture was awkward, out of place, repulsive. Video has long been a given in self-promotion and communication. Conventions have stabilized with regard to length, rhythm, and kinds of performance, and because of that, the way a gesture is executed and the contexts in which it is perceived and interpreted are critical. So regardless of the first two points mentioned above, Green's video as a work of art is awkward and deserves criticism on an aesthetic level; even more so because Green, as a choreographer, is responsible for the artistic training at the university.

Throwing Gestures Outlined

The chapters in this book present several different perspectives on the phenomenon of gesture in its entanglement with media and politics, including the precarious plight of gig workers, new media and their specific uses in different cultures, protest movements, and the perpetuation of socio-economic crises over many decades; they highlight the quantification of work and leisure and ask which story gesture and art are telling about society and politics in the context of transformation driven by technology and media.

Gesture is currently a hot topic across a variety of academic disciplines—politics, art, the media, technology—in spite of the fact that there is no clear-cut definition of the term "gesture." The focus shifts according to context and interests, as does the concept of what a gesture actually is. This book evolved from an intense interdisciplinary examination

of gesture's topicality at the intersection of media and the political. Eight individuals with either art or research backgrounds formed the core of our artistic-academic research project, *The Entanglement between Gesture, Media, and Politics* (*EGMP*).[4] The formation of this heterogeneous group was precipitated by the following thesis: the significance of gesture beyond disciplinary boundaries can only be explored from a basis that has a breadth equal to that of the multiple voices of those who study and work with gesture.

EGMP's two-year-long research process was nourished by influences from the arts, culture, technology, and academia. The core group worked in close collaboration—at times with international guests—to develop an exhibition and symposium that combined artistic practice, academic study, extensive materials and, above all, new approaches in dealing with the subject of gesture. There are several basic assumptions in the papers and theories presented in this book. Firstly, gesture is a clearly defined physical movement. Secondly, it is a movement that is easily copied, and acquires the status of a sign that is accorded cultural significance through the manner of its use and the context in which that use occurs. What remains paramount is that gesture is also a form of conditioning, it shapes bodies and experiences. Gestures affect individuals, their experiences and their representations, but also the way they are perceived and interpreted. Issues of perception and forms of representation are also always linked to (technical) media. It is precisely through technical media that gestures are made perceptible. They are measured and become operative, and thus attain a certain agency.

The research in this book is presented with an interdisciplinary approach which demonstrates that gestures can acquire significance when they are performed with a group of people; they can become a sign of the collective in themselves and contribute to forming and stabilizing communities. A community may be freed from being bound to a single location if a particular gesture is then registered and communicated via media. Such gestures, media-communicated signs that have significance for collectives, move in a variety of contexts, so a gesture that developed in one context may be reflected in another that looks very different. Colin Kaepernick's "take a knee" protest during the US national anthem is a good example. It developed in a political context but was later used in a commercial context as part of a sporting equipment manufacturer's advertising campaign.

Gestures discussed in this book move from body to body and place to place through their representation in media. As elements of youth culture, signifiers for protest movements, and emulsifiers for political movements, gestures write transnational stories but are, at the same time, always distinctly individual. Gestures are always performed by individuals. The chapters in this book examine how gesture is embedded into technological media, its forms of representation, and the ways it enters

4 Florian Bettel (cultural scientist, Vienna), Dina Boswank (artist, Berlin/Weimar), Timo Herbst (artist, Leipzig/Berlin), Irina Kaldrack (media scientist, Braunschweig), Stefanie Kiwi Menrath (ethnographer, Berlin/Cottbus), Tobias Schulze (junior scientist media studies, Berlin), Konrad Strutz (artist, Vienna), and Laurie Young (choreographer and dancer, Berlin). Fabian Chyle (choreographer, dancer, and performer, Düsseldorf) and Mark Coniglio (media artist, Berlin) were also involved in the early stages.

economic relationships and politics (of gaze). The articles highlight the ways art, culture, and theory negotiate such relationships in three aspects.

First, the chapters situate gesture and its im/perceptibility in media technology, examine decisive moments in technological development, and discuss new forms of visibility and the ensuing shifts of meaning in art, politics, and academia. Second, gesture and the political become an object of study with the focus on stakeholders, forms of the physical and media presence of gestures, and discourses on the subjects of work, economy, and protest. Third, aesthetic and aesthetic-medial practice aspects of gesture are addressed. The different operating systems in which the stakeholders are situated have just as much of a role to play as questions of media representation and political discourse. Forms of interdisciplinarity and collaboration are also highlighted.

The different approaches and interdisciplinary collaborations of *Throwing Gestures* bring together conversations, artistic and essayistic contributions, and scientific articles. Image and text are juxtaposed and readers are invited to leaf through the collection, using it like a flip book. The research project's associative, artistic, performative, and scientific examinations of the entanglement between gesture, media, and politics thus find their continuation in contributions to the book as well as through the book as an artefact.

It turned out to be a real stroke of luck to be able to continuously reflect on the spatial and temporal encounters between art and humanities and their respective appearances that arose in the course of the project (in exhibitions, performances, etc.). We were able to work iteratively on the research questions while contemplating where different disciplines meet and create new spaces. To include those insights and address Anna-Lena Wenzel's[5] advice to display "the interdisciplinarity and heterogeneity of the modes of expression it [the project] included [...] with increased focus on the border area of different approaches," we created small "exhibition spaces" within the book, which offer space for a more essay-like approach. Designer Marie Artaker worked intensively with the authors to create a distinct layout for this book-within-a-book section marked by red

5 See Anna-Lena Wenzel's chapter *Gestures of an Exhibition* in this book, pp. 245–257, esp. 255.

introduction pages. The essays distill the collaborative process (or the "artistic-scientific complicities"[6] as Stefanie Kiwi Menrath puts it) into the pages of this book and dare to create new modes of expression in relation to the book as a medium. Thus, the resonances and differences between art and the humanities open up image and thought spaces where the phenomenon of gesture becomes tangible.

6 See Stefanie Kiwi Menrath's chapter *Artistic-Scientific Complicities. The Entanglement between Gesture, Media, and Politics project from an Empirical-Cultural Anthropological Perspective* in this book, pp. 325–346.

Gesture and Media

A closer examination of the connection between gesture and media demonstrates first and foremost that what is understood to be gesture is also defined by the (technical) media of each era. Of particular relevance to this book of the gestural is the way gestures are defined not only as signs but also, based on technical media and interfaces, as actions. Thus, gesture can only be perceived, in a manner of speaking, through technical media, experimental research design, and theoretical discursive articulations.

In *Modeling the Gestural*, Irina Kaldrack explores which model of gesture can adequately account for current articulations of gesture, media, and the political. Based on an everyday understanding of gesture (described above) and a short review of historical gestural phenomena, Kaldrack suggests that gestures should not primarily be understood according to function, such as communication and expression, or representation, but should instead be characterized according to the interplay of their respective sign, action, and media dimensions. Kaldrack examines this approach sketching a number of important European discourse-historical lines of gestural theory. Currently, according to Kaldrack, the traditional relationship between the dimensions of the gestural is dissolving; an upsurge of interest in the gestural suggests that relationships between the dimensions in the entanglement with media and the political are being reconfigured.

Konrad Strutz's essay *Gestures of Labor* focuses on the tension between the variability and repeatability of gestures as they have been understood in ergonomics since 1900. Strutz highlights how work gestures are formatted in the connection between an economic gaze and specific media technologies. Strutz narrates how the reading of variability in movement and gesture has been changing. While time and motion study pioneers Lillian and Frank Gilbreth were characterizing movement variability as "lost motion," it had already acquired the status of "productive" in Nikolai Bernstein's neuro-physiological research. As tacit knowledge, the previously lost gesture has been redeployed in more recent approaches of media-technologically reinforced operability. Strutz (also) entangles these considerations with images of his own works, and thus exposes both the pioneering and more recent approaches to

entanglements of gesture, media, and an aesthetics of concealing and forming gesture, to the reader and viewer.

Media and culture scientist Stefan Rieger, on the other hand, takes new forms of interfaces and their operability, which address a naïve user and their intuition in their forms of interaction, as his starting point. He analyzes the role of the intuitive in current discursive landscapes of philosophy and media studies, and connects the dots between the historical concept of naive physics and its discursive space in classical modernity. Rieger demonstrates how (seemingly) intuitive gesture serves to negotiate correlation between practices—in dealing with things and the world—and (implicit) knowledge. Interface design and interaction design are two of the current settings for a politics of the gestural. Gestures of the intuitive in current discourse and interface developments are aimed at multi-species forms of interaction and political processes of participation beyond a linguistic-semiotic hegemony.

Representations and (linguistic) interpretations are fundamental to political practice and are always embedded in hegemonic constellations of power. Florian Bettel, a cultural scientist, contrasts two military documents that describe Muslim gestures of prayer in his essay *Contextualizing Praying Bodies—Gestures and the Military.* He uses these examples to reveal different interpretations of documentation showing body movements in prayer from specific (historical) contexts. The documents arose from a trans-national imagining of "us" and "them," and perpetuate that imagining. The essay opens a space to reflect on regimes of the gaze, forms of representation, de-contextualization, cascades of translation and interpretation in military, and hegemonic structures in their historical continuities and fault lines.

Gesture and Politics

In the context of politics, there are several different notions of gesture currently in circulation. "Gesture politics," for instance, describes empty words, grand gestures, and suggestive images with no real action behind them. Media communication of gestures is always a focus of the mise-en-scène in gesture politics, whether on a grand political stage, a National Football League field, or an Olympic Games medal ceremony podium. Gestures of protest testify to the political power factor emanating from demonstrators' presence on the street, active citizens, and the international networking of movements, but they are also manifold and often unique, so they can come to symbolize the protest movement from which they arise: the opening of umbrellas during the Hong Kong democracy protests of 2014, banging on pots and pans during the Catalan independence referendum in Barcelona in 2017, "Hands up, don't shoot" in the Black Lives Matter movement in the US and many other nations since

2013, but also the Greek far-right Chrysi Avgi (Golden Dawn) party's use of the Nazi salute. Gestures can become signifiers of protest movements.

In their dance performance *One hundred more* (2019/2020), choreographer-dancers Justine A. Chambers and Laurie Young examine iconic gestures of protest as well as personal gestures of resistance. The "Hands up, don't shoot" gesture, its breakdown into sequences of movement, repetitions, and rhythmizations are key elements of the piece. They reflect on their work process in *With the Gestures Where We Feel Charge,* discussing their theoretical references (Erin Manning's term "minor gestures" for example), questions of gesture perceptibility and interpretability, and the location of gestures in different contexts and regimes of seeing. Chambers and Young also highlight the process of appropriating gestures, the effects of rhythm and repetition on the body, and the outcome of further developing gestures and, in doing so, according them significance.

Florian Bettel examines the relationship between gestures of protest, art, and popular culture against the background of socio-economic crisis in his chapter *At the Center of Attention—Gesture, Police and the Commodification of Protest*. Bettel identifies three strategies artists use when appropriating the aesthetics of protest movements: material culture, re-enactment, and active participation in a movement. None of these three strategies individually allows for any conclusions about whether artistic appropriation is exhausted in an "aestheticization of politics" (Walter Benjamin), or whether it has an emancipatory potential in the context of an increasing commodification of protest. As a hinge between protest, politics, and economy, Bettel uses the concept of "Policing the Crisis," developed in a study by Stuart Hall and colleagues at the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies in 1978, as a model. The analysis holds that police are used as an instrument to manufacture a certain form of "security." In the twenty-first century, protest and police themselves become the objects of neoliberal commodification.

In *Play by Rules*, Timo Herbst and Marcus Nebe intricately transpose their dynamic and multilayered five-channel video installation of the same name (shown at Kunstquartier Bethanien Berlin), into a visual essay. *Play by Rules* deals with the appearance of gestures in political protests and how those gestures are formed, captured, and circulated as images. Footage of protests—refugees at Keleti Train station in Budapest (2015), demonstrations and celebrations after the failed coup in Istanbul (2016), and protests during the G20 summit in Hamburg (2017)—show similar gestures and techniques in news coverage. The artists take an interest in the coverage of the protest gestures by both journalists and by the demonstrators themselves. How are space and people integrated within the media's technical apparatus, and how do protesters and passers-by arrange and organize themselves in relation to the media?

Political scientists Riccardo E. Chesta and Zoe Lefkofridi also focus on different gestures of protest (in contemporary history) in their contribution *Symbolic Gestures in Contemporary Protest Movements*. The authors highlight the relationship between institutionalized politics and protest, and the functions that gestures (can) acquire in the latter. Chesta and Lefkofridi situate protests as non-conventional politics, which can be understood as a resource of the powerless or marginalized. The authors examine (contemporary history) gestures of protest with regard to their mobilizing effect, their addressees, and the level of provocation and (self-inflicted) violence. They demonstrate that the symbolic strategy of using gestures to mobilize people comes with many risks to the activists. For the strategies Chesta and Lefkofridi map as symbolic gestures, there must be cognizance of the intricate connection between symbols, contexts, and meanings, which requires profound reflection from activists.

Laurie Young's photo essay *Ambit*, on the other hand, focuses on a single gesture—"Hands up, don't shoot"—and tests the interconnection between individual gesture, the gaze regime, media representation, and the political demand of marginalized groups to acknowledge their perspectives and demands. In the process, she uses a centuries-old apparatus of magical arts, which is able to provide a self-reflexive comment on the medium of books—a flip book. As a conceptual extension of her dance performance *One hundred more* (2019/2020, with Justine A. Chambers), Young's flip book animation explores the transition of a body movement or posture from a simple movement to being interpreted as a political gesture.

Gesture and Aesthetics

Media representation and gestural politics are intimately entangled; they condition each other with their specific characteristics and effects. The (technical) media characteristics of gesture transmission affect the interpretation of gestures just as much as their outward forms do, and also give rise to a tendency to medial dissemination that is in opposition to conformity. The question of the form these reciprocal effects take, of who addresses a gesture to whom in which contexts, and in which manner they are interpreted in different constellations, are broached in manifold ways in visual and performing arts, film and exhibitions.[7]

In their conversation, *Artistic Gestures—Political Gestures*, visual artist Timo Herbst and curator Alexander Koch discuss the relationship between artistic and political gestures. To better grasp the similarities and differences between these two forms of gesture, Koch and Herbst examine several examples from the artistic and political spheres such as art works, exhibitions and protest movements, and discuss various transitional moments. They differentiate between functional gestures, where the

7 Many projects focus on the hand as the medium of gesture and as a physical repository of knowledge, as seen in two 2019 exhibitions, *Gesten—gestern, heute, übermorgen* at the Museum for Communication Berlin and *Der Hände Werk* at Schallaburg, Austria. While the aspect of the hand as a repository of knowledge (artisanal knowledge, for example) was one focus, technical expansions of the body (exoskeletons, protheses, wearables, etc.) were also featured. Work by artists Anette Rose and Lucie Strecker in this area is long-standing. STELARC and Nina Sellars have a long history of working on technological expansions of the human body, examining the expressive possibilities of such bodies, including those with protheses or exoskeletons, for many years. At the 2019 Venice Biennale, *Assembly* by Angelica Mesitis was shown as a public-private partnership, and *Unity*, a sculpture in public space by Hank Willis Thomas, which stands nearly seven meters tall, caused heated discussions regarding the interpretation of the depicted gesture. See Martha Schwendener, "A Sculpture for Brooklyn's New Golden Age?" *New York Times*, Nov 10, 2019, www.nytimes.com/2019/11/10/arts/design/10brooklyn-bridge-sculpture-hank-willis-thomas.html.

intention is to transform the thoughts and actions of others directly, and emancipatory gestures, which create open-ended situations of negotiation and dialogue in which people are invited to become responsible spectators in both art and politics.

Herbst and Koch's discussion serves as a transition to documentation of *Throwing Gestures—Protest Economy and the Imperceptible,* an exhibition at Kunstquartier Bethanien in Berlin from 9 to 16 December 2018. Curated by Florian Bettel, Dina Boswank, Timo Herbst, Konrad Strutz, and Laurie Young, the exhibition allowed for a variety of approaches to the question of the political and gesture framed in different media and materials. Writer, art critic, and artist Anna-Lena Wenzel's critical tour of the show, *Gestures of an Exhibition,* offers an external perspective on negotiation of the gestural in individual works, works in combination, and the curatorial gesture of exhibiting.

Irina Kaldrack and Timo Herbst's essay *G20* weaves together video stills, photographic documentation, research material, stage directions, and text from a lecture performance that was the result of a collaboration between people involved in artistic praxis and academic theory. As the *EGMP* project unfolded, Kaldrack and Herbst worked with artists Dina Boswank, Marcus Nebe, and Silas Mücke to develop an exhibition and lecture performance on political gestures, which was then presented at Kunstverein Leipzig. Through images, spoken word, and Kaldrack's own embodied movements, the authors reflect on what the political meanings within gestures could be—as exemplified by the G20 summit in Hamburg (2017)—and to what extent protest movements and their gestures show and are able to provoke moments of instability within systems of power.

Media scientist and theater maker Martina Leeker performs a critical questioning of both the term entanglement and the practice of entanglement with her contribution *Pain, Befallen-ness, Conflict, Mediocrity. Dark Entanglements for Artistic Research and Critique in Digital Cultures.* She discusses entanglement as a modus operandi of current digital cultures, as having a key role in new materialism and as a guiding principle of so-called artistic research.

With a view to the interdisciplinary collaboration of working groups in the *EGMP* project, and in particular the development of the *G20* lecture performance, Leeker developed a model of conflictual artistic-academic collaboration where moments of experience are initiated by friction. Building on such practices and methods, she sketches the possibility of a praxeological critique in digital cultures.

Media scientists Irina Kaldrack and Tobias Schulze's essay *Dancing Fists* traces the feedback loop emerging between gesture itself and the techno-medial communication of gesture. Using the video-sharing app TikTok as an example, Kaldrack and Schulze explore the significance assigned to the gestural via the user interface and typical video effects. They also place, by means of producing their own clip, the location of (TikTok) gestures in between the hand of the user and the smartphone as a user medium, which leads to questions regarding the limitations, gestural vocabulary, and role of a third party that develop from the interplay between person and device.

Finally, ethnographer and cultural anthropologist Stefanie Kiwi Menrath documented the development of the topic as well as the emerging forms of collaboration from an empirical cultural anthropological perspective after following the *EGMP* artists and researchers over the entire duration of the project as a participant observer. Her chapter, *Artistic-Academic Complicities*, seeks to identify the rise of heterogeneous, interdisciplinary complicities between art and academia, and traces the preconditions for such forms of cooperation. Due to the social-experimental and particularly dynamic character of complicities, the process is difficult to plan for, it demands great flexibility from all those involved, but also produces unforeseeable and, in the best case, innovative results.

In the midst of a pandemic, in the ongoing crisis and the ensuing new visualizations, all sorts of things seem possible. On a political level, diverging positions are negotiated in new contexts and with new meanings. These negotiations are playing out against the background of a renewed dynamic of the entanglement of gesture, protest, economy, and

the imperceptible, a development that Dean Allyson Green of Tisch School of the Arts could barely have suspected when she published her controversial video. For a brief moment, these dynamics pushed her video to the surface of international attention only to be forgotten again just as quickly. Political content can gain visibility through gesture; the negotiation of that content is ongoing and more fascinating than ever.

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Modeling the Gestural

Gestures are meaningful body movements whose forms of expression and representation are not fully explained by the intention on which they are based. [...] There is an element in gesture that goes beyond intentionality and can only be experienced through mimetic reenactment.[1]

Irina Kaldrack

Entanglements of Gesture, Media, and Politics

Gestures are body movements. They have a bearing on meaning and expression, and they are used consciously. Etymologically, the term *Geste* came to German "from the Latin *gestus,* 'movement of the hands, gesticulation of actors or orators, via the Latin *gerere* (gestum), to bear, to carry (out), (reflexive) to conduct oneself.'"[2] Gesture has long denoted gesticulation with the hands, but it is also connected with behavior and—not surprisingly—theatrical performance. Historically speaking, what is meant by gesture has shifted. Gesture is also related to the media of respective eras, particularly with regard to the question of representation.

1 Christoph Wulf, "Geste," in *Vom Menschen. Handbuch Historische Anthropologie* (Weinheim: Beltz Verlag, 1997), 516.
2 Wolfgang Pfeifer, ed., "Etymologisches Wörterbuch des Deutschen," Vol. 1: A–G, with contributions from Zentralinstituts für Sprachwissenschaft author collective led by Wolfgang Pfeifer (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1989), 559.

In this chapter, I explore which model of gesture is the most appropriate for understanding the present upsurge of interest in the gestural. Which contemporary phenomena are thus relevant in entanglements between gesture, media, and politics?

In institutional politics (including the inherent decision-making and implementation processes), a number of gestural-media or media gestures stand out. The *Merkel-Raute* (Merkel diamond or Triangle of Power), a widely known iconic gesture, is German chancellor Angela Merkel's trademark and is used to refer to her. Peer Steinbrück's "middle finger," which made the cover of *SZ Magazin* in September 2013 when he was SPD's candidate for chancellorship,[3] stood for a political and content-related statement that played with provocation of or within a hegemonic order of social norms, jurisdiction, and freedom of expression—in this sense, it was about political communication. The same gesture by Yanis Varoufakis, Greek economist, which appeared in a video dating from 2013, provoked a debate on fake videos when he was minister of finance in 2015.[4] Although the debate was sparked by the gestural provocation, the main issue became the status of video as evidence. Gestures made by politicians operate as a reference to people and statements, they take place in particular contexts, and are tied to media. However, political content is not necessarily all that they represent.

A historically prominent gesture linked to political "effects" is the *Warschauer Kniefall*, Willy Brandt's genuflection at the memorial to the fallen of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. As a gesture of humility beyond the arranged protocol of remembrance on December 7, 1970, it attracted international attention (less so in Germany and Poland) and was interpreted as a spontaneous, emotional act of regret or plea for forgiveness. The genuflection was also, however, representative of the subsequent policy of détente between the Federal Republic of Germany and the German Democratic Republic.[5] The "symbolic" gesture in politics is particularly important when it has a binding character, when the gesture is followed by action (as with the genuflection). That is, there has to be a profound institutional involvement of the "gesticulating" individual, who needs to have a certain position of power.

3 Michael König, "Steinbrück zeigt den Stinkefinger," *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, September 2013, www.sueddeutsche.de/politik/spd-kanzlerkandidat-im-sz-magazin-steinbrueck-zeigt-den-stinkefinger-1.1769507.

4 Nora Burgard-Arp, "Jan Böhmermanns Medienkritik Royale: die Chronologie des #Varoufake," *MEEDIA*, March 19, 2015, meedia.de/2015/03/19/jan-boehmermanns-medienkritik-royale-die-chronologie-des-varoufake/.

5 See Christoph Schneider, *Der Warschauer Kniefall: Ritual, Ereignis und Erzählung* (Konstanz: UVK, 2006). See also Christoph Schneider and Bernhard Giesen, *Tätertrauma: Nationale Erinnerungen im öffentlichen Diskurs* (Konstanz: UVK, 2004), 133–238.

The gesture's effectiveness can follow from this; it emerges as (an announcement of) action.[6]

Conversely, a gesture can also be a refusal to act and achieve political relevance and iconic status through that refusal. When Colin Kaepernick and other NFL players remain seated or kneel during the US national anthem protests that began in 2016, it is less a gesture of humility than a refusal to stand at attention, hand over heart, for *The Star-Spangled Banner*.[7] In Western cultural memory, the protest essentially alludes to another gesture that challenged racism in the US—the "Black Power salute." At the 1968 Olympics in Mexico City, Tommie Smith and John Carlos raised gloved fists in salute during the national anthem at the medal ceremony for the two-hundred meters. Barely fifty years later, another gesture and its associated slogan "Hands up, don't shoot" (re)signifies structural racism in the US. After the fatal shooting of Black teenager Michael Brown by police officer Darren Wilson, the slogan and gesture stand for both a desire to not be shot and protest against police violence. "Hands up, don't shoot" highlights the fact that the physical movements of black, indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) are read differently than those of people with white bodies, that they are embedded in power structures, hegemonies, and policies.[8] Dissemination of the gesture through various

6 Jens Jessen, "Symbolische Politik," in *Symbole*, APuZ—Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte, Zeitschrift der Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung 20 (2006).

7 Vilém Flusser, *Gestures* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014). See also Riccardo Emilio Chesta and Zoe Lefkofridi's chapter *Symbolic Gestures in Contemporary Protest Movements* in this book, p. 161.

8 See Justine A. Chambers and Laurie Young's chapter in this book, *With the Gestures Where We Feel Charge*, pp. 89–103, and Laurie Young's chapter *Ambit*, pp. 183–200.

media contributed to it becoming a powerful sign for being affected by structural violence, as well as for the demand for justice and solidarity with that demand.

In political contexts, gestures are iconic signs for people, political issues, opinions, political attitudes or demands, and even for acts or the intention to act. But they also express emotion—at least in their discursivization. The (mass) media amplify the dissemination of gestures, contextualize them, and interpret them.

Media don't just represent and disseminate gestures, but also shape them and incite the invention of brand-new gestures, which then show up in different cultures and communities. In the film *Black Panther*,[9] members of the fictional nation "Wakanda" greet each other by briefly crossing their arms (and fists) across their chests and then lowering them. The greeting has been used by Black athletes frequently since 2018.[10] Less political are the small gesture choreographies performed in schoolyards and on soccer fields. "The Floss,"[11] for instance, went viral and was incorporated as an "emote" in the computer game *Fortnite*—one of the most played online games of 2018.[12] These (paid) emotes are used for equipment and the appearance of individual game characters and include dances or "moves," which are mostly performed as victory dances. In 2018, performances of these routines spread from game characters to real-life soccer players celebrating goal scores.[13]

9 *Black Panther*, directed by Ryan Coogler (February 2018; Burbank, CA: Marvel Studios). See also Rebecca Wanzo, "And All Our Past Decades Have Seen Revolutions: The Long Decolonization of Black Panther," *The Black Scholar* (February 2018): accessed June 8, 2020, www.theblackscholar.org/past-decades-seen-revolutions-long-decolonization-black-panther-rebecca-wanzo/; Derilene (Dee) Marco, "Vibing with Blackness: Critical Considerations of Black Panther and Exceptional Black Positionings," *Arts* 7 (Nov 2018): 85, accessed June 8, 2020, doi.org/10.3390/arts7040085; George Faithful, "Dark of the World, Shine on Us: The Redemption of Blackness in Ryan Coogler's Black Panther," *Religions* 9 (Oct 2018): 304, accessed June 8, 2020, doi.org/10.3390/rel9100304.

10 Kashmira Gander, "Is the Black Panther 'Wakanda Salute' becoming a symbol of black pride?" *Newsweek*, (March 13, 2018), accessed June 8, 2020, www.newsweek.com/wakanda-salute-becoming-symbol-black-solidarity-842294. See also Mark Heywinkel, "Die Siegesgeste aus 'Black Panther' hat es bis in die Sportwelt geschafft," ze.tt, (March 14, 2018), accessed June 8, 2020, ze.tt/die-siegesgeste-aus-black-panther-hat-es-bis-in-die-sportwelt-geschafft/. See also: "Black Panther 'Wakanda forever' becomes new global salute for empowerment," IBTimes UK, March 14, 2018, YouTube video, 1:05, accessed June 8, 2020, youtube.com/watch?v=sf_A3_mVLCo, and "Le signe du Wakanda devenu symbole pour les Noirs—Black Panther," Lewis Brown 242 TV, March 24, 2018, YouTube video, 2:04, accessed June 8, 2020, youtube.com/watch?v=5xfie-k34do.

11 In May 2017 teenager Russel Horing performed the Floss to Katy Perry's song *Swish Swish* on an episode of *Saturday Night Live*. See also "Floss (dance)," Wikipedia, accessed June 8, 2020, en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Floss_(dance).

12 *Fortnite* is a cooperative survival game in which a group of players has to beat zombies (or other players). See also "Fortnite," *Epic Games*, epicgames.com/fortnite/en-US/home, and "Fortnite," Wikipedia, accessed June 8, 2020, en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fortnite.

13 See Mike Herbstreuth, "Kultphänomen 'Fortnite' Der Tanz, der aus dem Computer kam," *Deutschlandfunk Kultur*, July, 27, 2018, accessed June 8, 2020, deutschlandfunkkultur.de/kultphaenomen-fortnite-der-tanz-der-aus-dem-computer-kam.2147.de.html?dram:article_id=423453. See also Constantin Hackober, "Wieso die WM-Fußballer am liebsten mit Fortnite-Tänzen jubeln," *Welt—ICONIST*, July 17, 2018, accessed June 8, 2020, welt.de/icon/article179078074/Viraler-Trend-Wieso-die-WM-Fussballer-am-liebsten-mit-Fortnite-Taenzen-jubeln.html. See overview "Fortnite Dances in Football!" *Kystar*, March 13, 2018, YouTube video, 2:45, accessed June 8, 2020, www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gf9a_6K-MlmU; see also "AMAZING FORTNITE CELEBRATIONS IN FOOTBALL (Fortnite Battle Royale)," *F2Freestylers—Ultimate Soccer Skills Channel*, April 11, 2018, YouTube video, 0:30, accessed June 8, 2020, youtube.com/watch?v=q7Lx0c4Z4RM. In late 2018 and early 2019, several artists complained that Epic Games used "their" moves in *Fortnite* without having asked and without paying fees. See also Kristin Banse, "Rapper verklagt Epic Games: Keine Emotes mehr in Fortnite?" *ran*, December 7, 2018, accessed June 8, 2020, ran.de/esports/news/rapper-verklagt-epic-games-keine-emotes-mehr-in-fortnite-114701; Elizabeth A. Harris, "A Real-World Battle Over Dancing Avatars: Did Fortnite Steal the Floss?" *New York Times*, January 11, 2019, accessed June 8, 2020, nytimes.com/2019/01/11/arts/fortnite-floss-dance-lawsuits.html. And for an overview of the movements in question and their possible models from music clips, movies, etc.: "Fortnite: ALL 58 emotes and dances + Their real life original references [No bonuses]," LFP Gaming, May 31, 2018, YouTube video, 14:32, accessed June 8, 2020, youtube.com/watch?v=oe2cE-eVhtg.

Similar gesture choreographies can be found not just in games but also on social media. Phenomena like *Planking,*[14] the *Gangnam Style Meme,*[15] the *Harlem Shake Meme,*[16] and what are known as challenges—popular with the broader public since the *Ice Bucket Challenge*[17]—are fueled by shared images and videos on YouTube, meme and other social media platforms. They combine specific activities with (partly ironic) self-promotion, virtuoso imitation, and variations on a theme.[18] Short-form video hosting services or social video apps particularly encourage such utilization. One of the first of these apps was Vine, which was discontinued in 2016. In 2014, musical.ly was released, which was bought by Beijing's ByteDance Ltd. and integrated into its social video platform TikTok in 2017.[19] When looking at the way these challenges appear and are featured on video apps and social media platforms, the crucial point with regard to gestures is how they circulate between online and offline worlds and through different segments of society. They are invented, discovered as moves, brilliantly imitated, repeated and varied. They develop their own forms of media presence and become an economic factor insofar as they are integrated into specific economies of attention[20] and likes.[21]

Gesture control, on the other hand, is a field in which gestures are "designed."

14 *Planking* or *à plat ventre* gained popularity at the end of the 2000s. It consists of lying flat, face down, in public and taking/posting photos of the activity. A Facebook group was started in 2007. See "Planking," *Wikipedia*, accessed June 10, 2020, en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Planking_(fad), and know yourmeme.com/memes/lying-down-game.

15 *Gangnam Style* is a single by South Korean rapper Psy released in July 2012. The video was widely parodied, and the choreography of the "horse style" became very popular. See Silver Chariot, "Gangnam Style," Know Your Meme, 2013, accessed June 8, 2020, knowyourmeme.com/memes/gangnam-style.

16 The *Harlem Shake Meme* began in 2013 with the "Do the Harlem Shake" video featuring YouTuber George Miller aka Filthy Frank as Pink Guy wriggling to the song Harlem Shake, a track by DJ and music producer Bauer released in 2012.

17 See "Ice Bucket Challenge," Wikipedia, accessed January 19, 2020, en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ice_Bucket_Challenge.

18 See Christian Helten, "Vor neuen Herausforderungen," *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, August 9, 2019, accessed June 8, 2020, projekte.sueddeutsche.de/artikel/panorama/internet-challenges-vor-neuen-herausforderungen-e511136/.

19 See "Musical.ly," Wikipedia, accessed June 10, 2020, en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Musical.ly. On *TikTok*, see Irina Kaldrack and Tobias Schulze's chapter *Dancing Fists* in this book, pp. 315–324.

20 The concept of the attention economy was outlined in the German-speaking world by architect and urban planner Georg Franck's 1998 publication *Ökonomie der Aufmerksamkeit (The Economy of Attention)*. In the English-speaking world, its origin is cited as Davenport and Beck's book *The Attention Economy. Understanding the New Currency of Business*, 2001; see also Claudio Celis-Bueno, *The Attention Economy: Labour, Time and Power in Cognitive Capitalism* (London: Rowman & Littlefield International, 2017).

21 See Carolin Gerlitz and Anne Helmond, "The like economy: Social buttons and the data-intensive web," *New Media & Society* 15, no. 8 (November 2013): 1348–1365.

They are specified as positions to be performed. They are assigned a specific effect in particular technological contexts and are in a sense re-framed, which is exactly the way they were designed. From clicking to typing, swiping and waving, with touch screens, contact-free interfaces, monitoring in houses, public spaces and workplaces, gestures are increasingly measured, data-ized and computed.[22] Surveillance and security applications promise to recognize each and every individual by their ineluctable movement and gesture signature.[23] In expert discourse, advertising, and the social imaginary, gestures appear to be intuitive, they don't have to be learned or practiced, they belong more to the affective, the emotional, the non-linguistic than to the rational.[24] Seen from a technological angle, gestures are fed into translation chains, which is the prerequisite for them to be available as operations and controls. Traditional gestures of manipulation merge with communication gestures to form new gestures of control.[25] At this juncture, new gestural politics and forms of power are established: the latter adapt the human body to fit the new "digital cultures" and modify traditional body techniques or even invent new ones.[26] Here, too, the repetition of gestures is paramount: the gesture needs to be recognized correctly for the control to be effective. Yet, and this is crucial, the objective in monitoring is recognition of not just uniformity in gesture execution, but also difference—which is exactly what characterizes the individuality of the gestural, and that, according to the promise, is what makes individuals identifiable. There is, then, a standardization of gestures on the one hand, insofar as they need to be executed in a sufficiently precise and self-similar manner. On the other hand, and simultaneously, the dissimilarities of gestures are made productive as the ineluctable signature of the unique individual.

This cursory overview shows that we are living through a boom in gesture, especially in fields where the spheres of politics and media intersect in their respective forms. And in the context of politics and media invoked here, gestures are attributed "classical" functions established in the history of gesture theory—communication, expression, and representation.

22 See Ellen Fricke and Jana Bressem, eds., *Gesten—gestern, heute, übermorgen. Vom Forschungsprojekt zur Ausstellung*, part V, (Chemnitz: Universitätsverlag Chemnitz, 2019), 172.

23 See Biometric Signature ID, biosig-id.com/; see also Margaret Rouse, "Behavioral Biometrics," WhatIs.com, accessed March 26, 2020, whatis.techtarget.com/definition/behavioral-biometrics. See Adam Vrankulj, "Explainer: Gesture recognition," Biometric Update, accessed March 26, 2020, www.biometricupdate.com/201404/explainer-gesture-recognition.

24 See Stefan Rieger's chapter *Naive Physics. Gestures of Intuition* in this book, pp. 65–77.

25 See Fricke and Bressem, *Gesten—gestern*, 2019, part V, 172.

26 See Martina Leeker's chapter *Pain, Befallen-ness, Conflict, Mediocrity. Dark Entanglements for Artistic Research and Critique in Digital Cultures* in this book, pp. 293–313.

It seems to me, however, that gesture cannot be completely explained by these functional attributions. A review of contemporary gestural phenomena makes it clear that gestures have three dimensions that make them particularly suited to the functions attributed to them. Gestures have a sign or symbolic dimension, and by that I mean gestures always include an aspect of representation—they appear in a specific form (and are thereby imitable), they represent something, refer to something, and thus can acquire specific meaning.

Similarly, gestures often have a dimension of action in the sense that they have observable effects in the material-physical world or in the socio-political sphere. Based on a concept of action that is broad, but bound to human beings, action manifests as a targeted, intentional movement originating from an actively moving human actor. The action may well be embedded in an action situation and as such appear to be reactive, but it has effects an observer would attribute to the actor.[27] In this sense, the action dimension of gestures is characterized by the fact that gestures, and control gestures in particular, trigger actions. Furthermore, gestures may either refer to, reinforce, or anticipate actions.

In the current boom of the gestural, it is characteristic that gestures occur in the media, but they also sometimes exist only in and through media. Based on this observation, I propose a third dimension of the gestural, namely a media dimension. To this end, I am using a simple concept of media in which they convey and transmit, and so are situated in the in-between. From this perspective, the media dimension of gesture initially consists in mediating between the interior and the exterior in the form of expressions, and in transmitting between individuals in the form of communication. The media dimension of the gesture emphasizes that it is situated in the center and in the in-between, and has a strong bearing on perception in the sense of *aisthesis*.[28] The three dimensions proposed here cannot be separated clearly, but I think they can help outline a model of gesture that is analytically and critically able to accommodate the entanglements between gesture, media, and politics.

It is important to be aware of the history of gesture theory when modeling the "gestural" like this. It is clear from the following overview of the history of European thought on gesture that particular gesture motifs and epistemes of the gestural evolve into lasting traditions. But while there are long continuities in the terms and concepts of what gestures are and what they do, the meaning of such terms and concepts does gradually shift over time. It is also clear that the contexts in which gestures are negotiated as a priority vary theoretically and practically. I have outlined the main historical lines of thought on gesture in their most relevant disciplines and contexts in broad strokes below. It seems that, historically, each era "pinned down" what a gesture is. Knowledge and practice of the gestural stabilize superficially, but are always subject to subtle shifts. In these constant renegotiations, dissolutions, and new stabilizations,

27 The concept of action applied here is thus fundamentally different from Hannah Arendt's concept of action, see Hannah Arendt, "Action," in *The Human Condition* (1998). Arendt's concept of action is, in turn, essential for my reflection on political gestures of protest, which I developed with Timo Herbst; see Timo Herbst and Irina Kaldrack's chapter *G20* in this book, pp. 259–292. However, I would like to emphasize that the three dimensions of the gestural model outlined here emerged specifically from practical work. For an approach to concepts and theories of action, see also Jürgen Weierstraß, *Enzyklopädie Philosophie und Wissenschaftstheorie*, vol. 3: G–Inn (Stuttgart, Weimar: Verlag J.B. Metzler, 2008).

28 Stefan Hoffmann, *Geschichte des Medienbegriffs* (Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 2002).

an excess becomes apparent, repeatedly demanding that the relationships between different dimensions of the gestural be realigned. My reading of the situation was the direct result of and by means of a specific entanglement of artistic and academic practices, particularly the conflicts and mutual reflections engendered by that entanglement.

Discourse Histories of the Gestural

1 Antiquity

Historically, thematization and discussions of gestures, their functions, and their effects in Roman antiquity began in the context of rhetoric. In the writings of Cicero (106–43 BCE) and Quintilian (35–96 CE) on rhetoric, speech-accompanying gestures were dealt with in the context of *actio*—the art of delivery. The artful and appropriate use of gesture to give speeches a "winning, convincing, and thrilling" effect was central.[29]

Gestures were to be used to express the content of speeches and engage the audience; orators were to use gestures intentionally, expertly, and appropriately to do so. In particular, speakers ought never exaggerate or appear ridiculous.

According to Derrick de Kerckhove, Greek theater developed in the context of the adoption of the Greek alphabet. The alphabet was an apparatus that transformed the mental organization of (silent) reading from an inner idea into one of the orders of perception, rehearsing it in the process.[30] The decisive factor was the introduction of a spectator who was separate from the events, and accordingly followed the action in a detached manner, thus taking a theoretical stance on it. The social context of the Greek theater was the polis: "In the theater, the individual citizen experienced himself as part of a community that was both political and historical, a community that was capable of taking its destiny into its own hands, even militarily."[31]

With regard to Greek theater as an organizer of perception, Ulrike Haß emphasizes that it first and foremost organized the act of listening: "The actor in this theater was body and voice. [...] The [actor's]

29 Cornelia Müller, "Eine kleine Kulturgeschichte der Gestenbetrachtung," *Psychotherapie und Sozialforschung* 4, no. 1 (2002), 8.
30 Derrick de Kerckhove, *Schriftgeburten: vom Alphabet zum Computer* (München: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1995).
31 Hans-Christian von Herrmann, "Das Theater der Polis," in *Archiv für Mediengeschichte—Medien der Antike*, ed. Lorenz Engell, Bernhard Siegert and Joseph Vogl (Weimar: Verlag der Bauhaus-Universität Weimar, 2003), 36.

physical mobility and facial expressions were extremely repressed or even prevented."[32] Even Vitruvius, in the first century BCE, designed the auditorium (*cavea*) to be a "resonant cavity and amplifier."[33] Seen against the background of the great social and media-technological formations of Greek antiquity, the (speech-accompanying) gesture gained specific functions: the *actio* in rhetoric served to bring writing to life, making it audible, as well as appropriately presenting the content.[34] Similarly, ancient theater, as an architectural arrangement and a cultural practice, formed a mode of perception that linked bringing writing to life with collective listening and detached observation.

In other words, speaking itself was not what created a shared space between speakers and listeners; the audience were more like spectators who observed in a detached and judging manner. Gesture was credited with the ability to overcome that separation: gesture was a transmitter of the content and quality of the spoken word and achieved the (desired) effect on the listening audience; gesture had a media dimension and an action dimension.

2 European Middle Ages

Functions of the gestural diversified in the Middle Ages. In his book *La Raison des Gestes dans l'Occident medieval* (The Logic of Gestures in Medieval Europe),[35] historian Jean-Claude Schmitt reconstructs the differentiation that occurred between the third and thirteenth centuries CE. According to Schmitt, gestures were omnipresent in the Middle Ages. They were supremely important in church contexts as well as at court and in the upper echelons of society (even more so in the High Middle Ages). By the Late Middle Ages, gesture had become relevant in the context of a further differentiation of "work" and in law.

If we accept Schmitt's reconstruction, gesture in the Middle Ages was, on one hand, directed at the body: the body was subject to various forces that could be guided in the right direction, so to speak, through gestural discipline and virtuosity. On the other hand, at times of societal differentiation, gestures were decisive in representing and affirming group

32 Ulrike Haß, *Das Drama des Sehens. Auge, Blick und Bühnenform* (München: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 2005), 131.
33 Ulrike Haß, *Das Drama*, 2005, 139.
34 This involves the individual speaker being in command of their gestures, in principle a speaker is in control of their gestures and so are responsible for them.
35 German translation: Jean-Claude Schmitt, *Die Logik der Gesten im europäischen Mittelalter* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1992).

membership and rank in the social order. Gesture became a means of inserting the individual-material body into the God-given order, as well as the social body into the social order, bringing a sign dimension of the gestural to the fore which is, however, strongly linked to a transcendent, and therefore action, dimension.

According to Schmitt, the institution of the church was the decisive location point in negotiation of the practice and theory of the gestural in the Middle Ages. At the center of the debate was the relationship between the body and divine order. The church sees human beings as fundamentally sinful. The body is the source of original sin, but can also be a means of salvation through the biblical promise of redemption.

This tension led to the development of a "Christian morality of gesture" during late antiquity and the early medieval period.[36] Gesture was a means of disciplining the (clerical) body in monastic asceticism and an expression of the (clerical) spirit. Moral-theoretical reflections reached a high point of sophistication in the writings of Hugh of Saint Victor (1097–1141 CE). *De institutione novitiorum,* in particular, contains the most complex definition of gestures in the whole of the medieval period, a definition that became very influential. Schmitt writes:

> *"Gestus est motus et figuratio membrorum corporis, ad omnem agenda et habendi modum."* I provide a deliberately ambiguous translation of this definition: The gesture is a movement and composition of the limbs of the body such that they are adapted to any action and pose (but also: with regard to, according to and in accordance with the modalities of any action and pose).[37]

Movement and action on the one hand, and pose, composition—and thus also aesthetics—on the other. This was the area where Hugh of Saint Victor aligned gesture with the ideal of moderation. Within a classification of opposing gestural qualities (such as casual versus insolent) and their respective assignment to vices (like negligence and arrogance), a virtuous gesture needed to find the right balance, because "virtue is the mean between two contrary vices (*inter vitia contraria medius limes virtus est*)."[38] Through moderate gesture, the body was able to resist harmful influences and to defer to divine order. A beautiful form, which referred to the overall impression arising from harmonious body movements and postures, was especially successful.[39] Deferment to this order was repeatedly threatened, bodies were subject to forces that were perceived in the gestural in particular. Thus, from the eleventh century, spirit possession was seen to manifest as inarticulate and excessively gesticulating physicality. "The bodies beset by the demon seem to lose all moderation, they are at the threshold between animal and monster."[40] In the form of

36 Jean-Claude Schmitt, *Die Logik*, 1992, 66.
37 Jean-Claude Schmitt, *Die Logik*, 1992, 167.
38 Jean-Claude Schmitt, *Die Logik*, 1992, 173.
39 See Jean-Claude Schmitt, *Die Logik*, 1992, 175–183.
40 Jean-Claude Schmitt, *Die Logik*, 1992, 121–2.

a mystic experience, which involved cataleptic states of ecstasy and extreme mobility, even floating states,[41] the gestural excess was reintegrated into the divine order. The spiritually possessed person, the mystic, and the novice practicing virtuous gestures were connected by "one and the same belief in omnipotent external forces that can make the human body their seat or even their hostage, a tool or a moving image."[42]

Gestures also created and affirmed the legitimacy of those in power. In addition to the anointing of rulers—carried out by the clergy—the accolade (or dubbing) that confers knighthood is a gesture that changes (social) status. In the early medieval period, there was an upswing in the popularity of "mirrors for princes"—behavioral guidebooks for aspiring rulers. In the high medieval period (ca. 1050–1250 CE), in the context of an (increasingly) differentiated society with principalities and estates, the tradition was followed by the concept of courtliness, which emerged in the twelfth century. This model of ideal aristocratic behavior with regard to status, and in particular in dealings with the other sex, raised some social groups above "the savagery, 'cloddishness' and 'heinousness' of the world of work associated with serfdom, to which is linked everything that seems to threaten or invert the knightly concepts of honor."[43]

However, the eleventh and twelfth centuries saw not just strong social differentiation, but also enormous economic expansion. With that came a moral revaluation of work—which had previously been regarded as punishment for the fall of humanity—and an increased (theoretical) interest in gestures of work. Development of the guild system of specialization and the invention of new techniques and machines such as windmills, powerful catapults (trebuchets), improvements in ploughing, and developments in construction were decisive factors. "The gestures are subordinate to the function of the machine and are based in its specific form of movement."[44]

A different context for "gesture" in the Middle Ages is that of historiography. As high and late medieval period (literary) genres, "*res gestae*" and "*chanson des gestes,*" gesta and gesture were reports of deeds

41 See Jean-Claude Schmitt, *Die Logik*, 1992, 299–308.
42 Jean-Claude Schmitt, *Die Logik*, 1992, 124–5.
43 Jean-Claude Schmitt, *Die Logik*, 1992, 215.
44 Jean-Claude Schmitt, *Die Logik*, 1992, 227.

that often represented national history as sagas, heroic tales, and histories of ruling houses. Crucially, these epics were performed by jesters. From the thirteenth century onward in particular, such performances became extremely popular, with troupes of jesters being brought to the courts by nobility, and in spite of the clearly hostile attitude of theologians, even bishops welcomed such troupes.[45] On one hand, imitative gestures were fundamentally immoral, an assessment based on the Christian "idea that *mimesis* all too easily falls prey to false reflection, while the truth is always hidden and thus beyond the mirror, which only reflects vanity, tempting inanity, and sensuality."[46] On the other hand, monastery members had been staging theater performances depicting episodes of biblical stories since the mid-tenth century, a development that complicated the blanket condemnation of performance and dramatic acting. Accordingly, a distinction between "good" and "evil" jesters was gradually introduced, with the former gaining some recognition as a profession in the thirteenth century.[47]

In the Middle Ages, gesture permeated a differentiating society. As a gesture of prayer, a sign of the cross, the knighthood accolade, or an oath—in the context of church, court, and law—the gesture had, *firstly,* a transcendent quality, which nevertheless depended on the correct execution of all movements: "Any formal mistake nullifies the effective force of the gesture, or, even worse, produces the opposite effect."[48] *Secondly,* the effect of the gesture was—particularly in the context of the clerical state—considered in its disciplining effect on the body. *Thirdly,* gesture had to be seen in the context of societal differentiation, and in that setting it proved to be always a performative representation: gesture lent itself to representation of power structures and hierarchies, with God placed above humans, ruler above subjects, clergy above laypeople, and men above women. When gestures were used appropriately, they represented and thus affirmed the (hierarchical) social order.

In its sign and action dimensions, the gestural was therefore very specifically contoured. The effectiveness of the gestural was coupled to correct

45 See Jean-Claude Schmitt, *Die Logik,* 1992, 254.
46 Jean-Claude Schmitt, *Die Logik,* 1992, 253.
47 See Jean-Claude Schmitt, *Die Logik,* 1992, 252–259.
48 Jean-Claude Schmitt, *Die Logik,* 1992, 305.

execution and unvarying form, and was protected by divine order. This in turn was made readable through individual signatures, which were based on similarities. Nevertheless—or maybe precisely because of that—mimesis as a gestural mode of imitation (and as belonging to the profession of jesters) was scorned. It was also problematic: truth, after all, is not visible on the surface but lies hidden behind appearances.

3 Early Modern Period

In the early modern period, however, it was precisely mimetic gesture that moved center-stage: *commedia dell'arte* was a form of professional theater featuring masks and improvisation that originated in Italy in the sixteenth century and later spread throughout Europe.[49] It reached a peak in the seventeenth century before falling into decline over the course of the eighteenth century. The characters of *commedia dell'arte* were stock types each defined by specific rules of movement and behavior. These allowed

> the human gesture to directly communicate with things, the bodies, or the gestures of the other characters. In this respect, the comic mask does not signify the limited or generalized form of a character waiting to be individualized, but essentially articulates the character's range of motion, its *gestus*, its demeanor.[50]

According to Ulrike Haß, the harlequin, the most famous of comic figures, embodied

> essentially a mediating character that allows the hallmark of one thing (the movement of a fly), to be seen in another (the movement of the harlequin's hand). In Harlequin's gesture, the signifier (hand) and the signified (fly) merge with an evidentness that would only be possible within the framework of a pre-existing order.[51]

49 The dominant genre of courtly theater in the sixteenth century was the *commedia erudita*—the learned comedy.
50 Ulrike Haß, *Das Drama*, 2005, 170.
51 Ulrike Haß, *Das Drama*, 2005, 169.

The "pre-existing order" Haß speaks of is the doctrine of signatures and the episteme of resemblance. According to Michel Foucault, the Renaissance was characterized by resemblance and similitude. Resemblance connected the most diverse objects and creatures of the world, even microcosmic and macrocosmic structures. These similarities, however, needed to be deciphered, which was possible because God gave all the world's living beings and things signatures, distinctive marks that indicate how and with what they are connected.[52] But the signatures were less (written) signs or representation than repetitions[53]—and it is precisely in such repetitions that the marked objects and organisms also held the powers of what they refer to.

In this light, the mimetic gesture of comedic figures played with the action dimension of priestly and disciplining gesture on one hand while on the other, counteracted the dominant sign dimension of gesture of the social body in the (European) late medieval and early modern eras. In fact, mimetic gesture was freed and acquired a certain autonomy. The magic of the mimetic, which was excluded in ecclesiastical and courtly contexts, was in the spotlight, bringing the media dimension of the gestural to the fore. The baroque (theatrical and courtly) practice of gestures, in turn, reconfigured the dimensions of the gestural.

4 Baroque Gesture Knowledge

The metaphorical concept of *theatrum mundi* became common in the seventeenth century. In an ecclesiastical context, the concept pertained to an understanding of the world as a theater and earthly existence as illusion. But *theatrum mundi* also referred to courtly life, which had developed a culture of extreme festivities and an associated culture of, and compulsion for, representation. Foremost was the idea that everyone is playing a role, but just as important was the making visible of an invisible, underlying divine order into which everyone must integrate. The theater as a cultural format gained a prominent position. In the theater, it was possible to capture and represent the world, but it was not achieved in a "naturalistic" manner.

52 See Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things* (New York: 1971), 17–45.
53 See Ulrike Haß, "Das Sichtbare und das Sagbare," in *Das Drama des Sehens. Auge, Blick und Bühnenform* (München: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 2005), 42–50, here in particular 45–6.

It was symbolic, allegorical. The theatrical space became, with the implementation of designs using perspective, a pictorial space and an arena for inscription.[54] Bodies and their gestures were harnessed to this representational-perceptual apparatus.

In opera and tragedy, characters usually stood in a symmetrical arrangement downstage or in a semicircle according to rank with the most important at the center. The actors assumed strictly prescribed poses (which were essentially static),[55] a basic body posture, stage crossing, a particular manner of walking and moving limbs (and permissible positions). These posture and movement rules were valid irrespective of the role. They were considered the right and proper way to act and were put in place out of a sense of propriety. Beyond the positioning and movement rules were detailed specifications for gestural signs that denoted specific feelings or affects. The repertoire was established in accordance with antique rhetoric (Quintilian's work in particular). The aim was not to produce "naturalistic" signs, gestures used in "everyday" life, but the development of "correct" signs representing the affect to be expressed. It was, however, possible to break the rules if, for instance, the character was being controlled by its affects. According to Erika Fischer-Lichte, the development of this theatrical code in the baroque period provided signs

> which are able to 1) perfectly and appropriately represent the self; 2) reveal the ephemeral phenomena themselves as signs referring to an eternal meaning; and 3) adequately depict the invisible order underlying the sensorially perceptible world.[56]

Tragedy was intended to have an effect that would cleanse the audience of their emotions, and building on that, enable them to judge and act "correctly," under the assumption that the "proper" representation of emotions would transfer them to the viewer. Accordingly, proper representations for emotions that needed to be understood and overcome were particularly important in the theatrical code. Underlying the aesthetics of effect was the idea that the

54 See Ulrike Haß, "Innen ohne Außen," and "Pozzo: Architektur des Sehens," in *Das Drama des Sehens. Auge, Blick und Bühnenform* (München: Wilhelm Fink Verlag 2005), 310–322, and 366–378; see also Irina Kaldrack, *Imaginierte Wirksamkeit. Zwischen Performance und Bewegungserkennung* (Berlin: Kadmos, 2011), 52–69.

55 On baroque theater see Erika Fischer-Lichte, *The Semiotics of Theatre* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), 151–153.

56 Erika Fischer-Lichte, *Semiotik des Theaters*, vol. 2. (Gunter Narr Verlag, Tübingen: 1989), 89; see also Erika Fischer-Lichte, *The Semiotics*, 1992, 155–177.

hidden order of the world could be accessed through reason (intellect), provided you did not allow yourself to be led astray by confusing affects, or feelings. Language was thought capable of fully expressing the order discerned by the mind.[57] High baroque theater thus combined rhetoric and affect in a system of producing appropriate signs to be read. The sign dimension of the gestural was predominant; on the baroque stage, the body entered the powerful media apparatus of the central perspective. Gesture turned into pose that inscribe meaning onto an architectural plane of representation.

5 Natural Gesture of Bourgeois Theater

In contrast to gesture as pose, or following on from that tradition, and in a revaluation of baroque patterns, gesture in bourgeois theater of the eighteenth century was conceived as an expression of the soul, which had the potential to directly touch the viewer. It was a division that took place mainly within the arts.

> It is the loss of a binding social catalogue of gestures, the destabilization of self-evidence and the lack of rules for polite social interaction that are at the origin of the phantasm of a natural language of gestures in the mid-eighteenth century.[58]

Fundamental to the shift was Lessing's 1766 treatise, "Laocoon; Or The Limits of Painting and Poetry," which marked a transition to "a new aesthetics of transitory appeal that is defined as 'beauty in motion.'"[59] Von Hermann emphasizes that such an aesthetic was framed against the background of and in opposition to the experimental physiology of the eighteenth century, where body movement was explained without any reference to soul.[60] What made the difference was beauty, and thus a harmonious form. This (normative) aesthetics also applied to the "art of acting," which Lessing, in his *Hamburg Dramaturgy*, situates "between the fine arts and poetry."[61] A culmination of that aesthetic is Johann Jakob Engel's *Ideen zu einer Mimik* (Ideas on Mimicry) published in 1785–86, which von Hermann characterizes as a "continuation in terms of acting theory"[62] of Lessing's aesthetics. Engel's "hermeneutic theory of expression" completes "the emotional turn in representation theory, from representation of the objectively given to the expression of feelings."[63] The decisive factor was that body movements and mimic movements were perceived as being caused by, although not completely determined by, shifts in the psyche. Therefore, "the correct expression is not a question of rule-guided representations of inner states, but a matter of carefully considered interpretation."[64]

Through this expressive turn, the actor became a "virtuoso of the physiognomic"[65] who mastered the forces of emotion in facial expressions and gestures to such a degree that he was able to produce

57 See René Descartes, *Regulae ad directionem ingenii. Rules for the Direction of the Natural Intelligence*, ed. and transl. by George Hefferman (Amsterdam, Atlanta: 1998/1701).
58 Günther Heeg, "Die Berührung der Geste," in *Verhaltene Beredsamkeit? Politik, Pathos und Philosophie der Geste*, ed. Mechael Wehren, Veronika Darian with assistance from Katharina Polster and Hilke Werner (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2009), 22–3.
59 Hans-Christian von Herrmann, *Das Archiv der Bühne* (München: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 2005), 93.
60 Hans-Christian von Herrmann, *Das Archiv*, 2005, 91–93.
61 Quoted from Hans-Christian von Herrmann, *Das Archiv*, 2005, 99.
62 Hans-Christian von Herrmann, *Das Archiv*, 2005, 112.
63 Günther Heeg, *Das Phantasma der natürlichen Gestalt. Körper, Sprache und Bild im Theater des 18. Jahrhunderts* (Frankfurt am Main: Stroemfeld Verlag, 2000), 304.
64 Günther Heeg, *Das Phantasma*, 2000, 307.
65 Hans-Christian von Herrmann, *Das Archiv*, 2005, 113.

the correct (and effective) expressive movement. In other words, gesture in bourgeois theater was assigned to emotions, affects, and the truth, and simultaneously was awarded the status of immediately touching the audience. In addition, it was always based on the harmonious pose that must develop from the expressive movements. At the same time, gesture was subject to the regime of linguistics and signs. Gesture—in the practice and the discourses of bourgeois theater—was a direct expression of emotion, which was, however, always and exclusively framed in the mode of language and meaning. The limit of meaningful and well-formed gesture was, in turn, based on the experience of the sublime. When the body of a character was at the mercy of excessive affects and physiological stimuli, speech was suspended. "Sublime gestures form, or rather, they occur when speech dissolves and disintegrates in the howl of nature that immediately affects us."[66] The hermeneutics of gesture is suspended, and in moments of pain, of madness, of death, "the machinery of the body irrupts into the psychological theater."[67]

Melodrama as a separate genre (of musical theater) provided these gestures with a stage, allowing them to turn into frozen poses or emerge as ornamental waves.

> The whole plot of the melodrama is designed in order for its heroine—who has to be a woman!—to lose her "consciousness," as the saying goes, and to be beside herself, to go mad. Then come the sublime gestures in a rush: frantic hand-wringing, vulnerable opening of arms, unseemly reaching and grasping, crashing around but, above all, the falling, groveling, wincing, sinking to the knees, struggling and succumbing.[68]

In bourgeois theater, gesture became expression, physicality rather than meaning dominated, but the physicality appeared in beautiful form. The soul communicated in or through this beauty if the character did not succumb to madness.[69]

Whereas gestures were produced and read as legible and appropriate signs in the baroque period,

66 Günther Heeg, *Die Berührung,* 2009, 30.
67 Hans-Christian von Herrmann, *Das Archiv,* 2005, 117.
68 Günther Heeg, *Die Berührung,* 2009, 31.
69 In the nineteenth century, the idea of gestures as a universal language, not as an expression, but in a lexical sense, also emerged, which led to the development of sign language theory and practice. According to Schmitt, only then was gesture finally desacralized, the faith in transubstantiation left to the individual, which created the opportunity to think gestures as "act of communication […] along the lines of language" (Jean-Claude Schmitt, *Die Logik,* 1992, 340). In Ulrike Bergermann's, *Ein Bild von einer Sprache: Konzepte von Bild und Schrift und das Hamburger Notationssystem für Gebärdensprache,* München: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 2001, Bergermann outlines the different overlaps, translations and shifts, which, while constituting sign language as the origin of language before any spoken language, also repeatedly links it to imagery and written language.

the debate regarding gestures in the eighteenth century strengthened the action and media dimension as "immediately" affective on one hand, and as direct communication on the other. In previous historical reconstructions, what becomes clear is how this supposedly natural gesture was, firstly, subject to a pictorial form, an established pictorial aesthetic (and thus a specific media aesthetic); and secondly, that the underlying logic of the natural gesture's "direct communication" was, in reality, the logic of a linguistic regime.

6 Movement and Gesture in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries

By 1900, gesture and media had become entangled with each other in a variety of ways. They were part of a similar practice, a similar knowledge, and legitimized each other. Various media, including film (since it was able to represent movement and gesture) were used to explore and optimize movement. The near metaphysical status dance and gesture had acquired in the historical avant-garde had become associated with film and its suggestive powers. Harmonious movement had become the optimal work gesture.

A crucial concept for this mélange was that of an unconsciousness of movement, which first appeared in Heinrich von Kleist's essay *On the Marionette Theater*, originally published in four installments in the *Berliner Abendblätter* newspaper in December 1810. In a conversation about a marionette dance, the grace of a young boy, and the fencing skills of a bear, "for the first time movement liberated from any trace of linguistic sign appears in the sphere of art."[70] According to Kleist, the mechanical and unconscious (body) movement of the marionette produced the most perfect grace—at best, this quality of grace would reappear in movement of the very highest consciousness: "Grace appears most purely in that human form which either has no consciousness or an infinite consciousness. That is, in the puppet, or in the god."[71] A bear's movements, in contrast, are primarily efficient. It doesn't allow itself to be deceived, anticipates its opponent's movements, and parries all attacks with minimal effort.

70 Hans-Christian von Herrmann, *Das Archiv*, 2005, 147.
71 Heinrich von Kleist, "On the Marionette Theater," trans. Idris Parry, accessed June 15, 2020, southerncross-review.org/9/kleist.htm. See also Veronica Kelly and Dorothea E. von Mücke, eds. *Body and Text in the Eighteenth Century* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994), 209–226 and 329–333.

Kleist's essay made manifest the idea of an unconsciousness of movement based on the body and defined by the laws of the body's mechanics that connects the perception and execution of movements beneath the threshold of consciousness.[72]

Physiological research in the nineteenth century was focused on the laws of body mechanics. Skeletons were measured, living people, soldiers in particular, were (chrono)photographed, their gait and gestures clocked, collated, calculated, and evaluated in graphs of function. Studies by brothers Wilhelm and Eduard Weber,[73] chronophotographic images by Étienne-Jules Marey,[74] and the works of Christian Wilhelm Braune and Otto Fischer[75] investigated the truth of human movement, and located it by detaching movement from the body, by abstracting it in order to make it as describable and calculable as (a) mathematical function(s).

This knowledge of body mechanics was applied to motion in workplaces in around 1900. Ergonomics in the tradition of Taylor's scientific management deconstructed units of movement—gestures—into elementary movements in order to improve them by eliminating unnecessary motion.[76] Frank Bunker Gilbreth fitted light bulbs to workers' hands, tools, and machines, making movements visible on stereoscopic photographs as traces of light.[77] Movements of a variety of workers were then measured and assessed according to speed, efficiency, and the minimization of fatigue, and an ideal movement was defined as the norm and spatialized as a wireframe model. The aim was to extract an efficient and optimized gestural form that could serve as a training model. The perfect work movement was the performance and embodiment of an ideal—the forms were not exclusively about efficient action, but also aesthetics, which made it possible to consider them gestures of work.

Concomitant to the development of the positivist concept of movement outlined here, an understanding emerged that aligned movement with intuition, feeling, the non-rational, and metaphysical. It was linked to the suggestive ideas of the new medium of film and attached itself to the physiological knowledge of movement, redefining it. Essential to this understanding was the popularization of Nietzsche's *The Birth of Tragedy from the Spirit of Music* (1872) and his distinction between the Dionysian and the Apollonian. For Nietzsche, the Apollonian in art belongs to the dream, the visual, the creative; the Dionysian belongs to drunkenness, to music, to movement; more precisely: to dance. The Dionysian had the potential of communicating from body to body through sympathy or arousal, and thus to transform. Such communication could also be found in experiments and theories on hypnotized women in the late nineteenth century. The women became exquisite dancers under hypnosis, without the intervention of the will, through just music, automatically, so to speak. "Free Dance" and its protagonists built on this movement knowledge—the movements of dance were thought

72 See Hans-Christian von Herrmann, *Das Archiv,* 2005, 151ff.

73 On the Weber brothers' studies, see Wilhelm Weber and Eduard Weber, *Mechanik der menschlichen Gehwerkzeuge: Eine anatomisch-physiologische Untersuchung* (Göttingen: Dieterich, 1836); see also Hans-Christian von Herrmann, *Das Archiv,* 2005, 160ff., and Friedrich Kittler, "Der Mensch, ein betrunkener Dorfmusikant," in *Bühnen des Wissens. Interferenzen zwischen Wissenschaft und Kunst*, ed. Helmar Schramm (Berlin: Dahlem University Press, 2003).

74 See Étienne-Jules Marey, *Die Chronophotographie,* trans. from French into German by A. von Heydebreck, in *Kinematograph* Nr. 2, French original published in 1893 (Frankfurt am Main: 1985).

75 See Christian Wilhelm Braune and Otto Fischer, *Der Gang des Menschen. Versuche am unbelasteten und belasteten Menschen* Theil 1. *Abhandlungen der Mathematisch-Physischen Classe der Königlich Sächsischen Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften*, Vol. 21, Nr. 4 (Leipzig: Hirzel, 1895). See also Erika Fischer-Lichte, *Semiotik des Theaters* (Tübingen: 1895).

76 On "lost motions" see Konrad Strutz's chapter *Gestures of Labor. An Artistic Contemplation* in this book, pp. 51–64.

77 On Gilbreth's studies, see Hans-Christian von Herrmann, *Das Archiv,* 2005, 167ff.

to possibly offer access to the origins of life and metaphysical truths, and communicate them to the audience.[78]

Discourse on media at the time connected with the concepts outlined above in many ways. The focus was on questions regarding the specific qualities of different media—e.g. photography, film, cinematography, and, to some extent, radio—and their effects. It ranged between the poles of the objectifiable and the non-objectifiable on the one hand, and in the register of transmission and excitation on the other.

As automatic depictions, the new media had objective qualities.[79] In addition, they made the non-perceptible perceptible and accessible to conscious knowledge. At the same time, media addressed the individual, the concrete; they showed rather than described, and were therefore particularly suited to representing experience and expression (in the discourse of the period).[80]

The new media worked in ways that were difficult to grasp at the time, operating at the level of neural impulses as well as having psychological impact. In discourses contemporary to the early days of recording media, film in particular was described as the objectification (and control) of psychological structures of perception—of attention, memory, and imagination[81]—and in this sense conceptualized as an optical unconscious.[82] Similarly, film was explored for its effect, and linked to nervous irritation and states of excitement on the part of the audience. Early cinematic theories were linked to traditional ideas of mass psychology and its concepts of transference and hypnosis.[83] From this conglomerate of ideas, film emerged as something able to "technologically transmit experiences from one individual to the next."[84] In other words, the new medium of film was linked to the question of perception and the transmission of movement. The tradition that was introduced in the media epistemology of the time can be concisely described as movement detaching itself from the body and affecting movement by means of film. Effectiveness is not bound to observation and interpretation, but happens in the mode of "tactile habituation."[85]

78 Examples of such ideas are, for instance, Loie Fuller's veil dances in the 1890s, Edward Gordon Craig's 1905 conception of the Übermarionette, Adolphe Appia's theater experiments in Hellerau in the 1910s, and Oskar Schlemmer's theater experiments in the 1910s and 1920s.

79 On the discourse of self-representation, see Joel Snyder, "Visualization and Visibility," in Picturing Science, Producing Art, ed., Caroline A. Jones et al. (New York, London: Routledge, 1998), 379–397.

80 On the problem of the relationship between visibility, abstraction, and the concrete in contemporary film theory—especially with regard to facial expression and gesture—see Béla Balázs, "Visible Man or the Culture of Film," in Béla Balázs: *Early Film Theory—Visible Man and The Spirit of Film*, ed. Erica Carter, trans. Rodney Livingstone (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2010), 9ff.

81 Hugo Münsterberg, *The Photoplay: A Psychological Study* (New York: D. Appleton and Co, 1916).

82 Walter Benjamin, *The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility and Other Writings on Media* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2008/1936).

83 See Michael Gamper, "Charisma, Hypnose, Nachahmung. Massenpsychologie und Medientheorie," in *Trancemedien und neue Medien um 1900: ein anderer Blick auf die Moderne*, ed. Markus Hahn and Erhard Schüttpelz (Bielefeld: Transcript-Verlag, 2009), Medienumbrüche Series 39: 351–373.

84 See Ute Holl, *Kino, Trance & Kybernetik* (Berlin: brinkmann & bose, 2002), 24.

85 See Walter Benjamin, *The Work of Art,* 2008/1936, 39f.

The main point is that around the year 1900, research on gestures (of work), the representation of movement, and media development became entangled and began referring to each other. In doing so, media objectified gestures on one hand, and on the other, gestures became the true representation of individual, vivid expression. The action dimension of gestures in this reconstruction was particularly evident in the operating gestures of work, which science sought to objectify, that is, to measure and calculate, and, above all, to optimize.

Media and movement were particularly entangled with regard to their capacity to produce experience and excitation in the recipient, or rather to transfer the experience expressed in gestures and facial expressions to them. The hopes and promises for immediacy and completeness of media recording and intuitive perception and transmission in the gestural were united. The media dimension of the gesture, which purported to "directly" transmit experience, became evident in the media and the discourses on them.

Truth about movement and truth connected to a metaphysical unconscious of movement merged with the specific media quality of film. Film, in turn, was thematized with regard to its biological excitation potential, and was therefore particularly easy to connect to nineteenth century biologically based theories of expression. These theories explained the assumed correspondence between perceptions of the psyche, emotions or affects, and (readable) mimic or gestural signs with physiological causalities, which overlapped with nerve stimulation, electromagnetism, and vital forces, and allowed them to be connected to technologies of the time.

7 Gestural Evolutions

A new understanding of gesture emerged from the end of the nineteenth century with the theory of evolution and the anthropological approaches that grew from it. Charles Darwin outlined a model of the development of gestures in *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals*.[86] He argued that gesture is derived from three principles, with the third principle

86 Charles Darwin, *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals* (London: John Murray, 1872); see also Catherine Newmark, "Charles Darwin: The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals," in *Hauptwerke der Emotionssoziologie*, ed. Konstanze Senge and Rainer Schützeichel (Wiesbaden: Springer VS, 2013).

of "the direct action of the excited nervous system on the body"[87] tying in with physiological discourse of the time.

The first principle of "serviceable actions becoming habitual in association with certain states of the mind" ensures

> that movements which are serviceable in gratifying some desire, or in relieving some sensation, if often repeated, become so habitual that they are performed, whether or not of any service, whenever the same desire or sensation is felt, even in a very weak degree.[88]

The action was thus separated from its purpose by habit and linked to a stimulus as a pattern. According to the second "principle of antithesis," new gestures could develop that are the opposite of such movements of expression:

> Hence, if certain actions have been regularly performed, in accordance with our first principle, under a certain frame of mind, there will be a strong and involuntary tendency to the performance of directly opposite actions, whether or not they are of any use, under the excitement of an opposite frame of mind.[89]

With Darwin's evolutionary theory of the gestural, the physiological stimulus-response pattern is transposed into a model of development and anthropologized, with the gesture in a sense detaching itself from the biology and nature and becoming culture. The crucial element is repetition, which gradually dissociates the action from its purpose and thus "liberates" it. In Darwin's model, the gesture remains bound to a stimulus or state of mind, and thus retains a trigger. Nevertheless, it is disengaged from its purpose orientation and subjected to a sort of immanent logic: the operations of the gesture are imitation and repetition—and thus the mimetic comes to invade the heart of the gestural. While gestures are subject to a stimulus, they follow a logic of similarity and contrast.

André Leroi-Gourhan's[90] 1960s techno-anthropological model of gestures was influenced by Darwin while foregrounding the question of operations and operational chains. Leroi-Gourhan's evolutionary model is particularly interesting with regard to the relationship between gesture and media considered here.

According to Leroi-Gourhan's anthropology of technology, technology and speech, or symbolic representation, share the same evolutionary origin. The preconditions for both were the upright gait, the associated freeing of the hands, and the evolution of memory:

87 Charles Darwin, *The Expression*, 1872, 66.
88 Charles Darwin, *The Expression*, 1872, 348; see also Catherine Newmark, *Charles Darwin*, 2013, 348.
89 Charles Darwin, *The Expression*, 1872, 348; see also Catherine Newmark, *Charles Darwin*, 2013, 348.
90 André Leroi-Gourhan, *Gesture and Speech* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1993).

> the operations involved in making a tool anticipate the occasions for its use and the tool is preserved to be used on later occasions. [...] Techniques involve both gestures and tools, sequentially organized by means of a "syntax" that imparts both fixity and flexibility to the series of operations involved. This operating syntax is suggested by the memory and comes into being as a product of the brain and the physical environment.[91]

Early tools served as amplifiers of hand activities. The manipulation of tools followed the same trajectories as the underlying operations; the relation between hand and tool is, according to Leroi-Gourhan, one of "direct motor function." In a second stage of development, (indicated by spear-throwers and similar weapons), the hand-tool relationship changed, becoming "indirect motor function"—new, dissimilar operational chains were necessary for the tool to fulfill its purpose.[92] Only with the introduction of the steam engine and industrialization was the hand freed from its "motor function," which forced a new relationship to develop between hand and tool.[93]

A key point here is that while gesture operates through repetition and imitation, it evolves in the in-between of body, tool, and purpose, and in doing so, it is increasingly dissociated from materiality and mechanical causalities that are exteriorized to machines. To a certain extent, the action dimension of the gesture of work disappeared into the translational chains of electronics and circuitry, allowing the sign and media dimensions to come to the fore.

Approaches to Contemporary Gesture Constellations

Over the past fifty years, there have been periodic upsurges of interest in the gestural. Linguistics shaped by cognitive science (psycholinguistics), which focuses on speech-accompanying gestures, continued the evolution theory tradition.[94] Here, I would like to revisit Vilém Flusser's attempt at a phenomenology of the gestural, *Gestures,*[95] which is firmly rooted in cybernetic tradition while also tying in to philosophical phenomenology. Flusser provided the following definition: "a gesture is a movement of the body or of a tool connected to the body for which there is no satisfactory causal explanation."[96] While gestures have a cause and do not occur randomly, they are more than just cause and effect. Gestures have something "extra" that appears as meaning and calls for interpretation (in particular on the part of the observer). On the part of the gesticulating person, the gesture is particularly linked to the moment of representation, and it is always formed in that representation. For Flusser, the gesture must always be considered "also as codified meaning,"[97] and gesture therefore has a sign or symbolic dimension. In terms of expressive

91 André Leroi-Gourhan, *Gesture,* 1993, 114.
92 See André Leroi-Gourhan, *Gesture,* 1993, 243ff.
93 Leroi-Gourhan offers compelling arguments for this thesis using specific stages of technology, which, on the one hand, reorganize memory functions, and reframe the functions of the hand on the other. The narrative culminates in the invention of electronic brains as a current new formation in which neither the hand nor the memory of the human being is necessary, leading to the creation of a new situation; see Leroi-Gourhan, *Gesture,* 1993, 8–9.
94 See e.g., Adam Kendon, *Gesture, Visible Action as Utterance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); see also David McNeill, *Gesture and Thought* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), and Michael Tomasello, *Origins of Human Communication* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2008).
95 Vilém Flusser, *Gestures* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014).
96 Vilém Flusser, *Gestures,* 2014, 2.
97 Vilém Flusser, *Gestures,* 2014, 2.

gestures, the moment of formation is the transformation from a (psycho-physical) state of mind into the affect that appears in and through the gesture: "affect 'intellectualizes' states of mind by formalizing them into symbolic gestures."[98]

A gesture is (at the moment of performative representation and formation) an "expression of freedom."[99] In addition, Flusser distinguishes between gestures according to what they are directed at (others, inanimate matter, nothing, themselves).[100] For Flusser, the symbolic dimension of the gesture is crucial; the action dimension recedes behind it. As an expression of freedom, it cannot be measured according to its effect, though some gestures Flusser examines are linked to media (for instance writing, filming, telephoning). To some extent, gesture is a medium of freedom as it is an expression of freedom linked to media. In Flusser's work, the something "extra" constituting the gestural is in a sense captured and defined as representation as its symbolic dimension.

At present, topics for the question of gesture are the independent activity, the something "extra" that cannot be captured, and the gap that cannot be closed. Discourses of affect and performativity as well as ontologies like new materialism have made sure that

98 Vilém Flusser, *Gestures*, 2014, 7.
99 Vilém Flusser, *Gestures*, 2014, 168.
100 Flusser makes this distinction in the appendix of the book, which is a plea for "a general theory of gestures," see Vilém Flusser, *Gestures*, 2014, 161–176. The appendix, "Toward a General Theory of Gestures" is written in the context of his philosophy of history and is less of an explanation of gestures.

> *materiality, technicity, and affectivity* have emerged as new parameters in the humanities, especially in the realm of cultural studies and philosophy. The term *agency* has also been expanded to apply to nonhuman agents and helped to push language—as a hegemonic legacy of modernism—off center stage.[101]

From this angle, the gestural is something associated with the affective that leans toward the technical but has a productive effectiveness that appears as performativity or agency, giving the gestural an action dimension; likewise, the gesture is that which can transform itself into a (technical) materiality and in doing so can produce meaning in the interplay between materiality, technicity, and affectivity.

101 Marie-Lusie Angerer, "Moving Forces," *Minnesota Review 88* (May 2017), 85–86. On the philosophical-historical traditions of these discourses and their intersections, see also Marie-Luise Angerer, *Ecology of Affect: Intensive Milieus and Contingent Encounters* (Lüneburg: meson press, 2017), accessed March 15, 2020, meson.press/books/affektokologie/. On the current entanglements in digital cultures and the formation of a new regime of thought and practices, see Martina Leeker's chapter *Pain, Befallen-ness, Conflict, Mediocrity. Dark Entanglements for Artistic Research and Critique in Digital Cultures* in this book, pp. 293–313.

Modeling the Gestural

My tour of the selected historical constellations of practices and theories of gesture embedded in their respective social and media contexts reveals that what gestures are and what they do is addressed in similar motifs and terms, but that those motifs and terms are always subject to shifting meanings.

Gestures comprised different forms of body movement in different eras, from hand gestures accompanying speech, acting, body poses and action, up to movements at work and inner attitudes. Gesture theories organize gestures according to their occurrence at different occasions and reflection in their (often institutional) contexts. Gestures are assigned functions that are often framed as expression, representation, and communication. Those functions are often linked to the contexts of the gestures and their historical discourses, and are accompanied by specific assumed effects of gestures: gestures convince by expressing the content of what is said—and historically much later partially replacing that content—and winning over an audience to your narratives and arguments. But they also discipline the body and spirit (in the clerical state). They channel (transcendent: divine and demonic) forces and actualize the divine order; they affirm social relations. Gestures touch upon and communicate emotions and states of mind in particular, but also metaphysical truths.

Genealogical perspectives in turn explain how gestures became what they are and thus lend plausibility to the assumed effects. Gestures develop in the modes of imitation and repetition, moving between physiological-physical causality and cultural construction. As intentional-habitual movement, they are indebted partly to the pattern of stimulus-response, but, as a physical technique, they are only conditionally indebted to the means-ends relationship. Thus, gestures oscillate between materiality, causality and technicity as much as between biology and culture.

A historical modeling the gestural repeatedly draws on similar motifs of the functions and effects of gesture, some of which are charged with almost contradictory meanings. In my (rough) historical reconstruction, it should be clear that three dimensions of the gestural are continually being placed in new relationships. What gesture is in each case is outlined in the relationship between the action, sign, and media dimensions.

The current upswing in the gestural suggests that these dimensions are being put into a new relationship again, especially in entanglements with the political on one hand, and media on the other. Different dynamics emerge at the intersection of "media" (as technical apparatus as well as social institutions), "politics" (as institutional politics as well as the political) and gesture. Media disseminate and contextualize gestures, thus condensing the form of specific gestures and assigning meaning to them. In other words, they shape the sign character of the gestural. This happens both in political communication and the media, and with regard to gestures of control. In the process, media also constitute the effects of gestures and thus strengthen their action dimension, which is obvious with regard to the control effect of gestures, but media also strengthen the political effect of gestures by emphasizing them. However, the political effect is, first of all, always bound to political institutionalization and corresponds to a certain public sphere, the contemporary form of which is the like economy in social media. Its specificity is its nature of affordance, which seems to go hand in hand with the implementation of contactless gesture control, media circulation, and platform publics. Imitative repetition of gestures and gesture choreographies are in vogue, virtuosity in execution and appropriation in variations are paramount. Meaning and effect is less decisive than process and performance; your own imitative activity in a (media) representation (in front of an audience) becomes the major focus.

The media dimension of the gestural is then less the function of communication and transmission than the function of connecting. The gestural in

contemporary practices allows people to connect in groups and to gain specific experiences in their activities. This emerges in what Kaldrack and Schulze call an "appreciative contest,"[102] and in associations with political protest groups.[103] This contouring of the gestural and its media dimension itself ties into historical traditions insofar as gesture moves between and negotiates inner experience and exterior construction.

My own modeling of the gestural thus proves to have deep historical roots. At the same time, it has developed from practical interdisciplinary work and a reflective theoretical examination of that work. It would have been different without that personal experience and my exposure to performative and media-creating processes, and it has become increasingly differentiated in the productive tension of discussions and reflections in different registers and contexts.[104]

102 See Irina Kaldrack and Tobias Schulze's chapter *Dancing Fists* in this book, pp. 315–324.
103 See Riccardo Emilio Chesta and Zoe Lefkofridi's chapter *Symbolic Gestures in Contemporary Protest Movements* in this book, pp. 161–181 as well as Timo Herbst and Irina Kaldrack's chapter *G20* in this book, pp. 259–292.
104 See Stefanie Kiwi Menrath's chapter *Artistic-Scientific Complicities. The Entanglement between Gesture, Media, and Politics project from an Empirical-Cultural Anthropological Perspective* in this book, pp. 293–346.

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Konrad Strutz, *Gestures of Labor. An Artistic Contemplation*

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Variability is a defining feature of human motion. Compared with the repeatable movement patterns of industrial machinery, the movements of people at work have, in the past, been hastily construed as imperfect, ripe for eradication, to be replaced by sophisticated equipment. In the course of the streamlining of factory floor choreographies, however, individual motion sequences were eventually recognized as professional gestures that, beyond their ability to flexibly adapt to changing circumstances, also facilitate the conveyance of experience-based knowledge and the transfer of professional skills. Only now that computers are being developed with the capabilities to learn from heterogeneous data has variability itself become a target for economization.

Lost Motion

In a 1911 book that laid the groundwork for his motion studies, Frank Bunker Gilbreth (1868–1924) remarked that the cumulative harmful effect of natural phenomena on the US economy "is negligible compared with the loss each year due to wasteful motions made by the workers of our country."[1] He went on to detail how the supposed inefficiencies of manual labor could be tackled using his methods and how the result would see overall productivity at least double, which, he believed, would give workers a choice between higher wages or more leisure time. Although that expectation presumably went unfulfilled, the Gilbreths'[2] theories did have a significant impact, particularly severe for workers, through their amalgamation with Frederick Taylor's (1856–1915) methods of scientific management and their subsequent introduction to factories and as an academic discipline. The discussion that was spawned by the development of the theories and which later expanded beyond the scientific realm to a more popular arena[3] arguably changed the notion of human motor abilities and their status in the context of industrial management, as well as the roles attributed to workers in production processes. In hindsight, time-motion studies represent just one of several recurring attempts to contain and subsume bodily motion within a discrete formal language, notwithstanding its intrinsic structure, which is irreducibly continuous.

The methodology of time-motion studies is based on a technical language designed to describe specific tasks by encoding bodily movements as an ordered list of distinct elements,[4] each referring to a predefined vocabulary of "elementary" motor sequences. The resulting notation of movement patterns—which was task oriented rather than action oriented compared to notational schemes from non-industrial fields like Labanotation—provided the starting point for extrapolating "simplified" or "optimized" variants of those sequences, which were meant to be conveyed to workers and obeyed by them to increase output while reducing expenditure in terms of time and resources. However, the Gilbreths' work is today equally noted for the techniques of data acquisition that they had specifically tailored towards the requirements of their method—and particularly the artifacts that these techniques subsequently produced. Relying heavily on photography and cinematography, they designed standardized settings and employed chrono-cyclographic methods[5] to capture worker movements as a time series in photographic protocols. The images were designed to be commensurable with each other as well as to facilitate the extraction of formal descriptions of the sequences. "Optimized" sequences were eventually even molded into wire-frame models used as means to document the details of movement sequences and to communicate them during instruction.

1 Frank Gilbreth, *Motion Study: A Method for Increasing the Efficiency of the Workman* (New York: D. Van Nostrand Company, 1911), 1.
2 Lillian Moller Gilbreth (1878–1972) and Frank Bunker Gilbreth were assumedly co-authoring all publications. Lillian was not named as co-author in publications until after she had received a PhD.
3 *Cheaper by the Dozen* (1948), written by F. B. Gilbreth Jr. and his sister E. Gilbreth Carey, was a bestselling novel that recounted their childhood experience.
4 The main syntactical entities consisting of eighteen different *Therbligs* ("Gilbreth" in reverse).
5 "The chrono-cyclograph consists of a small electric light attached to the hand or other moving part of the person or machine under observation. The motion is recorded on an ordinary photographic film or plate. The path of the motion stands out in two dimensions." F. B. Gilbreth, US Patent 1,199,980, filed May 23, 1913, and issued Oct. 3, 1916.

19.1.2013, 12:43–17:38, **2013**
22 pcs. 35mm film on glass; 210 × 85 cm

***Direction*, 2009**
c-print on aluminum;
45 × 60 cm

The photographic and sculptural byproducts of the process yielded remarkably appealing depictions and the Gilbreths' own judgment appears to have fallen victim to the visual stimulations expressed by their method through the alluring aesthetics of the rapidly developing photographic technology of the time. Their analyses tend to not thoroughly distinguish between conclusions based on rigorous metrics of efficiency and more vaguely denoted aesthetic qualities such as "smooth" or "more harmonious." This attitude was obviously shared by many of their contemporaries who, inspired by machine aesthetics, would pursue the imitation of movement patterns witnessed in then-novel industrial machinery and advocate their imposition onto the biomechanical domain. Many such instances can be found in the performing arts of the time where, after 1900, machine dances or mechanical ballets denoting the (imagined) motorization of dancers, emerge.[6]

And while machines that could swiftly and rectilinearly perform predefined movements became models of ideal motion, the apparatus that recorded the movements, either in one long exposure or in a series of successive still images, made an equally big impression. Tellingly, a statement by Étienne-Jules Marey (1830–1904) echoes the emphatically phenotypical view on human motion: "Living beings have been frequently and in every age compared to machines, but it is only in the present day that the bearings and the justice of this comparison are fully comprehensible."[7] In retrospect, it is a view that appears thoroughly confined to that era's faith in progress and technology. The reasoning hints at metrics of similarity that derive not directly from a spatial, encompassing domain, but instead straight from the planar projection of a photographic image. Just as in the Gilbreths' work later on, the basis for the comparison was a specific angle of view with an orientation that allowed for a reduction of complexity in the motion sequences as they took place. Combined with a trademark bio-metric grid in the background, the Gilbreths' method specifically aimed to flatten spatial phenomena so as to simplify their analysis. In this sense, it could be argued that the aesthetics of the time were partly inspired by a new-found ability to detach from a continuous and therefore uncontrollable space in favor of a projection that promised to make conformal repeatability, that is

6 Felicia McCarren, *Dancing Machines: Choreographies of the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), 4.
7 Étienne-Jules Marey, *La Machine Animale* (Paris: Librairie Germer Baillière,1873), V.

***Fold III*, 2019**
pigment-print on aluminum,
36 × 45 cm

repetition without variations, possible to achieve. This notion generously ignored the persistent variability of continuous movements that even projected images would have inherited had they been taken from distinct viewpoints.

Drawing on motion studies, the industrial efficiency movement associated with Frederick Taylor sought the refinement of the individual movement into its "essential" or "minimum" form in an "economy of gesture" that was intended to permit the synchronization and streamlining of group activity in the workshop or plant.[8]

Along these lines of thought, variability in bodily motion was nothing but an inefficient deviation from the ideal path exemplified by a paragon of machine-inspired movement and didn't fit well into the world-view advocated by the sciences of the time with their paradigms entrenched in deterministic models and rooted in Newtonian mechanics.[9] With its disregard for individual, variational manifestations of bodily movements and

8 Alix Beeston, *In and Out of Sight: Modernist Writing and the Photographic Unseen* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 134.
9 Nihat Özaka and Margareta Nordin, *Fundamentals of Biomechanics: Equilibrium, Notion and Deformation* (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1991).

its exclusively mimeomorphic[10] approach to manual work, motion studies would not only affect the diversity of workplaces and the autonomy of workers, but, on a more fundamental level, also reduce the ability of a workforce to autonomously and flexibly adapt to changing conditions. Moreover, the rigid and meticulous pre-definitions of the parameters of every single move would suppress the autonomous deciphering of tasks into motor control and weaken the knowledge-generating coupling between thought processes and biomechanical experiences.[11]

Serendipitous Grasp

Human motor variability thus represents the antithesis of the pre-defined schemes advocated by motion studies. With a view on biomechanics that emphasized the mere execution of discretized sequences given in a formal language, the interpretation of variability could only point towards uncorrelated noise,[12] making it a nuisance that ought to be minimized. The "wasteful" motion that the Gilbreths considered "lost" to a productive process (and, through their sense of mission, also to the national economy) finds its fractal replication at the micro-level in the form of recurring variations within the repeated execution of one and the same movement. Yet, just prior to these developments (twelve years before[13] Norbert Wiener's [1894–1964] pivotal publication[14]), a reading of movement variability was theorized in which meaningful effects, if not purpose, for it were established. As part of his research on the nervous system's motor control, Soviet neurophysiologist Nikolai Bernstein (1896–1966) produced insights into the development of skills and their manifestation through training schemes based on repetition. The interactions between biomechanical and cognitive processes depend on variability, which, in his rationale, is not a byproduct born of a lack of precision, but a hallmark of bodily movement. The repeated execution of movements together with simultaneous sensory feedback from the impacts induce a heuristic process driven by fluctuating changes between individual sequences—a mechanism he synoptically described as "repetition without repetition."[15]

10 In contrast to polymorphic actions that "may be executed with many different behaviors, according to the social context and, again, according to the social context the same behavior may represent different actions. Therefore, polymorphic actions cannot be mimicked unless the point of the action and the social context of the action is understood." Harry Collins, *Tacit and Explicit Knowledge* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013), 56.

11 A comparison to Moritz Schreber's (1808–1861) pedagogical ideas and apparatuses seems rewarding insofar as both approaches claim corrective effects versus a supposedly untamed physiology.

12 Karl Newell and Eric James, "The amount and structure of human movement variability," in *Routledge Handbook of Biomechanics and Human Movement Science*, ed. Youlian Hong, Roger Barlett (New York: Routledge, 2008), 92–104.

13 Nikolai Bernstein, *Obshchaya Biomekhanika* (General Biomechanics). (Moscow: VCSPS, 1926).

14 Norbert Wiener, *Cybernetics: Or Control and Communication in the Animal and the Machine* (Cambridge, MS: MIT Press, 1948).

15 Nikolai Bernstein, "On Dexterity and its Development," trans. Mark Latash, in *Dexterity and its Development*, ed. Mark Latash, Michael Turvey (Hillsdale, NJ: L. Erlbaum Associates, 1996), 204.

***Fold I*, 2019**
pigment-print on aluminum,
21 × 13 cm

Plaid, **2020**
fabric, needles; 34 × 22 cm

The underlying model is a continuous probing of the relationship between a specific execution of an act and the corresponding response, through which a stream of information is generated that would not be formally explicable. This dialogue with the workpiece enables workers to refine their technique and adjust to changing conditions of the workplace or to varying properties of the material. Movement variation is an indispensable part of this serendipitous learning strategy: while performing iterations of a task, the performer has to synchronously assess effects and changes. Typical variations that occur in motor performance across multiple repetitions[16] evoke experiential feedback that allows comprehension of the features of a task at hand, the materials involved, and the effect of a certain movement. The perceptional agglomerate generated from this process yields the ingredients of a tacit form of knowledge. "We may say in general that by acquiring a skill, whether muscular or intellectual, we achieve an understanding which we cannot put into words and which is continuous with the inarticulate faculties of animals."[17] Clearly, it is within the very seriousness of earnest practice and labor that a variational and playful approach is most rewarding.

The implications of this concept naturally contradict any strategy that tries to statically link the purpose of a movement to its visual shape or a symbolic representation. A discrete sequential decomposition with its determinate number of permutations will fall short of the expressiveness emerging from a continuum, just as the inherent concurrency within any bodily movement leaves its aggregate directedness undetermined and indescribable, no matter how many bifurcations an analytic scheme entailed. Imposing rectilinear abstractions onto biomechanics in order to contain their complexity in analytically accessible constructs is a fully comprehensible intention. Yet, with bodily motion intrinsically continuous and variable, technical languages or wire-frame-models do not suffice.

Variability, however, plays a part not only in the acquisition of knowledge, it also affects its

16 Nicholas Stergiou and Leslie Decker, "Human Movement Variability, Nonlinear Dynamics, and Pathology: Is There A Connection?" *Human Movement Science* 30, no. 5 (2011): 869–888.

17 Michael Polanyi, *Personal Knowledge* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1958), 90.

conveyance. Just as gestures meant to be identical are never the same, but are nevertheless readable—perhaps even more so if their differences can be parsed—the movement variability that allowed a proficiency to consolidate in the first place can also communicate its own underlying complexity. Bernstein showed, mainly through his work with musicians, that as performers become proficient, the variability in their performance does not necessarily converge to monotonicity or perfect repetition.[18] Instead, what may be perceived as virtuosity can as well amount to movement variations that bear witness to the knowledge, or expertise for that matter, that had been accumulated. A description of pottery apprenticeship in Japan by anthropologist John Singleton (1930–2019) is illustrative:

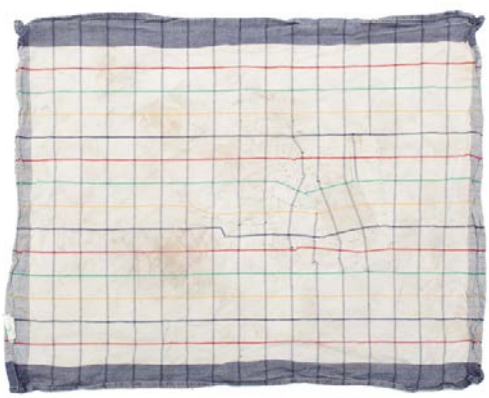
> It is expected that serious learning will proceed unmediated by didactic instruction. [...] When an apprentice presumes to ask the master a question, he will be asked why he has not been watching the potter at work, where the answer would be obvious.[19]

This example emphasizes the incommensurability between a description and the supposedly corresponding operation. It hints at how displaying the (concurrent) actions involved in a task make the heuristics of acquiring expertise in the first place comprehensible. In this way, physical movements, as adaptive and knowledge generating processes, also act as professional gestures that support the conveyance of a task's conditions and the associated perpetual decision-making during its performance.

18 Mihai Nadin, "Variability by Another Name: 'Repetition Without Repetition,'" in *Anticipation: Learning from the Past*, ed. Mihai Nadin, Cognitive Systems Monographs (COSMOS), volume 25 (Cham: Springer, 2015): 329–337.

19 John Singleton, "Japanese Folkcraft Pottery Apprenticeship: Cultural Patterns of Educational Institution," in *Apprenticeship: From Theory to Methods and Back Again*, ed. Michael Coy (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989), 26.

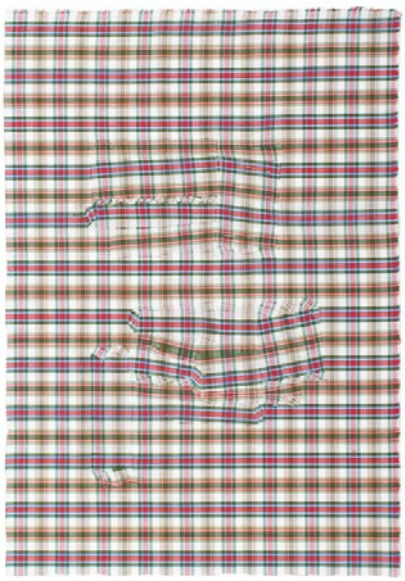
Professional Gestures



***Dish*, 2020**
fabric, needles; 43 × 53 cm

The topicality of imparting all aspects of professional knowledge became increasingly visible against the backdrop of structural changes in the rapidly growing industries of the twentieth century, with their increasing demand for skilled workers creating the need for scalable solutions to their education. Because the traditional model of apprenticeship, which in many trades had involved extensive travels and often indeterminable immersive experiences, stands in stark contrast to the requirement of scalability, methods for the standardized conveyance of crucial

20 Harry Collins and Robert Evans, *Rethinking Expertise* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 23.
21 Sophie Le Bellu and Benoit Le Blanc, "How to Characterize Professional Gestures to Operate Tacit Know-How Transfer?" *Electronic Journal of Knowledge Management* 10, no. 2 (2012): 142–153.
22 Jacques Leplat, "Skills and Tacit Skills: A Psychological Perspective," *Applied Psychology* 39, no. 2 (1990).



***Dish*, 2020**
fabric, needles; 43 × 53 cm

yet inexplicit professional knowledge were needed. These developments signify an outright reversal of the earlier attitude. The approach to professional gestures had changed from dealing with nuisances—due to their unruliness with regard to uniform descriptions—towards actively acquiring and propagating them as a highly sought-after asset, or as Collins and Evans put it:

> Over the last half-century, the most important transformation in the way expertise has been understood is a move away from seeing knowledge and ability as quasi logical or mathematical and toward a more wisdom-based or competence-based model.[20]

There is little consensus on terminology in the field though, with "gestural knowledge" and "gesture of work" among other expressions frequently used. However, professional gestures are clearly understood as the tacit knowledge of industry[21] that is "encapsulated in the action."[22] In this sense, there is a specific equivocalness about professional gestures that makes them alternate between acts as deeds and acts of communication. This becomes obvious in view of how they develop, that is, since the same mechanisms that are involved in the aggregation also perform the conveyance of the underlying knowledge. Gestures of work, hence, may be considered equivalent to onomatopoeic terms in spoken language and could, in this capacity, provide a model for inquiry into the emergence of gestures in general.

In order not to be misled by the reference to non-verbal communication into regarding professional gestures as occurring exclusively in a rudimentary or craft-like environment, the following example offers an impression of their significance in a scientific context:

> Despite some years of effort, measurements of the quality factor (Q) of sapphire made 20 years ago in Russia were successfully repeated in the West only in the summer of 1999. The failure to transfer the "tacit knowledge" of how to make the measurements has been responsible for at least some of this delay. [...] In the summer of 1998, after a series of failed efforts to measure Qs comparable to the Russian claims, members of a Glasgow University group visited Moscow State University for a week to learn the Russian technique.

> [...] After only a few days in Russia, the Glasgow team had become convinced that the Russian results were correct. They were convinced as a result of experiencing inexactly describable features of experimental practice.[23]

Collins and Evans, among others, hold that

> "enculturation" is the only way to master expertise which is deeply laden with tacit knowledge because it is only through common practice with others that the rules that cannot be written down can come to be understood.[24]

23 Harry Collins, "Tacit Knowledge, Trust and the Q of Sapphire," *Social Studies of Science* 31, no.1 (2001): 71–85.
24 Collins and Evans, *Rethinking Expertise*, 2007, 24.
25 Le Bellu and Le Blanc, "How to Characterize Professional Gestures," 2012, 142.
26 Ibid., 142.

An immersive approach, however, is scarcely feasible on a larger scale—an issue that has frequently surfaced in the course of professional training programs, especially in industrial environments:

> operators perform many technical gestures linked to tacit know-how. The problem to transfer this implicit knowledge was usually solved with implicit transfer technique: the journeyman. This intergenerational transfer needs one to one workers contacts and several months to be achieved.[25]

***V-Sign*, 2020**
(from the series „Read my Lips")
pigment prints mounted
on aluminum; 34 × 22 cm

Naturally, the established approach of the industry towards the problems of this transfer is to substitute as much of the "enculturation" as possible with technology or digital means, i.e., through the creation of simulations or artificial settings tailored to the particularities of the experiences associated with a specific task. Le Bellu and Le Blanc's work on artificial immersion techniques and their experiments with Electricité de France, which also produced their *Multimedia Apprenticeship Platform,* provide a case study for the topicality:

> Operational knowledge in industries is difficult to capture because of the tacit nature of gestures. Our experiments showed that the operators can be equipped with video capture devices. Professional workers can also be invited to describe the intentions of their gesture. But the bottleneck is in the gesture itself.[26]

At the same time, the peculiarities of their implementation thoroughly reflect the foundations of professional gestures: "The 'thought/decision-making descriptor' tries to give a clue on the degree of the gesture variability according to the necessary thought and decision-making 'quantity' for the realization of the gesture."[27]

These techniques generally proceed to create the immersion that they rely upon by integrating the surrounding space as the medium where interaction takes place and through which technology is blended into the world. The concept of *spatial computing,* which is often used in the description of such environments, offers additional insight beyond the preceding observations about the dichotomy between the space of gesturing and its planar representation and demonstrates clearly how the approaches have changed. Unlike previous attempts that were, from the beginning, conceptualized as mere simplifications, digital immersion technologies sought to emulate (arguably unsuccessfully) the space of interactions in order to make gestural knowledge accessible.

Capturing Variability

Augmenting professional gestures through technical means—either in support of knowledge exchange or for the direct control of devices—has become a common practice in most workplaces. Gestural control in particular has long been employed as a low-latency channel in human-computer-interaction with specific sets of gestures being patented by corporations to be exclusively used in connection with their products.[28] Like most methods of accessing a domain governed by inexplicit knowledge, the computerized interpretation and replication of gestures relied, until recently, largely on brute-force methods that derive their classifications from rudimentary search operations in databases containing exhaustive sets of samples. Thus, they are restricted to representing motion sequences merely as monolithic elements of communication and cannot take into account the semantics of individual compositions as part of an automated inference.

A typical source of samples used in the analysis of gestures are crowd-sourcing platforms where "a distributed workforce who can perform these tasks virtually"[29] is readily available[30] to fulfill "Human Intelligence Tasks" (HITs), as they are called by Amazon's *Mechanical Turk*, and to submit their results online. HITs in this context are either used to gather training-data during the development of fully automated systems that,

27 Ibid., 147.
28 A few examples: Walker et al., System for Data Management Based on Hand Gestures, US Patent 6,452,584, filed Apr. 23, 1997 and issued Sep. 17, 2002; Freeman et al., Hand Gesture Machine Control System, US Patent 5,549,469, filed Feb. 21, 1995 and issued Aug. 27, 1996; Chaudhri et al., Unlocking a Device by Performing Gestures on an Unlock Image, US Patent 8,046,721, filed Dec. 23, 2005.
29 Amazon *Mechanical Turk,* accessed June 10, 2020, www.mturk.com.
30 Some of the dire social implications of crowd-working are surveyed in: Alana Samuels, "The Internet Is Enabling a New Kind of Poorly Paid Hell," *Atlantic*, January 2018, www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2018/01/amazon-mechanical-turk/551192/.

upon completion, can perform specific tasks independently, or to augment existing, incomplete automation by outsourcing those tasks that it cannot execute autonomously. Augmenting artificial intelligence with human intelligence is currently subsumed under the notion of Artificial Artificial Intelligence (AAI). While, in this way, the processing of gestural knowledge has been and may still be performed by humans to a large extent, a shift in the focus of the crowd-worker's tasks is arguably underway.

In this respect, significant implications as to the status that human work currently holds can be derived from the ongoing transformation of crowd-sourced labor. A change in the specifics of the tasks and the deliverables demanded gives significant hints at the current state of automation. Related to this, Hubert Dreyfus (1929–2017) made the observation about chess that "heuristic programs without brute force did seem to need, and still seem to need, more than explicit facts and rules to make them play better than amateur chess."[31] His remark offers an explanation for the transition of crowd-sourced work away from straightforward verbal translations or exemplifications of gestures towards performing increasingly intuition-based and, from the individual performer's view, obscure acts that do, however, simply because of their unpredictability, contribute eminently to the knowledge base. The advent of computational means that have the ability to process heterogeneous or unstructured data hence led to a reassessment of bodily motion with the aim of possibly artificially recreating gestural knowledge in its full spectrum, including the underlying variational and non-deterministic mechanisms.

Thus, a century later, the preoccupation with human motor abilities has come full circle. While it still pivots between methods of reproducing specific human skills and attempts to substitute them, the approach taken has moved from opposition to imitation. At the same time, attitudes towards those professional gestures has changed from skeptical to exploitative, with gestural knowledge crucially important and sought after—particularly within non-rectilinear or undirected movements, which arguably would previously have been considered lost motion.

31 Hubert Dreyfus, "'Artificial Intelligence,' a debate between Daniel Dennet and Hubert Dreyfus," *Slate Magazine* (May 1997).

The Finger, 2020
(from the series "Read my Lips")
pigment prints mounted on aluminum; 34 × 22 cm

Ma Che Vuoi, 2020
(from the series "Read my Lips")
pigment prints mounted on aluminum; 34 × 22 cm

I do not understand the physics behind it, but I understand what I must do.[1]

The proposal is to construct a formalisation of a large part of ordinary everyday knowledge of the physical world.[2]

Interfaces as Pets. Computer-human interface (moving from computers to humans) is difficult to bring off. Better to go the other way: start with humans. Begin with what people want around them: “nurturing,” “fun.” Remember that 80 percent of communication is non-verbal. Don’t try to make interfaces friendly. Instead, start with friendly things and make them smart![3]

1 Søren Qvist Jensen, Andreas Fender, and Jörg Müller, “Inpher: Inferring Physical Properties of Virtual Objects from Mid-Air Interaction,” lecture, *Proceedings of the 2018 CHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems*, Montreal QC, Canada, April 21–26, 2018.

2 Patrick J. Hayes, “The Naive Physics Manifesto,” Université de Genève, Institut pour les études sémantiques et cognitives, Working Paper 34, 1978, 2.

3 Michael Harris et al., “Natural and invisible human interfaces,” SIGGRAPH Conference Abstracts and Applications 1999, 127–129, 128.

4 Otto Lipmann and Hellmuth Bogen, *Naive Physik. Arbeiten aus dem Institut für angewandte Psychologie in Berlin. Theoretische und experimentelle Untersuchungen Über die Fähigkeit zu intelligentem Handeln* (Leipzig: J.A. Barth, 1923). See also the short overview by Rudolf Arnheim, “Rezension zu Lipmann, Otto und Hellmuth Bogen: Naive Physik, Leipzig: J.A. Barth 1923,” *Psychologische Forschung. Zeitschrift für Psychologie und ihre Grenzwissenschaften* vol. 9, (1927): 194, and on Bogen, Walter Benjamin, “Karussell der Berufe,” in *Walter Benjamin Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. II.2 (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1980), 667–676.

Naive Physics. Gestures of Intuition

Stefan Rieger

1 ‘Naive Physics’

The formula *Naive Physik* is a quotation—it originated from a discussion of the term ‘intuition’ as it was framed in classical modernism. In 1923, two psychologists, Otto Lipmann and Hellmuth Bogen, published a monograph with a title that combined naivety with physics, of all things.[4] The book has two subtitles. The first links the project to the *Institut für angewandte Psychologie in Berlin* (Institute of Applied Psychology in Berlin), which Lipmann co-directed with differential psychologist William Stern; the second, *Theoretische und experimentelle Untersuchungen Über die Fähigkeit zu intelligentem Handeln* (Theoretical and Experimental Studies on the Ability for Intelligent Action), reveals their genuine focus.

The title indicates that the book initially covers the expected state of affairs at the time—Lipmann is considered one of the main protagonists of intelligence research of the period in both the theory as well as numerous strategies of its experimental representations.[5] In spite of the authors' historical and conceptual distance from the current situation, including the transformed offer of theories like actor network theory or agential realism, the discourse of *naive physics* does shed light and focus on current discussions regarding the design of interfaces and technology. It may offer clarification of the "gestures of the intuitive" that are the focus of *The Entanglement between Gesture, Media, and Politics* research project. The helpfulness of the discourse is reflected, on the one hand, in the use of a semantics that accumulates around the intuitive, and which defines current discussions on the design and acceptance of technology; on the other hand, it is reflected in its focus on a certain type of user who seems virtually predestined for connecting to the intuitive. Current discussion stages these users in a wide spectrum under the label of the special (and unconventional) user (who therefore has to be addressed by unconventional means). In some cases, the naive user appears directly under this designation and may be approached as the subject of separate studies (*A Realisation of a Human-Computer Interface for Naive Users—A Case Study*).[6] For the current varied situation, we may thus state that there is an entanglement of political commitment and the design of interfaces. For this purpose, the concept of the intuitive aims for a culture of participation that widens the circle of addressees and expands it to nonhuman entities. In this process, *participatory design* not only focuses on human beings who are differentiated according to stages of development and possible peculiarities (for instance perception or cognitive ability), but also on animals and technology itself.[7]

In classical modernism, naivety is an attractor of attention that describes a special kind of reference to a world and its objects. That reference—and this links the historical concept of *naive physics* to current discussions on the design of interfaces—includes elements of the intuitive, the instinctual, the

5 Otto Lipmann, "Über Begriff und Erforschung der 'natürlichen' Intelligenz," *Zeitschrift für angewandte Psychologie* 13 (1918): 192–201. On intelligence tests and their criticisms, see Stephen Jay Gould, *The Mismeasure of Man* (New York: Norton, 1981). On continuing research under conditions of the artificial, see Manuela Lenzen, *Natürliche und künstliche Intelligenz. Einführung in die Kognitionswissenschaft* (Frankfurt am Main: Campus Verlag, 2002).

6 On case studies over time see Günter Haring, Theodor Krasser, "A Realisation of a Human-Computer Interface for Naive Users—A Case Study" in *Readings on Cognitive Ergonomics—Mind and Computers. Proceedings of the 2nd European Conference Gmunden, Austria, September 10–14, 1984*, ed. G.C. van der Veer et al. (Heidelberg, Berlin: Springer, 1984), 182–191; Jasmin Bernotat et al., "Welcome to the Future—How Naïve Users Intuitively Address an Intelligent Robotics Apartment," in *Social Robotics: 8th International Conference, ICSR 2016 Kansas City, MO, USA, November 1–3, 2016 Proceedings*, ed. Arvin Agah et al., Lecture Notes in Artificial Intelligence vol. 9979, (Heidelberg, Berlin: Springer, 2016), 982–992, and comprehensively Tylee Cairns, "Exploring Intuitive Use," (master's thesis, Oregon State University, 2015).

7 On the concept of the exceptional user, see Sarah E. Ritvo, Robert S. Allison, "Designing for the Exceptional user: Nonhuman Animal-Computer Interaction (ACI)" *Computers in Human Behavior* 70 (2017): 222–233.

self-evident, the enigmatic, the subliminal, the unconscious and the unknowable, and is thus based on categories that cannot or can barely be explicated. The categories cited have a key role in present efforts to naturalize interfaces, and thus re-validate the virtues of the historical concept.[8] In classical modernism, such references are not isolated cases, and the reference to *naive physics,* which at first glance might seem arbitrary, is more than just casuistic. In fact, there is a range of references in fields like ergonomics, economic psychology, and literature.[9] There we can find systematic cross references to intuition and basic assumptions linked to it that apply to rationality and awareness—for instance in the strategies of a so-called "trans-rationalization" (Willy Hellpach), or the "breakthrough via the conscious individual" [*Durchbruch durch die bewusste Person*] (Robert Musil).[10]

The point of a *naive physics* is that, compared to other approaches, it need no longer be considered deficient or regarded with pejorative contempt but comes into focus as a separate quality. There is method to the resulting validation of naivety and within the historical segment of classical modernism it therefore tends to increasingly introduce actors from whom we hope to glean positive insights into possible effects of knowledge—and this beyond the idealization of noble simplicities and calm grandeur that otherwise had to stock the semantic courtyard of naivety for a long time.

A naive person in this other sense may be considered someone who remains untouched by a certain knowledge in a certain way, who simply does not know a certain knowledge.[11] Naivety here is considered to be a manner of being-in-the-world that concerns all those and everything that engages with the affordances of things and media, and with their respective praxeologies. Bogen and Lipmann, the two creators of the term, arrived at the articulation of naivety and physics in their efforts to define intelligence differently than tests usually do. The authors emphasize that in the classic variations, mere cognitive achievements that are little concerned with living environments and their praxeologies take center stage. They complement these concepts, which can be expressed in numbers and chalked up as an intelligence quotient,

8 For instance, in the 1950s there was once more a coupling of these two terms; however, according to our present knowledge, it was without any reference to the 1923 concept. On this relaunch, see Patrick J. Hayes, "The Second Naive Physics Manifesto," in *Formal Theories of the Commonsense World,* ed. Jerry R. Hobbs, Robert C. Moore (New Jersey: Norwood, Intellect Ltd, 1985), 1–36. See further S. L. Hardt, "Physics, Naive," in *Encyclopedia of Artificial Intelligence,* vol. 2, ed. Stuart C. Shapiro and David Eckroth (New York: Wiley-Interscience, 1987), 746–748. For concrete applications, see Xin Xu, Guy Wallis, Steven Cloete, "Naïve Physics in Vehicle Steering Control," in *HCI International 2014—Posters' Extended Abstracts*, ed. Constantine Stephanidis (Cham: Springer, 2014), 384–389.

9 On the details and the respective protagonists, see Stefan Rieger, *Die Individualität der Medien. Eine Geschichte der Wissenschaften vom Menschen.* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2001).

10 See Willy Hellpach, "Psychotechnik des Unbewussten," in *Industrielle Psychotechnik. Der Mensch. Eignung—Leistung—Charakter—Verhalten,* 13, ed. Walter Moede, (Berlin: 1936), 104–116, 104; and Robert Musil, "Durch die Brille des Sports," (1925–26 or later), in *Robert Musil: Gesammelte Werke,* vol. 2, ed. Adolf Frisé (Reinbek: Rowohlt, 1978), 792–795, 793.

11 On this boom of non-knowledge, see for instance Michael Bies and Michael Gamper, *Literatur und Nicht-Wissen. Historische Konstellationen 1730–1930* (Berlin: Diaphanes, 2012).

with a concept in which knowledge does not merge with the experimental setting as an end in itself. Rather, it represents a preliminary stage to interactions with the environment, to what they call *physical action.* By integrating action and *physis*, the laws of nature come to the fore, and with them, the things implicated in contexts of acting.

> Intelligent action of the kind we are concerned with here therefore presupposes that the primarily registered relations of things are precisely their relations according to natural law, that the elements included in the process of creation are mainly those qualities of things that may influence the success of the action in one or the other direction; in other words, intelligent action presupposes physical knowledge which, as such, naturally does not have to be explicitly conscious—therefore a "naïve physics."[12]

With the explicitness of knowledge, the status of consciousness becomes just as virulent as the quest for suitable actors. Such agencies of non-knowledge find their embodiment in phylogenetic and ontogenetic preliminary stages, as they are predispositions in so-called members of non-industrial societies, but also in children, in persons with disabilities, and not least in animals and machines. Thus the body and its implicit knowledge are brought into play long before the respective conceptualizations and their theoretical elaboration—that is, *before* the elaboration of the relevant theories of affordance and *tacit knowledge*.[13] The choice of physics could not be more confusing in all this, as, since the beginning of the twentieth century, the discipline has been busy questioning its own paradigm and thus just the type of rationality that had been, by and large, its exclusive domain in its guise as classical physics. The field that had reached its maximum scope in Newton's mechanics, that had successfully established a worldview based on causality over centuries, is now considered to have been rocked to its foundations. In the name of *naive physics*, therefore, an open concept of intelligence that does not aim for the *rational* mastery of physical phenomena and their rules is to be negotiated. Instead, the focus is the appropriateness of praxeologies and the target orientation of actions into which, it seems, an intuitive understanding of physics is embedded.

An intelligence that is assessed in this manner has to account for the actants of the respective action as well as the respective environment into which the action is embedded in each case. Intelligence is thus an instance that becomes manifest only in an interaction with something else. This other emerges as nature, as environment, but also, and in a less abstract manner, as technical equipment or as a vehicle of movement, as a tool, a toy, or a set piece in an arrangement—thereby greatly enhancing the status of the object, and consequently in the orbit of that which different theories have framed in concepts like realia, thing, technology,

12 Lipmann, Bogen, *Naive Physik,* 1923, 4.

13 On tacit knowledge, see the classic works by Michael Polanyi, particularly *Personal Knowledge: Towards a Post-Critical Philosophy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958). On the reception, see, for instance, Harry Collins, *Tacit and Explicit Knowledge* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010). On affordance following the works of American psychologist of perception James J. Gibson, see Nicole Zillien, "Die (Wieder-)Entdeckung der Medien—Das Affordanzkonzept in der Mediensoziologie," *Sociologia Internationalis* 46, no. 2 (2008): 161–181.

artifact, fact of nature, object, dispositive, hybrid, quasi-objects, boundary objects, or simply as a medium.[14] Whatever the theoretical framework, whether it is actor network theory or agential realism, or in one of the many variations of a *material* or a *materialistic turn,* they have risen above the mere status of objects, possess an according agency, and are, in short, things that matter and have epistemic relevance. That is how a historical concept on the definition of intelligence ends up in the present era of interfaces and their designs.

Compared to the contours of Latour's grand outline on agency and the theoretical relevance of non-human actors, the 1923 project of a *naive physics* is far more humble; and still, it has much in common with the criticism of modernism that the former so vehemently pursues. What these two psychologists realized, and this not ex post, but from within modernism itself, is not completely alien to the boom of things—even though the things that are quoted there are so unspectacular that it is often hard to discern their relevance. A stick, a hammer, a saw, a crate, a swing, a cable winch, a ball, and a spear are doubtless not aspirants for a parliament of things that command our attention. Nevertheless, they are able to provide information on the order of modernism, and above all on the relationship between things and humans, in their own way.

Just how effortlessly transitions from supposed naivety to theoretical intentions and the broader academic-socio-political climate are achieved becomes clear when we look at where respective issues are taken up and processed further—places that aim for the center of present efforts around gestures of the intuitive. There, alliances between representatives of different ways of being are entered into quite naturally, and they take at its word what, with Lipmann and Bogen, still remains rather cryptic in the still-to-be-extended formulation of their circle of addressees ("for animals, children, etc.").[15] If, from the sphere of current intuition offensives, considerations turn to a strategic deployment of animals and children, if under titles like *Of Kittens and Kiddies: Reflections on Participatory Design with Small Animals and Small Humans* (Yoram Chisik, Clara Mancini), the entanglement of species allows the possibility of participation to emerge and to operatively take shape, then *naive physics,* and with it the associated intuition offensives, have arrived in the present.[16] Thus, the rational can be renegotiated in sometimes very special and possibly seemingly arbitrary places in a politically relevant manner.

14 See Gustav Roßler, "Kleine Galerie neuer Dingbegriffe: Hybriden, Quasi-Objekte, Grenzobjekte, epistemische Dinge," in *Bruno Latours Kollektive—Kontroversen zur Entgrenzung des Sozialen*, ed. Georg Kneer, Markus Schroer, Erhard Schüttpelz (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2008), 76–107. See also Jutta Weber, "Mannigfaltige Techno-Naturen. Von epistemischen Modellsystemen und situierten Maschinen," *Philosophia Naturalis* 43 (2006): 111–141.

15 Lipmann, Bogen, *Naive Physik,* 1923, 5.

16 Yoram Chisik and Clara Mancini, "Of Kittens and Kiddies: Reflections on Participatory Design with Small Animals and Small Humans," lecture, IDC 2017, June 27–30, Stanford, USA, in *Proceedings of the 2017 Conference on Interaction Design and Children* (New York: Association for Computing Machinery, 2017).

2 Places of Intuition

In the case of Clara Mancini, quoted above, it quickly becomes clear that more than mere casuistry lies behind such efforts. In fact, with her programmatic *Animal-Computer Interaction* (ACI), Mancini advocates for a systematics that, fundamentally, refers to the field of changed social forms (*interspecies communities*) and is committed to a *multi-species awareness*[17] which recognizes its obligation to special users—an obligation that does not exhaust itself in the arbitrariness of the respective uses and applications, for instance the use of dogs to detect cancer cells.[18] She links her cause with the aspiration of an overarching taxonomy and the self-confidence of a developing new discipline.[19] This obligation not least involves a social responsibility. With the crossing of inter-species boundaries, society is obliged to change its ideas of participation, because its scope has expanded. This has to be accompanied by taking into account the peculiarities of semiotic systems and an insight into the necessity of a separate ethics.[20] By transcending species and politicization, approaches like ACI become part of a situation that succeeds as post- or trans-humanism, characterized by the dissolution of differences. The formulaic condensation of this opening is Donna Haraway's *Staying with the Trouble. Making Kin in the Chthulucene*—in particular where she explains the term of those *critters* that are central to her thinking, and which is to allow new forms of co-creation. As she writes in a footnote, it becomes a marker of a peculiar generosity. Here Haraway is imprecise, while otherwise she directs her sensorium towards minute shifts in historical semantics, "In this book, 'critters' refers promiscuously to microbes, plants, animals, humans and nonhumans, and sometimes even to machines."[21]

For Haraway, this abstention is linked to the demand to make kin. Making kin in this form, i.e., including the circumvention of biological restrictions, becomes a moral duty and an ethical task in order to allow for the cooperation of species, including those that are technological, and thus to strengthen a utopian element which seems to be hardly covered by a certain bias of communities of necessity.[22]

17 On this formula, see Demi Mankoff, Anind Dey, Jennifer Mankoff et al., "Supporting Interspecies Social Awareness. Using Peripheral Displays for Distributed Pack Awareness," lecture, UIST 2005, October 23–27, Seattle, Washington, USA.

18 See Clara Mancini, Rob Harris, Brenda Aengenheister, et al., "Re-Centering Multispecies Practices: A Canine Interface for Cancer Detection Dogs," lecture, CHI 2015, April 18–23, Seoul, South Korea.

19 See Clara Mancini, "Animal-Computer Interaction (ACI): a manifesto," *Interactions* 18, no. 4 (2011): 60–73; also Ilyena Hirskyj-Douglas, Patricia Pons, Janet C. Read et al., "Seven Years after the Manifesto: Literature Review and Research Directions for Technologies in Animal Computer Interaction," *Multimodal Technologies and Interaction* 2, no. 2 (2018): 1–25.

20 Against the background of actor network theory, see Fredrik Aspling, Oskar Juhlin, Heli Väätäjä, "Understanding Animals: A Critical Challenge in ACI," NordiCHI 2018, 148–160.

21 Donna J. Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble. Making Kin in the Chthulucene* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016), 169, n. 1.

22 On precarious techno societies and their logics of participation, see Beate Ochsner, "AudioVisual Accessibility (AVA) oder: Zur Herstellung prekärer Kommunikationsgemeinschaften," in *Das Mitsein der Medien. Prekäre Koexistenzen von Menschen, Maschinen und Algorithmen*, ed. Johannes Bennke, Johanna Seifert, Martin Siegler et al. (Paderborn: Wilhelm Fink, 2018), 121–145.

Kinship thus becomes a symbiotic utopia that is linked to a transformation of the forms of creation (*sympoiesis*): "What must be cut and what must be tied if multispecies flourishing on earth, including human and other-than-human beings in kinship, are to have a chance?"[23] Rosi Braidotti proposes a similar argument, engaging all species in their common vulnerability against the backdrop of anthropogenic environmental changes, demanding cross-species collaboration and energetically putting it on the political agenda. According to Braidotti, the order of the day is to establish a new social bond—not only with other modes of being, but also with that techno other that is otherwise kept at a distance. Only that would allow a joint survival of the community of the equally endangered.[24] What we can see in Braidotti is a basic dedifferentiation of the social, comparable to the generous dedifferentiation of the ontological in Haraway's definition, or rather non-definition, of critters.

Gestures of intuition are almost inevitably linked to such figures of dedifferentiation that are central to the theoretical position after or beyond the human, which thereby also seek to escape the habitually launched reproach of anthropocentrism—a diagnosis that unites the numerous movements of opening or expanding against the dominant *human computer interaction.* After long periods of political abstinence, these openings increasingly claim categories such as responsibility, ethics, and participation. The far-reaching entanglement of participation offensives and theoretical positions is, for instance, evident in the words of Swedish sociologist Fredrik Aspling:

> The increased involvement of nonhuman species in interactive contexts supported by digital technology, which could be framed as multispecies-computer interaction, leads to new possibilities and forms of interactions, and consequently, a need to reconsider what this is and can be in terms of interaction.[25]

A *multi-species interaction* thus becomes the operational foundation for a transformed concept of interaction. On that basis, Aspling adds a concept of inclusion to the agenda, an inclusion that becomes a demand for the inclusion of other species as well as the consideration of their particularities.

> The addition of nonhuman species challenges conventional interaction approaches and theoretical frameworks in HCI. There is a need to think beyond the human and confront the challenges associated with the inclusion of other species with dissimilar cognitions, experiences, senses, abilities, time-scales, wants and needs. For further advancement we need appropriate approaches and theoretical foundations to better understand the emerging dynamics of these new forms of interactions. The attention given to nonhuman

23 Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble*, 2016, 2.

24 See Rosi Braidotti, *The Posthuman. Posthumanism. Life beyond the Self* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2013), in particular 100–101. Such an attitude towards the technological other is promoted by numerous anthropophilic gestures. On anthropophilia, see Michael Andreas, Dawid Kasprowicz, Stefan Rieger, *Unterwachen und Schlafen. Anthropophile Medien nach dem Interface* (Lüneburg: meson press, 2018), in particular their joint introduction (7–31).

25 Fredrik Aspling, "Animals, Plants, People and Digital Technology: Exploring and Understanding Multispecies Computer Interaction," lecture, ACE 15 *Proceedings of the 12th International Conference on Advances in Computer Entertainment Technology*, 2015.

species in HCI (e.g., animal as legitimate users to design for and with) is in analogy with posthumanism and its critique of anthropocentrism.[26]

3 Gestures of the Intuitive

The practical implementation of all these diagnoses and demands leads to the establishment of gestures of the intuitive, to forms of interaction, of collaboration, and to a communication that have given up on the old disciplinary enclosures. It is gestures of the intuitive that make the special users a particular issue, and particularly address them. In this configuration, without it becoming explicit in any way, the concern of an idea of intelligent action asserts itself as it was envisaged in the historical segment of a *naive physics.* In doing so, it not only invalidates familiar concepts of rationality—in the remakes of a strategically mounted naivety, alternative ways of addressing are contemplated. They revolve around naturalization and self-evidence; they operate by circumventing familiar ideas of communication and their theoretical competences.
In the course of relevant considerations, it seems that what classical communication theory (or what it is held to be) had to say or think about communication is abandoned: with specific users comes an unconventionality of the involved senses, an almost unmistakable multiplication of forms and a consistent expansion of user circles. Or, to say it with a research title: The sensory offensive leads to a veritable agenda of the multi-modal, to what one text calls *Multisensory Storming.*[27]

Taking special users into account leads to applications that are explicitly dedicated to the extra-linguistic, that decidedly rely on asymmetries. At the hospital bed or in cases of cognitive impairment, after a stroke or when people suffer from dementia, alternative forms of interaction are needed, forms that are self-evident, that act on the body, that have no need of a complicated deduction and that are open to being used in a kind of private language. In short, what is required is the gesture of intuition.[28] For instance, to cite but one example, in a device called *LumiTouch*, communication takes place in the mode of different sensualities.[29] Tactile handling of a frame that releases colorful patterns and allows for the communication of emotional states has advantages that are useful precisely in the case of impairment and stress: it is intended for forms of asymmetrical communication, where one communication partner does not even need to be in full possession of their cognitive and motoric abilities. "People who are unable to actively communicate for long periods of time (e.g., the sick or elderly) might be able to use the passive transmission of LumiTouch."[30] These forms of communication are able to counter the potential of motoric or cognitive stress in certain situations, for instance at the hospital bed, or in other states of reduced communi-

26 Aspling, "Animals, Plants, People and Digital Technology," 2015. See recently Aspling, Juhlin, and Väätäjä, "Understanding Animals," 2018, 148–160.
27 See Maurizio Caon et al., "Towards Multisensory Storming," in *Proceedings of the 2018 ACM Conference Companion Publication on Designing Interactive Systems*, 2018, 213–218.
28 On their definition see for instance Jörn Hurtienne et al., "Intuitive Use of User Interfaces—Definition und Herausforderungen," *i-com* 5, no. 3 (2006): 38–41.
29 See Stefan Rieger, *Die Enden des Körpers. Versuch einer negativen Prothetik*, Anthropologie—Technikphilosophie—Gesellschaft Series, ed. Klaus Wiegerling (Wiesbaden: Springer, 2018).
30 Angela Chang et al., "LumiTouch: An Emotional Communication Device," in *CHI 2001 Extended Abstracts on Human Factors in Computing Systems*, 313–314, 314.

cative ability, with controls that demands less of the user: "Similarly users who lack the required dexterity or concentration for pushing numerous buttons might appreciate this system due to its small number of simple grasping inputs."[31] The text goes on to say that this allows for forms of exchange that may bypass intentionality and consciousness. What emerges is no less than the possibility of passive participation.[32]

This comes with the discourse of the paralinguistic as well as a positioning of these new possibilities in relation to classical theories of communication, and in particular Shannon's theory. A detailed example is, for instance, a text that describes the disentanglement from the common theory as a revolution (*Human-to-Computer-to-Human Interactions (HCHI) of the communications revolution*).[33] Disentanglement from the linguistic and the description along other factors is no isolated finding—it is also, and especially, increasingly used in the arts.[34] These strategies aim to achieve participation. The highest principle of relevant design guidelines is to pursue design *for* and *with* special users, to include them in the process of design from the start. This duplication of prepositions becomes the mantra of a participation, and it becomes the mantra of this entanglement that lies between a politics of participation and the design of things. As in *naive physics,* one reverts to categories of intuition, of the subliminal and the low-threshold, of the unexplained and unexplainable. These categories perfectly fit the situation of media that are described in categories of the seamless or silent, that remain in the background and avoid being perceived.[35]

Gestures of the intuitive are omnipresent. They inscribe themselves into a discourse as an adjective that submits everything and anything to the yoke of its naturalness.[36] The use of media, according to these stipulations, is lightheartedly enlightened, it occurs casually, as though effortlessly, fluidly. The semantic fields of the fluid and the elastic best express this alliance of the intuitive. When we run through the proposals and promises, the offers and affordances of the intuitive, we are at the center of current gestures of naturalization.[37] Good is what is self-evident, what works without having to be laboriously taught, what is effortless and knows its obligation to a praxeology

31 Chang et al., "LumiTouch," 2001, 314.

32 On the classification of such empathy machines, see Carolina Fuentes, Valeria Herskovic et al., "A Systematic Literature Review About Technologies for Self-Reporting Emotional Information," *Journal of Ambient Intelligence and Humanized Computing* 8, no. 4 (2017): 593–606.

33 Orville L. Clubb, "Human-to-Computer-to-Human Interactions (HCHI) of the Communications Revolution," *Interactions* 14, no. 2 (2007): 35–39, 35.

34 On Human-Computer-Biosphere Interaction (HCBI), see Hill Hiroki Kobayashi, "Human-Computer-Biosphere Interaction: Beyond Human-Centric Interaction," in *Distributed, Ambient, and Pervasive Interactions, Second International Conference, DAPI 2014, Held as Part of HCI International 2014, Heraklion, Crete, Greece, June 22–27, Proceedings*, ed. Norbert Streitz, Panos Markopoulos, 2014, 349–358.

35 On relevant theoretical proposals, see for instance Mark Weiser with his proposal of a *Calm Technology*.

36 To cite but two representative examples for their use, see Sturla Bakke, "HCI Theory and Practice. An Activity Theory Approach to Intuitiveness: From Artefact to Process," in *Human-Computer Interaction: Design and Evaluation, 17th International Conference, HCI International 2015, Los Angeles, CA, USA, August 2–7. Proceedings, Part I*, ed. Masaaki Kurosu, 2015, 3–13, and Andreas J. Schmid, Martin Hoffmann, Heinz Wörn, "A Tactile Language for Intuitive Human-Robot Communication," in 7th IEEE-RAS International Conference on Humanoid Robots, 2007, Pittsburgh, PA, 58–65.

37 With a view to the discussions around the NUI, see Alexander R. Galloway, *The Interface Effect*, (Cambridge: Polity, 2012), and Florian Hadler, Daniel Irrgang, "Instant Sense-making, Immersion and Invisibility. Notes on the Genealogy of Interface Paradigms," *Punctum* 1, no. 1 (2015): 7–25, and Donald A. Norman, "Natural User Interfaces Are Not Natural," *Interactions* 17 no. 3 (2010): 6–10. Future developments also rely on articulating naturalness and intuition. See Jinmiao Huang, Prakhar Jaiswal, Rahul Rai, "Gesture-Based System for Next Generation Natural and Intuitive Interfaces," *AI EDAM* 33, no. 1 (2019): 54–68.

that follows the principle of a *naive physics*. The offers are plentiful, expressing the suppleness with which the intuitive enters into alliances with other semantics. And one is always aware of being in an off-knowledge, in the mode of an unconscious or not known—but in any case at a however well-masked distance from the rational. The alliance with intuition is omnipresent. It defines forms of limited exchange as well as shaping collaboration in the factory halls of the future. There, it even enters into an alliance with autonomy, "As the manufacturing technology becomes more and more autonomous, the need for intuitive and fluid human-machine interaction becomes necessary."[38]

Participatory design is negotiated *with* as well as *for* and *between* humans, animals, and machines—and it is negotiated in a manner that is not subordinate to technological determinism.[39] What interaction design can learn from turning to children, animals, or persons with disabilities or special needs, are lessons in the strategic reduction of complexity at the locus of a technology that otherwise seems to be defined by an almost unbroken dictate of augmentation.[40] Interaction design becomes the scene of transformations that are due to a dedifferentiation of their respective addressees. Reduction becomes the operative side of participation and finds its factual implementation in gestures of withdrawal.

> The aim is to strengthen connected thinking whilst highlighting the exchangeable connecting methods from both ACI and HCI and their subfields including Child Computer Interaction (CCI) and Human Robot Interaction (HRI), discussing what these fields learn from each other with their similarities and differences mapped.[41]

This double use of prepositions is significant for the concern, which explains its frequent occurrence. Kittens and kids, but also people with disabilities, with special or highly individual needs are becoming particularly considered protagonists of an interface design that is relevant because it is custom-made for them. The transgression of species needs suitable media and channels (*Towards multispecies interaction environments: extending accessibility to canine users*).[42] It needs suitable attentions and particularities, technologies and attitudes. And, again and again, the expertise of intuition is called upon.

> In the field of human-computer interaction the notion of intuitive use describes the extent to which a human user can subconsciously interact with a product by relying on existing knowledge from similar or identical situations. In animal-computer interaction (ACI) the idea of intuitive use holds great potential as it offers a way to conceptualize and further design better interaction.[43]

38 Eythor R. Eiriksson et al., "Augmented Reality Interfaces for Additive Manufacturing," in *Image Analysis: 20th Scandinavian Conference*, SCIA 2017, ed. Puneet Sharma, Filippo Maria Bianchi, June 12–14, Tromsø, Norway, 515–525, 515.

39 On the relationship between participatory and universal design, see Jesper Simonsen and Toni Robertson, *Routledge International Handbook of Participatory Design* (London: Routledge, 2013), and Christian Fuchs and Marianna Obrist, "HCI and Society: Towards a Typology of Universal Design Principles," *International Journal of Human-Computer Interaction* 26, no. 6 (2010): 638–656.

40 For the case of autism in general and in children, see Debra Satterfield et al., "An Analysis of Data Collection Methods for User Participatory Design for and with People with Autism Spectrum Disorders," in *Design, User Experience, and Usability. Design Thinking and Methods,* ed. Marcus Aaron, 5th International Conference, DUXU 2016. Held as Part of HCI International 2016, July 17–22, Toronto, Canada, 509–516, and Aurora Constantin and Juan Pablo Hourcade, "Toward a Technology-based Tool to Support Idea Generation during Participatory Design with Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder," lecture, ASSETS 2018, October 22–24, Galway, Ireland.

41 Ilyena Hirskyj-Douglas et al., "Where HCI meets ACI," lecture, NordiCHI 2016, October 23–27, 2016, Gothenburg, Sweden. On child-computer interaction in particular, see Juan Pablo Hourcade, and Natasha E. Bullock-Rest, "Universal Interactions: Challenges and Opportunities," *Interactions*, 18, no. 2 (2011): 76–79, and Juan Pablo Hourcade et al., "Child-Computer Interaction, Ubiquitous Technologies, and Big Data," *Interactions* 25, no. 6 (2018): 78–81.

42 Clara Mancini et al., "Towards Multispecies Interaction Environments: Extending Accessibility to Canine Users," in *Proceedings of the Third International Conference on Animal-Computer Interaction, United Kingdom*, ed. Milton Keynes, November 15–17 (2016): 8:1–8:10.

Multispecies communities as a stage of the participatory are becoming the home of new actors, of new communications and collaborations, of new design concepts and participations, of new responsibilities and social forms: between humans and animals, plants and algorithms, artifacts and biofacts, machines and media, the animate and the inanimate, the real and the virtual, the untreated and the augmented, the found and the conceptualized, the simulated and the modeled, between the enhanced and that which is reduced in its enhancement, between the obvious and the enigmatic, between the known and the unknown. One might feel that the great project of a *naive physics*, which is central to classical modernism and what it stands for, has found a goal. In uses that seem to have cancelled the contract of technology with the rational, for instance in *mindless computing, naive physics* has come into its own.[44] Its gestures have confronted the principle of the rational and its logics of incessant augmentation with a moment of pausing and reducing. Reduction and participation are becoming the formula of a new alliance.

43 Ida Kathrine, Hammeleff Jørgensen, Hanna Wirman, "Designing for Intuitive Use for Non-Human Users," lecture, ACE 2015, November 16–19, Iskandar, Malaysia. This text refers to and uses John Maynard Smith, David Harper, *Animal Signals* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

44 Alexander T. Adams et al., "Mindless Computing: Designing Technologies to Subtly Influence Behaviour," UbiComp 2015, September 7–11, Osaka, Japan, 719–730.

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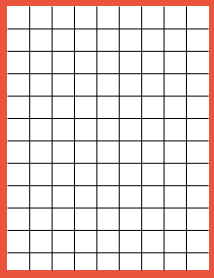

Florian Bettel, *Contextualizing Praying Bodies—Gestures and the Military*

pp. 79—88

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Picture credit
Unknown artist, “View of Mecca and Muslim Prayer” in Rites and Festivals of Muslims and the main Hindu Castes (Gentil: Manuscripts, Faizabad, c. 1774, IS.25: 27-1980), Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

Layout
Marie Artaker in collaboration with Florian Bettel

A manuscript page dating from the late eighteenth century records a detailed sequence of movements in watercolor, like choreographic notation. The raising of the right hand—the index finger nearly completely extended, the right leg placed in front of the left one—is followed by the closing of both hands, forming a cup. The legs are now placed parallel to each other, followed by the lowering to the floor. The body's weight rests on the lower legs, the knees are bent, the hands placed on the thighs. A glance to the left, one to the right—and back to the front. Now the upper body follows the imagined vanishing point of the gaze, it travels forward and is lowered to the floor. The forearms support the burden of the upper body, the hands are again cupped, and the head placed into them.

In the 1770s, Jean Baptiste Joseph Gentil (1726–1799), French army colonel and special adviser to the grand vizier of the Mughal Empire, commissioned the notation of Muslim gestures of prayer in India. The graphic representation of the movement sequences highlights the orientation of the bodies towards Mecca. Gentil had been dispatched by the French army to foster resistance against the advance of the English East India Company's troops. He collaborated with local artists in Faizabad to compile an elaborate album of fifty-eight paintings, most of them paired with text. Local rituals, festivals, and athletic activities are depicted along with other observations by Gentil. The album incorporates local as well as inter-regional Mughal representational traditions and eighteenth-century French observations. Those parts of the visual vocabulary that were newly developed for Gentil's album were integrated into the canon of the artists and subsequently became part of the Indian as well as the French imaginary of the Orient.

Mahometans

Différentes positions du corps pendant la prière

Différentes sortes de la grande révérence

2010. US army analysts spread across the globe are trying to understand images being relayed to their screens in real time from Afghanistan. They appear to identify the same gestures on their electronic displays that Gentil recorded 240 years earlier in his sequence of watercolors. The meaning of the gesture, however, at least from a military perspective, seems to have shifted since the 9/11 attacks. For the analysts following video transmissions from a Predator drone, a gesture that they assume is one of prayer contextualizes the scenario they observe. The real context of the action is lost when the video camera zooms into a particular scene.

The images, which are blurred and transmitted with a delay, show, indistinctly, two SUVs and a pickup truck with people on them; the number cannot be determined. The communication between the US military units in their stations across the globe, which is recorded as a transcript, illustrates the problem of attributing these decontextualized images to particular individuals and their intentions. The analysts are neither able to get a general idea of the situation nor assess its possible danger. But once gestures of prayer have been identified, the mission intelligence coordinator's comment about the group of people under observation is: "they're going to do something nefarious." With this assumption, the soldier sets the framework for a further process of interpreting the images, and thus for the operation itself. Suddenly, the analysts discern weapons where they hadn't seen anything suspicious before. Shortly after, the armed forces activate their remote-controlled arsenal. It later transpired that this form of image interpretation cost twenty-three civilians their lives on February 21, 2010. In May 2010, a commission of investigation appointed only a few weeks after this devastating incident was to find that the analysts were looking for a trigger to identify for the order to kill.

Transcript

01:46 (Sensor) Standby on that zoomout and drop metadata, I just wanted to scan everybody, I'll get them a picture. I'm going to freeze it here for about 10 seconds then I'm going back. 01:47 (MC) They say good to go. 01:47 (Pilot) MD back on. 01:47 (MC) Looks kinda like blankets, they were praying, they had like... 01:47 (Pilot) JAG25 KIRK97 We get a good count, not yet? 01:47 (Sensor) They're praying, they are praying. 01:47 (Jag25) KIRK97 JAG25 01:48 (Pilot) JAG25 just want to confirm that you copied we have about 20 pax dismounted, they are outside the trucks praying at this time and we're 3 1/2 miles from the friendly location. 01:48 (Jag25) Roger good copy, from SOTF, we should have A-10's and OH-58's that are on standby...*garbled*01:48 (Sensor) A-10's as well, that's consistent with the vehicle capacity, 24–25 people. This is definitely it, this is their force. Praying? I mean seriously, that's what they do. 01:48 (MC) They're gonna do something nefarious. 01:48 (Pilot) Did they say OH-58's? 01:49 (Sensor+MIC) Yes, OH58's and A-10's. BAMBAMS, but I can only guess Hogs. 01:51 (MC) Yeah, as soon as they get out and we can see them again. 01:52 (Sensor) One guy still praying at the front of the truck. 01:52 (Pilot) JAG25 KIRK97 be advised, all pax are finishing up praying and rallying up near all 3 vehicles at this time. 01:52 (Sensor) Oh sweet target. I'd try to go through the bed, put it right dead center of the bed. 01:53 (MC) Oh that'd be perfect. 01:52 (Sensor) Like more of them from the other vehicles are around this one right now. 01:53 (MC) They're all around their one leader, except for those guys. Missile's on the left right? 01:53 (Sensor) Correct, on the left. 01:53 (Pilot) BAMBAM 2441 will loiter south of Cobra until blue forces are ready to get them. 01:54 (Sensor) Copy 01:56 (Sensor) we'll get all 3 vehicles. I'm confident they are still hanging around. 01:56 (MC) one weapon on ground may have picked it up and walking around the pickup. 01:56 (Sensor) I didn't quite catch that but I believe it. 01:56z (Pilot) JAG25, KIRK97 01:56z (Jag25) JAG25 01:56z (Pilot) JAG25, KIRK97, update, our screener just called out one additional weapon. Was laying on the ground, where praying, picked it up and now has entered the highlux truck. How copy? 03:06 (Pilot) Did he ever give you a count on how many people he thought there were. 03:06 (Sensor) 24 or 25 at the praying stop. 03:07 (Sensor)

“The Orient is an imaginal construction, an ensemble of representations from which everyone picks what they like, wherever they are. It is naïve to think [...] that this repository full of Oriental images is specific to Europe today. No. These images, this treasure chest, are accessible to everyone and everyone adds to it, according to cultural productions, new sketches, new portraits, new music. Algerians, Syrians, Lebanese, Iranians, Indians, Chinese take turns drawing from this travel buffet, this imagination. [...] That’s also the product of a common construction based on Muslim sources transformed by all the images of modernity. These atrocities take their place in this imaginal world; they continue the common construction.”

M. Enard, Compass, p. 308

01:46 (Sensor)

01:47 (MC)

01:47 (Pilot)

01:47 (MC)

01:47 (Pilot)

01:47 (Sensor)

01:47 (Jag25)

01:48 (Pilot)

01:48 (Jag25)

01:48 (Sensor)

01:48 (MC)

01:48 (Pilot)

01:49 (Sensor+MIC)

01:51 (MC)

01:52 (Sensor)

01:52 (Pilot)

01:52 (Sensor)

01:53 (MC)

01:52 (Sensor)

01:53 (MC)

01:53 (Sensor)

01:53 (Pilot)

01:54 (Sensor)

01:56 (Sensor)

01:56 (MC)

01:56 (Sensor)

01:56z (Pilot)

01:56z (Jag25)

01:56z (Pilot)

03:06 (Pilot)

03:06 (Sensor)

03:07 (Sensor)

With the Gestures Where We Feel Charge: Justine A. Chambers in Conversation with Laurie Young

Vancouver–Berlin, August 14, 2019

JC Justine A. Chambers
LY Laurie Young

LY Thank you for making the time to have a chat with me. I thought I'd preface our conversation with some context for people who might be unfamiliar with the dance process of *One hundred more*.

The work that we've been doing is, at its core, a rigorous, playful, physical process in the dance studio, and the deeply held trust of embodied knowledge.

Though it's informed by reading inspiring thinkers such Ashon Crawley,[1] Erin Manning,[2] Thomas De Frantz,[3] Rebecca Schneider,[4] Anusha Kehdar[5] and equally informed in rhythm by Chaka Khan,[6] Leikili47[7] or Tanya Tagaq,[8] I find it tricky to translate this back into language. But I'm hoping that a transcribed conversation might be a way to bring liveness to this reading.

It's a bit pre-emptive to talk about our upcoming performance as it has not yet premiered, but I'd love to talk about some of our processes, especially as it relates to gesture, political gesture, and choreography.

We've been busy working through our allyship to specific personal and iconic gestures of political resistance and using rhythm and repetition to feel the force of the gestures in the studio as a way to find different forms. Feeling the force might find its way as an emotional connection or response to a specific gesture and what that brings up. With the gestures where we feel charge, we dwell within these forms to see what other physical traces emerge and perhaps formalize these manifestations into new gestures, sometimes unreadable to others but always meaningful to us.

The container for much of our work is the "Hands up, don't shoot" gesture and the micro movements that lead up to and fall off after that recognizable gesture. One movement score we've developed has us starting

1 See Ashon Crawley (website), accessed July 3, 2020, ashoncrawley.com/. See also Ashon T. Crawley, *Black-pentecostal Breath: The Aesthetics of Possibility*, (New York: Fordham University Press, 2017).

2 See Erin Manning (website), accessed July 3, 2020, erinmovement.com/. See also Erin Manning, *The Minor Gesture* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016).

3 Thomas F. DeFrantz, "Afrofuturist Remains: A Speculative Rendering of Social Dance Futures v2.0," in *Choreography and Corporeality: Relay in Motion*, ed. Thomas F. DeFrantz and Philipa Rothfield (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 209–22.

4 Rebecca Schneider, Lucia Ruprecht, "In Our Hands: An Ethics of Gestural Response-ability. Rebecca Schneider in conversation with Lucia Ruprecht," *Performance Philosophy Journal*, 3, no. 1 (2017).

5 Anusha Kedhar, "Choreography and Gesture Play an Important Role in Protests," *New York Times*, December 15, 2014, www.nytimes.com/roomfordebate/2014/12/15/what-does-the-style-of-a-protest-say-about-a-movement/choreography-and-gesture-play-an-important-role-in-protests.

6 See Yvette Marie Stevens, Chaka Khan (website), accessed July 3, 2020, chakakhan.com/.

7 See Leikili47, Instagram, accessed July 3, 2020, www.instagram.com/leikeli47/?hl=en.

8 See Tanya Tagaq (website), accessed July 3, 2020, tanyatagaq.com/.

with our hands down by our sides. We spend several minutes going from that position to the gesture of "Hands up, don't shoot." In that travel to and from the moment of "Hands up, don't shoot," we find different pathways and micro movements or perhaps gestures which lead us towards and away from that recognized gesture. This is approached by pulsing to a regular beat and playing with rhythm and irregularity.

The idea of what a perceptible gesture is and what an imperceptible gesture is comes into our work quite a bit. "Imperceptible" needs some consideration: it is considered as something so slight, gradual, as to not be perceived or then inversely, to be perceived is something that is recognized or to regard someone/something in a particular way.

Crucial questions are then: Perceived by whom? Who is watching? Or what is watching? A camera? What gaze? Is this perception also an internal somatic process? And, as we are making a dance performance for the theater, what is the audience perceiving?

So, I was thinking about what the audience receives, or indeed perceives. I was struck by one thing you said, which is that you're not interested in making meaning for the audience. I would love to unfold that idea and its relationship to gesture because gesture is, by some definitions, an act of semantic communication and we are intentional in evoking that when we perform.

JC Yeah, I guess it's less about not being interested in making meaning but also aware that I don't actually have the ability to necessarily convey the meaning because I can't place myself in each body that is in the audience. I can't be with myself in their history. And so, if I concern myself with making meaning, I'm worried that I will take away what it means to me.

There would be a danger of making a pedantic understanding. Maybe pedantic isn't a fair word. I think it flattens my experience to spend time making meaning for the audience. I like to think that if it's meaningful for me, thoughtful, fully embodied, meaningful for you, and we know what we're working on, the richness of that understanding or that care will be conveyed. Whether or not they understand what we're doing, I think the context is pretty clear. They may understand, but whether or not it builds a world that we are working with or in for them, that's something I can't concern myself with. I have no jurisdiction over their perception, but I can work with my own, over ours, and share our interests through the transmission between bodies.

What's important is conveying what's *felt* instead of some sort of cerebral logic. I mean, we talk about this so much. If we're talking about an alternative body of knowledge being valued—embodied knowledge—then I have to move away from that belief to provide for a kind of linear logic to be in place for an audience. If we create an environment, or a space, or there's a thickness in the air so that we can actually take the audience out of a frontal lobe understanding and displace these very measured "understandable" ways that are centered around a metric, which has nothing to do with being a woman of color.

I feel like what we're offering is another way to be together with an audience, and it's about asking them to be with us as we are. So, they'll take what they take, and they'll understand what they understand, and I don't have or need control of that. But I do have control over my embodied experience and my own clarity within the work. And that's another kind of offering—a knowledge that I value and that you value.

LY A question that came up in the *EGMP* working group is that in Germany, "Hands up, don't shoot" is not a commonly known gesture. It's not directly associated with the protest movement sparked by the 2014 police killing of Michael Brown, an unarmed black man, in Ferguson, Missouri. The gesture has been taken up by Black Lives Matter and related activist movements. It doesn't make headline news in Germany the way it does or should do in North America. And so, there was a question of how this particular gesture gets read in Germany. The association might be of a broader stroke of surrender, whether that's to police or as a bank robber when you play childhood games, but not necessarily to policing of Black lives and Black bodies. So, I'm curious how this gesture will be read when we show this piece in Berlin. And even though it's to a theater audience and probably to a very specific theater audience, I'm still wondering what context it will be given in Germany. Another thing to consider is that we are dancing. And I don't want to equate dance with gesture making. But I do feel like we are dancing the gestures or dancing through the gestures and wonder how this might work with abstraction.

JC The “Hands up, don’t shoot” gesture in the world is often one of surrender, but the question to ask is why is that person surrendering? To whom, and for what? The “what” in this instance is the multitude of reasons why a marginalized person would be placed in a position where they felt they must perform a legible gesture of surrender. I am certain that it is not always because they’re a villain.

There are people who are always at risk no matter where they are, and even more so if you don’t uphold or acquiesce to hegemonic societal structures. So, the person who needs to do this gesture isn’t always a criminal. People of color can be at risk no matter where they are—the demand to surrender is placed on their bodies by the structure itself. It is an experience shared by many.

LY It’s now become a repeatable gesture that can multiply.

JC But I think when you have two women of color in front of you doing something like a reiterative force of a gesture of
Again
and again
and again,
I mean, the title of the work is *One hundred more* it’s like
Again
and again
and again
and again.
It’s about reiteration of gesture, so dancing the gesture is less about making it into dance and about committing to
seeing it

again
and us feeling it
again
and revisiting
and imbuing
it with whatever shows up in the moment or whatever we’ve inscribed for ourselves.

We provide context by being who we are. A context that’s personal and this context will change for us depending where we are in the world. In turn, the gesture will be read differently, and I feel fine with that. But it goes back to the thought—do I need it to mean “Hands up, don’t shoot” as well as a gesture of resistance understood by Germans? No. But do I need them to see you and I doing these movements

Again and
Again and
Again and
Again and
in rhythm
with pleasure
with pain,
joy?
Yes. I do need that.
I need that recognition.
I need to be seen.
I need them to see you.
I need them to sit with that discomfort.

We talk so much about "how is this a gesture of resistance?" The work itself needs to be a gesture of resistance if we don't want to be illustrative or representational. We want the thing to be it.

The two of us there,
Insisting
and insisting
and doing these things
over
and over
and perhaps the more they see, the more they'll question.

Perhaps the more they see, the more they'll get bored.

Perhaps the more they see, the more they will care.

The thing about repetition and repeated gesture and insistence on presence through gesture is that the more you see, the more something else happens. And the something else? I can't be responsible for it. I can't direct that. Although I would love to.

I guess I have this hope that the work will bring people into the present. And they may not see "Hands up, don't shoot" as a gesture of resistance, but other feelings and images may arise.

LY Yes, we hold reiteration and repetition very strongly in our movement. I'd like to bring back the word metric because there is an interesting combination between metric and rhythm.

We play with the rhythm of gesture. We also talk about the gait or walk, and the expected normative rhythms that certain bodies have to subscribe to in order to be legible and readable. And how taking on a different rhythm to the normative is especially risky for certain bodies. And that can be about readability and assessment, in this case, the metric—whether through the lens of gender, queerness, race, neurodiversity.

When we first began rehearsals, we gave ourselves the task of sustaining the "Hands up, don't shoot" gesture for twenty minutes, which is elbows held at ninety degrees with hands close to the face. This extended exercise of rhythm was brutal not just because it was physically exhausting but because within that we were, as Donna Haraway would say, "staying with the trouble" and the emotion of that gesture was inescapable. The extended time gave rise to a feeling of trans-generational trauma.

It was so confronting to stick with this very embodied gesture through time.

JC Yeah.

LY There are moments in our movement sequences that feel very readable and then moments where we work with opacity.

We think through the words of Édouard Glissant and “the right to opacity for everyone.” And how opacity is not obscurity but rather of “that which cannot be reduced.”

Within this opacity lies the desire for these unknowable micro gestures, or as Erin Manning might say “minor gestures,” to have their own agency and also for us to bear our rights to be unreadable for every gaze. So what gestures are legible and illegible keeps shifting. And that also has to do with the metric.

We are in this world of finding pathways into gestures, those pathways may not be readable and yet they have their own resonance, body, and agency. There are gestures that some gazes are not privy to understand.

That makes me wonder if abstraction can ever be something that we, as women of color, can own?

I don’t mean to equate the illegible with abstraction, but I do wonder where the differentiation might lie when I ask the public to read my body.

JC Yeah. I’ve been thinking a lot about opacity and for me it’s less about a mask or veneer or a blocking or as shade. That was a bad choice of words (laughs).

LY Shade.

JC Shade!

But more about an action, a way of being.

How do I wrap my head around opacity being anything other than movement?

I can't. I'm always thinking about this work in the back and in the front of my mind and it is clear to me that opacity is about action. It is deciding to be in our bodies in the way we choose. It is less focused on concealing and centered on making a choice to withhold—or, more specifically, to hold something for ourselves. So, coming back to metrics, if you think about a metric as the standard measurement—through opacity, we are creating our own standard of measurement.

> Opacity as an/other standard of measurement
> which relates to action,
> which relates to rhythm
> and that relates to repetition.
> Maybe that's how opacity is birthed
> and then slides away
> and rebirthed
> and slides away.

That's how I'm thinking through metric and rhythm and readability. To read a book—the moment when it's legible would be because it sits within a standard of measurement that is agreed upon. That's how we see and read and understand. And what we're trying to create is a new standard of measurement that is specifically about us as individuals, and how that relates to our experiences as women of color. We are not going to speak for all people of color because each of us have different levels of privilege inside of our (laughs) non-whiteness.

I feel like we can instrumentalize choreography to create this new standard of measurement and that's where the opacity comes in. They (the public) don't know how we're going to lay it out or how we're understanding it, how rhythm is moving through our bodies. So, although we do not reveal our standard of measurement or what our actions of opacity are, we ask that the audience be alongside us.

We'll be here in this action (puts hands up to the face), then we start doing "this" (moves hands closer to neck height with thumbs almost touching, palms open to the front) then all of a sudden it becomes some other kind of action.

God, it makes me think of *Singing in the Rain* when Lina Lamont does this weird action while Cathy is behind the curtain singing for her.

This action of hands up
ba-bi-ba-ba (the sounds of counting out the rhythm)
can become something else,
like the action of hands in *Singing in the Rain* and the public doesn't know what that transition is—maybe they knew the action of "Hands up" or maybe this other action looks like *Singing in the Rain* or something else, maybe it looks like an emoji heart.

If we're making those decisions about when and what it turns into then it's on our terms and it is for us. But they are welcome to go looking for a logic that doesn't belong to them.

That's what I like to think about with this work. That this work doesn't belong to everybody. It belongs to us and we have enough audacity to say: here, we serve it up for you.

And it's in the rhythm.
What we change,
when,
and how we reveal, when,
is the opacity.

LY I love thinking about the idea of opacity as a movement.

When we work we are establishing a very clear rhythm. We move to a certain beat per minute that makes us feel good. And a beat to which we enjoy moving together.

But what happens when we break that expectation? Like when we suddenly switch to the off beat? Or, for example, when the beat doesn't hit or when the beat does hit but you do something other than what's expected. There are all these tensions that can be played with in terms of what you expect the body to do.

I'm also thinking about the idea of our gestures in relationship to protest gestures. In protest gestures there is often a desire for call and response. "What do we want?" "Freedom!" "When do we want it?" "NOW!" You throw out the gesture to elicit a reply.

Where are the gestures going to land? They're going to land with the theater audience. And how are they going to reply? How will they reply to our rhythm?

I'm wondering what kind of rhythm or entrainment will happen in the bodies of the audience and if that's a way of replying to our call. Whether they know it or not a rhythm shift has to happen in the audience, especially if you're working with so much repetition.

JC My question then becomes: What are they responding to, and how are they responding? And that goes back to making meaning. If we make the hail, do they hail back? I'm thinking about theater space and the behavioral codes around the theater and how obedient an audience can be. Either they sit quietly and watch, or they leave.

But I believe there will be an energetic response of some kind.

LY ... which can be manipulated to a certain extent.

JC Certainly.

LY Some of our gestures are also clear communication... Like the "hi" gesture. I'm wondering how it lands in this context of political gesture because although the gesture is for us, it's also a call-out.

JC If I think about it as a call-out then the call is "Is anybody paying attention that we're here?"

And, most importantly, all these ways we have to work to be here. So that we can be here.

So, there's something about showing this
rhythmic,
iterative,
non-stop.

Part of me wonders if I need anything from the audience. I want to do this:

I give it to you

bring it to me
give it to you
take it back to myself

So, it's not me going like this (performs gesture of hand out as if asking for something) and please give something back to me with my hand open.

It's like here
I take it back.
Here.
I take it back.
You're not on top of it?
Then I take it back.
Okay, you're not getting it?
I got it.

It's just like here
and again
and again
and I can keep going on forever.

There's something about reclaiming, so maybe it's not about waiting for their response but rather

feeling my own
and serving it again,
feeling my own
and serving it again
and feeling OUR own.

I don't need an amen from the audience. I need an amen from you.

LY You got it. Amen.

That's a great way of thinking about regeneration and also going back to the idea of the call and response—

Perhaps the call and response is also between us. You send me a gesture, I receive it, embody it and send a reply back to you in solidarity.

It's our unison and synchronicity of movement that relays the gestures between us, taking up the baton so the other person can breathe and rest.

So that we can be physical for longer than if we were by ourselves. It's something that's come up in protest movements, the ability to relay action and breath, so that activists take turns, take care, and don't burn out.

I'd like to come back to the imperceptible gesture, or maybe an invisible gesture that needs to be activated to reduce risk and harm for certain bodies.

For example, the gesture of not meeting the gaze.

Deciding to cast your eyes downwards. Choosing to glance instead of stare. All of these movement choices that one has to make to sometimes NOT be visible. Or again inversely, the need to make gestures hyper readable—hands staying out of pockets so they stay seen.

JC Yeah. There's opacity to guard oneself and then there's a certain kind of performance of self that allows you to disappear.

I'm thinking about the physical re-calibration I have to do, to be present with things that are actually excluding me.

But I have no choice but to be present in them. So, if I don't do these physical re-calibrations then I am putting myself at risk.

I like to think about how we can show a physical re-calibration, how that might be one way of dealing with the beat dropping, or not dropping, or tension held, because I know that's not understood by those that don't have to do that work, and that it is a daily occurrence for many of us. Every day I have to do those re-calibrations. And when I'm on the street with my child, he also knows he has to do those re-calibrations in some way.

Maybe it's about making the invisible visible as much as it is about making gestures that are known or unknown visible. Can we make the invisible, visible?

LY And have it count. And have it be its own. So that the idea of the minor gesture is valued and has its own agency.

JC I guess the beauty about having the privilege we do, is having this theater space that gives us a pocket for it.

Its content has been valued simply because it has been invited to be performed.

How are we using the theater? We are using it as a container for this hail. For making the minor gesture the main event. And then the audience is choosing to participate by showing up. They're putting their €10 down, if it was Canada it would be $30 (both laugh), but there's something about simply showing up and committing to being present to instill belief and power in the ideas.

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fig. 1
Sharon Hayes, *In the Near Future*, 2009.
Multiple-slide-projection installation, 13 actions, 13 projections, 1,053 slides. Dimensions variable. Courtesy of the artist and Tanya Leighton Gallery, Berlin.

At the Center of Attention—Gesture, Police, and the Commodification of Protest

Florian Bettel

In 2008, mounted police officers in uniform patrolled a transient space at Tate Modern. Crowd control tactics were applied to an incidental assembly of people during a weekend of art performances. The widely discussed piece, *Tatlin's Whisper #5,* by Cuban artist Tania Bruguera, took spectators by surprise, confronting them with common police tactics. Bruguera created a shift in context by transferring mounted police into an art space, exhibiting their violent gestures, weapons, and equipment while focusing on interactions with the audience.

Bruguera's performance is only one example from an increasing number of artists who incorporate the aesthetics of riot control and protest movements into their work. Parallel to the artistic interest in protest and riot, there has been an intensified appropriation of these specific aesthetics into the greater sphere of popular culture. Music videos, advertising, and movies draw on both fictitious and real uprisings along with their symbols, material culture, and gestures.

Recent years have seen protest movements from across the political spectrum. There have been examples from the left, like the Occupy movement from 2011 to 2012, the Spanish anti-austerity movement from 2011 to 2015, and the *Donnerstagsdemonstrationen* (Thursday demonstrations) in Vienna, from 2000 to 2006 and 2018 to 2019, as well as from the right, such as Pegida, ongoing since 2014, and the Unite the Right rally in Charlottesville in 2017. Then there are movements that cannot be clearly classified politically, like the *gilets jaunes* (yellow vests) in Paris, ongoing since 2018, and the worldwide Fridays for Future movement, also since 2018.

The following analysis focuses on historical and contemporary examples of different artworks that deal with protest aesthetics and the incorporation of gesture. Three categories of artistic strategy are examined: firstly, reinterpretations of the material culture of protest movements; secondly, reenactments of specific (historical) moments of protest; and thirdly, the direct involvement of artists in protest movements.

As a specific area of cultural production, art serves as a stepping-stone to discuss common narratives of debate on protest aesthetics within broader popular culture. The discussion in this chapter is based on the premise that intensified interest in protest aesthetics takes place against a background of economic and political crises—subsumed as neoliberalism—with the police, "society's first line of defence,"[1] being a crucial actor in social anxiety and a re-installment of social order.

Neoliberalism, a political ideology that penetrates all aspects of life, even the most private areas, in conjunction with the excessive use of police as

1 Stuart Hall, Chas Critcher et al., *Policing the Crisis: Mugging, the State and Law and Order* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), xii.

a political tool—or as a substitute for politics—fuel both individually experienced security and insecurity. Against this background, protest movement gestures are mediatized and thus made accessible to a wider audience, which extends their meaning beyond the local. In this chapter, I argue that these gestures as signifiers become part of popular culture and its gatekeeping functions.[2] As far as the gesture succeeds in the realm of popular culture, meaning as far as it is commercially exploitable, it is subsequently decoupled from the signified and acquires other meanings. The political consequence is that the gesture becomes a substitute for politics; within the neoliberal regime, both the signifier and the signified become a commodity.

Art and the Material Culture of Protest

In the Near Future (2005–2009) is a series of performances by US artist Sharon Hayes in which she cites the language and materiality of historical protests within a certain topographic context. Hayes confronted passers-by in cities including Berlin, New York, Vienna, and Warsaw, with signs bearing historical protest slogans (see fig. 1). She encouraged the audience to document the performance on slide film— for Hayes a chance to emphasize the event-like status of the capturing and transmission (heritage) of photographs, video, sound, etc.[3] Hayes was interested in the viewers' reactions. Some of the protest sign slogans were anachronistic. Some were still relevant despite being a hundred years old. *In the Near Future* investigates the relationship between speaker and listener as well as the relationship between the documentation of a political event and the (historical) event.[4]

In an interview published in Frieze magazine, Hayes elaborated on the integration of historical narratives into her work. She explained that she uses anachronistic materials, images, texts, artworks, etc., because they are still relevant to an "unresolved set of problems, struggles, questions, debates"[5] and they help, with reference to Walter Benjamin's notes on historiography, "to seize hold of a memory as it flashes up at a moment of danger."[6]

p. 104

2 There is now a comprehensive right-wing pop culture that is already partially transitioning to mainstream. For many studies, such as this one, however, a deeper examination of right-wing and fascist protest gestures in popular culture remains a desideratum. Many thanks to Liddy Scheffknecht and Ernst Strouhal for numerous hints and for the enriching discussions over the past few months.

3 Andrea Geyer and Sharon Hayes, *History is Ours* (Heidelberg: Kehrer, 2009), 48–57.

4 Sharon Hayes, "Speech Acts," interview by Roger Cook, *Frieze* 129, (March 2010): 94–97.

5 Hayes, "Speech Acts," 2010, 97.

6 Hayes, "Speech Acts," 2010, 97.

2

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fig. 2
Nasan Tur, *Demo Kits Deluxe*, 2009.
Brass, satin, spray paint can, refined adhesive tape
90 × 5.5 × 7.5 cm.
On display at the *Throwing Gestures* exhibition in December 2018.
Courtesy of the artist. Torsten Schmitt Fotografie | Berlin, 2018.

fig. 3
Jeremy Deller, *The Battle of Orgreave (An Injury to One is an Injury to All)*, June 17, 2001.
In collaboration with Mike Figgis. Courtesy of the artist and The Modern Institute / Toby Webster Ltd., Glasgow. Photograph by Parisah Taghizadeh.

Hayes is not the only artist to use the material culture of protest movements. In 2009, Nasan Tur exhibited *Demo Kits Deluxe*, each a unique, high-priced work of art. Buyers get the opportunity to make their own custom protest sign—for or against whatever cause they choose—from banner kits featuring exotic wood, hand-polished precious metal, the finest silk, and glossy spray cans (see fig. 2).

In 2017, Cinthia Marcelle created a disconcerting experience with her installation *Chão De Caça* (Hunting Ground) in the Brazilian pavilion at the Venice Biennale. The audience entered a space with an inclined floor made of metal grating. The artist used objects reminiscent of those used in protests and riots to create an environment that seemed far removed from the picturesque Venetian Giardini. A video installation showed a group of men gradually dismantling a tiled roof from the inside to create openings. The men, apparently prisoners, were climbing through the openings onto the tile roof, either working on their escape or preparing to protest.

There seems to be a fundamental interest in the material culture of protest movements in art. It is, however, difficult to define the material culture of protest movements since the appropriation of objects is a very fluid process. There are, of course, iconic items that can be found at any protest: signs, banners, megaphones, etc. But as Pamela Odih demonstrated in her study of the Occupy London Stock Exchange movement (2011–2012), the material culture of protest is much more extensive and dynamic. The occupation of St. Paul's Cathedral piazza led to the appropriation of actual urban space as well as media space. Everyday items—tents, kitchens, board games, shopping trolleys, advertising pillars, bicycles and bicycle modifications, newspapers—became signifiers of the occupation.[7]

Hayes explained that a confrontation with material that is connected to—or resembles, as she put it—historical political events confronts visitors with present-day conflicts and debates in line with the idea of *longue durée*. So, when Tur exhibited and sold artifacts reminiscent of protest culture—empty, slogan-less, and packaged as a DIY set—he was speaking with irony about protests in the age of digitalization, selfie culture, and webinars. *Demo Kits Deluxe* fulfills the needs of a society that longs for non-virtual materials, where objects and their surfaces are nostalgically charged and sold to the highest bidder.

7 Pamela Odih, *Visual Media and Culture of "Occupy"* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2013). Timo Herbst's chapter *Play by Rules* in this book, pp. 135–160 examines the material culture of media technology in reports from within and about demonstrations.

p. 108

Re-enacting Protest

If we look deeper into the confrontation of art and protest movements, one example always stands out: Jeremy Deller's *The Battle of Orgreave* (2001). Deller worked with the residents of Orgreave to re-enact a historic episode that is considered a turning point in modern British history: the Battle of Orgreave, a violent confrontation between police and striking workers at a coking plant in June 1984. Described as "[a]lmost medieval in its choreography,"[8] the battle brought Thatcherism's violent power—something the ruling Conservatives did not shy away from—to the attention of the British public. Margaret Thatcher's political power was based on a bottom-up demand for the defense of social order. The state's response to this demand was described by Stuart Hall et al. in 1978, six years prior to the events in Orgreave, as "policing the crisis."[9]

In 2001, Jeremy Deller teamed up with workers and police officers involved in the events of 1984, as well as hundreds of amateur actors, to re-enact the violent clashes (see fig. 3). Deller was interested in working with the community and finding an artistic format that would allow an open discussion on the historical events of Orgreave and the socio-economic situation of the workers under the New Labour government. A television team documented the process and the documentary was subsequently broadcast on national television. Deller's artwork managed to address a historic moment in British history, making it tangible for a whole community, and bringing it to a wider audience to open up the underlying social, societal, and political dimensions to discussion.

p. 109

Artists within Contested Space

Ten years after Deller's *Battle of Orgreave*, the world public eagerly followed urban protest movements that claimed their rights to the streets in various regions of the world. In January 2011, protesters occupied Tahrir Square in Cairo, Egypt. Sparked by previous events in Tunisia, Egyptians used the central urban

8 Tristram Hunt, "The Charge of the Heavy Brigade," *Guardian*, September 4, 2006, www.theguardian.com/theguardian/2006/sep/04/features5.

9 Hall et al., *Policing the Crisis*, 2013. See below for more on the topic.

location to make visible their demands for a democratic and liberal society. Media enabled the rest of the world to follow the events. Social media was new, and protesters used it to organize occupations, to communicate within the community as well as with a wider audience.[10] Other examples of urban protest movements at the beginning of the 2010s were the uprisings in Stuttgart, New York, and Istanbul.

In the course of their struggles, most of these protest movements were able to incorporate a set of techniques that empowered heterogeneous groups of people to communicate, plan their actions, and interact with a larger audience. Technology facilitated the constitution and maintenance of their activities, and by occupying public spaces and marking out territories, they achieved public awareness and media coverage.[11]

One striking similarity between the movements was the involvement of artists and artistic activism. So, for example, in Istanbul, 2013, the violent eviction of a protest camp sparked outrage. Protesters were contesting an urban development plan for Gezi Park, one of the few remaining green areas in the city center. Performer Erdem Gündüz explored artistic methods of subverting the then active police strategy of violently suppressing protests against the eviction. He stood in Taksim Square, still and silent, for hours, staring at the Atatürk Cultural Centre. With his singularized body, he represented no gathering of people, yet his gesture was an invitation for others to join him on Taksim Square. The resulting assembly of individuals was not dissolved by the police.[12] Images of the *Standing Man* performance went viral on social media and reinforced media coverage of the events. Gündüz's performance became a signifier of the Gezi Park movement.

Standing Man can be seen as one example of a long tradition of artistic exploration and appropriation of urban spaces. Art history coined the term "urban performance" for a long strand of temporary artworks that contest the "city" as a reference point for a heterogeneous urban population with different needs and expectations. Urban art forms are especially powerful in making political, social, cultural, and economic issues sensorially perceivable.[13]

10 Britta Baumgarten, "Culture and Activism across Borders," in *Conceptualizing Culture in Social Movement Research*, ed. Britta Baumgarten, Priska Daphi, and Peter Ullrich (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 91–112. Baumgarten focused on the interactions between national boundaries and transnational media spaces at different levels of protest movement culture.

11 Florian Bettel and Luise Reitstätter, "Politics of Participation: From the Right to the City to the Right to the Museum," in *Museopathy Revisited. Artist Interventions in Canada and Beyond*, ed. Anne Koval, Taryn Sirove, and Andrea Terry (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, forthcoming).

12 Florian Bettel and Luise Reitstätter, "Right to the City! Right to the Museum!" in *Uncertain Spaces: Virtual Configurations in Contemporary Art and Museums*, ed. Helena Barranha, Susana S. Martins (Lisbon: Universidade Nova de Lisboa, 2015), 159–182.

13 Heinz Schütz, "Die Stadt als Aktionsraum. Urban Performances als singulärer Auftritt und kollektives Ereignis," *Kunstforum International* 224 (2013): 44–81.

By the end of the 1950s, Allan Kaprow's *Happenings* were taking art to the streets, or rather, turning public space into art. The boundary between art and everyday life was being questioned. "The city" as subject matter was prevalent throughout the history of modern art, but in the 1950s and '60s, artists began to conquer the urban environment. Günter Brus and Valie Export in Vienna, Hi-Red Center in Tokyo, Kaprow in New York, and Guy Debord in Paris—they understood the city as action, something that is in use and to be experienced.[14]

Valie Export, for example, started in 1972 with her series *Körperkonfigurationen* (Body Configurations, 1972–1981), a playful mapping of the city. Her urban performance was a physical approach to architectural structures in Vienna. The artist used her body to trace the manifestation of power in the form of buildings. Pieces such as *Aufbeugung* ("Bending-up"), *Zustützung* ("Backing-up"), and *Einkreisung* (Encirclement, all 1976) show the artist in a kind of struggle with historicizing and seemingly inaccessible architecture; Export's approach to power evidently caused her pain (see fig. 4).

p. 116

For artists, the physical and conceptual investigation of power structures can be outlined with three basic strategies that many artworks employ: establishing relationships, empowering people, and speaking out.[15] Henri Lefebvre's demand for a "right to the city" still resonates in these works of art. So, establishing relationships means finding access to certain communities deprived of their civil, social, political, and economic rights. Ricardo Basbaum, in his ongoing series *Você gostaria de participar de uma experiênciência artistica?* (Would You Like to Participate in an Artistic Experience? 1994–), used a simple, painted metal object to involve people who would normally avoid events labeled "art." With their initial *Superchannel* project (1999–2005), Danish art collective Superflex empowered people to learn new skills, to use their existing know-how, and to grow professionally. And Erwin Wurm invaded public and media space with his pieces *Two Ways of Carrying a Bomb* (2003) and *Spit in Someone's Soup* (2003).

The acts, or "actions" (Hayes's preferred term)[16] by these artists, their instructions for others to follow

14 Schütz, "Die Stadt als Aktionsraum," 2013, 50.
15 Bettel and Reitstätter, "Right to the City! Right to the Museum," 2015, 167–176.
16 The Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, "Sharon Hayes: In the Near Future," Collection Online, 2019, accessed July 3, 2020, www.guggenheim.org/artwork/26692.

their lead, fall within the scope of what Engin F. Isin defines as activist citizens. He, along with other political scientists, has adopted a broader definition of political actors to scrutinize the phenomena of a globalized and mediatized society, thereby referring to fluid and dynamic entities instead of fixed categories.[17] Consequently, citizenship can and has to be performed in order to participate in public affairs. Protest movements, artistic interventions, urban performance, etc., are highly aesthetic acts of citizenship targeting different sites, scales, and rights.[18] Within the constant struggle over what Jacques Rancière defined as the "distribution of the sensible," gestures are precious tools for acts of citizenship.[19]

Art historian Claire Bishop has emphasized a conjunction of left-wing party neoliberal policies and socially engaged art of the late 1990s. Taking office in 1997, New Labour shifted the focus of its cultural policy, adopting a rhetoric very similar to that of socially engaged art agents. To justify public spending, New Labour argued in metrics, e.g., audience figures and marketing statistics. Public funding of low-threshold cultural institutions was cut; the government promoted *social inclusion* in the arts. The neoliberal regime sees people who do not or cannot contribute to capitalism—the socially excluded—as disruptive,[20] and New Labour made efforts to remedy marginalization with the constructive-sounding agenda of social participation and the ideal of the *artist* was used as a role model for the new proletarian. Flexible, creative, modest, motivated—virtues that ought to have enabled creative industries to offer enough entrepreneurial opportunities for everyone to participate—especially in light of New Labour's cultural policy preamble, "Everyone is creative."[21]

In the neoliberal era, best described by Margaret Thatcher's infamous sentence, "there is no such thing as society,"[22] artists had to submit to new evaluation criteria, to external metrics, when applying for public funding. A problem then arose for classical art critique. Socially collaborative practices were perceived as important to the task of social inclusion. Common criteria negotiated under complex aspects of aesthetics were suddenly considered obsolete. The result of this so-called "ethical turn" in the arts was an obfuscation of the political and the aesthetic: the struggle of class conflicts was increasingly replaced by matters of inclusion and exclusion.[23]

Within the field of artistic activism we see different actors, from artists who join a protest movement and contribute with their professional knowledge, like Gündüz did in 2013, to people coming from outside the arts and apply artistic strategies to communicate their objectives, like Zentrum für Politische Schönheit and the Center for Artistic Activism.[24] Rancière criticized the ethical turn in contemporary thought for its submission to moral judgment, that is, when the ethical gesture by an artist became the object of art critique.[25] Walter Benjamin subsumed his critique of the then overbearing Fascism and its relation to the realm

17 Engin F. Isin, "Citizenship in Flux: The Figure of the Activist Citizen," *Subjectivity* 29, (2009): 370.
18 Isin, "Citizenship in Flux," 2009, 371–372.
19 Jacques Rancière. "Die Aufteilung des Sinnlichen. Ästhetik und Politik," in *Die Aufteilung des Sinnlichen. Die Politik der Kunst und ihre Paradoxien*, ed. Jacques Rancière (Berlin: b_books, 2006), 25–34.
20 Claire Bishop, *Artificial Hells. Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship* (London/New York: Verso, 2012), 12–15.
21 Bishop, *Artificial Hells*, 2012, 15.
22 Quoted in Oliver Marchart, *Das unmögliche Objekt,* (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2013), 7.
23 Bishop, *Artificial Hells*, 2012, 13–26.
24 Florian Bettel and Elke Zobl, "Artistic Activism and Cultural Resistance: An Interview with Stephen Duncombe," *p/art/icipate* 2, (March 2013): 5–10, accessed July 3, 2020, p-art-icipate.net/artistic-activism-and-cultural-resistance-an-interview-with-stephen-duncombe/.
25 Bishop, *Artificial Hells*, 2012, 28.

of aesthetics in 1935 as the "aestheticization of politics."[26] What Benjamin later revised as the epilogue to *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* discussed not only the avant-garde, like Italian futurism, but popular culture specifically, such as newsreels and mass sports events. The 2000s have increasingly seen an aestheticization of politics in popular culture, not necessarily by political agents or parties, but primarily by commercial players that incorporate aesthetics of protest movements into their business models and public relations.

Protest Aesthetics in Popular Culture

In 2012, French director Romain Gavras presented his music video for Jay Z and Kanye West's *No Church in The Wild*.[27] The five-minute-long clip depicts a violent clash between protesters and police. It starts with a faceless man igniting a Molotov cocktail. The next shot shows the man's apparent opponents, a group of armed riot police. The first twenty seconds of the clip set the scene. The protesters use provocative and aggressive gestures of contempt extensively, but the police force uses gestures that are clearly signs of violence and authority (see fig. 5). The urban setting becomes a war zone during a fight between the two antagonistic groups. There is excessive violence on both sides—and no victory for anyone.

p. 117

Gavras, son of Greek-French film director Costa-Gavras, is known for his blunt use of violence in short films. A 2008 music video for the track *Stress* by French electronic music duo Justice, featured similar levels of aggression.[28] It follows a group of teenagers, all dressed in identical jackets with Justice's emblem on the back, from a Parisian *banlieue* to the inner city.[29] The gang is very violent, armed with clubs and batons, which they use in threatening gestures, assaults, fights, and blind aggression against bystanders and infrastructure as they move through urban space. In some scenes, they clearly inscribe themselves in the city—they spray walls in the Métro, knock the side mirrors off parked cars, smash slot machines in a bar, and torch a car with a Molotov cocktail. Gavras did not portray a clear antagonist in *Stress*; the gang's

26 Walter Benjamin, "Das Kunstwerk im Zeitalter seiner technischen Reproduzierbarkeit. Dritte Fassung," in Walter Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften, I.2*, ed. Rolf Tiedemann and Hermann Schweppenhäuser, (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1991), 506 (own translation).

27 Jay Z & Kanye West, "No Church in the Wild," Vimeo video, 5:04, 2012, accessed July 3, 2020, vimeo.com/149266922.

28 Jeffrey T. Iverson, "Uproar Over French Music Video," *Time*, May 19, 2008, content.time.com/time/arts/article/0,8599,1807724,00.html. The music video was heavily criticized when it was first released—by both the far-right National Rally and anti-racist organizations.

29 Jus ice, "Stress," directed by Romain Gavras, Vimeo video, 6:48, 2008, accessed July 3, 2020, vimeo.com/9518258.

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fig. 4
VALIE EXPORT, *Einkreisung*, 1976.
Courtesy of the artist, WVZ Nr. V.E. 243_F_1, Bildrecht Wien, 2020.

fig. 5
Still from the music video for Jay Z & Kanye West's *No Church in The Wild* directed by Romain Gavras, 2012.
Copyright Roc-A-Fella Records.

violence is not clearly targeted and anyone in their path could become their victim. The gang's antagonist, it seems, is society as a whole; a society that excludes and marginalizes its young members, so that in order to become visible again, they use undirected and unrestricted violence.

In *Stress*, Gavras also deals with the role of the audience, those who make the clip popular and thus profitable. The director explicated this double play with Rancière's distribution of the sensible in some scenes—when the film crew's boom operator suddenly appears midway through the video, for example. After six minutes of raw violence, the viewer is confronted with the gang's anger, which is now directed against the crew itself; one gang member spits onto the camera lens and the cameraman is knocked down with a glass bottle. The video ends with the camera lying on the ground, capturing the burning car in the background (see fig. 6). The viewer is part of the spectacle, implicated in the commercial utilization of the socially excluded, an otherwise barely perceptible societal phenomenon. More recently, English musician Ebony Bones focused on bringing the same phenomena to light in her self-directed music video *No Black in the Union Jack*.[30] While the song appropriates the infamous 1968 speech, "Rivers of Blood," by British MP Enoch Powell, and deals with racism in the UK, the visual narrative in the video additionally superimposes socio-economic questions over the song's identity-political layer. Grenfell Tower, where seventy-two people were killed by fire in June 2017, features prominently in a montage of people, impressions of London, and a synchronized swimming team dressed in Union Jack swimsuits. Bones noted that the tower has become a symbol of "systemic, institutional and structural inequality"[31] (see fig. 7).

There are further examples of music videos that—at their best—challenge viewers in their role as consumers, namely as potential buyers of music and the target audience for advertising. The Chemical Brothers' *Out of Control*, released in 1999, is a good example.[32] The clip, a trenchant satire, uses hyper-aestheticized and sexualized protest images to confound viewers' expectations with a clever plot

p. 120

p. 121

30 Ebony Bones, "No Black in the Union Jack," Vimeo video, 4:37, 2018, accessed July 3, 2020, vimeo.com/285630235.

31 Robin Murray, "Ebony Bones Makes A Statement With 'No Black in The Union Jack,'" *Clash*, June 25, 2018, accessed July 3, 2020, www.clashmusic.com/news/ebony-bones-makes-a-statement-with-no-black-in-the-union-jack.

32 The Chemical Brothers, "Out of Control," YouTube video, 4:14, 1999, accessed July 3, 2020, www.youtube.com/watch?v=6sOpbRL8R4g.

twist. A story of two protesters using iconic political gestures, which convey a sense of "too good to be true," and their confrontation with the police is exposed in the course of the video as a cheap narrative for a commercial (see fig. 8). The self-reflexive "film in a film" commercial offers itself as a commodity as it is seen on a television in a shop window display. Suddenly, the plot twists as the polished pictures are overlaid by rough, monochrome night shots made with a cheap camera. A demonstrator throws a brick through the shop window, smashing the TV behind it. Realistic depictions of protests, clashes with police, and violence follow. The connecting element between the two parts of the video is the use of graffiti, a reference to the Situationist International and the work of Guy Debord.[33]

p. 128

Thai film director Apichatpong Weerasethakul processed the problematic political past of Nabua, a town in northeast Thailand, in his video installation *Primitive* in 2009. He created films in a range of genres, one being music video. Weerasethakul described the video as essentially a portrait of teenagers who "celebrate the act of running and throwing things."[34] The director first worked to build trust with the teenagers; the idea of making a music video followed later. In 2008, the Thai political crisis became apparent and for Weerasethakul, his work with the teenagers became an opportunity to reflect both past and recent

33 Pamela Odih, *Visual Media and Culture of "Occupy,"* 2013, 1–26. Odih looked at the aesthetics and media channels of the "Occupy LSX" movement to examine Debord's theories, according to which capitalism permeates the leisure and humanity of workers, and the spectacle is on the rise parallel to a deepening crisis in avant-garde art.

34 Kick the Machine Films, "Primitive," n.d., accessed July 3, 2020, www.kickthemachine.com/page80/page22/page13/page62/index.html. Many thanks to Eva Kernbauer for the hint.

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fig. 6
Still from the music video for Justice's *Stress* directed by Romain Gavras, 2008.
Copyright Ed Banger Records.

fig. 7
Still from the music video for *No Black in the Union Jack* by Ebony Bones, 2018.
Copyright 1984 Records.

events. In 2010, as the world followed the violent Thai political protests, the director said that even though he was no political activist, "the political has entered my personal sphere."[35] For directors, the music video format is a way to reflect on political issues. How far this reflection goes and how far it remains mere aestheticization of protest and violence, depends on the ability and the will of those involved to articulate criticism in and of the format.

Policing the Crisis

Following Jeremy Deller's reference to Thatcherism in Britain, we turn to an outstanding theoretical approach that extends to current interest in uprisings in general and gestures of protest in particular. Violent maintenance of social order, such as that seen in 1984's Battle of Orgreave, is symptomatic of the state's approach to what Stuart Hall and his colleagues at the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies defined as "Policing the Crisis" in 1978, six years prior to the conflict.[36] Hall et al. began analyzing the social phenomenon of "mugging" in the early 1970s. In 1978, they published a study with the subtitle "Mugging, the State and Law and Order." They showed that the term "mugging," derived from US slang, became a signifier in Britain for an allegedly new quality of street crime: mugging meant a violent crime committed by youth, or more specifically, "black youth." Mugging implied a specific form of "otherness," something not "British."[37] The public response to this (mostly) media phenomenon was a demand for the re-installment of social order—and the most successful attempt to do so was "policing the crisis." Hall et al. understood "crisis" in a broad way. It meant a weakening hegemony of the post-war welfare state—the public experienced the shifting of ideologies as heterogenous individual socio-economic crises. Nevertheless, fear was spread as a "moral panic" about mugging, and crime in general became an index of social order disintegration.[38]

Perhaps the most provocative finding of the study was that the approach of tackling a social crisis by using police was not an invention of Thatcher and her Law-and-Order-cabinet, but a bottom-up demand, while violence became "*the* axis around which the public signification of the crisis turns in 1972."[39] In the second edition of their study, in 2013, the authors recapitulated, stating that the "convergence of crime, policing, race and the city [...] precipitated social anxiety [...] and convinced many of the socially excluded that the cause of their deprivation was not poverty but race."[40] So, the call to defend the social order against an opaque crisis that was signified by violence ultimately came from "below." Politics responded by "policing the crisis," which culminated in the events of Orgreave in 1984, where the miners, as part of the UK miners' strike in the years 1984 and 1985, were seen as agents of

35 Coline Milliard, "Review: Apichatpong Weerasethakul," *Art Monthly* 338, July–August 2010, 39.
36 Hall et al., Policing the Crisis, 2013.
37 Hall et al., *Policing the Crisis*, 2013, x–xviii.
38 Hall et al., *Policing the Crisis*, 2013, 7–31.
39 Hall et al., *Policing the Crisis*, 2013, 293 (italics in original).
40 Hall et al., *Policing the Crisis*, 2013, xiv.

violent disorder and the police as guarantors of law and order. Suddenly, the miners were the agents of "trouble" where previously "youth"—or, more specifically, "black youth"—had been associated with a certain social dis-affiliation.[41] British Conservative MP Enoch Powell, mentioned above, had already drawn this parallel in early 1970 when he assigned a protean quality to the enemy he opposed: striking teachers, students, demonstrations, race, and the "success of disorder."[42]

Ebony Bones and Gavras take us to places of social decline where, following Pierre Bourdieu, a lack of career prospects and cultural capital lead more or less directly to a self-affirmation that is almost always violent.[43] Violence as a signifier for the crisis, the same crises Hall et al. had already described in 1978, becomes apparent in the appearance of Grenfell Tower in *No Black in the Union Jack*, and is seen bluntly within the Parisian banlieue in *Stress*. The subjective experience of adolescents growing up in these places is characterized by subjugation and discrimination, with the police behaving very differently when it comes to controls, visitations, and penalization depending on an individual's social and cultural capital. A common theme of education in social housing projects is learning not to respond to police provocations. The adolescents are "police property,"[44] Canadian sociologist John Alan Lee's definition of marginalized groups whose care is essentially left to law enforcement officers. According to this reading, any confrontation leads to more discrimination. States of emergency are commonplace in the experience of these adolescents while they are subject to the police production of subjectivity.[45] The experience of a crisis is physical for adolescents living in infrastructurally weak areas, and the often-abstract power directly affects them.

Judith Butler asked what would happen when the absence of infrastructural support became a reason to act. The adolescents' actions in the music video *Stress* could be a coping strategy. For Butler, both the presence of infrastructure and the lack of it, that is precarity, facilitate acts.[46] The author investigated gesture against a background of questioning the possibility of solidarity in individual and fleeting ensembles of social relationships. The idea of solidarity with socially deprived adolescents might also be related to experiences of the ongoing crisis. Oliver Marchart, searching for a definition of the state of having lost the ground under your feet, noted that precarity is only relationally conceivable.[47] Solidarity can unfold in this relationality. The awareness that we share the same social space, in its "shimmering and eerie appearance,"[48] makes us receptive to knowledge of the absence of any grounds (German "*Grund*"). "At the moment of crisis, anomie, chaos, controversy, irritation, disgust or horror,"[49] the foundation (or grounds)—in terms of the totality of society—shows itself as an "*Ab-grund*" (abyss). We are shaken by the experience of contingency and antagonism, and a form of collectivization of this trembling and affections is protest."[50] "The medium of street protest is ultimately the human body [...]. The absent foundation for the protest

41 Hall et al., *Policing the Crisis*, 2013, xii, xvii.
42 Hall et al., *Policing the Crisis*, 2013, xvi–xvii, 268–273.
43 Didier Eribon, *Gesellschaft als Urteil* (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2017), 45.
44 Didier Fassin, "Die Politik des Ermessensspielraums: Der 'graue Scheck' und der Polizeistaat," in *Kritik der Polizei*, ed. Daniel Loick (Frankfurt/New York: Campus, 2018), 146 (own translation).
45 Daniel Loick, "Was ist Polizeikritik?" in *Kritik der Polizei*, ed. Daniel Loick (Frankfurt/New York: Campus, 2018), 20–21.
46 Judith Butler, *Wenn die Geste zum Ereignis wird* (Vienna/Berlin: Turia + Kant, 2019), 47.
47 Oliver Marchart, *Die Prekarisierungsgesellschaft. Prekäre Proteste. Politik und Ökonomie im Zeichen der Prekarisierung* (Bielefeld: transcript, 2013), 12.
48 Marchart, *Das unmögliche Objekt*, 2013, 442 (own translation).
49 Marchart, *Das unmögliche Objekt*, 2013, 59 (own translation).
50 Marchart, *Das unmögliche Objekt*, 2013, 443.

is not the call, but the eruption of an antagonism, which is neither voluntary to enforce nor verbally conjured."[51] The media transmits the emotions of these bodies on the ground to remote places, but for revolts and revolutions, the spatial coexistence of protesting bodies must be assumed.[52]

Bruguera's *Tatlin's Whisper #5*, Gündüz's *Standing Man*, and Deller's *The Battle of Orgreave*, are both mediums for historical actions (also within the spectators' and performers' experience) and moments of coexisting bodies and shared emotions. As artistic performance and re-enactment, these works refer to past violent events and stage gestures of aggression, power, and authority. The duplication of the gestures, noted Butler, makes the act of violence quotable. The repetition of the gesture is a reference to what people sometimes do, but is not a performance of the actual act.[53] These artworks quote what Hall et al. described as policing the crisis.

Commodification of the Crisis

Policing the crisis has entered an era of commercial exploitation. The aestheticization of protest gestures and gestures of violence has left the artistic realm of performances, re-enactments, and interventions—itself by no means free of commercial interests—and entered the realm of popular culture. I have already discussed the use of protest gestures in music videos as examples of more or less felicitous critical reflections of the power of these gestures in the struggle for the distribution of the sensible. There are many more examples of a more blunt use of this aestheticization for commercial purposes.

In April 2017, Pepsi retracted an advertisement that had attracted a great deal of negative attention. The just over two-and-a-half-minute commercial, titled *Live for Now*, depicts a demonstration featuring signs that say "Love," "Peace," and "Join the Conversation," a cheerful crowd of people—all conventionally beautiful individuals; a diverse mix of ethnicity, religion and gender—dancing and gesturing while enjoying their march on the streets.[54] US model Kendall Jenner is the main protagonist. Her character

51 Marchart, *Das unmögliche Objekt*, 2013, 443 (own translation).
52 Marchart, *Das unmögliche Objekt*, 2013, 444.
53 Butler, *Geste*, 2019, 78.
54 PepsiCo., "Live for Now," YouTube video, 2:39, 2017, accessed October 25, 2019, www.youtube.com/watch?v=dA5Yq1DLSmQ (video now private).

is seen walking from a photoshoot to a demonstration and joining the crowd. A few moments later, the demonstrators are confronted by crowd police. After the Pepsi brand is introduced, Jenner and Pepsi become the center of the action. “No need to worry, however,” wrote one critic about the scene where police and demonstrators face each other, “as Kendall Jenner picks up a can of liquid corporate America and approaches the menacing line and hands it to the most photogenic officer.”[55] In the following scene, the protesters cheer and the party continues. The commercial ends at the point where, in *Out of Control*, the criticism begins; almost as if a rare folding of the space-time continuum enabled The Chemical Brothers to make fun of the 2017 clip in 1999.

Pepsi was criticized for co-opting contemporary protest movements such as Black Lives Matter, which were subjected to massive police violence, “while framing a privileged, white 21-year-old supermodel with a can of soda as a peacemaker between civil rights activists and police.”[56] However, other corporations have also had to deal with the same criticism. Maybe the creators of Pepsi’s advertisement were just too sarcastic, or even too honest in their portrayal. In the commercial, it isn’t just the supermodel who is obviously privileged, the clip also depicts a completely segregated and gentrified city. The protesters, with their meaningless signs, appear to be members

55 Olivia Solon, “Kendall Jenner’s Pepsi Ad Criticized for Co-opting Protest Movements for Profit,” *Guardian*, April 5, 2017, www.theguardian.com/fashion/2017/apr/04/kendall-jenner-pepsi-ad-protest-black-lives-matter.

56 Solon, “Kendall Jenner’s Pepsi Ad,” 2017.

of the creative class, a wealthy part of society pursuing self-realization while not dependent on earned income—a "Creative City" full of artists, neoliberalism's role model. Society's other classes are solely implied in the form of the police, who are dependent on wage labor and thus their employer, the state.

The freedom of the artist, as proclaimed by the avant-garde Situationist International movement and its critique of the factory system and scientific management, is implemented in the creative class's system of values. The idealized idea of the artist, for whom the boundaries between work and non-work are suspended, was applied to ever more groups of workers in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. "The situationist dérive was being universalized into a model of comprehensive mobility and flexibility requirements."[57] The crisis Hall et al. investigated in 1978 produced the symptomatic worker of the twenty-first century with so-called zero-hours contracts. At least a million people in the UK worked under these conditions in the year 2013, according to estimates.[58] Zero-hours contracts mean employees "are on call to work when you need them, you do not have to give them work, they do not have to do work when asked," as the British government explains on its website.[59] Zero-hours contract workers are the cheap labor that keeps Uber, Amazon, Foodora, etc. running and highly profitable for some.

57 Marchart, *Die Prekarisierungsgesellschaft*, 2013, 71 (own translation).
58 Jeremy Deller, *All That is Solid Melts into Air*, (London: Hayward Publishing, 2013), 40. For more information on Deller's work dealing with zero-hours contracts, see Anna-Lena Wenzel's chapter *Gestures of an Exhibition* in this book, pp. 245–257.
59 Government Digital Service (GDS), "Contract types and employer responsibilities," n.d., accessed July 3, 2020, www.gov.uk/contract-types-and-employer-responsibilities/zero-hour-contracts.

Metrics that make time and space measurable for scientific management to increase productivity and decrease so-called "lost motion"[60] are applied directly to the bodies of zero-hours contractors with wearable technology, geotracking, gesture recognition, and so on.[61] The new metric regime has not stopped there. It has diffused into the most personal sphere through dissolving boundaries between work and non-work. Neoliberalism enforced the logic of optimization and performance enhancement in all possible areas of life. Competition for the best numbers has become a way of life and leads to ever more data. Data, as the key currency of the digital society, anchors performance and self-improvement in the social sphere.[62] The new quantified self can therefore also be found in children's bedrooms and in the sphere of adolescence as young people use apps such as TikTok to allow an undefined public to assess their private space, their bodies, and their time.[63] Self-optimization is no longer a friendly invitation to secure additional income through advertising and product placement, it has become imperative.

On February 25, 1976, the Whitney Museum was host to what was an outrageous presentation at the time. The performance *Articulate Muscle: The Male Body in Art* (see fig. 9) featured three bodybuilders—Arnold Schwarzenegger was one of them—"as living objects of art."[64] Because in 1976, bodybuilding was seen as "a sport with a low repute in this country,"[65] it took a whole panel of academics from various disciplines to justify the event. And yet, the discipline required to keep one's body within a strict space and time regime was and is emblematic of applying metrics to the self, and has since become a directive for how bodies of the twenty-first century look. The self-staging of influencers' athletic bodies in social media testify to this strict regime.

The high visibility of precarious workers in digital space contrasts with the invisibility of low-paid workers. Santiago Sierra rendered low-paid workers visible in his performance *250 cm Line Tattooed on 6 Paid People* in 1999. Through a recruitment agency, Sierra hired six Cuban workers to be living canvases. In precisely the essence of what Bishop called a delegated performance, Sierra turned "the economic

60 For more about the term "lost motion" see Konrad Strutz's chapter *Gestures of Labor* in this book, pp. 51–64.
61 Deller, *All that is solid*, 2013, 32–43.
62 Steffen Mau, *Das metrische Wir. Über die Quantifizierung des Sozialen* (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2017), 26.
63 For more information about TikTok, see Irina Kaldrack and Tobias Schulze's chapter *Dancing Fists* in this book, pp. 315–324.
64 Katharine Lowry, "The Show of Muscles at the Whitney was Vitiated by Academic Flabbiness," *Sports Illustrated*, June 7, 1976, www.si.com/vault/1976/06/07/614871/the-show-of-muscles-at-the-whitney-was-vitiated-by-academic-flabbiness.
65 Lowry, "The Show of Muscles," 1976.

p. 129

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fig. 8
Still from the music video for The Chemical Brothers' *Out of Control* directed by W.I.Z., 1999.
Copyright Virgin Music.

fig. 9
Whitney Museum, *Articulate Muscle: The Male Body in Art*, 1976.
Photograph by Elliott Erwitt, Magnum Photos (NYC32286), Agentur Focus (Germany).

context into one of his primary materials."[66] In Sierra's performance, aspects of the economy of the twenty-first century were "*aufgehoben*" in the sense of the Hegelian principle of sublation (*Aufhebung*) and its threefold meaning: *tollere* (to abolish/negate), *conservare* (to conserve), and *elevare* (to elevate). Globalization, outsourcing, offshore-labor, zero-hours contracts, and so on were exhibited, preserved, and obliterated in the artist's gesture of letting these conditions be drawn onto the bodies of low-paid workers.

Capitalism, under the neoliberal conditions that Hall et al. described as the crisis, has always been fast to adapt to new circumstances and create a market for itself. Demonstrations inspired by the Right to the City and directed against the capitalist regime (e.g. Occupy Wall Street), consequently offered an opportunity to develop and sell new products and services (coaching activists, web services, apparel, riot control technology, etc.), and to brand these protests, as in the cases of the Euromaidan in Ukraine and the Egyptian Revolution of 2011, which are synonymous with "Twitter revolution." Music videos and advertising use the aestheticization of protests for commercial purposes. In contemporary art, which is not detached from the economic cycle either, an application-oriented approach to protests is emerging, like the workshops for activists and inflatable objects for protesters offered by Artúr van Balen, founder of Tools for Action.[67]

In the reflection of the apparent successful utilization of protest aesthetics in popular culture, in the critical confrontation of artists with protest gestures, and in the high-gloss images of social media, we see the misery of low-paid workers, their struggle within the highly precarious gig economy. Capitalism has learned to profit from the crisis; to capitalism, the crisis is a commodity and, as such, highly lucrative.

Post Scriptum

In Pepsi's commercial, the revolt is purely an end in itself, it has no teleological vanishing point anymore. In an era where resistance against capitalism can be a commodity, popular culture makes it harder to pay attention to the soft nuances, to the im/perceptible gestures. And yet there is a place in popular culture, not quiet at all, that is currently able to, at least temporarily, establish a highly heterogeneous community. Bogomir Doringer's exhibition *Dance of Urgency* in 2019 focused on club culture and its ability to conquer political repression.[68] Dancing, performing bodies are rendered in/visible in clubs because of the lighting, fashion, technological tools, and, of course, drugs. In May 2018, Georgian police raided the transregionally significant club Bassiani in Tbilisi. The action was extremely violent and aimed to permanently scare away the guests. The Ministry of Internal Affairs had the club in its sights, pegged

66 Bishop, *Artificial Hells*, 2012, 223. Bishop deepens this analysis using the example of Pierre Bal-Blanc's exhibition *La Monnaie Vivante* in 2006–2010, see ibid., 232–236.

67 Bishop cited the Slovenian art collective IRWIN, who suggested that "critical" and "political" art were as necessary to neoliberalism as socialist realism was to the Soviet regime; Bishop, *Artificial Hells*, 2012, 363, footnote 16.

68 Bogomir Doringer, "Dance of Urgency," n.d., accessed July 3, 2020, danceofurgency.com.

as a place of resistance, although the argument for the crackdown was the fight against drugs. Following the raid, protesters took to the streets, dancing in a huge crowd. The previously im/perceptible bodies received international visibility; the newly formed temporary community demanded the implementation of long-delayed drug policy reform. Even though the political demands were not met and the club is still under heavy political pressure, the moment when the power of mobilization through dancing bodies became visible caught everyone by surprise. Now, the simmering tension over interpretation within the “distribution of the sensible” over the events in May 2018 between policing the crisis, commercial interests, and political gestures has broken out into a fight.

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Timo Herbst, Marcus Nebe,
Play by Rules

pp. 135—160

Imprint

Installation *Play by rules* at Kunstquartier Bethanien between 07.12. and 16.12.2018.

Five-channel HD-video, 18 min, 2015–2018.

Part of Collection Kunstfonds Dresden and exhibited at Kunstquartier Bethanien with the kind support of Kunstfonds Dresden.

Ongoing project.

Stills
Timo Herbst, Marcus Nebe

Photography and Editing
Torsten Schmitt Fotografie | Berlin

Text and Layout
Timo Herbst

OF CHILDREN

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WE FIGHT FOR OUR RIGHT!

Play by Rules
(Budapest, Istanbul, Hamburg)
Timo Herbst, Marcus Nebe

"Play by Rules" is an ongoing long-term project that examines how both international media and private individuals produce images and how the process of image creation affects the dynamics of the specific sites and situations of protests and states of emergency. The work depicts different purposes of image production, intentions, and perceptions by capturing how journalists and other filmmakers in different cultural contexts frame the creation and conscious staging of protest gestures. The work thus simultaneously reveals the self-staging of these actors, the presence/absence of journalists, videographers, amateur filmmakers, and their ability to move (through crowds and police lines). The five-channel video shown at Kunstquartier Bethanien in Berlin 2018 depicts the development, communication, and staging between the media and participants in three different political situations: refugees protesting at Keleti train station in Budapest 2015; supporters and protesters on Istanbul's Taksim Square during the 2016 failed coup in Turkey; and the protests and riots during the G20 summit in Hamburg 2017. The form of the installation reconstructs journalists' techniques. Except now, the recording devices are replaced by playback devices. Instead of cameras, there are video projectors on tripods; instead of lights, there are projection screens set up on stands.

Symbolic Gestures in Contemporary Protest Movements

Riccardo Emilio Chesta,
Zoe Lefkofridi

Protest is not always expressed with words. At the 1968 Olympic Games in Mexico, gold medalist Tommie Smith and bronze medalist John Carlos protested against race discrimination by raising their fists in the “Black Power salute” during the national anthem; they wore black socks without shoes to symbolize black poverty and wore human rights badges on their jackets. Symbolic gestures are protest tools that use performative techniques “to reach and communicate with the target and to create a politics of spectacle for the audience.”[1]

1 Yasmin Ibrahim, “The Art of Shoe Throwing: Shoes as a Symbol of Protest and Popular Imagination,” *Media, War & Conflict* 2, no. 2 (2009): 213–226.

p. 221

In this chapter, the arts and humanities are addressed in a discussion of symbolic gestures of protest. The aim is to embed symbolic gestures of protest in broader political sociology debates and explore how symbolic gestures are used to convey different political meanings. The chapter is structured as follows: the first part begins by defining protest and embedding it in the broader scientific debates on political participation. Since protest is a form of political engagement, we briefly review different types of political behavior and place protest in the sphere of non-conventional politics, which takes place outside the formal institutions of the state. Then we elaborate on which (constellations of) factors motivate protest. In the second part of the chapter, we draw on real-life examples to discuss how protesters convey messages to political elites, the masses, and the media by using symbolic gestures instead of words. In the concluding section, we discuss how symbolic gestures contribute to the production of resistance through new disruptive meanings and frames.[2]

Protest as a Form of Political Engagement Signaling Dissatisfaction

Citizens can engage in politics in many different ways. Perhaps the obvious is voting in different types of elections (local, regional, national, and European elections) or referenda organized by the state. During the legislative term, citizens have the right to contact their elected representatives to express and communicate their preferences and needs. Besides voting, citizens of democratic regimes have freedom of association, that is, they can join political and professional organizations (e.g., parties, trade unions), and they can support political campaigns (e.g., through voluntary work or donations). However, there are many more ways people can and do participate in politics, such as signing petitions, boycotting specific products for political reasons, and demonstrating.

2 In this regard, this chapter connects to and complements Edelman's socio-psychological analysis of the use of symbols in politics, see Murray Edelman, *Politics as Symbolic Action: Mass Arousal and Quiescence* (Chicago: Markham Publishing, 1971). However, we would like to stress the importance of the structural embeddedness of symbolic gestures (understood here as protest tools that use performative techniques) in specific conditions. It is these conditions that make them politically relevant and conducive to mobilization—under specific conditions, symbolic gestures have the potential to act as vectors of social and cultural change. Edelman's (1971) work was a typical example of the "mass society" and "collective behavior" theories dominating US scholarly debates in the 1960s (see the paragraph "Conditions of Protest" below, pp. 165–70). These theories conceived political mobilization as a direct reaction to the pathologies of advanced capitalism (e.g., modern alienation and new forms of exclusion in the impersonal and bureaucratic order of mass society; anomie due to social atomization in big metropoles). However, these streams of literature neglected other more rational, organizational, and political aspects that make political symbols effective. This issue will be addressed in a comprehensive way in following sections.

Signaling Dissatisfaction: From Within or from Outside the Institutions of the State?

Even though the institutional machine of power distribution is pluralistic and democratically regulated, it has the potential to produce grievances and dissatisfaction concerning the efficiency, equality, and justice of its decisions. Dissatisfaction or disagreement can be expressed through the institutional arena of representation (e.g., the opposition contests government decisions), or it can move outside the institutional arena (citizens and the civil society sphere contest institutions) and call into question the established formal and informal institutions (e.g., practices). In contrast to revolution, which seeks to overturn the system, protest seeks to address (and eliminate) its injustices (but not replace it with another regime).[3]

Indeed, politics is not an activity restricted to the institutional arenas that are recognized and legitimized by the rules of the state (e.g., parliament, government). Even though decision-making in complex societies is organized through the rules of the state, many activities and phenomena related to politics in general and political participation in particular can and do take place outside of state institutions. Sociologists and political scientists use the term "non-conventional politics" to refer to the many and diverse activities such as assemblies, associations, mobilizations, and protest demonstrations.

If protesters retain some faith in the system and do not wish to overturn it, why do they opt for non-conventional channels of expression and representation? An important motive for non-institutionalized political engagement—and protest in particular—is the lack of access to institutionalized opposition. For instance, large numbers of people in many, if not most, so-called advanced industrial democracies were denied voting rights on the basis of their gender or race right up until after the mid-twentieth century. Another reason people may use non-conventional forms of political participation is the perception that institutionalized channels (elections and political parties) are ineffective. Under such conditions, people may engage in non-violent or violent behaviors and actions outside the institutional sphere of politics.

Conventional (e.g., voting, party membership) and non-conventional (e.g., boycotting, protesting) forms of political participation differ in terms of resources, social composition, goals, and targets. A growing scholarship in political science and sociology has been reflecting on and investigating the commonalities and intersections between the two. This literature[4] shows how threats and opportunities to mobilize reciprocally affect the strategies of action by social movements, political parties, and the state. Social movements and citizen demonstrations frequently interact with political parties in government or opposition (and vice-versa); also, political party members can mobilize groups and associations to contest or support specific campaigns. Similarly, the process of organizing

3 That said, protest parties, such as anti-immigrant right wing parties, do intend to replace the *established* center-right and center-left parties in government.

4 For example, Charles Tilly and Sidney Tarrow, *Contentious Politic* (Boulder: Paradigm Publishers, 2007).

is a natural outcome of mobilization processes, which can transform the nature of the movement's structure and its forms of action. The so-called "social movement parties" are an example of this hybrid set of tactics, strategies, and forms of mobilization. The rise of left-wing formations in Latin America during the 1990s, such as the Movement for Socialism in Bolivia and the Workers' Party in Brazil are good examples.[5] Europe has also witnessed similar phenomena, such as the emergence of the Greens in the 1980s[6] and the emergence of the radical left, right, and even post-ideological formations in the context of recent political and economic crises (e.g., the Spanish *Podemos* and the Italian Five Star Movement).[7] Examining the specific conditions and logic of such protests is vital to developing an understanding of why disruptive gestures emerge as a necessary way to raise issues that have been ignored or silenced by established political actors. It may be a radical critique of the state of things (e.g., lack of democracy, denial of rights) or a counter-proposal for a *new* state of things (e.g., expansion of rights to new groups, new rights, innovative democratic procedures).

If politics is a civilized attempt to domesticate violence and conflict that is intrinsic to social life, protest is indicative of the difficulty of fully satisfying latent needs and desires that are present in society. Institutions are, in this sense, conceived as a set of rules and practices, the aim of which is to provide legitimate order in society. Given the complexity of the social world, however, institutions are by nature incomplete and produce discontent.

Raising issues of public concern through protest relates to the intrinsic, unequal distribution of power that every political regime produces. The emergence of protest relates not only to the limits of political systems, but also to the vitality of its societal components. What protests highlight is that the complexity of the social sphere may exceed the restrictions of the political sphere and its institutions; in this sense, the power of social movements is not only *critical* but also *emancipatory*—they not only criticize the state of things but also imagine new worlds and horizons of possibility.[8] One of the key activities of social movements is the constant creation of "concrete phantasies," which are projects of "real utopias."[9]

To summarize, there are different ways in which people can engage politically.[10] The literature distinguishes between institutionalized and non-institutionalized forms of political participation. Institutionalized (or conventional) methods include voting in electoral contests, membership of parties and associations (e.g., trade unions), and writing letters to representatives. Non-institutionalized (or non-conventional) forms include the signing of petitions, demonstrations, and the boycotting of specific products for political purposes. The literature also distinguishes between public and private forms of participation: while demonstrations are a public form of political engagement, writing letters to politicians constitutes

5 Gianpaolo Baiocchi, *We the Sovereign* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2018).
6 Herbert Kitschelt, *The Logics of Party Formation: Ecological Politics in Belgium and West Germany* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989).
7 See Donatella Della Porta, Joseba Fernandez, Hara Kouki, and Lorenzo Mosca, *Movement Parties against Austerity* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2017).
8 Luc Boltanski, *De la Critique. Précis de sociologie de l'émancipation* (Paris: Gallimard, 2009).
9 Erik Olin Wright, *Envisioning Real Utopias* (New York: Verso Books, 2010).
10 For an overview, see Herbert Kitschelt and Philipp Rehm, "Political Participation," in *Comparative Politics*, ed. Daniele Caraman, 4th ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 310–326.

a private form of participation. These different types of engagement involve different costs and risks. Some activities are costlier than others in terms of time and money. Moreover, while some are not risky at all, others, like demonstrating (especially under an authoritarian regime), can be dangerous for the individuals involved. While embracing a diverse range of individual and collective behaviors and actions,[11] political protest concerns a specific behavior that has political content and aims that are critical of the existing system. As such, protest is a form of political engagement that expresses dissatisfaction.

In this context, symbolic gestures of protest constitute public, non-institutionalized forms of political participation. Symbolic gestures are low cost since the body is all the protester uses to express the political message. Depending on the situation, symbolic gestures of protest can involve low or high risks. Athletes Tommie Smith and John Carlos, citizens of the democratic US, were accused of politicizing a non-political sporting event at the 1968 Olympic Games in Mexico and were expelled from the US team two days after their symbolic gesture of protest. People living under non-democratic regimes may be subject to harsher punishments, including loss of life.

Conditions of Protest

Political participation and protest are not unilinear processes, neither in terms of outcomes nor in terms of origins. The political sociology literature dealing with motivations behind political participation distinguishes between factors operating at different levels of analysis, namely macro, meso, and micro-level factors.[12] The interactions of factors operating at different levels create the conditions generating broader or narrower forms of mobilization and protest.

The analysis of macro-sociological factors producing waves of protest participation evolved from traditional structuralist approaches: on the one hand, functionalist paradigms stress the disruption of social order as a pathology and dysfunction of the system; on the other, Marxist paradigms emphasize the essential role of conflict in producing social transformation and emancipation. Political process theory, developed by Charles Tilly in his studies of social movements,[13] critically synthesizes classic paradigms. It demonstrates the need for structural dynamics to be analyzed along with the agency of the actors collectively involved in the dynamics of order preservation (State, conservative political elites) and conflictual systemic transformation (deprived groups, social movements, progressive political elites). The waves of mobilization are therefore a complex set of interaction dynamics between different groups creating new shifts in power distribution, opening or closing political opportunities for change, and therefore explaining fluctuations in terms of protest participation.

11 Ibrahim, "The Art of Shoe Throwing," 2009, 213–226.

12 See Jan E. Leighley, "Attitudes, Opportunities and incentives: A Field Essay on Political Participation," *Political Research Quarterly* 48, no. 1 (1995): 181–209; Kitschelt and Rhem, "Political Participation," 2017, 310–326; Hanna Wass and Andre Blaze, "Turnout," in *The SAGE Handbook of Electoral Behavior*, ed. Kai Arzheimer, Jocelyn Evans and Michael S. Lewis-Beck (London: SAGE, 2017).

13 Charles Tilly, *From Mobilization to Revolution* (Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 1978).

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fig. 1
***Crossing Wrists Over the Head: Oromo protest in Ethiopia,* 2015–2016.**
Photograph by Tiksa Negeri, 2016, picture alliance/REUTERS.

fig. 2
***Thousands of Athenians performing moutzas directed at the Hellenic Parliament, Syntagma Square*, 2011).**
Photograph by Ggia, CC BY SA, June 2011.

The agency of protest places emphasis on the meso-level, that is, the universe of citizen groups, civil society associations, activist networks, non-governmental and social movement organizations act collectively to produce mobilizations and organize (more/less) disruptive public events, street demonstrations, spontaneous assemblies, petitions, and other forms of extra-institutional campaigning for a collective cause.

Many scholars have emphasized the importance of material resources to trigger and sustain collective action, pinpointing the commonalities of economic incentives and deterrents to participation. Mancur Olson[14] analyzed worker strikes as collective actions characterized by economic costs (e.g., working hours and incomes) directed toward the production of collective goods (salary increases, better working conditions). Olson articulated the puzzle of the free-rider, an individual who, acting in self-interest, does not participate in collective action (increasing their benefits in terms of working hours) but eventually benefits from the outcome of strikes organized by other workers. So, why would anyone participate in a strike? The answer lies in types of incentives and collective goods that are not easily reducible to material interests, such as the creation of broader solidarity among workers, the strengthening of social ties, public recognition and the collective identity of participants as well as political expertification and professionalization derived from the political competences developed in the process of collective action itself.[15] The stream of literature emphasizing the importance of resources in terms of time and economic availability thus shifted toward the analysis of variables less likely to be reduced to economic power, such as cognitive resources and social capital.

In line with the critique of mass society, collective behavior theory emphasized the way an individual's psychological status shaped the likelihood of participation in mass demonstrations.[16] Individuals with perceptions of relative deprivation and status inconsistency were more likely to protest, join protest groups, or show "unusual" political behavior (e.g., street conflicts and demonstrations). This line of argument partially focused on a direct link between psychological traits and structural changes but

14 Mancur Olson, *The Logic of Collective Action: Public Goods and the Theory of Groups* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1965).

15 Alessandro Pizzorno, "Political Exchange and Collective Identity in Industrial Conflict," in *The Resurgence of Class Conflict in Western Europe since 1968, Vol. 2—Comparative Analyses*, ed. Colin Crouch and Alessandro Pizzorno (London: McMillan Press, 1978), 277–298.

16 Neil Smelser, *Theory of Collective Behavior* (New York: Free Press, 1962).

excluded other intermediate conditions, such as individuals' capacity to organize, coordinate into collective action, and raise issues at the political level. However, according to "resource mobilization theories"[17] it is individuals that have strong ties to powerholders and/or are well integrated in society who play a primary role in collective protest and mobilizations, not frustrated or atomized individuals. People that are members of social groups (churches, trade unions, political parties) are more likely to be recruited into political activity.[18]

Since political participation is an activity that requires time and skills, resources always matter for protest politics. Consequently, the type of resources that are at the disposal of a social movement also define its nature, its social composition, its chosen goals, and its repertoires of action, frames, and ideologies. In this regard, the internet, the diffusion of communication technologies and social networks have opened up opportunities for new forms of political participation and mobilization. Online politics, however, is both more egalitarian (e.g., easy access) and more unequal for some groups of the population (e.g., disabled, elderly, or the very poor). It could be argued that online politics has more effect on the symbolic side of protest, such as the circulation of frames and messages, than any direct impact on real policy making. However, research into the digital economy suggests that, nowadays, because value is produced through data and increasingly symbolic and immaterial labor,[19] online political protests can impact politics and even the economy by affecting the reputation, credibility, and legitimacy of companies and corporations.

To summarize, as a form of political engagement, protest can be encouraged by macro-level structural changes, such as economic or regime crises, and can be facilitated by meso-level organizational changes, such as shifts in alliances among associations or networks of participants. However, micro-level factors, such as the motivations and resources of individuals, also matter.

In a society where power and resources are unequally distributed, political participation itself is inevitably unequal. Individual characteristics such

17 John D. McCarthy and Mayer N. Zald, "Resource Mobilization and Social Movements: A Partial Theory," *American Journal of Sociology* 82, no. 6 (1977): 1212–1241.

18 For example, Karina Kosiara-Pedersen, Susan E. Scarrow, and Emilie Van Haute, "Rules of Engagement? Party Membership Costs, New Forms of Party Affiliation, and Partisan Participation," in *Organizing Political Parties: Representation, Participation, and Power*, ed. Susan S. Scarrow, Paul D. Webb, and Thomas Poguntke (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017); Ann K. Karreth, "Schools of Democracy: How Trade Union Membership Impacts Political Participation in Africa's Emerging Democracies," *Democratization* 25, no. 1 (2018): 158–177.

19 Dominique Cardon and Antonio Casilli, *Qu'est-ce que le digital labour?* (Bry-sur-Marne: INA Editions, 2015).

as gender, race, income and education matter greatly to whether and how people engage politically.[20] To illustrate, while men outperform women in most types of participation (e.g., voting, party membership) women are more likely to engage in forms of silent, non-institutionalized protest, such as the politics of the supermarket (consumption in line with specific values, such as respect for the environment, labor or animal rights). Indeed, non-conventional political engagement and protest, in particular, involve a rich diversity in terms of repertoires of action. Groups or movement organizations choose violent or non-violent repertoires of action targeting authorities and symbols, depending on the resources (material and financial tools), the organizational structure (size, number of members, and allies) and the cultural frames (sectarian or mainstream), as well as the type of regime where they operate.[21]

Symbolic Gestures as Repertoires of Action

The interaction dynamics between political actors can reciprocally affect the choice of social movements' repertoires of protest action and their frames. Activists and social movement participants are constantly involved in processes of cognitive and symbolic innovation, monitoring and studying socially salient dynamics such as poverty, social rights, gender opportunities and equality, and economic justice. However, this activity needs to be translated into public actions that are politically visible and effective.

Social movements take to the streets to make new demands, protest, and voice neglected or silenced issues of public concern. Seeking to build consensus around their demands, they have to "frame" an issue in order to make it comprehensible and resonant for the broader public. Scholars of social movements have studied the cognitive processes related to the activity of targeting an issue or a situation (diagnosis), elaborating tactics, means and goals (prognosis), and calling to action (motivational phase).[22] Political participation is a complex process that requires material and ideational conditions and resources, which can cause success or failure.[23]

20 Though earlier work emphasized how individual resources (time, money, skills), civic orientations, and socialization matter for political engagement, recent research work explores the role played by personality and emotions (e.g., Aina Gallego and Daniel Oberski, "Personality and Political Participation: The Mediation Hypothesis." *Political Behavior* 34, no. 3 (2012): 425–451; Pavlos Vasilopoulos, "Terrorist Events, Emotional Reactions, and Political Participation: the 2015 Paris Attacks," *West European Politics* 41, no. 1 (2018): 102–127, and genes, Peter K. Hatemi and Rose McDermott "The Genetics of Politics: Discovery, Challenges, and Progress," *Trends in Genetics* 28, no. 10 (2012): 525–533.

21 Charles Tilly, *The Politics of Collective Violence* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

22 David A. Snow and Robert D. Benford, "Ideology, Frame Resonance, and Participant Mobilization," *International Social Movement Research* 1, no. 1 (1988): 197–217.

23 An example of the Matthew effect, a term coined by sociologist Robert King Merton (1968): more resonant and successful demands generate more participation, but demands that do not resonate with the memories and emotions of the population are likely to cause disengagement.

The choice of actions and frames depends on the political environment that determines the costs and risks of mobilization. Mobilizing under an authoritarian regime is indeed an activity that has different constraints and opportunities if compared with a democratic regime. Depending on structural conditions, the activity of social movements can create opportunities for social change. In this regard, the presence of allies in the institutional arena can be helpful. Political parties with similar ideological positions, or coalitions in government/the opposition that may benefit from a political crisis and are interested in bringing the issues voiced by protesters into the parliamentary arena can facilitate the change desired by protesters. The variable success of feminist mobilization across the world illustrates this point.[24]

In this context, symbolic gestures are forms of expression without words, where the human body becomes the means to express varied political meanings, such as subversion, defiance, deference, or domination. Symbolic gestures are usually a strategy used by individuals or groups that avoid physical violence directed towards other persons. However, violence can have a symbolic meaning: gestures may be violent and disruptive, without, however, causing physical pain to others. The importance of symbolic gestures resides mainly in the power of meaning, and culture plays a role in how disruptive these symbols are, how they are perceived, interpreted, and diffused. Meanings trigger mechanisms of movement diffusion because some images, symbols, or frames induce emotions and, ultimately, motivate segments of society to mobilize. In this sense, the emotional component of collective action and protest is as important as the rational one, since it strengthens sentiments of collective belonging, identity, and solidarity. According to Geertz,[25] culture is a text of meaning in which individuals and social relations are embedded, therefore producing a specific symbolic order that legitimizes material power and domination, and one of the strategies of protest is to create symbolic dissonance.

24 For example, Jutta Joachim, "Framing Issues and Seizing Opportunities: The UN, NGOs, and Women's Rights," *International Studies Quarterly* 47, no. 2 (2003): 247–274.

25 Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays* (New York: Basic Books, 1973).

Examples of Symbolic Gestures of Protest

How do protesters convey messages to political elites, the masses, and the media without words? What are their aims? What kinds of symbolic gestures do they use to convey different political meanings? In this section, we discuss examples of symbolic gestures of protest in different parts of the world.

We begin with symbolic gestures that are performed by masses of people simultaneously. In 2015, the Oromo people, the largest ethnic group in Ethiopia, contested a government plan to incorporate Oromo towns and villages into the administrative districts of neighboring Addis Ababa, Ethiopia's capital. The local Oromo communities all became

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fig. 3
The Burning Monk Thích Quăng Đúc protests persecution of Buddhists by the South Vietnamese government.
Photograph by Malcolm Browne for the Associated Press, 1963.

fig. 4
***Femen at San Pietro square, Vatican City*, 2014.**
Photograph by Stringer/EPA/picturedesk.com, 2014.

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involved in the movement. While the governmental plan was the motivation behind the uprising, it was fed by latent grievances that had been accumulating for decades as a result of the subordination and exclusion suffered by the Oromo people.

p. 166

As shown in fig. 1, the symbolic gesture used by the Oromo protesters in Ethiopia was to cross their wrists above their heads. Throughout history, the wrists of slaves and prisoners have typically been tied the same way (with ropes or chains), so it is a gesture that signifies oppression. The photograph was taken in October 2016 during Irreecha, an Oromo thanksgiving festival in Bishoftu town. The gesture was a widespread signal of the Oromo people's marginalized status, and went global when Feyisa Lilesa—an Oromo athlete exiled in the US—made the identical gesture at the Olympic Games in Rio, August 2016. This frame triggered a mass mobilization that threatened the Ethiopian government's legitimacy. The government reacted with state violence and the killing of hundreds of Oromo people. Despite the violent and repressive actions of the government, it was not able to quash the movement that brought the issue of Oromo's ethnic segregation from the margins to the center of Ethiopian politics. A simple hand gesture had helped the Oromo movement communicate with the Ethiopian government and the world without using words or violence.

p. 167

Another example of how a simple hand gesture can powerfully confer political meaning was seen during anti-austerity protests that took place during the peak of the sovereign debt crisis in Greece (fig. 2). The First Economic Adjustment Program for Greece, a memorandum of understanding (MoU) signed in 2010, meant the population was subjected to sudden reforms and severe austerity measures. Their implementation caused social unrest. In 2011, the "Aganaktismenoi" (Indignant Citizens) Movement occupied Syntagma Square opposite the parliament building. To express disdain, the protesters raised their hands and performed the "moutza," a traditional hand gesture deeply engrained in Greek culture. The moutza, with origins in the Byzantine empire, is a gesture that consists of spreading the fingers wide with the palm facing the receiver. It is meant to insult.

This symbolic gesture, known to all Greeks, quickly became a non-violent sign of protest against the highly unpopular political measures of the Greek government, whose policies were supported by a parliamentary majority.

The moutza became a frame connecting thousands of Greeks. This ordinary gesture— expressing anger physically and seeking to insult the target—spread through crowds of citizens standing in front of the Old Royal Palace. Although non-violent, the gesture was extremely disruptive at the symbolic level since the grievance was targeting the Hellenic Parliament, a symbol of representative democracy. The anti-austerity mobilizations involved citizen assemblies and discussions about how to improve democracy, not replace it. The citizens performing the moutza were not against democracy in general, but against democracy as practiced by Greek political elites. The moutza symbolized contempt for and distrust of politicians. In this case, a gesture rooted in everyday Greek culture was politicized and became a collective act symbolizing non-violent but very disruptive popular outrage towards political elites.

Both the Oromo and Greek hand gestures are actions that operate at a symbolic level that is used by masses of people simultaneously. The gestures are disruptive but not violent. They cause physical harm to neither the protester nor their targets. Our next example, however, is very different. It is a symbolic gesture of protest performed by a single individual alone that causes extreme physical harm. It is perhaps the most extreme symbolic gesture any individual or group can make, an act of last resort in an extremely closed political system of domination: self-immolation.

For Buddhist monks, the act of self-immolation is a symbol of their oppression (and religious persecution more broadly). Fig. 3 shows Thích Quăng Đúc, a monk who, in protest against persecution of Buddhists by the South Vietnamese government, burnt himself to death on a Saigon street on June 11, 1963. About 500 people were watching the monk's protest against the pro-Catholic Diêm regime, which led to large demonstrations that included both Buddhist clergy and ordinary Saigon residents. The picture was taken by Malcom Browne, who witnessed and documented the whole process from the moment Quăng Đúc, was doused in gasoline. Browne, an Associated Press correspondent during the Vietnam War, was later awarded the Pulitzer Prize for the image. The picture of the monk's self-immolation became frontpage news globally and motivated a rethinking of US policy in the region.

p. 172

The practice has survived over decades. More than 150 Tibetan monks, rebelling against the Chinese government's suppression of Tibetan traditions, have self-immolated since 2009. Some precepts implicit in Buddhism—e.g., pantheism and the holistic philosophy that privileges fusion with Everything over the Self—give a radically existential meaning to the gesture of self-immolation. The pervasive violence and disrespect

toward the Tibetan right to exist as an independent culture is denounced; at the same time the Tibetan Monks opt for self-immolation rather than survival under conditions of oppression. It calls for a more radical rebellion against oppression.

In such contexts, the act of suicide expresses the highest possible dedication to an ideal. Self-immolation is a radical, symbolic gesture of protest, and it has a strong resonance—it activates (intimate) feelings of self-preservation and communicates a radical rebellion against domination.

The transnational feminist group "Femen" practices a different use of the human body as a means of protest symbolizing radical opposition to domination. Founded in Ukraine, Femen became famous in 2000 for its deeply impactful repertoires of action. The initial goal of Femen was to denounce the commodification and sexual exploitation of the Ukrainian women who were being reduced to objects of sex tourism. Femen's activities soon spread beyond Ukrainian borders, targeting not only political power but also religious institutions. In fig. 4 we see Femen members protesting at San Pietro Square, Vatican City, in November 2014 against the Catholic Church, whose discourse about women's bodies they condemn. Femen invaded an important Catholic Church site (San Pietro Square) and used their own bodies for the simulation of a reciprocal "profanation" using crucifixes as sex-toys. Symbolizing the way religious authorities penetrate the female body, the frame combined a physical element (body) and a spiritual symbol (crucifix) in a way that created dissonance between the two spheres. The dissonance, in turn, suggested a deep sense of disrespect.

p. 173

To express dissatisfaction and opposition, symbolic gestures transgress meaning to create dissonance. Moral outrage and disruption at the level Femen created is not, however, necessary. Symbolic dissonance can be created by imbuing gestures with different meanings and applying them to unusual contexts to emphasize contradictions. It is a strategy used by football players of the San Francisco 49ers in 2016, as seen in fig. 5. The players knelt on one knee during the US national anthem to protest police violence against African Americans. The ritual of the

p. 220

football match offered the opportunity of staging silent protest in front of thousands of spectators who were present in the stadium or were watching the match on screen. Convention in the US dictates standing during the national anthem; the rebellious kneeling gesture and the deference it suggests aimed to draw attention to police violence against African American communities—particularly in California. While kneeling is often a gesture of subordination or deference, in this case, the athletes' refusal to stand and participate in the ritual of the anthem communicates rejection and opposition. Performed by individuals with the power of influence over crowds because of their talent and fame, the gesture offers support to a mass movement (Black Lives Matter).

Taken together, these very different illustrations of symbolic protest gestures help us understand how culture and political environments affect the elaboration of political gestures. The Oromo and Greek gestures are both simple hand gestures of protest with high symbolic power that became popular and were practiced by masses of people. In both cases, a simple hand gesture offered the movement the opportunity to spread their political meaning efficiently without using words. The political environments where these gestures were performed, however, differ. The Oromo gesture was directed against the authoritarian regime in Ethiopia, while the Greek gesture was used by protesters against an elected Parliament that they perceived (and portrayed) as a symbol of ineffective democracy. In the Ethiopian case, the risks were very high: those protesting with symbolic gestures were punished through violent state repression and mass killings. In the Greek case, state reprisals were carried out at a lower level of violence (e.g., tear gas against protesters).

The gestures by Femen and the African American football players are similar in that they are performed by small groups to address social injustice and, in particular, the violation of rights of specific social groups—women and African Americans. However, they differ greatly in terms of symbolic choice. The football players' gesture of kneeling expresses refusal but the Femen gesture expresses subversion. Femen's symbolic gesture is highly disruptive of the "holy" order of the San Pietro Square, itself a symbol of the Catholic Church. The denunciation of the invasion of body by the catholic authorities is represented by the contrast between sexual and spiritual elements; their gesture is unsettling to religious authorities but also for state authorities, since it transgresses the legal boundaries of public nudity and sexual acts in public places. Finally, Femen's highly provocative gestures are performed by a small group, which, acting as a minority, tries to mobilize public awareness on a specific issue. While Femen act as a vanguard, the football players act as sponsors of the broader "Black Lives Matter" movement.[26]

Finally, the Buddhist monk's self-immolation is unique among our examples in that it involves the highest of all risks: physical annihilation. It is a radical protest communicating the status of victims under an

26 The extent to which protesters have an impact, however, is a question for empirical research, e.g., Kaouthar Darmoni and Tamara Witschge, "Counterpublics in the Age of Mediatisation: Local Responses to Femen in the Arab World," *Conjunctions. Transdisciplinary Journal of Cultural Participation* 2, no. 1 (2015): 115–131.

authoritarian regime. In this sense, the individual action of the monk—a practice diffused among Buddhist monks—involves a highly disruptive repertoire: it is a symbolic gesture of deep sacrifice for his own culture, which constitutes, at the same time, a radical denunciation of the oppression of his religion.

Conclusion

As political scientist Michael Lipsky put it,[27] protest is the political resource of the powerless. The marginal position that these actors have in the political system leads to the choice of repertoires of action, which bypass ordinary procedures and institutional channels, emphasizing a stance through symbolic resonance. In this context, protesting through symbolic gesture is a phenomenon that takes many forms. It can be an individual act, it can be performed by small groups or even by large populations. Moreover, it may speak for universal or more specific values: women's rights, religion and culture, or "the people" suffering under austerity.

Symbolic gestures of protest can be disruptive at the purely symbolic level, or they may even involve physical violence (e.g., self-immolation), which radicalizes the dramatic aspect of a situation. As a way of expressing political concerns, gestures may generate risks such as repression, legal sanctions, or physical violence for their performers. The degree of openness of the authorities, but also the reception of the public to which the symbolic gesture is addressed are crucial to its success or failure. Indeed, the success of political mobilization depends not only on its intrinsic goodness and contribution to emancipation, it also requires a good understanding of the context and of the public that needs to be motivated to support the cause. While a symbolic strategy can fuel processes of collective engagement, if the strategy is too radical and shocking, it might cause disengagement and isolate the group or individual producing it. According to Ibrahim:

> the ability of global audiences to engage or disengage with acts of resistance and popularize or transform them as entertainment through various media platforms is dependent on how they appeal to a popular consciousness, where dominant political discourse often interconnects with popular culture and imagination.[28]

The production of symbolic gestures is thus an activity that requires cultural sensitivity and the capacity to interpret the intricate connection between symbols, contexts and meanings.[29] The "framing" of an issue through a symbolic gesture is fundamental to its diffusion and for increasing broader participation. In this sense, besides their manifest function, which is to demonstrate dissensus toward a symbol or a specific group

27 Michael Lipsky, "Protest as a Political Resource," *The American Political Science Review* 62, no. 4 (Dec. 1968): 1144–1158.
28 Ibrahim, "The Art of Shoe Throwing," 2009, 223.
29 Snow and Benford, "Ideology, Frame Resonance, and Participant Mobilization" 1988.

or state of things, symbolic gestures of protest can have a latent function that operates more “silently” at cognitive and moral levels, triggering a rethinking of issues that were previously considered part of the ordinary state of things. Symbolic gestures can be part of a “repertoire” implicit in a culture that suddenly spreads as a political tool to contest the legitimacy of political decisions, such as the political use of a known ordinary gesture (the moutza) in the Greek anti-austerity protests. But they can also constitute a tool of “symbolic innovation.” In the examples of Femen and of the football players of the San Francisco 49ers, public attention is attracted through the introduction of symbolic gestures of dissonance within the very setting in which they were performed.

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Laurie Young, *Ambit*

pp. 183—200

Imprint

Ambit is based on the performance *One hundred more* (2019) made in collaboration with Justine A. Chambers.

Concept and Text
Laurie Young

Photos
Josh Hite

move to the centre

move in the centre

move as the centre

move through the centre

move from the centre

move the centre

move to the centre

Artistic Gestures—Political Gestures: Alexander Koch in Conversation with Timo Herbst

New Patrons Headquarters, Berlin, July 29, 2019

AK Alexander Koch
TH Timo Herbst

TH Alexander, today, I'd like to discuss the similarities, differences, and relationships between artistic gestures and political gestures with you. I am happy to have you as a dialogue partner because you address these topics in your curatorial works at KOW gallery and in the context of the "New Patrons" program, as well as in your theoretical reflections. I'd like to talk about the following questions: Do you think the dynamic between sign and action within gestures is different in politics and the arts? Is a gesture part of something we might call a social vocabulary? I have heard you say that art is a "player" in society working with the vocabulary we use to create society. I guess that is quite a political act.

AK Yes, that's how I see it. Gestures in the arts and in politics are two ways of world-making. My thinking comes from the philosophy of Richard Rorty. To put it simply, we could say that Rorty saw no way for us to get in touch with any deeper, essential truth. Therefore, we'll never have any reliable foundation for our opinions and actions, let alone for our political beliefs, whether it's a belief in democracy, the nation-state, human equality, or fascism. They are all more or less our own natural goods, products of human imagination, fueled by social interaction, power, and language.

TH And this is Rorty's idea of contingency?

AK Yes. It is the notion that anything we see as fundamental or permanent could have been different from what it is today. Therefore, we only have history. No essence. That is why his approach is anti-essentialist. The title of our opening show at the KOW gallery in 2009 was *Anti-essentialism*. I find it helpful to look at contemporary art in such a non-essentialist way. Policy-making—political practice—is a specific technique used to influence social reality. But poems are too. So, twenty years ago, following Rorty, I came to believe that any kind of articulation, whether music, theater, literature, or a policy paper share one process: the making and re-making of the world as we see it, and the re-constitution of solidarity, of the "We" within our very existence.

TH If we think of gestures as one kind of articulation, as you mention, then can a gesture, as a bodily movement, do the same work as music, theater, literature, or policy papers, by shaping our world and our sense of a collective "We"?

AK Yes, exactly. A gesture would be one of the mindful ways that we have within reach to influence how we would like the world, ourselves, and other people to be seen and understood. We have to make choices, draw a distinction. This is how I *want* to

see things, and therefore, I make them seeable accordingly. If I choose to follow the idea of democracy, then my hope and practice will be to share my vision of social relationships with as many people as possible in order to make it our shared reality. Not because democracy is closer to human nature, or a priori the best political system. It is just one way of seeing things, a way that makes sense to me. It is profoundly cultural, a shared set of beliefs, convictions, and rules that we have developed. From a holistic perspective, I cannot separate language, culture, economy, institutions, politics, sex, and whatever kind of personal conviction and practice I may have. Ultimately, in my vision, these are all sites of practice within a stream of cultural developments—different developments in different parts of the world.

TH I instantly thought of Judith Butler describing an assembly as not only a symbolic gathering in which people hope for some social change in the future, but also a moment when people project, fashion, and most importantly, exercise their view of society in that very instant through the ways that they are actually assembled.

AK Take the microphone, for example. It can be a gesture to pick up the microphone, but a gesture that might amplify the already loudest and most dominant discourse. So, some assemblies exclude microphones in order to give everybody the same power. Practically—acoustically—this sometimes makes no sense. But the gesture is important to the people involved.

TH The microphone gestures of the Movimiento 15-M in Spain or the Occupy movement in the US, for instance, create an equality in power in the act of speaking, yes, which also includes the hand signals they used to negotiate consensus without interrupting anyone. This is a communicative structure. I see these kinds of political assemblies and their questioning of communication structures also going on in the art sphere when artistic practices create performances or collective situations in museums, theaters, and galleries. What do you think of projects by Milo Rau, Rimini Protokoll, and Make Arts Policy! who try to rehearse political events to bridge them into the political realm?

AK Some of it makes great sense. My problem is, though, that I have too often seen artists claiming to affect social or political reality, but then nobody really cared except some intellectuals in the art world and their

peers, and that is bizarre. It is not bizarre if you make an assembly try to come up with different ways to assemble. But if you do that *as art*, or within the given limits of the art world, it's hard to claim it as a political project. You only have a political project once you actually try to effect change for others in a way that has real-life consequences. I think art should trust its own weapons, create works of art in whatever form it takes. It can be politically engaging, of course. For example, when you see a work that allows you to tune into the perspective of a person, or into a way of seeing the world that is totally strange to you and it feels abnormal, unexpected, different. With some works of art, you are confronted with a reality that was never your own but that you start to connect with, have feelings for, start to understand, eventually even making it a part of your own horizon. Isn't that emancipation and a somewhat political experience?

TH What exactly are the similarities and differences between orienting yourself in the art world and the political sphere?

AK One difference between art and politics would be scale. The yellow vest movement in France obviously has a very strong political articulation with an actual aesthetic marker, the yellow vest. Their presence in the streets is an interesting example of a disruptive gesture. Also because of the different, heterogeneous political agendas that stood behind the yellow vests. The movement was not creating one message, like a syndicate would in demanding a five percent wage rise. When Macron first invited participants of the movement to start a conversation, initially there was nobody there to talk to. There was no order of representation among the demonstrators, and, at first, no list of demands to be negotiated. That was fucking scary for the political players. So here we have a gesture that doesn't even aim to articulate one specific thing. Instead, it is basically an act of disruption in the moment, which declares that people do not agree, without already postulating what otherwise would be agreeable. In comparison, any collective gesture in the art world would obviously have

a marginal effect. It's not a problem that art is marginal in comparison. It's a difference.

My preference for making a distinction between politics and art is that politics has different kinds of claims, aims, and results. When he was asked what his definition of politics was, Oliver Marchart once said: Politics affects a large number of people. That's it. That is the political business. Art may eventually influence many at some point in history, but you cannot really aim for such influence. It's not art's business. And in contrast to art, politics may come along with another type of struggle. Someone who picks up a stone in the street, ready to throw it. This gesture alone shows something that art typically does not imply, whereas politics does: a real risk, sincere violence. Getting a stone in your face in a moment of social struggle—that rarely happens in exhibitions or on theater stages. And if it does happen, typically it is not about the play on stage but about something else.

But then, if you look at the question more closely, we might think about the fact that eight artists just declared their withdrawal from the Whitney Biennial because of a connection between one of the museum's trustees and the weapons industry. That's a gesture in the sense that the artists have openly and publicly declared that they will pull their artworks out of the show. Is that a kind of embodiment of a gesture even when it's not about their own bodies? Is it also, like the yellow vests, a moment of disruption in an institutionalized system? Once we start to compare different strategies and tactics of what a gesture can do in regard to an existing order, we may discover that the art world is just one of various worlds in which similar methodologies, similar kinds of signs, similar kinds of gestures are shared. I think that could be a helpful answer to the question, "Is art political or not?" I would say that from a certain point of view, it is not. And from another point of view, it is. But I don't expect art to have the same effects as politics or other forms of social articulation, like the Fridays for Future movement for instance.

TH In the Whitney example, is that an artistic gesture or a political gesture? Withdrawing my artwork

to distance myself from an institution that I disagree with politically would be, for me, a political gesture as a specific functional act to protest or undermine an institutionalized system. It expresses a direct and clear disagreement. I think in art pieces, you find gestures that are not necessarily that functional, for instance, art itself exists as a symbolic realm without end-oriented purpose. I think that the political gesture is mostly connected to the direct act of communication, usually in a social field defined by the binary logics of antagonistic groups. But the artistic gesture is often rather unclear—perhaps even intentionally unclear. It reflects more of an attitude through an artwork, or in specific cases it becomes embodied by the artists themselves through their reputations.

AK Yes, that makes sense. I think a terribly interesting example of political and artistic gesture is Hiwa K's video *This Lemon Tastes of Apple*.

Hiwa K is in his hometown in Kurdistan. There is an upheaval, protests against the regional government, demonstrations on the streets, and on one particular day, things are becoming more and more violent. He is moving through the demonstration with a friend; they have a megaphone. Hiwa plays the harmonica, his friend plays the guitar. Together they play the melody of...

TH *Once Upon a Time in the West*.

AK Exactly. The song is widely known to people there because that film was the first popular Western to basically take a dystopic perspective on the dream of going west to claim the land of opportunity. The cowboy hero image turned into a critical and

melancholic figure, which is parallel to the history of the Middle East, where the US quest to establish neoliberal democracies has basically caused more war, poverty, and violence. So, that's the broader context.

Now, during this demonstration, Hiwa performs the song with his friend, and at some point, there are shootings and tear gas. Hiwa is in the crowd and is inhaling the tear gas through the harmonica while still playing it. It is an amazingly rare moment during which the private, the body, the sound of music, the political apparatus, and the surrounding social movement become one and the same thing. It all becomes indistinguishable when Hiwa inhales the gas through his little, harmless instrument. The whole thing is clearly depicted as a display of gestures, including all the cameras around, filming, because what was happening was so significant.

A few moments later, the demonstrators move forward again, towards the lines of police, and Hiwa is one of the leaders. His dramatic sound seems to drive the masses, until finally, the gunfire aimed at them becomes so fierce that people run away. On the ground, we see blood.

TH So it is both a gesture of resistance and an artistic gesture of...?

AK Hiwa went back to his hometown in order to influence the political situation. He was not planning to make an art performance at all. For him, it was a political moment to bring voice, and drama, and dynamism into the demonstration. He was acting as a citizen and only later collected film material from people who had recorded the events, and that material became a video installation that documents the situation, and at the same time has such striking aesthetic presence that you can hardly escape it.

TH What stays with us from the political situation that is now gone as we see the video? The emotion through the video and the description of an oppressive status quo?

AK I guess so. It was the last day of the Iraq Spring. The next day, public demonstrations were prohibited. Nobody would ever pretend that the work is trying to change the situation in Kurdistan. But Hiwa did try as a person, when he was there. The work comes from that moment and testifies to it. Yet, structurally it is an autonomous work of art. Since you and I will not understand what the people are saying, and Hiwa has intentionally not included any subtitles, a broader public may perceive the work as somewhat universal, connected with any type of similar situation. Similar to Picasso's Guernica, which reacted to a specific act of barbarism during World War II, but it is universal in expressing the drama of war and the suffering of civilians.

TH The video claims to be art, although it looks like any number of other violent scenes we have seen before, which, if that were simply the case, would not be so interesting. Because of the similarity, the viewer may feel numbed towards the images in the video, but then it is the music and the action of Hiwa playing the harmonica in this extreme situation that challenges you and pulls you emotionally into the situation and generates empathy towards him.

AK And adding yet one more layer to Hiwa's gesture: it appears to me that what gives strength to a gesture is often its fragility. A gesture that really comes from your body is actually very vulnerable. It may be a very subjective, very intimate moment for the person performing the gesture, but due to its vulnerability, it can become a strong symbol that inspires many. And therefore, it may be able to create solidarity, and solidarity is obviously something that I would consider politically very valuable. It's an interesting thing, and not only for artists. Remember that man who stood alone in front of the tanks in China? What a gesture! And it became so famous and influential because it was unbelievably vulnerable. In such a position, the man has no means whatsoever to be political, it seems. Didn't it look extremely aesthetic exactly because it was completely existential? The scene that we all remember today is an iconic example of the massive power imbalance many people experience. You cannot not see that when you look at the video footage. It certainly became political in the way that it influenced so many others—which, however, doesn't mean that it changed the regime in China.

TH The two examples work well together because Hiwa's piece and the Tank Man are both visually effective, although one is considered art and the other not, which is precisely a friction we can also find in Hiwa's work. Isn't there a specific relationship between the image and the act? An act has aesthetic qualities that lend itself to becoming an image, and from the image, further consequences can emerge because people react to the image. For these consequences, it is not important whether this image is an art experience in a museum or an experience while you look at the newspaper or you're on the internet. Because when we see such a powerful image of a gesture, it unsettles our pre-existing view of the world. I guess political art often exposes you to such unsettling moments of disorientation?

AK I'm very skeptical of the notion of political art as a valuable kind of genre. I wonder if it is not more helpful to ask whether or not a work of art offers the possibility of being politicized, or rather to politicize you, the spectator. It's not that politics is inside the work, but rather that it mobilizes political affections in you, as a result of what the artwork does to you. *This* is one end of the reflection on the responsibility of the spectator. I tend to believe that we rather make use of the experiences we've made with certain artworks that influenced how we feel and think about certain political issues. The work that we may be drawn to call "political," may actually instead pull you towards a specific mental position, and language, within the spectrum of political interests, beliefs, and mindsets. I think it is not marginal to think about this carefully since you will find many artists who reflect very seriously on the "politicity"—that is another word—of their works. To what extent does the politicity of the work lie in its quality of addressing the observer's responsibility for making their own judgments? I think we are weakening whatever we might describe as political about art whenever we attribute political meaning to the artwork itself, and assume we are describing an inherent characteristic of the work, instead of emphasizing how the work renders the possibility, the responsibility, and even the urgency of a spectator to reconsider their own place within the political world.

TH I think that might be the difference between how actions and signs are related to one another in art and in politics. Artworks try not to fix a meaning, instead, they work with fluidity, which, in my opinion, resonates with what gestures are.

AK Yes, because a gesture never carries one sign. A gesture is not exactly this gesture and nothing else. One and the same finger constellation can have very different meanings—and very different consequences—depending on the culture you're in. So, let's say the same may be true for artistic gestures and po-

litical gestures. They need to be embedded in a symbolic situation in order to become significant, in order to bring change into a situation intellectually, emotionally, physically.

TH I would say that the artistic gestures we are talking about expose us to the dynamic processes in our social vocabularies. In contrast, political gestures work with our social vocabularies in a functional way and are therefore part of an operating system in which gestures must signal something very clear in order to have a specific, determined effect. Maybe the art we are talking about is not trying to convince the spectator of a certain order but reflects upon the vocabulary used to build such an order.

AK A good example of the responsibility we are talking about, and for the effect on an artwork's observer, is Christoph Schlingensief's Big Brother refugee camp in Vienna, *Foreigners Out!* I see a significant difference between this action and the projects of the Center for Political Beauty. The two are often put in the same box, which I find absolutely unfair. Schlingensief's involvement is very personal, very performative, and also actually very vulnerable. It is quite provocative because it pretends to be real. That's what Center for Political Beauty does as well. But Schlingensief engaged the public in a much more fundamental way, because what he did was create a drama of doubt for everybody looking at it. Is it true or not? Is it sadistic or not? Am I allowed to be curious about it? Am I allowed to be so snobby as to vote someone in or out? Yet it was not the question, "Is that allowed or not?" that made things so interesting. Rather, the significance of this whole action lay in its open-ended, partly uncontrollable character, in its personal and collective risk-taking on the uncertain grounds of a morally and politically highly determined and contaminated territory. I have the feeling that

the Center for Political Beauty strategically designs and controls every single aspect of their projects in order to stream the results through media channels without actually creating any real challenges or conflicts for themselves or for others.

TH They work much more with the operating system of politics, by functionally using some aesthetic strategies to create a specific effect. Therefore, as a political activist gesture, I find their work valid and important, but if considered as art, their work often does not provide the spectator with much uncertainty for them to be shaken up or have their understanding of our social vocabulary disturbed.

AK And such a designed campaign just cannot affect my own subjectivity too deeply. That can be one criterion for the difference between how a gesture works in the arts and in politics: how far does the work actually engage you in negotiating your position with yourself, both towards the world and towards the artwork, and maybe towards the problems that the work is producing rather than answering. It's amazing when an artwork creates a serious problem for you. Hiwa's video had that effect on me. It was the biggest struggle an artwork had produced in me in years because I just did not know what to do or think. Is it an ephemeral piece? Is it a performance? Is it a documentary? Can I make sense of it aesthetically? All my criteria went out of order and I had to re-adjust my gaze and my judgments.

So now I want to bring up something that may surprise you. I wrote about this in the conclusion of my last long text about Richard Rorty. Rorty addresses the question, "What is the sublime?" He is not talking about aesthetics here; he is talking about politics. What is the political sublime? And he comes up with a very interesting proposal: Beauty is an arrangement of things within a certain type of order that *we already understand*. In contrast, the sublime is rearranging things in a way we do not yet understand, provoking another kind of order that is not yet in place. And that is basically what we describe as a moment of revolution. There is a disruptive moment in which all the elements on the table, or on the canvas, or in the streets, require reorganization in an unknown way, which is terribly scary. This is exactly the aesthetic experience that you can have in the confrontation with certain works where you feel like you have no fucking clue what is in front of your eyes. This disruptive moment may be the most profound relationship you can have with an artwork. As disruptive as a political upheaval with thousands of people that quickly goes beyond your rational capacity to understand, or ability to even speculate on what may happen next. The only thing present is massive unrest and inconceivable movement,

and beyond that lies the nothingness of an as yet unthinkable change that you may one day look back on and be able to describe.

But beauty does not achieve this profound effect. The beautiful is something you can integrate much more easily. I think that could help us to look at gestures, artistic and political gestures, by considering whether they are beautiful or sublime, according to Rorty's description. Can we put them into words we understand, give them names that we are already trained to use? Or are we lacking a category of understanding, are we incapable of putting our experience into the words we have? The latter would be the more disruptive gesture. The one you don't know how to explain unless you try out new, uncertain ways.

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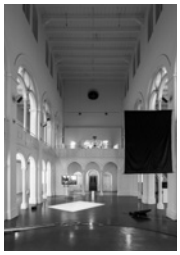


p. 213

pp. 216–17
Jakob Argauer, Timo Herbst, Laurie Young, *Inclinations*, 2018.
Installation. Pigmented concrete, silicone, Styrofoam, aluminum, wood, various sizes distributed in Studio 1 at Kunstquartier Bethanien.

p. 227
Larry Achiampong and David Blandy, *FF Gaiden: Black Death*, 2017.
Ultra HD color video, stereo sound, 16:9, duration 9 min. Made in collaboration with Kamile Ofoeme, commissioned by Two Queens, Leicester.

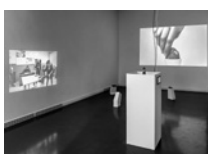
p. 225

p. 226
Jeremy Deller, Promotional film for *All that Is Solid Melts into Air*, 2014.
HD Video, duration 20 min., 54 sec., courtesy of the artist and The Modern Institute/ Toby Webster Ltd., Glasgow.

Jeremy Deller, *Hello, today you have day off (wording of text message sent to a worker on a zero hours contract informing him his labour would not be required that day)*, 2013.
Fabric banner made by Ed Hall. Banner 240 × 180 cm, installed dimensions 240 × 200 × 3 cm, Ed. of 3 + 2 AP, courtesy of the artist and The Modern Institute/ Toby Webster Ltd., Glasgow.

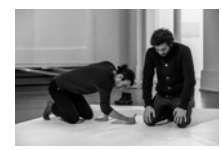
pp. 236, 238
Timo Herbst and Marcus Nebe, *Play by rules (Budapest, Istanbul, Hamburg)*, 2015–2018.
Five-channel HD-video installation. Duration 18 min. Part of the Kunstfonds Dresden Collection, exhibited with the kind support of Kunstfonds Dresden.

p. 237



pp. 228–29
Konrad Strutz, *Lost Motion*, 2018.
Installation with two HD-videos, stereo sound. Duration 5 min.

p. 224
***Rites and Festivals of Muslims and the main Hindu Castes*, in Gentil, Manuscripts, Faizabad, c. 1774**
Victoria and Albert Museum, London, IS.25: 27–1980.



p. 223
Bahaa Talis and Timo Herbst, *Point of Coincidence*, 2018.
Daily practice and live drawing.

p. 219
Nasan Tur, *Demo Kits Deluxe*, 2014.
Five items, each brass, satin, spray paint can, refined adhesive tape
90 × 5.5 × 7.5 cm, unique.

p. 218
Florian Bettel, Barbara Lippe, *Assad Waiting*, 2002/2018.
Installation. Video, sound, pedestal.
Duration 5 min. (loop).

p. 222

p. 239
William K. L. Dickson, *Pope Leo XIII in his Chair*, 1898.
Nitrate film transferred to digital video.
Duration 50 sec., courtesy of Eye Film Museum Amsterdam, FLM209234.

pp. 220–21
Colin Kaepernick's "take a knee," 2016, and Tommie Smith's and John Carlos' "Black Power salute" at the 1968 Olympic Games.

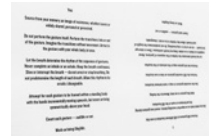
p. 240
Beyoncé, *"Formation" live at Super Bowl*, 2016.
Duration 4 min., 37 sec.

Chemical Brothers, *Out of Control*, 1999.
Directed by W.I.Z.
Duration 4 min., 14 sec.

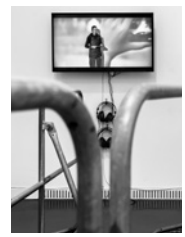
Jay Z & Kanye West, *No Church in The Wild*, 2012.
Directed by Romain Gavras. Duration 5 min., 3 sec.

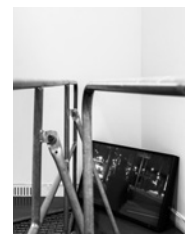
pp. 230–31
Kerstin Honeit, *ich muss mit ihnen sprechen*, 2015/2016.
Installation. Video, 30 cards on 6 aluminum rails), HD color, sound. Duration 1 min., 35 sec.

pp. 232–34
Justine A. Chambers, *ten thousand times and one hundred more*, 2018.
Installation. Photograph by Ryan M. Collerd, graphic design of score by Jeremy McCormick



p. 235
Dina Boswank, *Zentralperspektive/ Central Perspective*, 2018.
Installation.



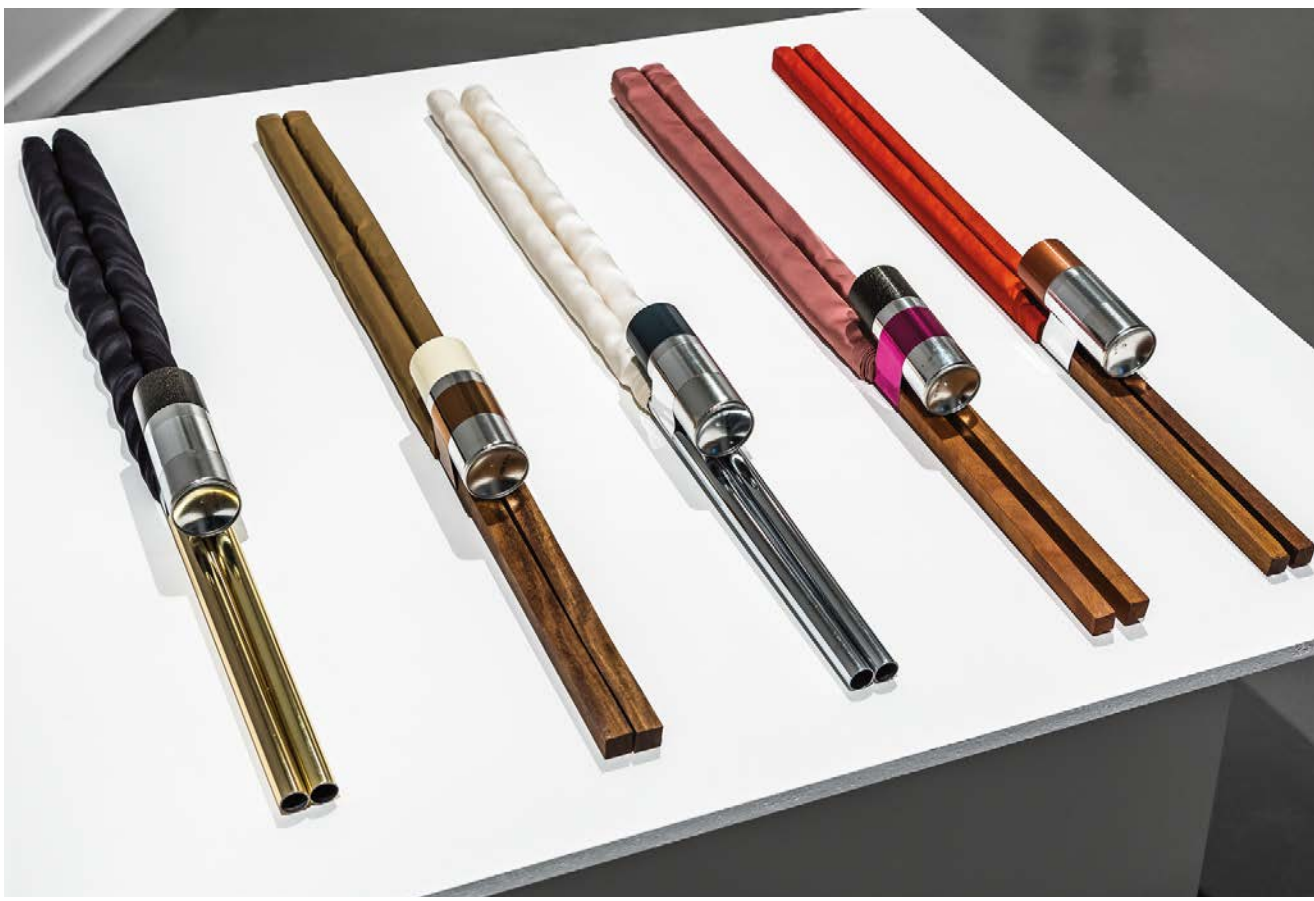


pp. 243–44
Dina Boswank, Timo Herbst, Irina Kaldrack, Silas Mücke, Marcus Nebe, *G20 (documentation)*, 2018.
Two 2.5k videos, duration 12 min./1 min. Installation by Silas Mücke.

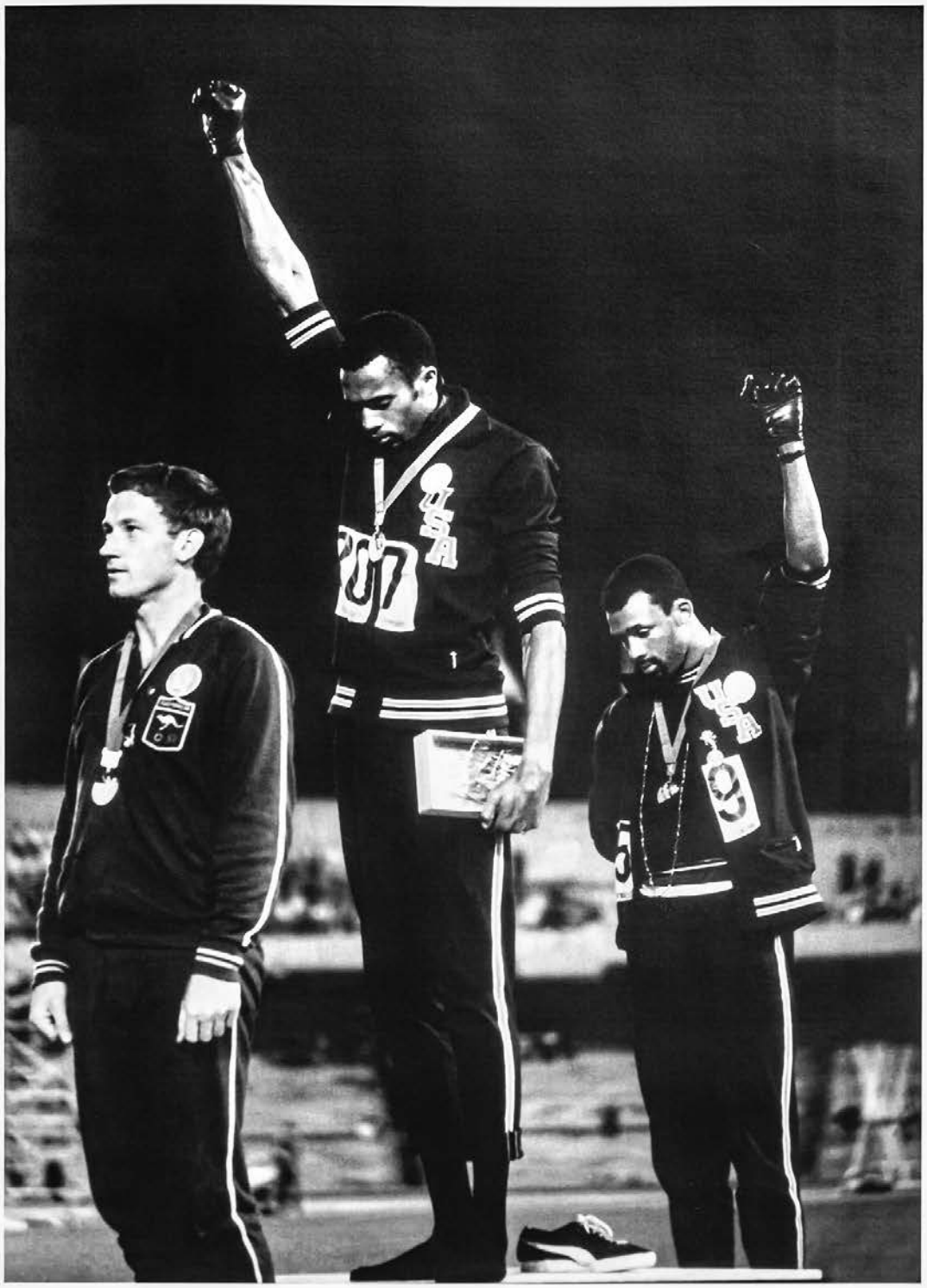
p. 242
Irina Kaldrack, Tobias Schulze, *Tanzende Fäuste*, 2018.
A0 poster with built-in tablet computer, video loop. Poster design by Torsten Schmitt Fotografie | Berlin.

Your are invited
to use the ramps.
Take off your shoes.
Inclination 36°
Use at your own risk
One person
at a time.
Die Rampen dürfen
betreten werden.
Bitte Schuhe
ausziehen.
Steigung 36°
Benutzung auf
eigene Gefahr.
Einzeln.

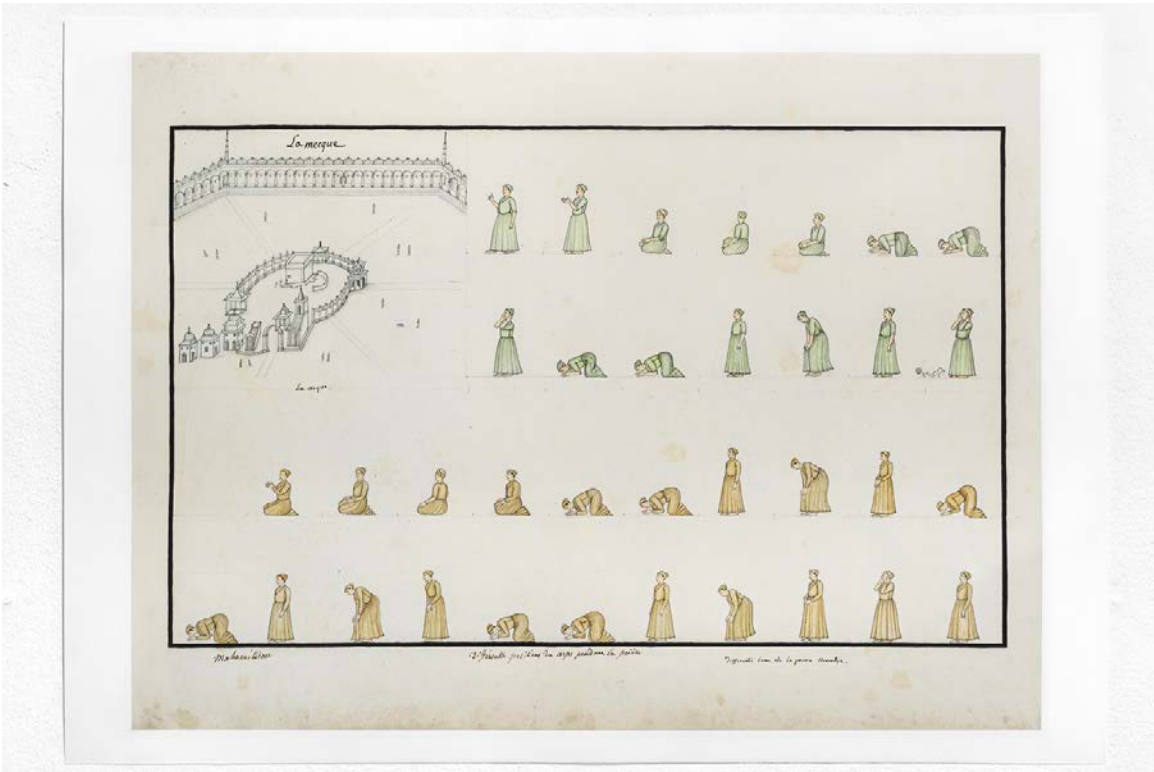
ha
s
day
ff.



HOME OF THE FAITHFUL


USA
207
USA
9

Hello,
today you
have
day off.


La mecque

المواطن

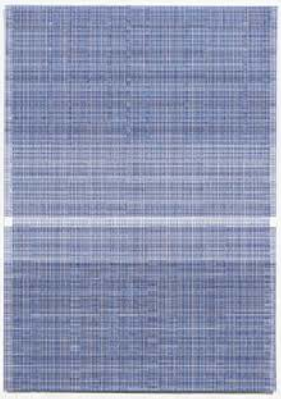
Hello,
today you
have
day off.

ETSAM

I have to talk to you
I won't breathe a word
I won't say a word
do you know what we say here?
so I said...
maybe I could clarify that myself and talk to the both of them?
talking between ourselves...
you're in shock and don't know what you're saying
tell me what that means?

I'll tell you what
that says it all
I won't say a word
I won't breathe a word
I'd rather we talk about that again tonight
and what are you trying to say with that?
maybe I could clarify that myself and talk to the both of them?
as I said...
you're in shock and don't know what you're saying
tell me what that means?
I hear the voice
what kind of drivel are you talking?

Exhibition views



You:

Source from your memory an image of resistance, whether iconic or widely shared, personal or perceived.

Do not perform the gesture itself. Perform the transitions into or out of the gesture. Imagine the transitions without movement. Arrive in the gesture with your whole body at once.

Let the breath determine the rhythm of the sequence of gestures. Never complete an inhale or an exhale. Keep the breath continuous. Slow or interrupt the breath — do not arrest or stop breathing. Do not predetermine the length of each breath. Allow this rhythm to be erratic /changeable.

Attempt for each gesture to be framed within a standing body with the hands incrementally moving upwards, but never arriving symmetrically above your head.

Count each gesture — audible or not.

Work on being illegible.

Hello,
oday you
have

Tanzende Fäuste

Irina Kaldrack Tobias Schulze

Social Media wird Social Video

#WE WILL ROCK YOU
#flip challenge
#react to this
Image pflege
Viele Likes stärken das Selbstbewusstsein
#kick andrun
FOLLOW
THE FIST #teamevil
Anerkennung
Sei du selbst!
I'm way 2 good 2 you
Grimassen schneiden
präsentierte Präsenz

Nachahmung und kreative Aneignung von Gesten etablieren einen anerkennenden Wettbewerb der Aufmerksamkeitsökonomie

Forschungsgegenstand

Social Media wird Social Video: Einerseits ergänzen Bild- und Video-Sharing-Apps klassische soziale Netzwerk-Plattformen. Andererseits werden im Internet mehr und mehr Videos rezipiert und zwar vor allem kurze und sehr kurze Videos. Damit ändert sich das Verhältnis von sozialen Medien und (zerstreuten) Öffentlichkeiten: vom Schreiben, Lesen und Folgen zum Sprechen und Präsentieren, Schauen und Teilen.

Vor diesem Hintergrund untersucht das Projekt „Tanzende Fäuste", wie auf der Plattform TikTok / musical.ly Präsenz und Öffentlichkeit durch den Einsatz von Gesten moduliert werden.

Mit der App erstellen die Nutzer*innen Playback-Videos zu kurzen Ausschnitten von Musiktiteln oder Film-Soundtracks und laden diese auf die zugehörige Plattform hoch. Typische Videos enthalten Tanzsequenzen und lippensynchrone Gesangsperformances im Stile von Musikclips. Dabei illustrieren die User*innen Songtexte mit Handgesten und stellen Steuergesten nach. Insbesondere nutzen sie das Zusammenspiel von Hand- und Kamerabewegung mit Zeiteffekten und Schnitttechniken sowie verschiedene Videofilter.

Die hochgeladenen Inhalte werden mit Hashtags versehen, können geliked und kommentiert werden. Insbesondere ermöglicht die Plattform, so genannte Challenges zu starten: Nutzer*innen werden aufgefordert, eine Inszenierungsidee, ein Bewegungsmotiv oder ein Choreografie zu einem Musikausschnitt zu produzieren und unter demselben Hashtag hochzuladen.

Die kreative Aneignung in der Nachahmung etabliert ein mimetisches Wir – es entsteht ein anerkennender Wettbewerb der Aufmerksamkeitsökonomie.

Vorgehen

Das Projekt „Tanzende Fäuste" schleust politische Faustgesten auf musical.ly ein, verfolgt ihre Verbreitung und wertet deren Aneignung durch die Nutzer*innen aus. Dafür entwickeln wir kurze Choreografien zu politisch konnotierten Musik-Ausschnitten und lassen diese durch unterschiedliche Akteure vorstellen.

Wir fordern relevante Nutzer*innen mit einer hohen Anzahl von Followern auf, die Choreos zu verbreiten und in Tutorials zu nutzen.

Wir lancieren eine Clickwork-Kampagne, um User*innen zu aktivieren, unsere Faust-Choreos in ihren musical.ly-Videos zu performen und zu modifizieren.

Wir starten einen Kreativ-Wettbewerb für Jugendliche, mit Aufrufen an Schulklassen, Theater-AGs u.a., die Faust-Choreo-Challenges entwickeln und durchsetzen.

Für die Auswertung werden Methoden der sozialen Netzwerkanalyse genutzt, um die Reichweite sowie die Wege der Verbreitung zu messen. Wir interviewen Nutzer*innen und führen Diskursanalysen von Kommentaren durch. Wir untersuchen dispositiv-analytisch, wie sich User*innen die Gesten-Choreos aneignen, welche Abwandlungen, welche neuen Effekte und welche Musikauswahl vorgenommen werden. Wir zeichnen nach, wie sich Gesten verbreiten und Aufmerksamkeit gewinnen, wie sie verändert werden und wie sich dabei ihre Kontextualisierung und Bedeutung verschieben.

Deutlich wird, wie eine Geste, die, zusammen mit den gewählten Songs, politisch aufgeladen ist, in einer zeitgenössischen Aufmerksamkeitsökonomie politische Öffentlichkeit generiert – und sei es als popkulturelle Mode.

Tanzende Fäuste zeigt, wie Gesten in digitalen Kulturen politische Öffentlichkeit modulieren

Ergebnisse

Das Projekt reflektiert die Verschränkung von Geste und Präsenz in videobasierten sozialen Netzwerken. Es stellt differenziert dar, wie sich Öffentlichkeit durch die mimetische Aneignung von Gesten formiert. Damit wird gleichzeitig deutlich, ob und wie sich durch die Ausführung von Gesten eine Haltung des Politischen einstellt.

Damit geben die „Tanzenden Fäuste" einen Einblick, wie in gegenwärtigen digitalen Kulturen Präsenz und Öffentlichkeit auch durch „das Gestische" hervorgebracht und moduliert werden.

Gesture Media & Politics
Throwing Gestures
The Entanglement of Presence and Publicness

Irina Kaldrack
vertritt die Professur „Wissenskulturen im digitalen Zeitalter", HBK Braunschweig.

Forschungsschwerpunkte: Theorie und Geschichte digitaler Medienkulturen, Wissenskulturen unter sychronologischen Bedingungen, Medien- und Wissensgeschichte menschlicher Körperbewegung sowie Methoden der Medienwissenschaft an der Schnittstelle von Gestaltungsprozessen, künstlerischer Praxis und medienwissenschaftlicher Forschung.

Veröffentlichungen:
mit Ute Holl et al. (Hg.), „Überlachen und Interfaces. Ästhetik und Politik filmischer Bilder", München 2018

„Individualität wird zur anonymisierten Adressierung von Profilen", in: „Profile. Impräzisierte Beiträge" (Hrsg: Martin Degeling et al.), Lüneburg 2017, S. 108

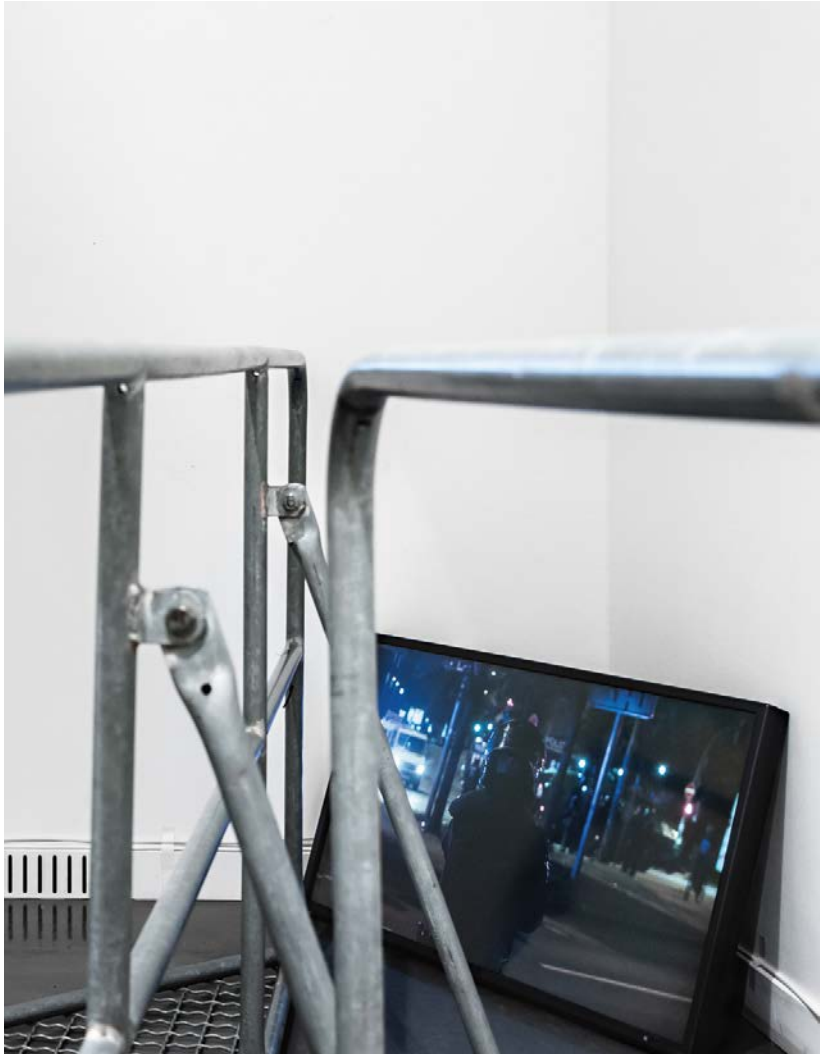
mit Tries Rörig: „Passbaus in Auflösung", in: Zeitschrift für Medienwissenschaft 16, Zürich Berlin 2017, S. 146–153

Tobias Schulze
studiert Medienwissenschaft (M.A.) an der Humboldt-Universität Berlin. Er ist Research-Assistant am Zentrum für digitale Kulturen (CDC) an der Leuphana Universität Lüneburg und Projektassistent für das Projekt „The Entanglement between Gesture, Media and Politics" an der Hochschule für Bildende Künste Braunschweig.

Forschungsschwerpunkt ist die Verschränkung von (Bilder-)Gesten, Zeitlichkeit und Medien.

Veröffentlichungen:
mit Howard Caygill und Martina Leeker (Hg.), „Interventions in Digital Cultures", Lüneburg 2018

„Hashmachten in Krisen. Aufnahmen der Bewegtbilder Deutschen Antiks Diskurs", in: „Klangbeziehungen aus der Vergangenheit. Forschungen zu Aufnahmen aus dem Berliner Lautarchiv" (Hrsg: Repertoire Rival, Aachen 2014, S. 71–95



Photographs
on pp. 213–244 by
Torsten Schmitt
Fotografie | Berlin

Gestures of an Exhibition

In the world of art, it is more or less expected for a young artist to surround his or her work with a fog of theoretical reflection. But often this is no more than a gesture. The gesture's name is radicalism, and in many cases, it seems to suffice in itself. In this variation, theory has become a form of art, and there it circulates and has found a new home; but this also means that it loses its role when it leaves this field.[1]

But what marks out Jacques at that moment is still not his image, but a very discreet gesture, in which he just brushed my wrist with the back of his index finger.[2]

Anna-Lena Wenzel

In the quotes above, science historian Philipp Felsch addresses the relationship between theory and art, and defines the gesture as something incomplete, while author Catherine Millet specifies the power of the gesture as contact that can imprint itself in memory more strongly than images or spoken words, hinting at the potential hidden in the gesture.

1 Philipp Felsch, "Theorie besitzt nicht mehr die Art von Evidenz als etwas, das in der Lage wäre, die herrschenden Verhältnisse zu verändern," interview with Steffen Bodenmiller and Noah Willumsen, *microform. Der Podcast des Graduiertenkollegs Literatur- und Wissensgeschichte kleiner Formen*, Berlin, 2018, audio, 40:13, www.kleine-formen.de/interview-mit-philipp-felsch/.

2 Catherine Millet, *Jealousy*, trans. Helen Stevenson (New York: Grove Press, 2011), 3.

The word "gesture" comes from the gesticulations of the actor. In current usage, gesture is defined as a movement, particularly of the arms, hands or head, used in interpersonal non-verbal communication—at least according to digital dictionaries.[3] But gesture can also be a symbolic, indirect form of expression; it has something of the inherently potential because it suggests movement rather than execution or realization. Often, we speak of gestures not in the sense of concrete actions but in order to express the underlying intention, as when we say, "that was a nice gesture."

The *Throwing Gestures* exhibition is dedicated to a variety of gestures that are addressed, reflected, and contextualized in the form of artistic works. The gestures include political, religious, and media gestures (with a focus on those borderline areas that open up between gestures of power: political and resistance gestures, forms of protest, and religious acts) as well as the appropriations of such gestures by pop culture and their use in advertising. Additionally, two questions can be traced through the exhibition like a scent. First, what is the role of media in interpreting and disseminating gestures? How important is their contribution to their dissemination, and to what extent are gestures manipulated in the media? And second, how targeted does the gesture have to be, or how untargeted can it be in order to elicit a reaction? Is its purpose suggestion and potentiality, or should it entail concrete consequences? In other words, where are the boundaries between "symbolic politics" and concrete agency? The exhibition focuses on gestures that are often ambiguous, both in their directionality and in their political orientation. It is focused on the gray areas and zones of ambiguity that are inherent in gestures and their media amplifiers. For that reason, the exhibition features artworks and situations in which, for instance, a gesture of power misses the mark, or a gesture of resistance results in destruction.

The exhibition assembles thirteen works of art by nineteen artists. In addition to works by participants in *The Entanglement between Gesture, Media, and Politics (EGMP)* project and their collaboration partners, works by four other artists were included

3 See www.wortbedeutung.info/Geste/ or www.duden.de/rechtschreibung/Geste, accessed July 3, 2020.

as well. The exhibition was curated and arranged by Florian Bettel, Dina Boswank, Timo Herbst, Konrad Strutz, and Laurie Young. Many of the works arose from collaboration, demonstrating the close cooperation of the project group—the result of four workshops that took place over the two years prior to the exhibition.

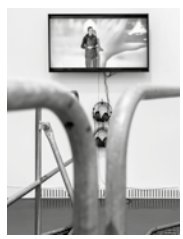
In this chapter, I will both address the subject of gesture in the form of artistic work, and explore the exhibition as gesture, that is, the selection of works, their placement, and how they relate to one another, first describing the works and then the curatorial interventions.

pp. 216–17

In the entrance area, visitors are confronted with the first piece and curatorial gesture, *Inclinations* by Jakob Argauer, Timo Herbst, and Laurie Young. It consists of eleven planks placed over steps; ramps that may be traversed only in socks. The incline is steep, so you have to recover your balance after walking up or down them. Access is not a self-evident given, you have to make a decision to enter the exhibition space: should you take off your shoes and venture onto the ramp, or should you avoid it? Ramps usually allow people in wheelchairs or with strollers to negotiate a barrier they wouldn't otherwise be able to cross. So, while *Inclinations* creates accessibility for some, it is a challenge, possibly even a hazard for people on foot. The significant aspect of the intervention is that it redesigns the entrance in such a way that visitors are forced to react.

Another work intervening in the space, although not quite as forcefully, is *G20* by project participants Irina Kaldrack, Timo Herbst, Dina Boswank, and their collaboration partners Marcus Nebe and Silas Mücke. It is a collaborative effort which, in my eyes, is crucial to the exhibition because it raises issues of teamwork, underlying questions, and artistic-academic practice. *G20* is an installation featuring crowd barriers and two monitors placed in a narrow gallery on the second floor. The crowd barriers almost fill the narrow space; one monitor is fixed to the wall at the end, the other is on the floor. The result is a spatial situation in which the visitors' freedom of movement is restricted, so the barriers fulfill their function even in the exhibition, though not as radically as they would in an outdoor space, or did during the performance of the work in Leipzig. One of the two monitors shows material that documents the lecture performance that took place in the context of the *G20* exhibition at KV—Verein für Zeitgenössische Kunst Leipzig in October 2018. We see Irina Kaldrack presenting thoughts on the subject of political gesture based on different relevant texts while she moves through two darkened rooms. The walls of the room are filled with projections of Timo Herbst and Marcus Nebe's photo and film footage from demonstrations at the 2017 G20 summit in Hamburg; the text and images overlap and permeate each other. Kaldrack explores the conceptual fabric of gesture and action, symbolic content, and signification, "In gestures of protest there is a strong element of action and an element of signification.

p. 243



A dimension of action and a symbolic dimension. The symbolic dimension of gestures is enhanced when they appear in the media."[4]

The work conveys a feeling of the space-related, performative multi-media practices and theoretical research that were the basis of experiments and interwoven in the context of the project. It is clear that the collaboration allowed forms to develop that led to the emergence of a new *common* project even though the participants' respective backgrounds and individual approaches had not dissolved.

The documentation is complemented by video footage of a police officer during the 2017 protests in Hamburg. A text on the project website describes an "insecure police officer" who "was a key figure in the examination of gestures of protest and the political in the collective work process."[5] The clip seems aimed at expanding the usual perception of police officers as "cops" through a gesture of insecurity that strips the officer of their usual role, even making it impossible for them to execute the role, disrupting the narrative of the powerful, "armored," and anonymous law enforcement officer.

p. 244

The G20 summit in Hamburg and associated protests and riots are also the subjects of *Play by rules (Budapest, Istanbul, Hamburg)* by Timo Herbst and Marcus Nebe. The artists added footage from Budapest (2015), and Istanbul (2016) to images from Hamburg. In a complex spatial installation, five videos that focus on moments of image-making and news production are projected onto screens. Media representatives are included as a third force alongside demonstrators and police officers in the documentation of events. We see a lively exchange between all parties, making it obvious that members of the press are not neutrally documenting but actively helping shape the events. Although the three contexts are different (G20, migrant protests, and a failed putsch), the forms of reaction and communication between media reporters and demonstrators are similar. The form of the installation is decisive, as it "reproduces and inverts the setting of the recording technique of news teams in the field. Projectors replace cameras on tripods, and projection screens replace the lights on the light stands," according to the text accompanying the work.

p. 238

Zentralperspektive/Central Perspective, a multi-part installation by Dina Boswank, also focuses on the protests and riots at the G20 summit in Hamburg. An audio piece accompanies three vertical paper prints with different details of the same motif shown in different formats. We see a situation with several hooded people in black in a wrecked supermarket. The artist asked friends to describe and comment on the hand and arm movements in the photo and read the comments aloud, which were then recorded for the work.

p. 235

The piece provokes questions regarding the political nature of acts of destruction, even of violence in general. Are the gestures in the photos gestures of resistance, or of destruction and violation of the law?

4 See Timo Herbst and Irina Kaldrack's chapter *G20* in this book, pp. 259–292.

5 *EGMP*, n.d., "Austellung: Throwing Gestures," accessed July 3, 2020, gesture-media-politics.de/workshop/ausstellung-throwing-gestures/.

It also poses the general question of how trustworthy images are in representing reality, and points out the scope of interpretation and contextualization in the media. Interestingly, we do not see a single person actually destroy or remove anything. What exactly is it then that these people were photographed doing? Were they actually "caught" doing something, or was the scene in fact staged?

The project, *ten thousand times and one hundred more* (2018), by Justine A. Chambers also deals with gestures of resistance—but it explores a different border area. Thirty photos document micro-political gestures executed at the limits of visibility, both indoors and out, by a female performer. Next to the photos are two A3 posters. On one, the title of the work is repeatedly printed horizontally and vertically, the superimpositions rendering it unreadable. Only five of the lines are decipherable, having been printed only once. The second poster offers two lines of instruction for performances, with one upside down. It reads, "Do not perform the gesture itself. Perform the transitions into or out of the gesture." The piece is an invitation to think of the gesture as a movement that does not exhaust itself in the moment of its execution but should be executed at least *ten thousand times.*

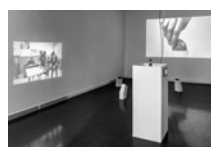
pp. 232–33

Assad Waiting (2002/2018), by Florian Bettel and Barbara Lippe, is a video of Syrian dictator Hafiz al-Assad. The documentary footage was chosen because it shows the dictator in an unusual role—waiting. While the media usually disseminates powerful and potent gestures and images of politicians, this scene is out of the ordinary, so it was never broadcast on television. The artists found it in an archive. *Assad Waiting* refers to the role of the media in the representation of states and ideologies, and hints at media manipulation and outside influences.

p. 218

The installation *Lost Motion* (2018) by Konrad Strutz picks up on the question of how (un)targeted an action can be. It questions the sense or efficiency of actions rather than the visibility of action as Chambers and Young's work does. The piece consists of several parts. Two synchronized videos are projected onto two walls in different sizes. Three shorter videos can be watched on small screens in custom-made peep boxes placed on the floor. In the center of the

p. 229



installation is a pedestal with a revolving disk onto which different objects can be placed to have their surface scanned and the resulting image integrated into the videos. The work is so complex that it is impossible to reduce it to a single statement or gesture, but the formal ensemble and the fragmentation of the work in its diverse parts form a message that we need to decipher, as do the contents of the collage-like world of images in the different videos. The title *Lost Motion* hints at a connecting theme. It has been borrowed from motion and time studies, in the context of which "lost" is not understood as "mislaid" but as "wasted." Motion and time studies is a specific methodological approach within the fields of process and automation technology, which aims to increase the efficiency of workflows; Strutz contrasts these studies with footage of inefficient or untargeted processes. One sequence is of a student disassembling and reassembling a Kalashnikov rifle while being timed. In another video, an individual executes intricate movements very precisely. The installation is structured in such a way that it is possible to identify connections between the individual elements, but the attempts often don't lead to anything. The work explores a vague area in which the gesture drifts into the intangible—and thus itself turns into a confrontation with contingency.

p. 242

Irina Kaldrack and Tobias Schulze's contribution to the exhibition is a counterpoint to Strutz's *Lost Motion*. Inspired by a scientific poster, it presents photos and concise information about a proposal for a project titled *Tanzende Fäuste* (Dancing Fists, 2018). According to the poster, the project aims to smuggle political fist gestures into musical.ly/TikTok to explore and document their dissemination. The applicants hope to gain insights into "how presence and publicity are created and modulated in current digital cultures." While the poster seems credible at first with its formal, funding-seeking proposal language, it is fictitious. The format itself is so unusual in an exhibition that it seems immediately suspicious and quickly identifies it as a fake. But the work successfully introduces the project's background into the exhibition. *EGMP* is also a third-party funded project that not only has a limited duration, but (as in most cases) involves considerable bureaucratic effort.

p. 223

Another cooperation is *Point of Coincidence* (2018) by Bahaa Talis and Timo Herbst; this one, however, takes place in real time and is not presented as a documentation. It is a performance that was repeated daily while the exhibition was open. White MDF boards are laid out in a rectangle on the floor and covered with two sheets of paper. Then both artists take off their shoes and step onto the rectangle. While Talis performs a Muslim prayer, Herbst draws on the paper and reacts to the movements (kneeling, bowing down, sitting up). The resulting drawing is a network of entangled lines that are reminiscent of Andalusian geometric patterns, some precisely executed, some only sketched. Like the gestures of prayer, they repeat themselves and could potentially be extended endlessly. By executing actions that otherwise hardly ever overlap at the same time,

questions regarding the differences and commonalities of these practices—between routine, daily practice, and the supposed uniqueness of artistic acts—are raised.

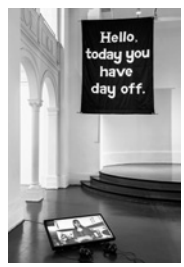
The Exhibition as Gesture

When the exhibition is included in our considerations and interpretations of gesture, curatorial decisions come into focus. Which artists were invited, and which works of art selected? Where and how are they positioned in space, resulting in references and tensions? As well as including their own works and collaborations, the curators, who are all members of the research project team, invited four other artists who "address important references in the research process as well as significant aspects for the exploration of the gesture." The artistic positions selected expand the exhibition's subject in four new directions: showing aestheticized forms of criticism (Jeremy Deller), negotiating discriminatory gestures (Kerstin Honeit), addressing the commercialization of resistant practices (Nasan Tur), and using digital space to explore the phrase "the medium is the message" (Larry Achiampong and David Blandy).

p. 230

Kerstin Honeit's multi-part installation *ich muss mit ihnen sprechen* (*I need to talk to you*, 2015–16) features scenes with American actresses (all women of color with one exception), where the original actors' voices have been replaced by that of a single voice actor. The dubbing has reduced the individuality of a multitude of voices to a single one—a phenomenon of de-individualization that disproportionately concerns actors of color.

p. 226



Two objects from Jeremy Deller's multi-part work and exhibition project *All that is Solid Melts into Air* (2014) are included in the exhibition: a twenty-minute video shown on a screen lying on the floor, and a banner freely floating in the room. Both are about British workplace realities—during industrialization and today. Deller's approach is eclectic, mixing popular culture with forms of protest and a commentary on today's thoroughly commercialized working environments.

p. 227

Larry Achiampong and David Blandy exhibit the video work *FF Gaiden: Black Death* (2017), which also refers to Great Britain and focuses on the transformations caused by Thatcherism—although using a radically different aesthetic, in this case making use of the graphics of a computer game.

p. 219

The title of Nasan Tur's *Demo Kits Deluxe* (2009), is self-explanatory. Five banners are rolled-up on poles, each with its own shiny can of spray paint taped in place. Materials that usually serve as tools of protest at demonstrations here become a work of art—a commodity on the art market; a cheeky commentary on the commercialization of protest culture.

The exhibition space is a large area that could swallow up individual works if not used wisely. In that respect, appropriating the space at the entrance for *Inclinations* was a good decision. The challenge was to develop a layout that would create a certain "electricity" and reveal subtle references between the works. Gallerist and curator Alexander Koch lent his expertise to the group, offering valuable advice on positioning each work relative to others and to the space. He also offered insights for dealing with the elements termed "interventions."

The interventions are contributions to the exhibition, selected by the curators. Not artistic works, but finds from the collection of material assembled during the course of the project over several years. Photos, videos, reproductions of historical drawings, and gestures (of protest) in everyday and popular culture are put on display, helping to ground the topic of gesture and also broaden it. With the interventions as references, it becomes possible to ask elementary questions regarding the sphere of action of gestures and their (sub)cultural appropriations for other purposes. A film of the Pope from 1898, *Pope Leo XIII in his Chair*[6] is projected onto a wall. The Pope sits on a chair in his white robe, Swiss Guard soldiers with static faces behind him. His right arm is bent and his hand raised in greeting before moving to his brow as the man on his left bends down to him and makes a gesture of reverence. Pope Leo exudes power in spite of his rather frail frame; raising his arm is a distanced but demonstrative gesture. It is reminiscent of many iconic images of gestures

p. 239

in politics—Willy Brandt's genuflection, the kiss between Erich Honecker and Leonid Brezhnev, as well as the many handshakes that politicians usually stage at their meetings. Art historian Constanze von Marlin says that traditional monuments have a centuries-old function of mediating politics based on a collectively understood repertory of gestures and symbols.[7] *Pope Leo XIII in his Chair* exemplifies the meaning of von Marlin's statement, despite the fact that the viewer is watching a moving image rather than looking at a monument.

Historical reference is also a feature of another intervention/work: a drawing referring to prayer. The drawing is an instructional diagram for Muslim and Hindu prayer movements (from the collection *Rites and Festivals of Muslims and the Main Hindu Castes,* circa 1774), which are more internally than externally focused. The movements depicted are practical instructions for daily dialogue with and devotions to God, and have little in common with the sublime gesture of the Pope. The drawing acquires another layer of significance when we read the name of the draftsman: Jean Baptiste Joseph Gentil (1726–1799)—a French army colonel in India during the colonial period. Are we able to identify a colonialist vision in these drawings? How does such information influence the significance of the historical document? The fundamental question is, what kinds of gestures are appropriate in dealing with the colonialist heritage?

These documentary and artistic references to historical gestures are complemented by current popular culture representations presented in the form of films and two unframed photos. As explained in the exhibition text, "In the 2016 Super Bowl halftime show, featured artist Beyoncé took to the stage with dancers in costumes reminiscent of the Black Panther movement of the 1970s. With the performance of her song 'Formation,' Beyoncé placed herself in the tradition of making political gestures at major sporting events, chief among them the iconic "Black Power salute" used by athletes Tommie Smith and John Carlos at the 1968 Olympic Games. Smith and Carlos's courageous statement finds its echo in Colin Kaepernick's 2016 refusal to stand for the national anthem

6 William Kennedy-Laurie Dickson, *Pope Leo XIII in his Chair*, directed by William K.L. Dickson and Emile Lauste, 1898, Great Britain, British Mutoscope and Biograph Syndicate, 68mm, [FLM82260], EYE Film Institute Netherlands.

7 See Constanze von Marlin, "Kunst im öffentlichen Raum zwischen Kunstgattung und politischer Aktion," in *Bärenzwinger Berlin, Spuren—Architekturen—Projektionen*, ed. Ute Müller-Tischler and Sabine Weißler (Bielefeld: Kerber, 2019), 124.

p. 224

p. 240

while on the pitch. His “take a knee” protest created a widely discussed symbol for the Black Lives Matter movement.” Photographs of the gesture are included in the exhibition.

The ambivalence of such media staging is acknowledged. The stage of a sporting event like the Super Bowl or the Olympic Games, or a music mega event, generates high levels of attention that can be used, in the case of showcased sportsmen, for political gesture, expanding the sphere of sports to one of politics. For a pop star like Beyoncé, however, political gesture may also be a coolly calculated marketing strategy. It is a gray area as controversial as a promotional clip that uses resistant practices to surround an advertised product with an aura of adventure and anarchy.

The work *Demo Kits Deluxe* by Nasan Tur also addresses the displacements noted above. While the *Demo Kits* are created as tools meant to facilitate “individual participation,” the “deluxe” versions are instead works of art (and thus also commodities), “consisting of exotic wood, hand-polished precious metal, the finest silk and shiny spray cans.” What happens to objects when their context is changed? Do they still have a practical function, or do they become objects of representation? Or high-priced works of art? “Every gesture, no matter how banal, has the potential in our current time of being misconstrued, corrupted, condemned,” says the exhibition text about the work *ten thousand times and one hundred more.* What should be added to this sentence is: any gesture has the potential to remain a suggestion instead of proceeding to action. A gesture’s lack of focus and open-endedness in terms of meaning are its potential, and at the same time, its potential deficiency.

An exhibition that is primarily an art exhibition that also aims to negotiate an issue and to provide insight into a process results in a mix of potentially differing intentions. The potential conflict is not immediately obvious, however, because the exhibition succeeds in establishing references between the individual (and sometimes very different) works, in staging the existing references in such a way that connections can be made between the individual works—whether because there are thematic

overlaps, they are by the same artist, or the format is similar. But there is a feeling of indecisiveness and simultaneity (which, as Konrad Strutz's work demonstrates, may have value in itself). To me, the crux of the matter is the manner in which the exhibits called interventions are dealt with. The term intervention originally relates to short-term interference, for instance when a state intervenes in other states' affairs in cases of violations of international law.[8] The research material in the exhibition, however, consists of objects that were introduced by the curators (the project participants), and that were important objects of reference during the project work, and thus do not come from outside but are part of the joint research. To mark their status of "other" by placing them differently (directly onto the floor or provided with a white frame) is a half-hearted gesture. Instead, the exhibition may have benefitted from more explicitly displaying the interdisciplinarity and heterogeneity of the modes of expression it included, illustrated by the poster, the intervention, and the documentary approaches. It could have been achieved with increased focus on the border area[9] of different approaches in which the exhibition moves due to its specific background as a group project and the diverse backgrounds of the participants at the intersections between art and academia. Specifically, this might have meant doing without the external artistic contributions, and mainly focusing on the fluid transitions or thresholds that develop when a research paper or documentary research material is transformed into a work of art, and transitions and thresholds that open up between works of art and interventions. What kind of adaptation turns documentary material into a work of art? How can curatorial gestures be distinguished from artistic-installational interventions, or is all of this dissolved in joint authorship? There is a related question regarding the self-definition of creators as artists, curators, and researchers that I would have been interested in. Is the assumption here fluid transitions, or are hard disciplinary boundaries becoming even more obvious in this interdisciplinary project? Instead of attempting a blurry distinction between the individual exhibits, a different approach would have enabled

8 See Friedrich von Borries et al., *Glossar der Interventionen* (Berlin: Merve, 2012), 90–1.

9 For a detailed description of the "border area" concept, see Anna-Lena Wenzel, *Grenzüberschreitungen in der Gegenwartskunst* (Bielefeld: transcript, 2011), 241–261.

the makers to emphasize the project's research character, which would have automatically made the searching movements, processes of negotiation, and explorations of thresholds a part of the exhibition. According to Joseph Vogl, the hesitation that occurs at these thresholds holds its own potential, "Tarrying interrupts sequences of action and functions as a caesura; it potentializes action, leads into a zone of indeterminateness between yes and no, exposes irreducibly problematic structures, and opens an in-between-time in which the contingency of incidents can articulate itself."[10]

10 Joseph Vogl, *On Tarrying*, trans. Helmut Müller-Sievers (London/Calcutta: Seagull Books, 2011), 98.

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Timo Herbst, Irina Kaldrack, *G20*

pp. 259—292

Imprint

Essay

The essay is based on *G20*, a lecture performance and installation on October 20, 2018, at KV Kunstverein Leipzig, Verein für Zeitgenössische Kunst Leipzig e.V.

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Text and performance
Irina Kaldrack

Video
Timo Herbst and Marcus Nebe

Live-editing during performance
Timo Herbst

Interview sounds within performance
Dina Boswank

Dramaturgy
Timo Herbst, Irina Kaldrack, and Silas Mücke

Dramaturgy counseling
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Installation
Timo Herbst, Silas Mücke, and Marcus Nebe

Installation (windows)
Dina Boswank

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Take up
a position
in front of
the projection
screen, at
the back left

Is that political?

It is not unpolitical.

Political stone-throwing,
political marching,
political torch-bearing,
political fuck-off,
political filming.

Movement is a change of position; movement and speaking are separate. Precise addressing. This is about the collection, description, and characterization of gestures

What kinds of gestures are in use?
Marching, walking, running, stopping.

Walk diagonally
to the back wall,
facing the wall

Jostling, making room, stopping.
Blocking and occupying.

Pause for
5 seconds

Walk straight
to the left
projection wall,
ending up in
the back area

There are gestures of provocation
and escalation,

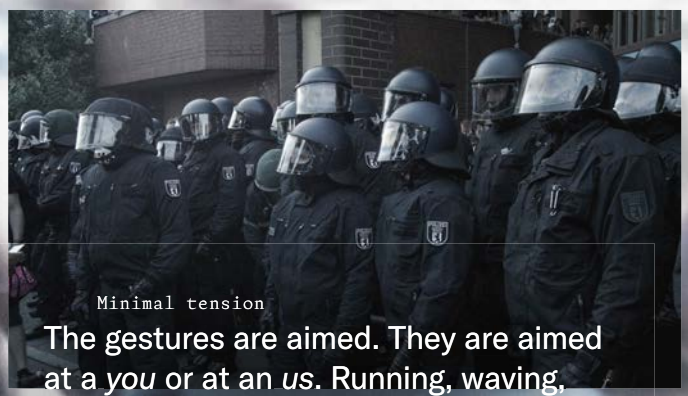
Walk towards
the audience,
directly in
front of the
projector that
projects onto
the back wall

gestures of defense, and
of self-preservation.

Walk backward
until the pillar
appears in field
of vision

What is it that makes these gestures political?

Is there anything distinguishing them, qualifying them to be perceived as political?



Minimal tension

The gestures are aimed. They are aimed at a *you* or at an *us*. Running, waving, threatening underscore the *you*.

Turn to the right wall

Ignoring, standing together, holding and blocking emphasize the *us*.

Walk quickly in
a half-circle
via the front to
the projection
screen on the
left
turn around
counterclockwise

Or the gestures are directed towards the space.
There is a back and forth in the space. Invading, occupying, clearing; denying others access, restricting their movements, directing them, and placing them creates structure in the space.

Walk quickly
to the center
in front of the
rear projection
screen

Blockades, barricades, and fire shut off the space.

Gestures of protest are not necessarily gestures.
Throwing stones, firing water cannons are actions rather than gestures.
And therefore political actions?
In gestures of protest there is a strong element of action and an element of signification.

Sit up

A dimension of action and a symbolic dimension.

Gestures of political protest are actions when they result in effects on the surrounding world. In this way, gestures of dissent modulate who lingers, who moves, as well as where and how. Attacks and self-defense are re/actions. Similarly, gestures of protest highlight these dimensions of action rather than having any real effect. Thus, they are more closely aligned to signification than action, more symbolic than operative.

As significations, established gestures of protest emphasize which group an individual relates to. In executing these gestures, they enroll in the group, reinforcing their position and their demands. At the same time, gestures acquire meaning insofar as they stand for political stances or even demands.

The symbolic dimension of gestures is enhanced when they appear in the media. Through their circulation in the media they are contextualized, interpreted and represented

Get up and walk
to the edge of
the performance
area

Female voice: I don’t know if I’d do that. I would not, I think. I wouldn’t even go in. If the shop were open now and I was only passing by in this scenario without knowing what was going on or what it was supposed to mean politically—I wouldn’t have gone in and stolen anything, because stealing, well, that’s a conscious act in a way, which then would also have to have political significance for me to do it. If it did, maybe it would be ok, it depends on the context, but...

Walk quickly to
a position at
the center back

What does “political” mean in political gestures? Politics signifies a particular system of decision making to organize the community and coexistence.

Continually
intensify from
here

“The political” asks how such a system is constituted. Who can become a political actor, and how? How do rules of negotiation become binding? How do which objects become political objects?

"As a political-theoretical concept the police is that which is pre-given in the circulatory organization of the polis as what predetermines pathways, establishes routes for circulation, and fits both into one single mode of being. In that sense it does not hail. Instead, it choreographs. And by doing so the police guarantees that as long as everyone moves and circulates in accord with a general conformity of being-in-circulation, this movement will produce nothing other than a mere spectacle of its own consensual mobility. [...] Choreo-policed movement can thus be defined as any movement incapable of breaking the endless reproduction of an imposed circulation of consensual subjectivity, where to be is to fit a prechoreographed pattern of circulation, corporeality, and belonging. [...]

The adjectival 'political' defined as the movement of freedom is a difficult, ever-evolving commitment. It is less predicated on a subject than on a movement (*bewegung*), defined by intersubjective action, that, moreover, must be learned, rehearsed, nurtured, and above all experimented with, practiced, and experienced. [...]

In other words, the police is a function of power which is the very opposite of the political. [...]"[1]

"'the political' in its difference vis-à-vis 'the social' and 'politics' serves as an indicator of precisely the impossibility or absence of an ultimate foundation of society. As an indicator (but only when differentiated from politics), 'the political' can assume the phenomenal or conceptual form of 'event,' 'contingency,' 'antagonism,' 'freedom,' or 'undecidability.' In some theories the political also indicates the moment of partial closure and founding: the moment of instituting society."[2]

Marchart identifies the French Revolution as a historical moment in which the contingency of social systems became disastrously clear. Contingency is not to be equated with coincidence, however, but means that grounds for a situation or the emergence of a particular social order are not necessary; there is no ultimate (transcendental) foundation.

"As far as no social order can be completely arbitrary, it will always bring forth objects of partial totality: effects of society, i.e. fragments of a whole that cannot exist, but without which even the most fleeting stabilization of the social would be impossible."[3]

According to this assessment, Marchart conceives the political as an antagonistic structure that is present-absent, differential, and relational.

"In the final analysis, conflict and contingency are [...] definitions of reflecting the political. And insofar antagonism is one name for the twofold definition of contingency and conflict, antagonism is the name of the political—possibly the only truly political name of the political."[4]

"The work of the political, i.e. the present-absent authority of antagonism, reveals itself in this high-frequency oscillation of the circumstances which so far were thought to be stable."[5]

1 A. Lepecki, *Choreo-police*, p. 19, 14, and 18

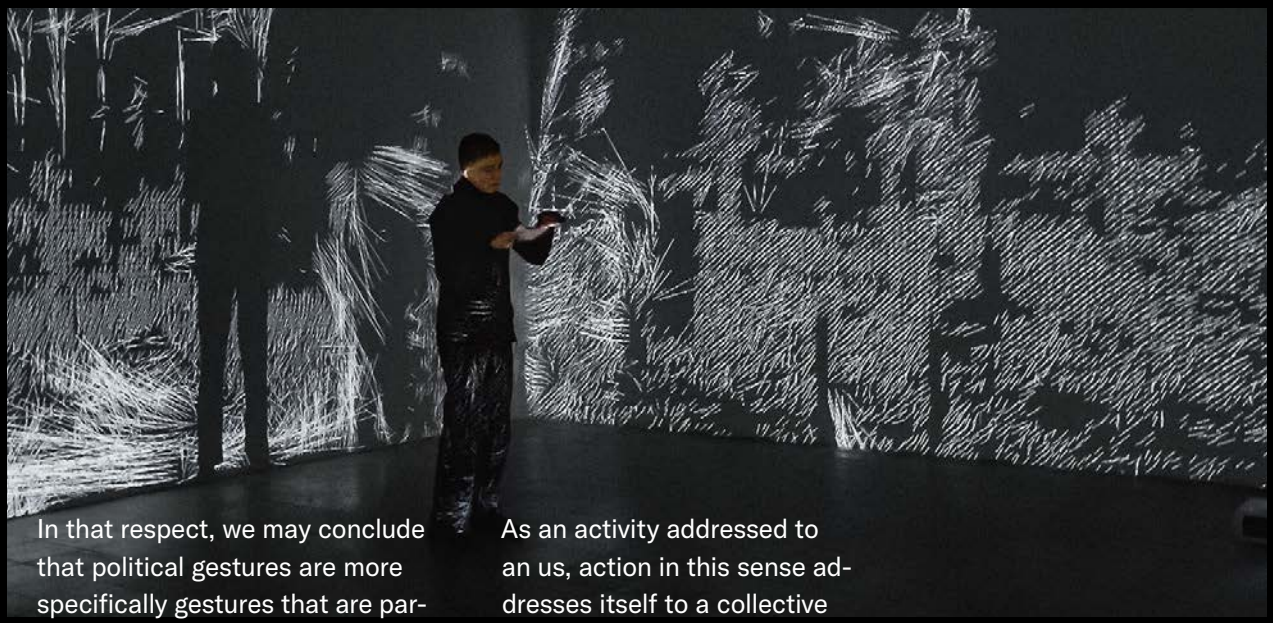
2 Marchart, *Post-Foundational Political Thought*, p. 154

3 Ibid., p. 37

4 Ibid., pp. 431–2

5 Ibid., p. 436

The political is linked to conflict, it is about interests, power, freedom of speech.
It is about rearranging and dissolving the existing order.



In that respect, we may conclude that political gestures are more specifically gestures that are particularly linked to a shifting political-social order and are signs of such a situation. However, what still remains underexposed is how the moment of action of political gestures can be determined more precisely. This questions what political action is. According to Hannah Arendt, this action is mainly oriented towards a collectiveness, towards the social environment.

"[...] the process of acting and speaking can leave behind no such results and end products. But for all its intangibility, this in-between is no less real than the world of things we visibly have in common. We call this reality the 'web' of human relationships [...]."[1]

"Since action acts upon beings who are capable of their own actions, reaction, apart from being a response, is always a new action that strikes out on its own and affects others. [...] Action, moreover, no matter what its specific content, always establishes relationships and therefore has an inherent tendency to force open all limitations and cut across all boundaries."[2]

As an activity addressed to an us, action in this sense addresses itself to a collective and to a public.

"Thus action not only has the most intimate relationship to the public part of the world common to us all, but is the one activity which constitutes it."[3]

Action, however, is not automatically bound to this purpose, but realizes itself as execution of its action.

Arendt refers in this context to a degradation of action in modern society in "occupations which rest essentially on performance," and notes that, "It was precisely these occupations—healing, flute-playing, play-acting—which furnished antique thinking with examples for the highest and greatest activities of man."[4]

In "Dancing Politics. Political Reflections on Choreography, Dance and Protest," Oliver Marchart uses Hannah Arendt's concept of action and emphasizes that she also sees the element of joy or pleasure in political action.

1 Arendt, *The Human Condition*, p. 183

2 Ibid., p. 190

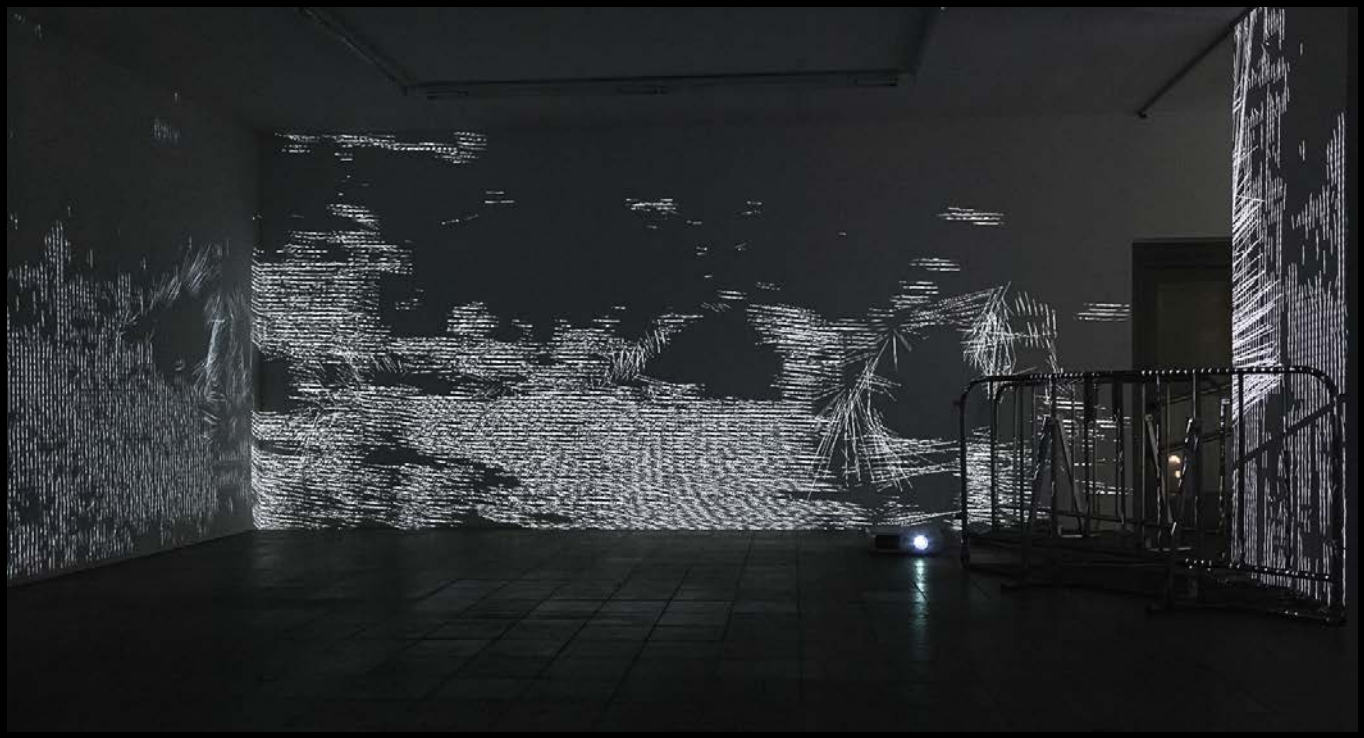
3 Ibid., p. 198

4 Ibid., p. 207

More intense,
hold climax

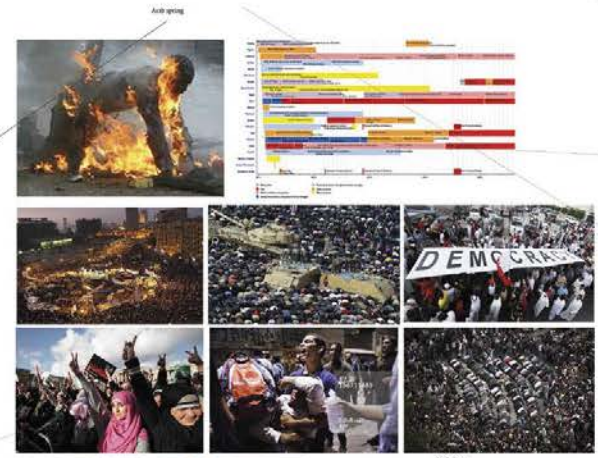
Gestures of protest become political due to a twofold moment of change. They fluctuate between action and sign. Dissolving and shifting, they connect with the oscillation of an existing order.

BLACK Walk to
the corner

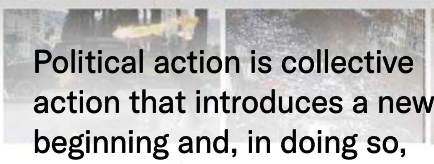


Political action requires the body.

It interrupts circulations; in particular the circulation of traffic and the marketplace.



It is public and it may be a pleasure.
Political action includes a tactical element.



Political action is collective action that introduces a new beginning and, in doing so, actualizes freedom. What is at stake is thus a collective practice that makes a fresh start, actualizes freedom, and, as a gesture, enters into media circulation.

Historical opposition between strike and riot
Riot is associated with illegitimate violence
Strike occurs within a legal framework

The Riot (market)
Is a collective action

A which concerns the price of goods on the market and their availability;

B in which actors don't necessarily have a relationship apart from their dispossession;

C which takes place in the context of consumption or circulation and its interruption.

1794–1973
from 1973

Mercantilism
Industrialization
Financialization

Circulation
Production
Primary circulation

Giovanni Arrighi

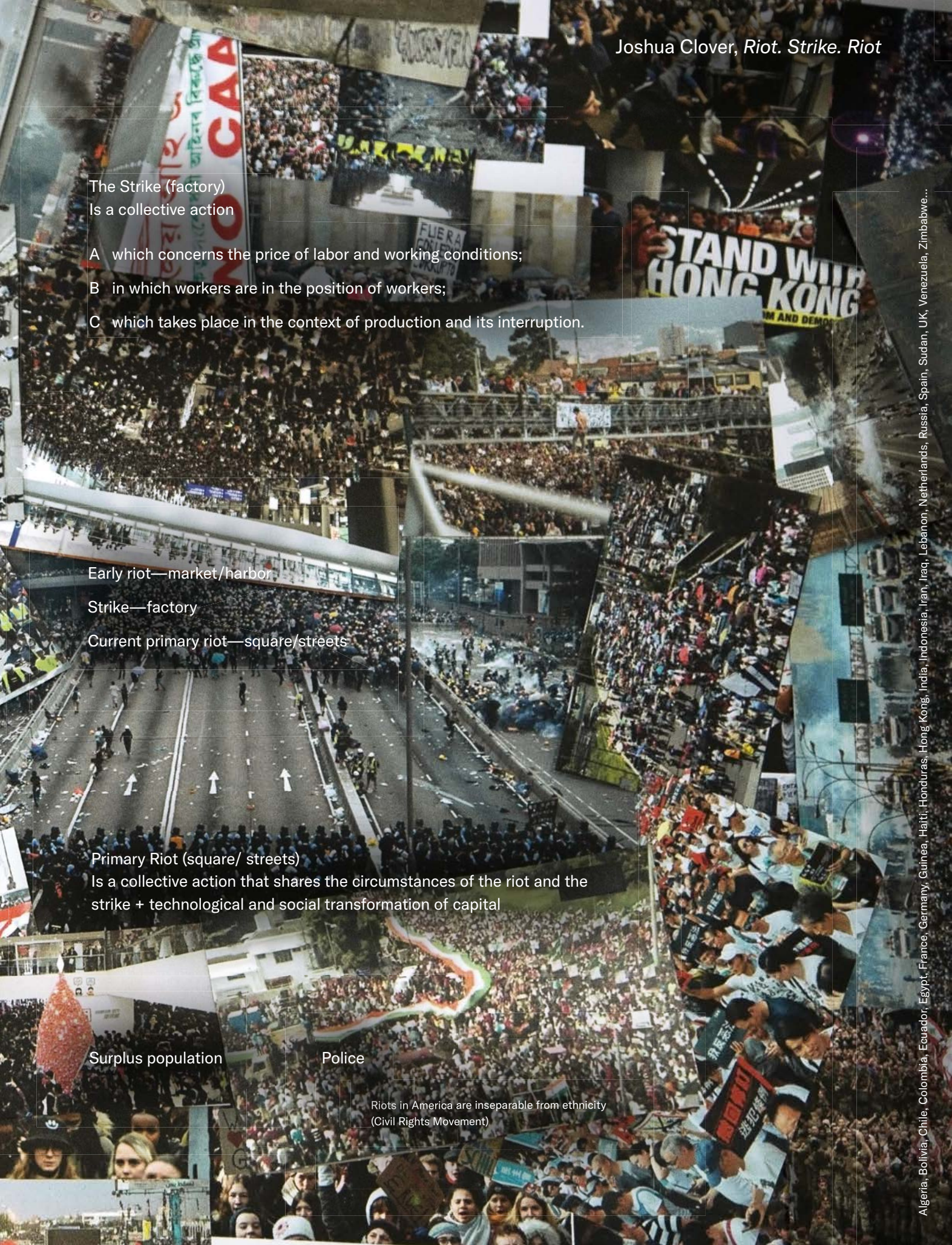
Spatial and Temporal Strategies of Capital

David Harvey

What is the political significance of the riot?
It is the rejection of a forced productivity, an act of dissent

John Rawls
Jeffrey Edward Green

France's history of protest is closely connected to the idea of the revolutionary people (French Revolution)



The Strike (factory)
Is a collective action

A which concerns the price of labor and working conditions;

B in which workers are in the position of workers;

C which takes place in the context of production and its interruption.

Early riot—market/harbor

Strike—factory

Current primary riot—square/streets

Primary Riot (square/ streets)
Is a collective action that shares the circumstances of the riot and the strike + technological and social transformation of capital

Surplus population

Police

Riots in America are inseparable from ethnicity
(Civil Rights Movement)

Algeria, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Egypt, France, Germany, Guinea, Haiti, Honduras, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Lebanon, Netherlands, Russia, Spain, Sudan, UK, Venezuela, Zimbabwe...

But there is no new beginning here; there is neither spontaneity nor unpredictability. It is obvious who acts in what way. There are fixed actors with quasi-choreographic patterns of movement and action. They produce familiar images that circulate in a predictable way.

Male voice: After the police shut down the "Welcome to Hell" demonstration, the protest took on a more chaotic and violent form, both more spontaneous but also increasingly hardened around two sides—the police and everyone else. All the people present were forced into the political spectacle constructed by the insurgency, because everyone had to adopt tactics to maneuver within the intensifying dangers and the deepening rift between protesters and police. However, at one point, in front of a storefront that had been looted, a bonfire was lit. It became a place of temporary respite for people on the move, who could warm themselves there and share food and drink with others. All around, the intensity of noise and violence was fierce, but at the center of it all, next to the fire, there was a strange peacefulness, in which those who collectively came together in that space became insurgents without an insurgency.

I felt that way. The situation supported a community of people that would have no basis in everyday life. It created a contrast with everyday normalcy, just as the calm contrasted with street fighting.

What is at stake is not an idealization of the people or the body in its revolutionary power, but rather finding a form of existence that lives and embodies this state and keeps it alive in everyday life.

The development of an ability as a result of a changed desire?

Does the assembly reflect the idea of the assembly (society) to bring to the world?

We need to understand a right that emerges from social relations that it bespeaks and enacts.

Claiming the street—stayed on the street—statecraft.

A police officer stands in a police cordon at the side of a street; the cordon is not closed, the officers don't link arms. He turns, skips to and fro, looks at the ground, looks up crosses his arms, scratches, blinks. He seems insecure.

A man in a white shirt pushes his bike in circles.
Water cannons and police cordons to one side, hooded stone-throwers and burning barricades to the other.
No stone, no water hits him, no officer and no protester steps into this zone.

Then why reflect political gesture?
What is its potential?
Gestures seem to be both more and less than actions at the same time.
They may disrupt intentions.
They occur, they intrude, they undermine us.
They may prevent actors from fulfilling their actions convincingly, they interfere with the gestural actualization of their role.
Movement between the actors can also confuse the formation of sides that briefly open up obligatory programs of action.
As a media gesture, it can be a sign of an opening, point to a new beginning that is realized in collective practices.

If the political is always conflictual, then such practices must endure and live with dissent collectively.

My reason for reflecting upon political gesture is a wish:

that the gesture, in its duality, constituting and challenging me with its unavailability and instability, can build bridges and create relationships: dissent in solidarity.

Lights out, exit

Pain, Befallen-ness, Conflict, Mediocrity. Dark Entanglements for Artistic Research and Critique in Digital Cultures

Martina Leeker

Digital cultures, which frame the inescapable conditions of today's technological existence, have, technologically and discursively, a basis in entanglements. In other words, to speak about digital cultures means referring to an overwhelming encounter with technologies, discourses, concepts, practices, and experiences of techno-human entanglement, and vice versa. The double bind of this all-embracing "entanglementalization" is that it applies symptoms of a technological existence as the basis for discourses on an allegedly better, namely entangled, human existence, and consciousness of ecological and geological care. This can be seen in Karen Barad's theory of entanglement, which is part of the "new materialism" approach in cultural studies. The theory is about a relationistic configuration of humans, other organisms, and systems through "intra-action," which becomes the paradigmatic point of reference here.

In this context, *The Entanglement between Gesture, Media and Politics (EGMP)* project is taken as a case study to question the highly problematic alignment of technological and discursive-optimistic entanglements by focusing on their dark sides. The case study builds a basis for skeptical revision both of cultural theories constituted in entanglement—including uncovering their blind spots—and of research using artistic means and methods. While *EGMP* operated explicitly outside the context of artistic research, in this text, artistic research is taken as part of the scientific and historical-epistemological background of the project for heuristic and technique-historical (*wissensgeschichtlichen*) reasons. Artistic research also leads back to digital cultures. It can be seen as a reaction to upcoming digital non-knowledge and indeterminacy as well as to digital entanglementalization. At the end of this chapter, the dark sides of entanglement are bundled into a concept and practice of dark entanglement constituting attitudes, methods, practices, and theories of critique in digital cultures.

1 Barad's Soft Version of Entanglement for Digital Connectivity

It is only in digital cultures,[1] which aim at a total, instantaneous, and allegedly unmediated connectivity of human agents with data-hungry infrastructures, that "entanglement" has been proclaimed the new and positively evaluated model of people's relationship to the world.[2] Within the entanglement model, everything is interconnected. Karen Barad's theories and concepts of entanglement are paradigmatic and a point of reference for this field of research.[3] For Barad, entanglement means that everything is interconnected and supposedly fixed. Stable entities like humans, animals, plants, and things only become identifiable in their entangling encounter. Barad names this co-constitution and co-existence "intra-action"[4] and describes the human and the non-human as ensembles of equal agency, thus making the traditional model of human supremacy over supposedly dead matter obsolete.

1 The term "digital cultures" makes it clear that there is no longer any separation between analog and digital worlds. The digital pervades all areas of life and behavior, transforming traditional notions of sociality (social media), work (techno-human co-operations), relationships (Tinder), etc. See: Timon Beyes, Jörg Metelmann, and Claus Pias, eds., *Nach der Revolution: ein Brevier digitaler Kulturen*, (Hamburg: Edition Speersort, 2017).

2 Entanglement has appeared prominently in cultural studies theories such as new materialism and object-orientated ontology (OOO), as well as in feminist research and in some areas of media studies (like techno-ecology), since the early 2000s.

3 See: Karen Barad, "Posthumanist Performativity: Toward an Understanding of How Matter Comes to Matter," *Signs. Journal of Women in Culture and Society*. 28, No. 3 (March 2003): 801–33. A deeper analysis of the differences and similarities of the theories mentioned (new materialism, feminist research, techno-ecology, object-orientated ontology) are beyond the scope of this text. For available research, see note 9.

4 Barad's explanation of "intra-action": "The neologism 'intra-action' *signifies the mutual constitution of entangled agencies*. That is, in contrast to the usual 'interaction,' which assumes that there are separate individual agencies that precede their interaction, the notion of intra-action recognizes that distinct agencies do not precede, but rather emerge through, their intra-action. It is important to note that the 'distinct' agencies are only distinct in a relational, not an absolute, sense, that is, *agencies are only distinct in relation to their mutual entanglement; they don't exist as individual elements.*" (Italics in original.) Karen Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), 33.

In Barad's view, matter is alive and it is granted its own power of action and self-will, which infiltrates human actors in their self-understanding as intentional planners and actors.[5] The positive evaluation finally arises from the idea that entanglements generate a deep humility that makes unrestrained destruction of the Earth, insatiable capitalist desire for uninhibited commodification, and normalized social injustice appear to be inappropriate modes of behavior and forms of organization. It is a seductive and promising model of thinking, as it seems to offer solutions to current urgent problems, including the climate crisis, technological automatization, new right movements, and migration.

However, the discourse of this *soft and immediate entanglement*—as the approach in the previously-mentioned posthumanist theories of entanglement in fields such as cultural studies is called in this text—carries some highly problematic theoretical assumptions and implications. Most notably, it is, firstly, erasing the analysis of the soft and immediate entanglement's involvement in the technological[6] conditions of digital cultures. Secondly, the idea of soft and immediate entanglement ignores conflicts, tensions, resistances, and exclusions[7] that can be carved out as the *dark* sides of entanglement. Pondering these problematic sides of entanglement in Karen Barad's theories

5 See Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway*, 2007.

6 The term "technology" refers here to the interplay of, among other things, technique, epistemology, discourses, habits, and practices. The term "technique," on the other hand, refers to technical constitution and procedures.

7 For a profound critical analysis of Barad's notion of entanglement in "agential realism," see Katharina Hoppe and Thomas Lemke, "Die Macht der Materie: Grundlagen und Grenzen des agentiellen Realismus von Karen Barad," *Soziale Welt* 66, no. 3, (2015): 261–80.

and concepts helps to unfold their politics, and also to recognize their pitfalls.[8] Addressing this question is important because soft entanglement emerges at the moment when data-hungry infrastructures, which rely existentially on human interactions, become a regime of total connectivity. In this context, the ontology of entanglement can be seen as part of a posthuman narration,[9] which could be necessary in digital cultures, as argued in this chapter. Suddenly, Barad's entanglement becomes entangled by digitality.[10]

1.1 Barad's Pitfalls in the Shadow of Digitality

Entangling Performativity Copies Technology

In her theory, Karen Barad emphasizes the performativity of entanglements. She assumes, as mentioned, that matter and human agents only become something definite in the intra-actions of entangling. In the context of technological conditions of digital cultures, an emphasis on the performative is problematic because it repeats, without reflection, their performativity. This can be seen in techno-human assistance systems like surgery and general health care because both partners are insofar defined and developed only in their co-operation. A machine is programmed and further developed by human interactions, and humans adapt to new operative behavior of machines. But in Barad's theory, these techno-human entanglements, which are for humans problematic, because they are subordinating, are hidden and translated into exciting and material intra-actions.

Matter as ontology

Barad remains ambivalent in assessing the status of matter.[11] She implies that it is, on the one hand, constituted from intra-action, but at the same time, says that it is pre-given and equipped with its own independent dynamics. Undermining the radical relationism (that Barad herself demanded) leads to the fact that entanglement has become a new ontology claiming to have finally achieved proper understanding of humans and the world.

8 For a discussion of the pitfalls, see Hoppe and Lemke, "Die Macht der Materie," 2015, 1–21.

9 For different concepts and approaches within the field of posthumanism, see Matthew Gladden, "A Typology of Posthumanism: A Framework for Differentiating Analytic, Synthetic, Theoretical, and Practical Posthumanisms" in *Sapient Circuits and Digitalized Flesh: The Organization as Locus of Technological Posthumanization, 2nd ed.* (Indianapolis: Defragmenter Media, 2018), 31–91. For an initial critical reflection on the theories of entanglement mentioned (new materialism, feminist research, techno-ecology, object orientated ontology) as constituents of a posthuman perspective, see the brilliant Gottfried Schnödl and Christian Voller, "Von der Herrschaft der Technik zum Parlament der Dinge. Ein Deutungsversuch," *Internationales Jahrbuch für Medienphilosophie,* 2 no. 1 (2016): 159–82.

10 This drive to digitality may explain why Barad herself has never made any connection between her research and media studies or digital cultures. Their intimate, epistemological, and political alliance is supposed to be kept secret. See Kristina Pia Hofer, "Repräsentation als agentieller Schnitt? Provokationen und Potentiale im Verhältnis von New Materialism und (feministischer) Filmwissenschaft," *Open Gender Journal,* (September 2017): doi.org/10.17169/ogj.2017.12.

11 See also Hoppe and Lemke, "Die Macht der Materie," 2015, 11.

Precisely because of the proximity of Barad's entanglement to the technological conditions of digital cultures, this ontologization is highly problematic because it establishes the hyper-connectivity of digital cultures as a metaphysical and given mode of existence.

12 See also Hoppe and Lemke, "Die Macht der Materie," 2015, 14.

A-Historicity of Entangled Elements. Supporting Presentism

Strikingly, a historical dimension is missing from theories of entanglement. The constant becoming lacks a "having-become" (*Gewordenheit*). However, when different elements meet in entanglement, it does not happen in a neutral state, as though innocent and newborn. Instead, historically pre-configured elements come together. This will be unfolded later in this text as a condition of resistance and protection against being devoured by entanglement.

Barad's a-historical attitude becomes understandable when assuming and analyzing its relation to digital cultures; copying their concept of time. Namely, digital cultures exist in a gigantic and permanent presentism. This can be seen in, for example, the co-operation of technical and human agents in purchase recommendations from retailers like Amazon. Recommendations are based on past activities and apparently refer to the future. But on closer inspection, they amalgamate both the past and future in a "now" of a data constellation that changes every instant because the tracked person, or their friends, have generated more data in the meantime. The clash of time and phases is essential because when everything is in the process of becoming, the past and future are lost and one can neither learn from old mistakes nor make changes in the present for a better future. That means the end of the acknowledgement of conflicts and orientations for politics and heralds the beginning of a concept of pure operating time. In this eternal now, entangling, co-operating, and connecting are the successors of political activities, generating a kind of change within permanent development. Barad's a-historical concept of soft and immediate entanglements prepare, support, and enlarge the timelessness.

Devaluing Conflictuality and the Loss of the Political

However, Barad's vision of entanglement is seen positively in academic circles, as it promises the advancement of humans into beings who will fight for a better world. One problem is her notion of openness, which she assumes to be political per se. But, on the contrary, openness and indeterminacy generate conflicts within social intra-actions, which have to be negotiated in political debates, filling the openness with structures, desires, modes of social order and other contents.[12]

This a-political politics fits perfectly with the algorithmic governance of permanent connection in digital cultures, as the narratives of posthuman entanglement are taken over by, for example, techno-ecological

theories. Digital hyper-connectivity is taken with it as political, undercutting any option of disconnecting.

Conclusion. Barad's Entanglement for a Soft Techno-Human Existence

The question is, what is the purpose of Barad's soft version of entanglement, disregarding its dark sides, with regard to the technological conditions of digital cultures.

The assumption is that Barad's concepts of entanglement, and others that are similar, have two fundamental functions. Firstly, they serve to conceal the fragility and imperfections of computerized systems, which can be seen in translations between different layers of computation-like machine language and graphical representation. Generating immediacy and happy techno-human co-operations enchants and masks the insecure technical conditions of their operativity. Secondly, Barad's theory of entanglement creates a framework for rethinking human powers of action and decision, which nowadays have been taken over by machines and algorithms. The history of posthumanization invoked by soft and immediate entanglement suggests, in this situation, relational models for being-with-the-world in which human beings still have a function in entangling, even if they lose their autonomy and intentionality.

The imperative for techno-human connectivity and co-operativity today results in human agents becoming prostheses of technical infrastructures. The infrastructures need human data to secure their existence and optimize themselves—a circumstance that is concealed by posthuman discourses.

2 *EGMP*. A Case Study on the Dark Sides of Entanglement

The *Entanglement between Gesture, Media, and Politics*[13] (*EGMP*) project is used here to elaborate on the epistemological barriers and problematic theoretical voids in entanglement discourse and their effects. The project is suitable as a case study as it involved research entangling artists and humanities scholars,

13 For more on the project see "The Project," The Entanglement between Gesture, Media & Politics, accessed July 3, 2020, gesture-media-politics.de/project/?lang=en. The project is hosted by the Braunschweig University of Art; funded by Volkswagen Foundation within the framework of the "Arts and Science in Motion" program; supported by University of Applied Arts Vienna.

in which different cultures of knowledge and research as well as differing self-understandings, institutional regimes of valorization, and codes of behavior all met. Since the project focused within its entanglements on differences and confrontations, the potentials of the dark sides of entanglement can be worked out clearly. These include the experiences of pain or befallen-ness (*Widerfahrnis*)[14] triggered by encounters, conflicts, the experience of inclusions and exclusions, and protracted, arduous, and exhausting processes of negotiation. Against this background, a model of "dark entanglement" is developed in which there is an awareness of its relation to technological conditions and an attempt to overcome the conceptual and theoretical pitfalls of the hyped model of soft and immediate entanglement.

2.1 *EGMP*

The *EGMP* project[15] concerned "investigating the interdependencies that exist between bodily movements or gestures, and ubiquitous, globally networked technologies."[16] It ran from January 2017 to June 2019 and was funded by the Volkswagen Foundation as part of the "Arts and Science in Motion" program.[17] By bringing art, science, and diverse scientific disciplines together, *EGMP* entangled different cultures and methods of research, the production of knowledge, and the organization of work processes. Its most intriguing and guiding aspects are the difficulties encountered in the collaboration, and the patience, endurance, and effort team members showed in dealing with them. The "project on gesture" was thus predestined to explore the dark sides of entanglement, and to be followed with a theory of dark entanglement in digital cultures.

The following preliminary insights and ideas on these topics are based on the author's sporadic encounters with *EGMP*. The first observation was during a workshop in November 2017, planned as the presentation of initial working-results of all projects within the funding program, *EGMP* amongst them, and was run by the Volkswagen Foundation. The second observation—of a rehearsal for the performative

14 See Wilhelm Kamlah, *Philosophische Anthropologie. Sprachkritische Grundlegung und Ethik* (Mannheim-Wien-Zürich: Bibliographisches Institut, 1972), 34–40.
15 See "The Project," The Entanglement between Gesture, Media & Politics, accessed July 3, 2020, gesture-media-politics.de/project/?lang=en.
16 Ibid.
17 See "Arts and Science in Motion—Wissenschaft und Kunst in Bewegung (completed)," Funding, Volkswagen Foundation, accessed July 3, 2020, www.volkswagenstiftung.de/en/funding/arts-and-science-in-motion--wissenschaft-und-kunst-in-bewegung.

p. 264

installation *G20*[18] as part of the "project on gesture"—is the most meaningful for modes of dark entanglements.

The Funding Program: Questioning Regimes of Science

The funding program "Arts and Science in Motion," which was the external framework of *EGMP*, is of special interest for research on a theory of dark entanglement as it explicitly "wishes to promote an exchange among equals involving experts from the Berlin University of the Arts, scholars, scientists as well as artists of all disciplines."[19] The funding program was unique—one of the first initiatives in Germany[20] supporting research that fits into the field of research with art/art and research, which itself is denied scientific status and therefore receives no funding from corresponding institutions in the humanities. The most crucial point in this situation and for the concerns of this text is that the Volkswagen Foundation funded ostensibly non-scientific research, and, above all, inscribed entanglement and encounter programmatically within a traditional scientific regime, kicking off a precarious, open-ended transdisciplinary research.

The dimensions and consequences of this concept of "Arts and Science in Motion" became obvious during the workshop in November 2017. The presentation of initial outputs as work-in-process turned into an occasion

18 See "The Project," The Entanglement between Gesture, Media & Politics, accessed July 3, 2020, gesture-media-politics.de/project/?lang=en.

19 See "Arts and Science in Motion—Wissenschaft und Kunst in Bewegung (completed)," Funding, Volkswagen Foundation, accessed July 3, 2020, www.volkswagenstiftung.de/en/funding/arts-and-science-in-motion---wissenschaft-und-kunst-in-bewegung.

20 Other countries provide funding programs for research with art, e.g. Austria (PEEK) and Switzerland (SNF). For funding and institutions for research with art, see Henk Borgdorff, "Wo stehen wir in der künstlerischen Forschung?" in *Kunst und Forschung/Art and research: Können Künstler Forscher sein?/Can artists be researchers?* Edition Angewandte, Buchreihe der Universität für angewandte Kunst Wien / University of Applied Arts Vienna Book Series, ed. Janet Ritterman, Gerald Bast, Jürgen Mittelstraß, vol 0, (Vienna: Springer, 2011), 29–79.

for judgment and evaluation over which the consultants and experts presided as seemingly uninvolved judges; the artists opposed and proposed to continue the event as one of a common and diffractive[21] looking and learning. Surprisingly, the two representatives of the Volkswagen Foundation embraced this mode, which was completely in contrast to the usual framework for the evaluation of third-party funded projects. They recognized, however, that the exchange and entanglement they themselves demanded also required other values of evaluation, and other forms of encounter and communication.

21 Karen Barad differs between "diffraction" and reflection. Reflection is a representational mode for fixed entities while diffraction stands for interferences and refraction. See Barad, "Posthumanist Performativity," 2003, 801–31, 803.

The effects of this reinterpretation are enormous. The research component was fulfilled with an emergence of unforeseeable outcomes, coming up as transient phases, instead of the evolution of fixed and stable results, organized in delimitable steps within a predefined research agenda, as in traditional research. With this shift, the generally accepted regime of scientificity as a system of common reliability based on an institutionally legitimized power of definition was thrown into question and thwarted by an open, intermingled, and collaborative re-combination of knowledge and research. Research was not an end in itself, coming up with results, but a process of a production of diverse, fragmented, and highly temporary knowledge.

2.2 *EGMP*'s Dark Sides

Staging Differences, Fighting for Demarcations

In this intriguing framework, *EGMP* unfolded a fundament for dark entanglements during the workshop, describing how encounters between different cultures, methods, and meanings of research do not necessarily lead to immediate, peaceful, and hyper-connective entanglements, as supposed in the theories of soft and immediate entanglement described above. On the contrary, during the encounter the differences were not subjugated to one idea but stayed in dissent, retaining even unmanageable and insurmountable positions. The effect of this mode of entanglement is that it revealed the constructedness and the power of exclusion and inclusion of scientific disciplines as well as art.

In the course of encounters for the joint work, however, fixed positions were also consistently torpedoed, generating an entanglement that made the power plays of each discipline negotiable. In the *EGMP* project, and with the vision of entangling in immediacy, softness, and consensus, entanglement became readable as a pushing force, facing defiance and bellicosity, and creating and playing around with demarcations, instead of stating boundary-less intra-active configurations.

Being Opened by Pain and Befallen-ness

The description of working processes during the workshops showed that each one had been painful for all participants a very productive way, because they required protracted debates and negotiations in order to find agreed approaches to potential common projects. At the same time, this painfulness had the advantage of exposing pre-conditions as well as fixed attitudes, methods, insights, and discursive biases and to bring them mutually, and massively, into question. Prescriptions of what science and art are, as well as prejudices about their practices, habits, cultures, and methods became thereby graspable and changeable. More profoundly, the entanglements of the humanities and art were about destabilizing scientificity, and artificity, instead of establishing new regimes. In this sense the concrete work in the *EGMP* project affirms the attack of the regime of scientificity via the framework of its funding, and pushed destabilization to become a method of research.

These painful encounters thereby revealed what is of high relevance. Entanglements are not at all based on undetermined and ahistorical elements, as suggested by the theories of soft and immediate entanglement, but engage with preset and even biased elements. This historicity of entanglement is, as will be seen in this text, its vital force, as it stands for friction and resistance, which is combined with flexible fraternizations.

This historicity is constitutively combined with the experience of being exposed to befallen-ness (*Widerfahrnis*),[22] which unsettles biased presets. This situation was initiated in *EGMP* by the fact that collaboration and communication were no longer predictable, since traditional research contexts and the rules associated with them had been dissolved, or at least weakened. Entering a kind of empty space and being confronted with openness and fragility, anything could just happen to the participants without them willing or controlling it, possibly enabling the invention of something that would have been unthinkable beforehand. Within this experience it becomes clear that passive parts of agency are constitutive for it, and not just an exception. It is in particular this in-betweenness of action and befallen-ness that enables the generation of fragile and temporary compromises in entanglement.

Entanglements are thus neither only passive, as theories of soft and immediate entanglement suggest in their concept of quasi-automatic performativity, nor are they only active, as modern ideas of science or an intentional and autonomous subject would claim. In fact, it is the encounter of given historically, technologically, and culturally generated elements and having been befallen with, for example, unwillingly experienced transgressions, that constitutes entanglement.

22 Wilhelm Kamlah, *Philosophische Anthropologie*, 1972, 34–40.

23 Michel Foucault, *La pensée du dehors* (Fontfroide le Haut: Editions Fata Morgana, 2018).
24 Hoppe and Lemke, "Die Macht der Materie," 2015, 11.

Losing Roles—Fragile Subjects—Solidarity

Furthermore, the entanglements in *EGMP* attacked the framework of rules and roles constituting subjectivity and subjectivation in the humanities and in art through conflictual and befalling entanglements. Self-promotion is important in both fields—being "somebody" in the art market or art criticism, or being a scholar with a clear, original, identifiable approach in academia. These "somebodies" were eroded and softened in entangling the humanities and art in the "project on gesture," as a lack of understanding and acceptance of the other evolved into unlearning prescripts and establishing and transgressing redefinitions. If the subject turns fragile, politics of science, art, and research become visible and changeable, and concepts of other forms of organizing research could appear, such as, for example, collectivity and solidarity.

Thought from the Outside

A fundamental intrigue occurred in *EGMP* work and research processes that can be described with the help of Foucault's concept of "thought from the outside."[23] His model stands for existing at the limits of speech and the sayable and reflecting on it. Humans are indeed in language, but they do not speak it, they are spoken by it and are thus subjected to language as a system of its own, as it does not represent an outside, but itself and its possibilities. Against this background, language is not spoken by a subject that appropriates the world and relates to it. "Thought from the outside" means, on the contrary, to expose oneself to the unmediatable, to irredeemability and unavailability as well as to the contingency of language, accepting them as a condition of human existence. Emptiness and the nothing floated tellingly above the *EGMP* project.

The effect of this thinking is that in an encounter with others it is no longer possible to rely on mimetic strategies of entangling such as becoming similar and appropriation, but to affirm a radical unrecognizability and non-identity. It is a model that is in contrast to theories of immediate and soft entanglement, which try to devalue language[24] as a medium of separation, subjugating matter under dichotomic orders and politics. Whereas immediate entanglement believes in connectivity, the "thought from outside" stands for an irreversible mediality, which cannot be entangled, but remains at an always-gaping distance.

In this context, *EGMP* resembles a lab for "thought from the outside" because it comes close to a kind of thinking where other persons and research-cultures remain, in the end, unavailable, so that one is always like a foreigner in a world that cannot be mediated. With these dark sides, entanglement becomes a transgression to a radical mediality that lies beyond human interventions and is not interested in them. Soft and immediate entanglements, on the contrary, create boundaries and shape everything, giving humans a feeling of importance and participation and, thereby, control.

Doing Knowledge

Finally, the entanglement of the humanities and art in the *G20* performance revealed forms of knowledge-production from the dark sides of entanglement, especially through a praising of conflicts (as aesthetic method), and of befallen-ness by performing. The performance, staged in October 2018 in Leipzig, consisted of a montage of a video installation by Timo Herbst, a soundtrack by Dina Boswank, and a lecture-performance by Irina Kaldrack.[25] Based on demonstrations at the G20 Summit in July 2017 in Hamburg, it dealt with the significance of gestures in political conflicts. The focus was on possibilities of resistance in an era of so-called post-democracy, a time of technical and medial circulation and preemption.

p. 264

The crucial point is that specific ideas about resistance arising from examples in the G20 performance only developed as a result of working with the material, so befallen-ness as a condition of knowledge-production was activated. Or, to pick up two concepts by German philosopher Mirjam Schaub, the results of research for *G20* were "moments of surprise" (*Überraschungsmoment*)[26] and were guided by a "logic of radical preference" (*Präferenzlogik*).[27] Surprise represents befallen-ness whereas the logic of preference marks an attitude and methods to go beyond common sense.

In *G20* this effect is seen in the proposals for resistance. "Peaceful dissent" is not the only strategy highlighted in the performance; violence and criminal energy are also suggested sources of resistance and sociality. Even looting emerges as a form of socio-political banding together for increased solidarity.

pp. 262–63

In fact, the relentless following of pure preferences, as well as the imperative of aesthetic intensification within humanities and art entanglements, allowed for risky thoughts[28] that originated from entanglement's dark sides. These qualities and capacities are set against the ontologisation of soft and immediate entanglement, which pulverizes the political just by reproducing its own theory of entanglement as the new politic. In other words, entanglement is not per se political or risky because it entangles. But it can become so if it hinders, resists, shocks, intrigues, or interrupts.

25 See "The Project," The Entanglement between Gesture, Media & Politics, accessed July 3, 2020, gesture-media-politics.de/project/?lang=en.

26 Mirjam Schaub, "Plädoyer für Kunst als verkannte Heuristik der Philosophie," *Ins Offene. Gegenwart, Ästhetik, Theorie*, ed. Elke Bippus, Jörg Huber, and Roberto Nigro. Das Magazin des Instituts für Theorie, no. 18/19 Zürich: Zürcher Hochschule der Künste, 2012: 65–73, 67. Own translation.

27 Schaub, "Plädoyer für Kunst," 2012. Schaub elaborates on this in another article, "What I like about art is the shortcuts and detours it takes, the meandering, the hesitation, the failure. And yet the resoluteness and element of surprise in the approach to philosophical (not artistic) problems may seem strange. […] The 'preference logic' of artistic invention is its real strength, an epistemic advantage over science and philosophy. The arts operate faster, more directly, less safely. I love the vulnerability and palpability." Dieter Mersch, Michaela Ott, and Mirjam Schaub, "Ein Gespräch über Virtualität und die schwarze Billiardkugel Kunst,"*Ins Offene. Gegenwart, Ästhetik, Theorie*, ed. Elke Bippus, Jörg Huber, and Roberto Nigro. Das Magazin des Instituts für Theorie, no. 18/19 Zürich: Zürcher Hochschule der Künste, 2012: 76. Own translation.

28 Examples of risky thoughts are those tabooed by common sense, or limiting discourses forcing, for example, a consensual being-in-diversity instead of its painfulness.

Dark Entanglement and Media Theory

Preparing a theory of dark entanglement out of these results has great relevance to media studies because it can be seen as a basis for the critical inspection of those approaches within the disciplines that rely on soft entanglements or posthuman narratives. In this context, a theory of dark entanglement can, firstly, serve as a reference for counter-models concerning the relationship between humans and the world or their mediation. Secondly, because of its specific bulkiness and resistibility, a theory of dark entanglement allows for hesitancy in the face of a theory of soft and immediate entanglement[29] and thus paves the way for its genealogical and discourse-analytical investigation.

3 Dark Entanglements of Art and Humanities, or: Re-thinking Artistic Research

Dark entanglements within the *EGMP* project also help to reflect and even redesign artistic research. In this text, artistic research is taken as the knowledge-historical context for the entanglement of art and humanities (*EGMP's* adoption of another focus and attitude nothwithstanding), as they share an interest in another knowledge, epistemology, and methodology of scientific work. Artistic research was launched in the 1990s in art academies as research by artists using methods and traditions of research from the humanities.[30] It shows a close relationship with soft and immediate entanglement and the problems that come with it. *EGMP*'s focus on entanglement is established on the one hand thematically, since many projects in the context of artistic research today are engaged in thinking about and testing an immediate relationship between humans and the world, starting from posthuman discourses. On the other hand, the relationship is, more radically, a systematic one, since entangling aesthetic methods and those from the humanities constitute artistic research. The aim is a new kind of knowledge, trying to overcome dichotomic systems and the allegedly existing focus on rationality in modern science by featuring topics of immediacy

29 For the soft and immediate entanglement approach, see James Burton and Erich Hörl, eds., *General Ecology: The New Ecological Paradigm* (London/New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017).

30 For a discussion of the relationship between artistic and scientific methods and cultures in artistic research, see Corina Caduff, "Artistic Research: Methods-Development of a Discourse-Current Risks," in *Poetry of the Real: Aufzeichnungen der Hochschule für Gestaltung und Kunst FHNW*, ed. Kirsten M. Langkilde (Basel: Christoph Merian Verlag, 2017), 311–323.

such as affects, the unconsciousness, sensuality, materiality, non-knowledge, uncertainty, and performativity.[31]

The first step for reflecting and redesigning artistic research is thus to frame it within its ignored functions in digital cultures. The *EGMP* project is used to propose a theory and practice of dark entanglement for re-thinking artistic research.

Unwillingly Supporting Digital Knowledge. Research Becomes Entanglement

Artistic research can be seen as a historical form of knowledge production emerging at a time of crisis in knowledge and science, as seen in digital cultures.[32] Intrigues are generated by, for example, big data, collecting data from allegedly unconscious and sensorial areas, establishing precarious and instable knowledge and understanding. In addition, investigations in big data research become open and tarnishing, because questions only emerge with the results of data processing, and are not given beforehand. Research and science become a looking-for-what-is-searched. Artistic research has similarities with this method and its epistemological consequences, as it opts for open and open-ended research—as well as for experimental procedures with unpredictable results—continually changing along with the flexible and transformative conditions in which it is undertaken.

So finally, artistic research is unknowingly responding to the epistemological challenges of digital cultures, and even unwillingly supporting its imperative of digital connectivity. Artistic research supports this digital desire, for example, by focusing on methods of research and knowledge that lie beyond cognitive understanding, counting on secrets, affects, and mysteries. The effect is that within a regime of secrets it is no longer possible to scrutinize the production of knowledge, and researchers become entangled in the maelstrom of data, results, and further options for following-up investigations. Artistic research nobilitates precisely this devouring form of knowledge production, and the epistemology of uncertainty, as it appoints it as the better and more complex vision of knowledge. Ultimately, artistic research gives human actors a function as well as a glimpse of control in digitally-controlled knowledge production by playfully experimenting and testing the organization of contingency and incomprehension. Against this background, a profound analysis of the proximity and similarity of artistic research's knowledge production with digitality is necessary, in order to inform and probably free it from its own unrecognized, problematic sides of entanglement, supporting digital cultures.

31 See, exemplarily, Dieter Mersch, "Art, Knowledge, and Reflexivity," *Art Nodes. Journal on Art Science and Technology* no. 20, (December 2017): 33–38.

32 A historical reconstruction of artistic research—which emerged at art academies in anglophone countries in the 1990s and reached the German-speaking world very soon after—in the context of digital cultures is still lacking and is beyond the scope of this chapter. For a specific history of artistic research, its development and methods, see Caduff, "*Artistic Research,*" 2017, 311–323. References to a contextualization of artistic research as an examination of changing knowledge cultures and orders of knowledge can be found, exemplarily, in Katrin Busch, "Wissen anders denken" in *Anderes Wissen*, ed. Kathrin Busch (München: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 2016), 10–33. For a direct reference to artistic research and digital technologies and their epistemology, see Gabriele Gramelsberger, "Epistemische Praktiken des Forschens im Zeitalter des Computers," in *Kunst des Forschens. Praxis eines ästhetischen Denkens*, ed. Elke Bippus (Zürich/Berlin: diaphanes, 2009), 91–108.

The Exclusive Sides of Artistic Research

Although the *EGMP* project did not inscribe itself in the field of artistic research, both share a focus on the interdisciplinary collaboration between artists and scholars. Thus, the characteristics of the project that I have elaborated on can be seen as a reflection of artistic research. On this basis, appropriate forms of critique in digital cultures can be developed.[33] This denomination is appropriate to the project's research procedures, as well as its intriguing drive and its potential. For the latter, it means that the incidental entanglement of the humanities and art led to a profound questioning and weakening scientificity, as well as digital conditionality, whereas artistic research normally generates just another kind of knowledge and science.[34]

Focusing on the dark sides of entanglement thus leads to a core problem of artistic research—wanting to be recognized as separate, but nevertheless as a science, especially in the humanities. Following this desire for recognition, which it has been fighting for since the 1990s, artistic research slipped into a pathway of subordinating itself under the rules and frameworks of scientific research, losing its own specificity and potentiality.[35] In doing so, it even reproduced the traditional power-play of scientificity, building its own powerful and exclusive scientific community of separate aesthetic and experimental knowledge. While claiming a diversity of knowledge and a reflection of knowledge production, artistic research under these conditions fixated on the quiet, on what "good" artistic research is, as well as on what science and art are. When viewed in this context, the *EGMP* project's reconfiguration of science and research, including artistic research itself, is groundbreaking.

Dark Entanglement Fights Scientificity

The dark sides of the entanglement of humanities and art, which undermine the efforts to put fixed frameworks in place, could help artistic research overcome this regime of scientificity, and redefine it as a permanent intervention in regimes. The attitude of research should then, in fact, be a sensibility for the cultural functionality of different formats of

33 The overt focus of the project, however, was the entanglement of gesture, media, and politics rather than interdisciplinary collaboration. See the project description: "Scientists and artists are working together over the course of two years, participating in three international workshops where they bring together various fields of research and diverse artistic media such as: Sound, performance art, and visual art, as well as media studies, dance science, history of technology, and social sciences. Besides fundamental research, working with exemplary gestures and movements will also take place as part of the workshops. To enable and support the interdisciplinary approach, a special framework was designed." "The Project," The Entanglement between Gesture, Media & Politics, accessed July 3, 2020, gesture-media-politics.de/project/?lang=en.

34 In other words, artistic research corresponds to—among other aspects—the soft version of entanglement, insofar as within the working process scholars (often artists) research and produce in a coherent and conjoint discursive field. In contrast, the participants of the *EGMP* project struggled within their entanglement with the conflicts, misunderstandings, and friction of interdisciplinary work that stemmed from the differences between the entangling groups, individuals, and cultures.

35 For a critique of this subordination, see Helmut Draxler, "Das Wissen der Spaltung. Über die symbolischen Bedingungen des künstlerischen Wissens," in *Wessen Wissen? Materialität und Situiertheit in den Künsten*, ed. Kathrin Busch, Christina Dörfling, Kathrin Peters, and Ildik" Szánt" (Paderborn: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 2018), 17–29.

knowledge and its production, and not for the epistemological intrigues generated by artistic research, which have been seen as its main task recently. This "epistemological turn," as German philosopher and scholar in the field of artistic research Katrin Busch[36] calls it, is thus part of knowledge production in times of a digital epistemological shift, rather than a reflection of them. The dark entanglements of the humanities and art are open for these investigations and interventions, as they are less ideological and they question regimes of all kinds, scientificity among them. As apparatus of tension, friction, and struggle, the entanglements do not fight for acknowledgement, but endorse conflicts and resistance. Against *essentialistic* attributions, even those that exist in artistic research, the entanglement of the humanities and art, as undertaken in the *EGMP* project, enables zones of reflections of discourses, territories, and institutions of scientificity.

36 See Katrin Busch, "Wissen anders denken," 2016, 10–33.

Theories and practices of dark entanglement could then be taken as a first step in asking what universities and knowledge would look like if other knowledge players took part, and research was done in painful and befalling collaborations. What would happen to the regime of scientificity when institutions for knowledge-production, such as universities, opened their doors to diverse forms of knowing, perceiving, and researching?

4 Dark Entanglement as Critique in Digital Cultures

Finally, dark entanglements of the humanities and art, as elaborated in the *EGMP* project, are helpful for transforming the extremely problematic constitution of critique in digital cultures. The hypothesis being put forward in this text is that traditional concepts, practices and modes of critique are coming to an end. Critique has become overheated by its excesses and escalation, losing what it promised in its modern form: resistance, subjectivity, and reflexive mediation. Some ideas on critique in digital cultures are outlined below to arrive at initial propositions for resistance and reflection that can be drawn from the concepts and practices of dark entanglements. These ideas can be employed even if existing critique is no longer useful, even if it is dangerous, and even if modern critique cannot be restored as it lacks all constituents that made it possible.

4.1 Critique in Digital Cultures

To understand the necessity of this task, the state of critique in digital cultures must first be described. In digital cultures, critique has become the medium for mediating humans and the world in entangling them for total connectivity. It is all about a soft and immediate entanglement, as elaborated in the posthuman discourses presented and analyzed in this text.

Digital critique as excess

As soon as we open technical devices or use applications, criticism appears. We “like,” follow fitness apps, and indulge hate speech in its diverse forms, from Facebook to academic works; ultimately, only scientific research with cool theses such as “unique features” counts.

This excessive, highly affective, and uninterrupted performance of critique, which operates without any references, achieves what is needed: a total connectivity of human agents. This drive transforms humans into voluntary and cheerful givers of maximum of data, ensuring the continuity and optimization of technical environments in digital cultures. This critique in digital cultures has to be avoided, because it will devour its practitioner in a maelstrom of excess and escalation.

In addition, it devours critical distance: we are always already inside.

Finally, in digital cultures values such as participation, public life, and truth-telling are sacrificed to data hype. From this perspective, fake news becomes interesting as a process of fetching more data, establishing an almost endless chain of critique bits, which builds a recursive operation of data processing. Public life becomes part of a desire to give data and gain connectivity.

Posthuman Data-Critique

Digital critique is also posthuman. It is done by algorithms like Amazon’s recommendation engines for improving shopping experiences, or decision-making algorithms at the labor office distributing training seminars and job offers. Algorithmic critique does what was previously the task of humans in modern critique—it differentiates, categorizes, and judges. This data-critique works in co-operation with human agents as it “learns” from them. So, for the first time, critique is automated and no longer in the hands of humans. At the same time, it entangles humans as a kind of prosthesis in this posthuman data-critique.

Resilience[37]

Finally, digital critique is transformed into management of crisis, mutating from resistance and problem solving to resilience, in other words, the permanent and unforeseeable and un-projectable adaptation of systems to crises and catastrophe as method of existence. The aim of resilience is survival on condition that parts of the system must die. In this sense, resilience ends politics and biopolitics, enhancing quality of life, substituting them with necro-politics,[38] giving one's own life for a higher order and purpose.

4.2 Dark Entanglement after Critique in Digital Cultures. Mediocrity for Resisting Connectivity

Qualities and methods of dark entanglement can jump into the vacuum left by critique. The aim is to find positions that allow distanciation, disconnecting, and subjectivation as well as resistance. The *EGMP* project case study offered a glimpse of new possibilities. The model of "thought from the outside" and befallen-ness allow distance and the generation of something like an "un-subject." The pain of entanglement guarantees a vital force for dis-connecting from the total connectivity of digital culture and becoming able to reflect on it. Befallen-ness and negotiating conflicts open up a model for re-thinking sociality, taking over and transforming modern social critique. These models can be merged in the concept of mediocrity, which begins with insight into the mediality of existence and moves from that point to a position of acceptance of social, epistemological, and subjective fragility and relativity, while at the same time refusing total digital connectivity.

"Un-Subjects"

To find a new position and mode for the former subject of critique, an extremely ambivalent situation needs to be considered. Due to the technological conditions of digital cultures, existence has to be reconfigured as entanglement. At the same time, this positioning repeats the total connectivity of digital cultures. A bitter

37 For a historical reconstruction of resilience and deeper analysis, see Florian Sprenger, *Epistemologien des Umgebens. Zur Geschichte, Ökologie und Biopolitik künstlicher environments* (Bielefeld: Transcript Verlag, 2019). For the political impact of resilience, see Orit Halpern, Hopeful Resilience, *E-Flux Journal Architecture: Accumulation* (April, 2017), accessed July 3, 2020, www.e-flux.com/architecture/accumulation/96421/hopeful-resilience/.

38 For more explications on necro-politics, see Martina Leeker, "Kritik in digitalen Kulturen. Begegnungen zwischen Entsagung, Revolution und Affirmation" in *Kritik in digitalen Kulturen*, ed. Laura Hille and Daniela Wentz (Lüneburg: meson press, 2021, forthcoming).

pill must be swallowed to find self-understanding and orientation. The positively valued concept of "posthuman," referring to immediate and soft entanglements, are not useful for this task, as explained above, because they were absorbed into total digital connectivity long ago. The task is to rethink a subjective position as entanglement-at-a-distance.

In this situation the entanglement of the humanities and art offers a kind of subjectivation by befallen-ness and "thought from the outside," which are partly based on the entanglement of human agents in technical milieus. Due to their painfulness and resistance to the risk of being devoured, these concepts allow a diffractive reflection at the same time. Starting from the concept of the historicity of entangled elements is crucial for imagining a befallen (un)subject and establishing it as a point of reference for critique.

Distance-In-Presence

The performativity of the entanglement of the humanities and art can serve as a model to develop a distant-point-from-the-inside, or a be-in as a distance-in-presence. Especially when staging the entanglement, performative methods guarantee this kind of distanciation and disconnecting, combining the emergence of the unpredictable by performing with repetition during the preparation of a performance as potential power of control.

Furthermore, performing entanglement can be seen as a permanent negotiating of standpoints, insights, cultures, and practices, which trains adoption and anticipation. But, in contrast to the resilience of systems described above, the dark sides of entanglement stand for permanent problem solving. In this process, painfulness is once again a vital potential for distanciation, providing an alarm-system for judgment and decisions.

Negotiating nearness and distance

Social critique, which had been framed as extremely dependent on the position of the subject and its distanciation from society for recognizing and judging, can be replaced by negotiations of nearness and distance as modes of de/-connecting.

The entanglements of the humanities and art described in the *EGMP* project are a precise and broad setting for such negotiations.

Negotiating nearness and distance ranges from the level of personal relations, or the attitude within the world, up to a re-thinking of power-plays in institutions and politics, and the negotiation of exclusion and inclusion.

Mediocrity

I want to conclude with a speculative thought experiment: What if these negotiations became an imperative of a mediocrity that is constituted of two intermingled aspects? The first aspect is respecting and accepting the medial and mediated existence that binds us to the environment. Such mediocrity donates an embodiment and knowledge of gaps between the elements involved, because a medial existence is always constituted of differences. There are media, forming a middle and, as such, having outsides, and there is the human body, which is formed by media and at the same time overstrained by them, carving gaps and asking for bridging mediations. Secondly, this medial mediocrity is constituted of a deep fragility, which is valuable for everybody. What if everything and everybody were finally moderate, mediocre, ordinary? Could this knowledge fight elitism and help to understand it as a regime of inclusion and exclusion on the basis of the hyper-neoliberal attitude of digital cultures, as seen in the politics of funding in academia and start-up-cultures? Elite is a discourse and not a truth. Do the entanglements of the humanities and art not work profoundly and courageously on this mediocrity?

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0.25X
0.5X
1X
2X
4X

Irina Kaldrack, Tobias Schulze, *Dancing Fists*

pp. 315—324

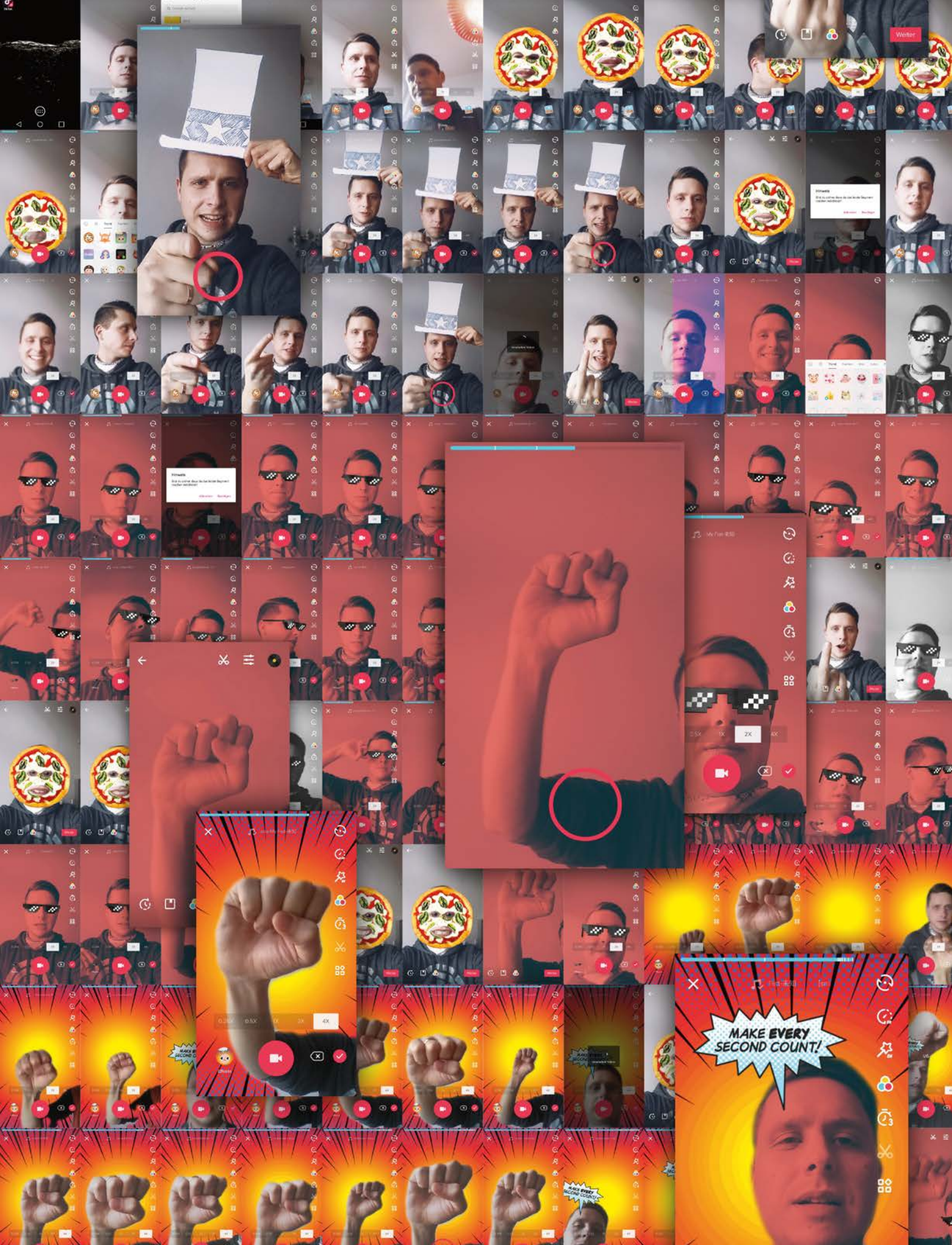
Imprint

Essay
Irina Kaldrack and Tobias Schulze

Gesture Descriptions
Tobias Schulze

Layout
Marie Artaker in collaboration with Irina Kaldrack and Tobias Schulze

Video Performance and its screenshots
Tobias Schulze with Irina Kaldrack


Weiter
MAKE EVERY SECOND COUNT!

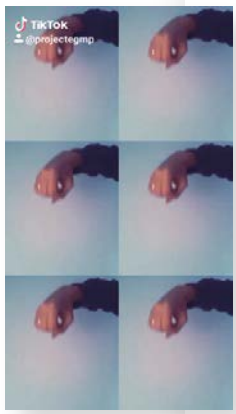
The amount of video content on different platforms is constantly increasing. Short clips, Stories, memes, collage-like montages of internet videos and homemade sequences are being shared on social networks of every kind in an upward trend. Whether it's WhatsApp Stories or vlogs on YouTube, videos on Snapchat or TikTok (and its earlier incarnation, musical.ly), "social media" is turning into "social video." TikTok's predominantly teenage users create lip-sync videos using snippets of (pop) songs and film soundtracks, but also comedy sketches and speeches, and then upload them to the associated platform. Initially limited to fifteen seconds, clips up to sixty seconds long can now be uploaded to the platform. The app is especially popular among teenagers and young users and its success continues unbroken.

TikTok's predecessor, and instigator of current lip-sync video hype, was a Chinese app called musical.ly. Published in 2014, it reached over 200 million *musers,* as musical.ly users were commonly known, worldwide. Typical videos were dance sequences, movements, and lip-syncing in music video style. Users created short choreographies (sometimes as tutorials), gestural expressions, representations of lyric content, and used smartphone control gestures like swiping to accompany audio tracks. The musical.ly app and the platform behind it were marketed to teenagers specifically, with the minimum age for access set at thirteen. Twins Lisa and Lena from Germany, born in 2002, became international stars with their musical.ly clips. Between 2015 and 2019, they popularized the app in Germany before leaving the platform because of security concerns amid accusations that musical.ly attracted pedophiles and failed to provide adequate protection for minors. In 2017, the platform was bought by Chinese company ByteDance and merged with their similarly functioning social video platform TikTok. Initial allegations regarding insufficient protection of minors and privacy concerns, persisted, however, resulting in TikTok being ordered to pay substantial fines.

The platform is now used by around 800 million people, not just for making lip-synced video clips but also to raise awareness for political, social, and societal issues. In late 2019, it emerged that TikTok uses a tiered moderating system based on "shadow banning." A user's videos remain visible to them while, depending on internal rankings, they are presented less prominently or not at all to the rest of the community. Such moderation systems register and evaluate LGBTQI* content, content by people living with disabilities, and political content such as, notably in this case, the Hong Kong protests and the systematic internment of Uighurs by the Chinese government.[1] The platform has been repeatedly accused of censorship in this context and critics speculate that TikTok is playing into Chinese authorities' hands—either in spite of or *because of* the fact that it appears to be a harmless app for teenagers.

1 Chris Köver, Markus Reuter, "TikToks Obergrenze für Behinderungen," Netzpolitik.org, accessed July 3, 2020, netzpolitik.org/2019/tiktoks-obergrenze-fuer-behinderungen/ and Enno Park, "Tiktok, tiktok, die Uhr ist abgelaufen. Löscht den Mist," t3n, accessed July 3, 2020, t3n.de/news/tiktok-tiktok-uhr-abgelaufen-1230086/.

↙ Feeling bad: **Left hand relaxed, half closed, and hanging down. Fingers loose and limp. I move my hand into the camera frame from above. I give my arm minute downward shakes and my fingers spread loosely. My hand is now slightly more open and each finger hangs downwards without any effort. They touch only very lightly.**



Despite the criticism, TikTok remains a popular app among young people, providing them with a playful way to create videos, add sophisticated effects, and share them with an audience of millions. Anyone can use the app; registration is required only to save and publish content but once registered, users can connect with others and build a profile. The complete content production and exploitation cycle is contained within the app: an online music database, video recording, video editing, upload, and the components of social media networking (sharing, commenting, rating, tagging) are seamlessly integrated.

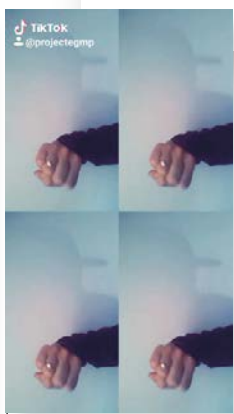
Open the app and an individually tailored video feed plays immediately. Content selection is based on carefully weighted factors including the user's browsing history, likes, location and other account settings, as well as specific video features like length, popularity, newness of filters and effects, and trending "challenges." The challenges provide audio tracks that users can iterate on, re-enacting, varying, and re-performing similar formats, sometimes with specific tasks or patterns of movement. Different interpretations of the task can be played from the same, highlighted keywords/hashtags—and new ones added. The same starting material, the same effects, gestures, movements, and routines lead to similarities, but it is right there that the essentially competitive differences crystallize and determine internal ratings, shared content, and the user's status in the social network. "Duets" function in a similar way. A split screen video can be created for an existing TikTok clip. The original appears on the right and a new recording on the left, which enables direct comparisons of performances, partner dances, and delayed interactions with others using an identical soundtrack. Ultimately, faithful, exact imitation of movements and perfect performances are as important as creative borrowing, interpretation and alteration. "Challenges," like duets, encourage participation in the form of an appreciative contest between the users of the platform.

TikTok videos are, above all, selfie videos. The prominently placed "plus" button allows users to record new videos; the app's user interface prompts users to produce videos in portrait format. A selection interface gives access to a large sound library. Soundtracks can easily be cropped after selection to comply with the maximum length of sixty seconds and the interface prominently displays tools for time axis manipulation. In recording mode, the sound can be played back faster, slower or

at normal speed. The speed options 0.3×, 0.5×, 1×, 2×, 3×[2] here refer not to the playback speed of the soundtrack, but to the final playback speed of the recorded video, 0.5× means the sound plays twice as fast during recording, and the movements in the finished video are at half normal speed. The soundtrack always plays at original speed in the end. So, the 3× setting results in the audio track being played very slowly for recording, which allows users to execute precise and exact movements (mouth, smartphone and body) and stop-trick special effects synced to what they hear.

2 In earlier versions 0.25×, 0.5×, 1×, 2× and 4×.

↓ Come on now get up: **I curl the fingers of my left hand into a fist, thumb over the middle phalanges of my fingers. I clench it tightly, envelopingly. I move my fist closer to the camera. I rotate it downwards around the palm so that my knuckles form a vertical line. I rest my fist briefly on an imagined plane, then raise it and rotate it upwards around the palm so that my knuckles again form a vertical line. I repeat the movements several times. With each rotation, I lift my arm a little higher, moving my fist steadily upwards.**



The app provides a library of different filters, effects, and AR elements. Users can choose from quite elaborate effects, including mirroring, morphing/warping/distortions, as well as masks, decorations, and beauty filters known from memes and subcultures, but also quizzes, random questions, tasks, animals projected into the space, photo frames, etc. The effects collection is updated regularly so viral internet phenomena are quickly integrated into TikTok, increasing their popularity. Once a few seconds of material has been recorded, it can be played back at original speed with all time and image effects applied. Changes to the material, however, can only be made according to the last-in-first-out principle: only the last section of a recording can be deleted, subsequent editing is generally excluded. After the video is finalized, it can be published to the social network, shared, and given comments and likes.

Tiktok videos characteristically feature heavy use of special effects such as stop tricks, slow motion, fast forward, filter effects, and, in particular, the interplay of hand and camera movement. Users of musical.ly had already developed a vocabulary of codified gestures in their interpretations of typical pop song lyrics like “in love” and “broken hearts” that are still taught in tutorials. To record videos, musers had to hold their phone and keep their finger on the record button for the entire recording time (recording is started and stopped by tapping the record button in TikTok). This limitation gave rise to an interesting aesthetic that sought to compensate for one-handed operation. The phone itself was used as a substitute second hand through the interplay of hand and camera movement. A gesture was made with the free hand, with or without motion, and the movement of the phone replaced the movement of the second hand during recording. Representational gestures became established, but so did control gesture tricks like “swipe yourself out of frame” transitions. The key factor is that these gestures developed from interplay between the hand being filmed and the hand holding the phone. The “video-graphed” gesture is formed between the visible screen, the moving hand being filmed and the moving hand doing the

filming. The stylized hand-heart gesture is made by the free hand and the smartphone each sketching half the curvature of the heart. The stand-alone parts are difficult to recognize, but combined with the interplay of body and phone movement, a picture emerges in which both hand and image movement complement each other.[3] The smartphone has become the source, partner and counterpart of the gesture. The characteristic feature is the gestural and moving interplay between smartphone and body. What becomes evident is that these gestures are not expressions of the inner self but decorative movements shaping—and shaped by!—image.

← Try and understand: **I lift my left arm, bend it, and hold my open hand, palm facing forwards, at a slight distance next to my head. I curl my fingers in until the tips touch my palm, leaving a light tension in my hand. I lay my thumb over my fingers. My fist has become a mouth and looks in my direction. I carefully position my fist side-on to the camera. I lift my thumb up and down the same distance from my fingers. I repeat the movement. The mouth talks.**

The movements of the hand being filmed and the movements of the hand holding the camera often work together miming gestural action effects. A hand is a gun, shoots at the camera, and the frame shakes. Video effects could, of course, be used to suggest a shattered window, but it is precisely the shaking of the screen as recoil or impact of the bullets that has a substantiating illustrative effect. The hand holding the smartphone turns a gesture into a visual act by creating effects for viewers by rotating, shaking, and shifting the smartphone. The smartphone (camera) becomes a partner in the performance and part of the (image) gestural relationship. Although TikTok offers a preview function allowing playback of clips immediately after recording, a reflexive, alternative, and technical external perspective is needed at the design and recording stages. The creators of such artistically staged TikTok videos simultaneously anticipate the gaze of viewers and the material-technological dimensions of the smartphone as a recording device.

TikTok plays with the use of gestures. Many effects require a creative and choreographed appropriation of technological parameters. One example is the interactive Hand Gestures filter. Once the filter is set, three graphic icons are displayed at the top of the recording screen—the V sign, the OK or ring gesture, and the finger heart,[4] or, alternatively, the sign that is both the American Sign Language finger-spelling of “I Love You” and the shaka sign (similar to the “call me hand” used to represent a telephone receiver). When any of the three gestures is made in front of the camera, a photo is taken and pinned in place of the corresponding icon. Users play with

creating collages using three sequential frames, for instance "hitting" themselves, sharing a meal, or acting out new memes.[5] Making a perfectly formed shutter-release gesture followed immediately—meaning within a one second shutter delay—by getting into position to create a photo for the collage is challenging. A fun aspect of this filter is that the complete production process, the entire "making of" is automatically included, so fails are inevitably part of the clip. Incorrectly made or unrecognized trigger gestures are shown along with clumsiness, trip-ups, weird postures and other accidents. TikTok trains its users to execute traditional, widely-known gestures, serving as control gestures in this case, as precisely as possible, and if the reaction is too slow they become, intentionally or unintentionally, purely visual gestures with no control function. There is an amalgamation of intentional, visualizing postures, body movements, and gestures that are on the midpoint between functionality and virtuosity.

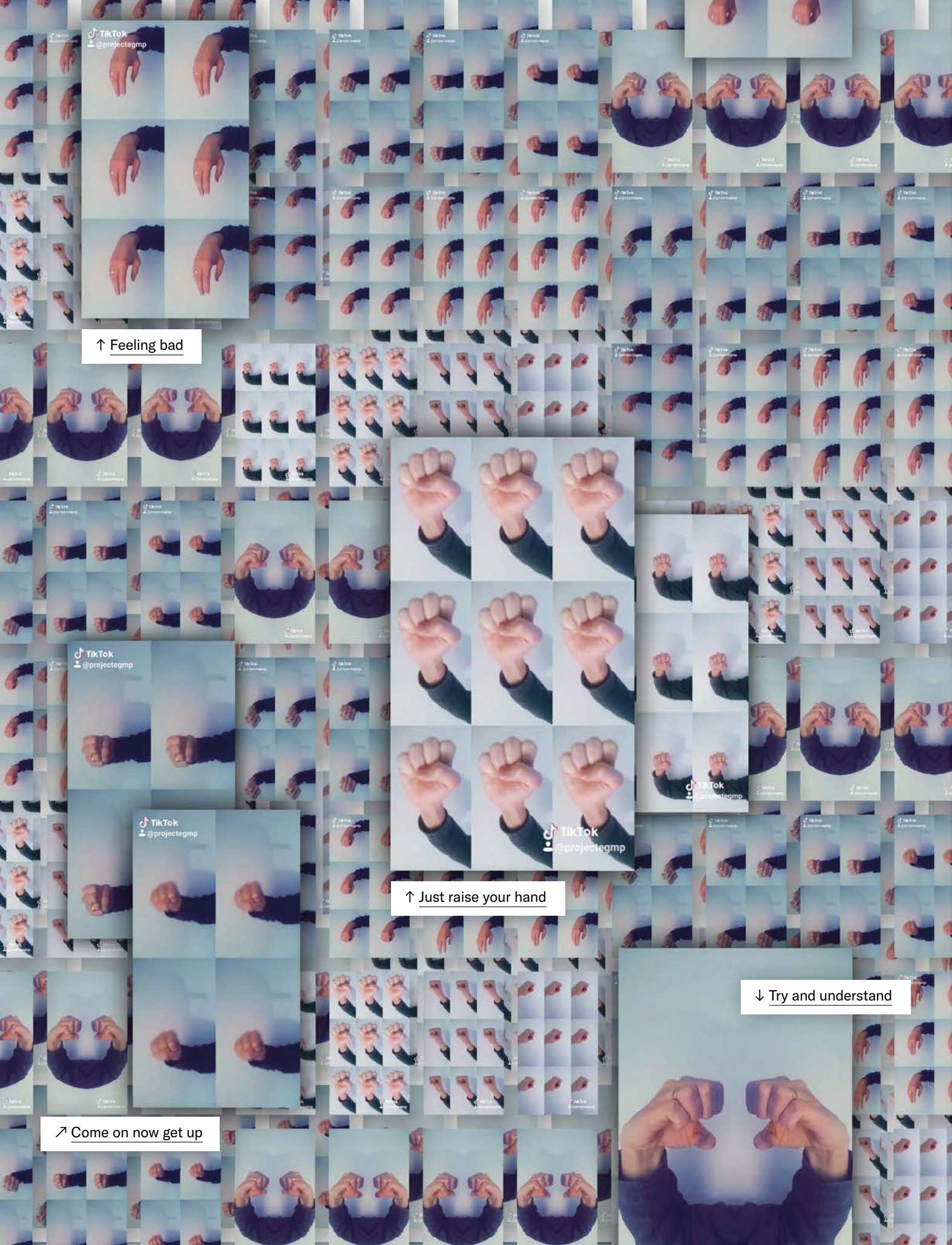
In TikTok, the gesture is more than just a movement that accompanies lyrics. It is a physical technique that requires virtuosity and precision. It makes songs, sketches, and the spoken word visual. It can function as a control gesture and as a visual gesture. It shapes a body-image-movement fusion as body movements, the role of the hand making recordings, the imagined role of the counterpart, and the physical dimensions of the recording device interact. TikTok seems to be a platform for experimenting with gestural conditions; the gesture becomes a mediator between the body, technology, and a third party.

3 See youtu.be/2ICGnFAHePQ?t=135, time stamp 02:15 (accessed January 27, 2020). Video has been removed.

4 Initially popularized in the context of South Korean K-Pop, the gesture represents a heart formed by putting thumb and index finger together. In Europe, the same gesture with its corresponding movement is more familiar as a gesture for money, or asking for money.

5 See Best of Tiktok, "Hand Gesture TikToks (The BEST ones)," YouTube video, 15:37, 2020, accessed July 3, 2020, youtu.be/Hrt3OnwCeQ4.

← Just raise your hand: **I clench my hand into a fist, thumb over my fingers, and bend my arm. I raise my fist and move it towards the camera and back again, making sure it stays within the frame. I try moving my fist towards the camera at different angles. I vary the distance between my fist and the camera. I unclench my fist and relax my hands and arms.**


TikTok
@projectegmp
↑ Feeling bad
↑ Just raise your hand
↓ Try and understand
↗ Come on now get up

Artistic-Scientific Complicities. *The Entanglement between Gesture, Media, and Politics* Project from an Empirical-Cultural Anthropological Perspective

Stefanie Kiwi Menrath

The demarcation between art and science has, for many years now, been subject to challenges from cross-boundary experiments between artistic-practical action and academic reflection in the course of a re-evaluation of knowledge and a critical inspection of academic practice. Artistic research, practice-as-research, and artistic-scientific cooperation have become common terms in the discourse. While there have been many discussions regarding the terminology for such experiments, the precise practical space between these social and cultural fields of art and academia has not yet been sufficiently examined. The challenges and potentials of collaboration between art and science—two historically evolved epistemic cultures—are empirically analyzed in this chapter using the example of *The Entanglement between Gesture, Media, and Politics (EGMP)*, a research project conducted jointly by artists and scientists.

p. 340

How do the participants address interdisciplinary challenges in practice? Which forms of cooperation do they establish, and how do they cope with diversity within the group? What are connecting factors, and what is it that participants get out of the project?

A theoretical framework for the analysis is provided by the term "complicity,"[1] which describes a collaborative form of action with a "specific social dynamics"[2] that occurs, or is at least aspired to, in such heterogeneous contexts. Complicities meet the interdisciplinary challenge with an affective "entanglement"; success also depends to a large extent on the project framework, which will be critically examined in this chapter.

1 An empirical-cultural anthropological perspective on *The Entanglement between Gesture, Media, and Politics* project

The Entanglement between Gesture, Media, and Politics research project (the *EGMP* project) on the links between physical gestures and current media technologies ran from January 2017 to June 2019. It connected artists from visual arts, media art, and performance as well as culture and media scholars from Germany (mainly Berlin) and Austria (Vienna) in a series of one-week workshops.

The project was funded by the Volkswagen Foundation, which has shown an increased interest in promoting artistic research projects in recent years. The specific aim of this particular funding initiative, called *Arts and Science in Motion—Wissenschaft und Kunst in Bewegung*, was to *bring* artists and scientists *together* for new projects. An open topic call for proposals on *Bewegung/Motion* was addressed to individuals at postdoc level: "Europe-based scholars and scientists who obtained their doctorate in any discipline, as well as artists of all disciplines with equivalent practical experience."[3] The aim was to connect individuals from the fields of art and science: "All too often a rigid boundary is drawn between scientific knowledge and artistic perception. Bringing the two into contact with each

1 Gesa Ziemer, *Complicity—New Perspectives on Collectivity* (Bielefeld: transcript, 2016). Note on quoted material: All translations by the translator unless otherwise specified.
2 Ziemer, *Complicity*, 2016, 42.
3 Volkswagen Foundation, 2014, "Arts and Science in Motion—*Wissenschaft und Kunst in Bewegung*," 2014, accessed July 3, 2020, www.volkswagenstiftung.de/sites/default/files/downloads/Information_Call_Arts_and_Science.pdf, 2.

p. 340

other and promoting fruitful exchange harbors great potential. [...] [T]he main focus will be on candid discourse and encounters between persons and their ideas with a view to becoming acquainted with other approaches and to intellectually tread wholly new paths."[4]

I was invited to participate in the project as a participant-observer and external attendee.[5] As a researcher, I focused on collaborative social processes without doing any research on the subject of gesture. I consciously adopted an "empirical-cultural anthropological perspective" because the project team had already invited me to do so during the proposal stage. As a cultural anthropologist, I would surely have found thematic links to the subject of gestures, media, and politics. Nevertheless, I decided early on to focus on collaborative social processes within the project, partly due to the very limited time available, but also in order to establish a sustainable role for myself as a field researcher by keeping a certain distance. Ethnographers regularly get involved in social processes as "*personal* recording instruments"[6] or "embodied" research tools,[7] but in addition to being participants, they also remain outsiders. This tension between participation and distance and the mutual differentiations involved in it are a key knowledge resource in cultural anthropological ethnography. In order to maintain this tension, and myself as a hybrid "research tool" within the structure, it was also important to avoid getting too involved. The field had already accepted me with open arms—from day one, the project group had given me its trust and enabled me to participate fully. I was, for instance, able to take part in all group and community meetings (which took place face-to-face and online). And the clicking sounds of my computer keyboard, as well as my ever-present notebook, were accepted without comment. In addition, all six key project members agreed to do interviews with me at the beginning, midterm, and end of the project. The interviews addressed individual perspectives on the project and the collaboration, as well as personal expectations and results of the collaboration.

p. 341

4 Volkswagen Foundation, "Arts and Science in Motion," 1.
5 I had also submitted a proposal in the call and later met the future members of the project group at an initial workshop at the Volkswagen Foundation in 2014.
6 Klaus Amann and Stefan Hirschauer, "Die Befremdung der eigenen Kultur. Ein Programm," in *Die Befremdung der eigenen der eigenen Kultur. Zur ethnographischen Herausforderung soziologischer Empirie*, ed. Stefan Hirschauer and Klaus Amann (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1997), 25.
7 Karin Knorr-Cetina, *Epistemic Cultures—How the Sciences Make Knowledge* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), 95.

2 Analogies: Artistic and Cultural/Media Studies Practice in Self-Reflexive Critical Humanities

When the relationship between art and science is addressed, the initial assumption is often that there are huge differences between the two. The Volkswagen Foundation's call for proposals was no exception: "Being limited, as [is] usually the case, to the methods and approaches prevalent in one's own realm or discipline constitutes a separative factor."[8] Inter- and trans-disciplinary initiatives often come up with the principle of "dialogue"[9] as an answer to the question of "how it may be possible to enter into an exchange in spite of different cultures of knowledge."[10] However, "science" is often tacitly understood as "natural science" in "epistemic cultures" discourse. The reason certainly has something to do with the fact that the "epistemic cultures" concept itself was developed in science and technology studies in the 1990s when production of knowledge within the natural sciences was subjected to an examination that had liberal arts and social science sensibilities.[11] As early as the 1950s, C. P. Snow was already talking about the divide between the two cultures of humanities and natural science[12]—contrasting the humanities' *understanding* with the sciences' *explaining.* In 2009, Jerome Kagan attempted another differentiation[13]—natural sciences that predict and explain natural phenomena, social sciences that predict and explain social phenomena, and the humanities as a third culture that, according to Kagan, does not aim to either explain or predict, but to understand.

Analogies

In contrast to such attempts at differentiation, I would like to advocate for a perspective of proximity and analogies. The *EGMP* project hosted no natural scientists (in the strict sense), or even social scientists wanting to predict or explain phenomena in the context of, for instance, a positivist paradigm—the participants were artists and academics from the humanities. As representatives of the third culture (according to Kagan's differentiation), the humanities, they shared a desire to interpret the world instead of making predictions or explaining. We can, therefore, assume a greater cultural proximity between participants in collaborations between artists and researchers in the humanities, in contrast to projects involving participants from the arts and natural sciences.

Self-Reflexivity

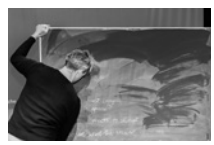
There are several approaches to the links between the humanities and the arts. Identifying analogies in the epistemic form,[14] for example, or the approach of pointing out historical processes of exchange between art and science.[15] In the *EGMP* project, I observed another very specific

8 Volkswagen Foundation, "Arts and Science in Motion," 2014, 1.
9 Doris Ingrisch, Marion Mangelsdorf, and Gert Dressel, eds., *Wissenskulturen im Dialog. Experimentalräume zwischen Wissenschaft und Kunst* (Bielefeld: transcript, 2017).
10 Marion Mangelsdorf, "'Erstaunlich (und) fremd'—Fokus Kulturdialoge," in *Wissenskulturen im Dialog. Experimentalräume zwischen Wissenschaft und Kunst*, ed. Doris Ingrisch, Marion Mangelsdorf, and Gerd Dressel (Bielefeld: transcript, 2017), 25.
11 Knorr Cetina, *Epistemic Cultures*, 1999.
12 C. P. Snow, *The Two Cultures and the Scientific Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1959).
13 Jerome Kagan, *The Three Cultures. Natural Sciences, Social Sciences, and the Humanities in the 21st Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).
14 Ursula Brandstätter, *Grundfragen der Ästhetik. Bild—Musik—Sprache—Körper.* (Vienna: Böhlau Verlag, 2008).
15 Dieter Mersch and Michaela Ott, "Tektonische Verschiebungen zwischen Kunst und Wissenschaft," in *Kunst und Wissenschaft*, ed. Dieter Mersch and Michaela Ott (München: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 2007), 9–34.

proximity between the participating disciplines—namely, media and cultural studies (represented by two individuals) and the arts (represented by four individuals).

There is a strong analogy between these disciplines relating to their self-conception and their thematic interest in *self-reflexivity.* Cultural and media studies have a long-standing tradition of critical reflection on the academic production of knowledge, and were themselves established as inter- or trans-disciplinary projects. Mersch and Ott state that, "after 1945, we can identify a convergence of art and science," in particular "in the name of philosophical self-reflectiveness with all its consequences of inherent self-referentiality."[16] Gerhard Gram observes that "the reflective turn of all societal definitions of knowledge and action parallels the process of the reflective turn in the arts."[17] The *EGMP* project included artists from the fields of media art, visual art, and dance—each of them engaged in a contemporary practice of art that aims to do justice to such a standard of self-reflexivity. The standard holds true not just for their artistic practices themselves. In the project, the standard of self-reflexivity also became apparent in discourses *about* art. One participating artist, for instance, described art itself as a "reflective epistemic medium." This analogy with a focus on self-reflexivity thus not only seems to be a staple of contemporary theory and philosophy of art and culture, but also seems to be deeply rooted in the practices of the *EGMP* participants.

p. 341



Social and Institutional Autonomy

Beyond this strong self-conception of self-reflexivity among the group's participants, I noticed another thing in the course of my participant observation: a particular sparking energy was felt in the group every time social values or rules were consciously transgressed or constructively challenged.

For artistic behavior, constructive transgression of rules is certainly normalized: "Rule breaking is the key business of the arts, for only in this way can the shifting of perception be achieved."[18] There are numerous examples. In fact, artistic works often challenge norms and habits. But among the researchers

16 Mersch and Ott, "Tektonische Verschiebungen," 2007, 24.
17 Gerhard Gram, "Vom Wandel der Wissenschaft(en) und der Kunst," in *Kunst und Wissenschaft*, ed. Dieter Mersch and Michaela Ott (München: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 2007), 37.
18 Ziemer, *Complicity*, 2016, 43.

in the *EGMP* project, too, a critical approach was clearly the rule: concepts, for instance, were often consciously re-read in a critical manner. Positive reinterpretation and appropriation of negatively connoted terms (such as "minor" or "queer") has a long tradition in media and cultural studies when tied to emancipatory movements.[19] In the *EGMP* project, I was frequently able to observe a comparatively subversive use of terms and concepts—as well as a subversive reference to social norms of behavior—as "sparking moments" in the group. In such moments, there was a spark in the air when participants "clicked" with each other.

Besides this tendency to societal autonomy, I was also able to observe a tendency towards institutional autonomy. The artists' views of the art market and art institutions were more or less unfavorable (in a conscious ambivalence to being aware of their dependence on them). The academic researchers, too, showed a self-conception as theoretical intellectuals who appealed to the power of free and individual thought—more or less free of social influence, but also of the influence of their academic institutions. In addition, the researchers and artists in the project are all very mobile and travel widely: over the two-year duration of the project, nearly all participants had several international professional engagements. Art sociologist Valerie Moser calls this position one of "institutional freedom"[20]—Moser studied the self-conception of artists over several years, taking the Berlin scene as an example.[21] She, too, links the artistic and the academic research field: "this position within the artistic field has a relation [...] to the academic field," and it "includes a relatively exclusive academic circle which, in its 'faith' in individual autonomy and the power of intellectual thought, is close to a developing 'global academic elite.'"[22]

The project participants—and here I should also include myself—share this critical position regarding social and institutional norms from an attitude of autonomy (and a corresponding economic position of autonomy). I would like to summarize this as the intellectual field of "critical humanities."

3 Working Together: Collaboration and Complicity

Collaboration

In contrast to "artistic research" by individual actors, artistic-scientific "collaborations" are practices of two or more actors from diverse fields. But why use the terminology of "collaboration" rather than "collectivity" or "collective work"?

There have been some influential collectives in art history; in academic practice, however, collectivity has a weak tradition. Contemporary sociology also seems to have given up the terminology of the "collective" due to a strong tendency towards individualization and

19 See also Ziemer, *Complicity*, 2016, 16–17.
20 Valerie Moser, *Bildende Kunst als soziales Feld. Eine Studie über die Berliner Szene* (Bielefeld: transcript, 2013), 323–325.
21 Moser, *Bildende Kunst als soziales Feld*, 2013.
22 Moser, *Bildende Kunst als soziales Feld*, 2013, 325.

heterogeneity within society. The term "collaboration" provides a more appropriate description of how we act together today—both connectedly and individually.[23] The term collaboration emphasizes that we are working together *in spite of* the heterogeneity of individuals (and not because of their commonalities).

A minimal definition of collaboration could therefore be the following: a temporary cooperation of several heterogeneous actors. Such collaborations don't emerge spontaneously between science and the arts, and there are hardly any established models of organization for this kind of cooperation.

Complicity

In order to describe the cooperation within the *EGMP* project, I use the term *complicity* as coined by Gesa Ziemer. Complicity is a specific form of collaboration. Ziemer lifted the word from its criminal context and imported it into the context of legal project work. She describes the phenomenon of a productive relationship in innovative and creative contexts, in particular in artistic research.[24] Complicity designates a form of collaborative practice between heterogeneous actors for a temporary period. In complicities, accomplices not only *think* together but also *act* together.

Complicity is a form of project cooperation that works towards the creation of temporarily shared aims and goals. Such a shared vision develops from the group itself; it does not exist beforehand, nor is it defined from outside.[25]

The terminology of complicity is helpful in describing certain forms of cooperation that are undertaken between art and the humanities. Complicities are temporary forms of cooperation between heterogeneous actors—and thus collaborations—the form of which follow a particular organizational model. While individual group members may each have their own independent long-term goals, for complicities, they need to be open to developing aims shared within the group for a temporary period. As mentioned, these goals are not fixed *prior* to the formation of the group and are not dictated from outside.

In contrast to *teams*, complicities are not oriented towards a preferably smooth process or the achievement of a previously fixed goal. And in contrast to *alliances*, complicities do not aim for a long-term strategic partnership, but are merely based on temporary, tactical modes of action.[26] To function properly, they have to bridge (and this is relatively short term) the diverging practical routines of participating artists and scientists, and the group must agree on a (temporary) common goal.

23 For example, over the last twenty years "collaboration" has become a common term in cultural anthropology to describe the research cooperation of ethnographers and research "subjects" in a globally connected world with its plentitude of knowledge producers (including George E. Marcus, "Affinities: Fieldwork in Anthropology Today and the Ethnographic in Artwork," in *Between Art and Anthropology—Contemporary Ethnographic Practice*, ed. Arnd Schneider and Christopher Wright (Oxford/New York: Berg Publishers, 2010), 91; George E. Marcus, "Collaborative Imaginaries," *Taiwan Journal of Anthropology 5*, no. 1 (2007): 1–17.)

24 Ziemer, *Complicity*, 2016, 12, 22.

25 Ziemer, *Complicity*, 2016, 21.

26 Ziemer, *Complicity*, 2016, 98–102.

Complicities in the *EGMP* Project

Temporary connections were established throughout the *EGMP* project based on several factors: topical proximity, communication settings, and research management were all important. The project's overall conditions, however, were not always conducive to making such connections.

3.1 Thematic Proximity

It seems obvious that a common research topic functions as a connecting line between a project's participants. In the project description of the *EGMP* group's research proposal to the Volkswagen Foundation, "entanglement between gesture, media, and politics" was named as a common denominator. At the same time, the proposal emphasized that there is diversity in the disciplinary perspectives on such an entanglement and the respective definitions of gesture.[27] The rationale for an inter- or trans-disciplinary approach was the societal significance and rapid development of modern media technology—and less so the academic desideratum of research on such a topic. Because the proposal featured a "complex social situation" argument as its justification, the project was designated "trans-disciplinary." In this context, however, trans-disciplinarity did not mean that there was a concrete societal commission for the project, such as the solution to a specific problem or a societal design task.[28] Instead, the *EGMP* project considered itself to be addressing artistic and academic audiences. The final presentation was held in an art space, and this book was published by an art book publisher. Thus, this project is not a case of applied research (commissioned by society) or of scientific research (commissioned by the academy). In lieu of such external commissions, the *EGMP* project was self-constituted on a decidedly intrinsic commission.

So the group's first objective in the initial workshops was the joint formulation of a self-assigned goal. Two key research topics had been named in the proposal—"im/perceptible gesture" and "political gestures"[29]—but right from the first workshop, interests were scattered in all directions. In interviews about project goals with individual group members at the beginning of the project, it became clear that although all participants came with a basic interest in gesture, the intensity of concentration on the topic was very different in each case. At one end of the spectrum was a specific habilitation project on gesture, while at the other, general exchange and cooperation between artists and scientists was emphasized as the main point of interest. These diverging tendencies were a contentious issue in the group's discussions—some welcomed them, some resisted them. Considerable time and energy were given over to negotiations. Still, thematic links only guaranteed productive cooperation between a few group members. Early in the course

27 *The Entanglement between Gesture, Media, and Politics*, project proposal, unpublished manuscript, 2015, 1.

28 Such a trans-disciplinary design task of trans-disciplinary projects is, for instance, identified by Wolfgang Krohn. Wolfgang Krohn, "Künstlerische und wissenschaftliche Forschung in transdisziplinären Projekten," in *Kunstforschung als ästhetische Wissenschaft. Beiträge zur transdisziplinären Hybridisierung von Wissenschaft und Kunst*, ed. Martin Tröndle and Julia Warmers (Bielefeld: transcript, 2012), 2.

29 *The Entanglement between Gesture, Media, and Politics*, project proposal, unpublished manuscript, 2015, 2.

p. 342

of the project, several sub-groups formed according to different interests and returned to working on their thematic foci; some quickly dissolved again. The academic idea of research as a persistent elaboration of a previously fixed topic often had to give way to unexpected inter-disciplinary and internal group dynamics.

3.2 Communication Settings

Production Method Transformation Chain

At the beginning, there were attempts to rein in the dispersing tendencies by introducing a shared method in the form of a sequential exchange of material and knowledge. A "transformation chain" was set up, where objects and material were to be passed from one participant to the next and "transformed" with each person's respective approach.[30] It soon became clear that such a method required a specific communication setting—namely the passing on of material with *minimal* accompanying communication between participants.[31] Such an approach, however, conflicted with the group's desire for lively exchange. The workshops offered a rare opportunity to share work and research, and inspire each other. So, the transformation chain was abandoned (at least by the majority, one sub-group continued working with it, see Timo Herbst and Irina Kaldrack's chapter *G20* in this book, pp. 259–292, but as an approach for the entire group, the method was deemed less productive.

p. 342

Sub-Groups

After initial plenary work, several sub-groups formed. At first, the groups were based on interest, then preliminary production, and closer to the end of the process, they were sub-groups that created artwork together. In addition, a group of five people teamed up to co-curate the final exhibition. Each of the sub-groups developed their own approaches to collaboration: some began by going for walks or spontaneous coffees together, others followed a pre-established meeting plan. The different locations of each workshop—a university, a creative prototyping festival, a dance studio, artist studios, and exhibition spaces—also played a role. Meetings at the university followed

30 *The Entanglement between Gesture, Media, and Politics*—adaptation of the project research question and project design, second project proposal, unpublished manuscript, 2016, 3.

31 For instance, following the model of the children's game *Telephone*. On such approaches, see Ursula Brandstätter, *Erkenntnis durch Kunst—Theorie und Praxis der ästhetischen Transformation*. (Vienna: Böhlau Verlag, 2013), 129–131; Dagmar Jäger et al., *Künstlerische Transformationen—Modelle kollektiver Kunstproduktion und der Dialog zwischen den Künsten* (Berlin: Reimer Verlag, 2010).

p. 343

a fairly clearly structured, pre-established timetable with specific room bookings, while the time and place for meetings in the workshop at the prototyping festival arose organically from the process. The festival setting initiated many informal, process-oriented encounters between participants, while the university setting provided a more result-oriented space. The appeal of each space varied widely for the different participants since some locations were better suited to their working methods than others.

3.3 Research Management

p. 343

The inter-disciplinary approach of the *EGMP* project challenged the participating culture/media scholars and artists to step out of the logic of their respective fields. In projects crossing established disciplines, field logics clash, and results and schedules are therefore much less predictable for both participants and project management. For instance, artists are used to working autonomously over a short period of several weeks prior to an opening or a premiere; a longer-term commitment over several months is, for artists, only really possible within residency and grant programs. Academics, on the other hand, are more used to long-term projects, in most cases spanning several years. The manner in which working time is structured distinguishes artists and scientists in their disciplinary socialization. Soloism is also practiced in differing ways. Most *EGMP* members had prior experience of collaboration in the form of *team*work in, for example, inter-disciplinary third-party funded projects, joint text production, or exhibition projects. Such teamwork, however, was conducted on the basis of more or less clearly defined responsibilities and authorships, where colleagues complemented each other.

In contrast, the social-experimental-explorative mode of the *EGMP* project, with no externally commissioned goal, resulted in frequent insecurities in many cases. Evening activities and meetings beyond scheduled workshop times created much-needed points of encounter. The research management of such a process requires particular “social moderation” and mediation in particular.[32]

32 Karen van den Berg, Sibylle Omlin, and Martin Tröndle, “Das Kuratieren von Kunst und Forschung zu Kunstforschung,” in *Kunstforschung als ästhetische Wissenschaft. Beiträge zur transdisziplinären Hybridisierung von Wissenschaft und Kunst*, ed. Martin Tröndle and Julia Warmers (Bielefeld: transcript, 2012), 43.

Furthermore, artistic-academic research projects are regularly faced with the unbalanced situation of their management being located at an academic research institution.[33] There are wide discrepancies between bureaucratic processes at universities and the needs of artists in, for example, drawing up contracts and terms of cooperation (grants, contracts for services, employment). There is a high degree of friction, and project administration accordingly becomes time-consuming for projject leaders.

In general, the effort of getting involved with fellow group members—their issues, perspectives, and their personalities—was enormous for all those involved in the *EGMP* project. The enormous effort was ultimately disproportionate to the level of funding for the project. Volkswagen Foundation's initiative "Arts and Science in Motion" was originally intended for projects undertaken by individuals or two-person teams for one or two years. Applying the same budget to a group of six to eight individuals doing research over several years created a precarious situation for the *EGMP* project overall. *EGMP* was just one of several simultaneous projects for all participants, and demanded a great deal of idealism.

Furthermore, the group had communally decided on a specific redistribution of the budget between the artistic and the scientific members of the group: Project participants were not paid according to the function of their activities or output for the project, but their general employment situation. Freelancers (mainly artists) received a significantly higher portion of the project budget compared to those in employment (mainly academics with fixed contracts). The intention was to offset the uncertainty for those in temporary employment with the aim of artists and scientists working "on equal terms," including on a structural level.

p. 346

4 Entangled Complicities

Complicities establish a strong feeling of "entanglement." Gesa Ziemer identified an etymological link between complicity and the Latin root "*com-plectere*"—meaning "to entwine with one another" or "to fit into one another."[34]

Complicities are affective—the individual is intensively involved in the collective structure. Anyone who is part of a complicity network takes responsibility for the group's product; deep trust in co-accomplices is required because "they know that the actions of the others weigh just as heavily as their own." To a certain degree, accomplices "lay their destiny in the hands of others."[35] Complicities are thus very close-knit affective collaborations in heterogeneous contexts over short periods.

33 One exception is the Austrian funding program PEEK (*Programm zur Erschließung und Entwicklung der Künste*/Program for Arts-based Research): www.fwf.ac.at/en/research-funding/fwf-programmes/peek/.
34 Ziemer, *Complicity*, 2016, 22.
35 Ziemer, *Complicity*, 2016, 25, 26.

4.1 Intensity and Trust

With the proximity between artistic and culture/media studies practice (see 1), the project fulfilled a basic requirement for trust-based collaboration as it was conducted in complicities. However, the participants' evaluation of the *intensity* of the cooperation in the project varied widely.[36] While most noted "a lot of exchange,"[37] "exchange on many levels,"[38] and "various axes of conversation,"[39] only a few of the participants were satisfied with the strength of the cooperation. Some wanted more—more depth, more intensity, more "real" collaboration. One participant stated, retrospectively, that the extended project structure—a total of five workshop meetings over a period of two years—had encouraged parallel rather than collaborative work.[40] Many found a depth of interaction in the sub-groups, which met for intensive working appointments in addition to the workshops, that they missed in the main group.

Interdisciplinary cooperation required a lot from the participants. To "lay [one's] destiny in [each other's] hands,"[41] or to develop trust in the first place, was a particular challenge between artists and scientists. One sub-group finally mustered the courage and established the necessary trust in the professional work of the "other side," and actually produced a joint work created by scientists and artists. Another collaborative work was developed by two academics working together, and another by three artists working together. One of the participants describes the barriers that had to be overcome:

> I had to trust that it would be ok if they [...] wanted to do it like that, that it would have its presence and quality [...] But I also just let them get on with it and let go [...] and let them decide completely for themselves, which was really important [...] It was *extremely* hard for me. But it was absolutely important.[42]

When close cooperation was unsuccessful, it led to a feeling of frustration and stress for some in the group. Others were satisfied with the cooperation, but, in contrast, the demand for high intensity and complicity became too much for them and they reacted by withdrawing. So, some sub-groups dissolved when they realized that they were unable to share responsibility.

And not all participants expected such an intensive, complicit quality in the project; some saw it as a "loose formation" for "creat(ing) some freedom together."[43]

From one perspective, the project was successful specifically because it allowed room for the diverse expectations, variety of cooperation concepts, and different personalities. From another perspective, however, that allowance also created periods of "running idle"[44] or, as one person put it, "For a long time, I didn't know why I was doing it at all."[45]

36 The following quotations are from interviews with *EGMP* participants.
37 [201905], line 44.
38 [201906], line 11.
39 [201904], line 21.
40 [201903], lines 36–38.
41 Ziemer, *Complicity*, 2016, 26.
42 [201902], lines 386–388, 394–397, 380.
43 [201906], line 589.
44 [201906], line 108.
45 [201905], line 402.

Because complicities develop goals and tasks only during the process itself, the working method is time-consuming and comes with many imponderabilities. Tensions between disciplines are constitutive and productive in this case. But, of course, dissonance can also become destructive, which then demands intensive phases of communication from participants.

Management for such projects needs to include phases of social moderation and motivation, and must be aware of and negotiate the sensitivities of both the art scene and research. Such a task requires full-time working hours and demands specific competences. Current practices within the academic world that require professors and postdocs to manage research projects "on the side" cannot do justice to those projects. In order to "professionalize" artistic-scientific complicities, it would be useful to adapt a practice from the arts, i.e., to create a separate position for such management—with a job description spanning the intersection of production and curating. Without such professional production/curation management, complicities between art and science, particularly with six or more on a team, are barely feasible.

p. 344

4.2 Hierarchies and Roles

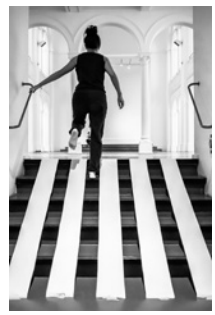
"[C]omplicity is not a hierarchy-free model of action."[46] But hierarchies within complicities are formed and negotiated from within the group rather than externally predetermined. In the *EGMP* project, different roles developed for the participants. Some got more involved in organizational tasks and thus occupied more central positions, some functioned as "interfaces"[47] linking different positions or keeping an eye on group motivation and "ease"[48] in the project, and yet others acted more as "one of many participants"[49] giving "impulses."[50] The project management directed and negotiated dealings with the administrating university, which required a considerable amount of work. At the same time, management was also active as a participating member of the group, which required a constant balancing of the roles of manager and researcher. Switching up roles for participants was, however, a basic principle in the project from the outset. For each of the four workshops, a different participant was named workshop leader, who then organized the respective meetings. Hierarchical reorganization was set up as an ongoing task for the whole group. In the course of a complicity, accomplices can continually change their positions. In fact, the ability of participants to rapidly change roles and use their own various abilities flexibly is key to the success of complicities.[51]

A specific flexibility was required towards the end of the *EGMP* project. The idea of organizing a final exhibition only came up at the end of the first project year. *Throwing Gestures. Protest, Economy and the Imperceptible* was held at Kunstquartier Bethanien in Berlin,

46 Ziemer, *Complicity*, 2016, 28.
47 [201701-06], line 272.
48 [201702-06], line 502.
49 [201702-05], lines 480f.
50 [201702-01], lines 252f.
51 Ziemer, *Complicity*, 2016, 28.

9–16 December 2018, parallel to the final symposium. It featured works from the group, but also included works from outside the circle of participants. Some participants had previous curating experience; others had never done it before. Works by all core participants—media and cultural studies scholars, undergraduate assistants, visual and media artists, and choreographers/performers—were shown, and everyone was, ultimately, positively surprised and very satisfied with both the successful exhibition and the concluding symposium.

p. 345



5 Results of Artistic-Academic Complicities

The evaluation of research projects is usually based on output in the form of publications, conferences, and workshop events, and the echo of that output in science communication. Such formats do not generally highlight the forms of knowledge and abilities gained by the participants in the course of projects. Beyond the production of explicit knowledge made evident in research papers and lectures, there is also an implicit knowledge created that the researchers and artists gain in the process and the practice of the project, and which is available to them as action-oriented knowledge for future research projects. Implicit knowledge is all the more present in projects between art and research that challenge familiar methods of knowledge production.[52] Complicities, in particular, with their social-experimental character, produce results that can't be predicted, emerge without being planned, and may even manifest long after the project has ended.

The participants stated that as a result of their involvement in the *EGMP* project, they deepened their knowledge of gesture, and/or have found new fields opening up to them, e.g., design practice for scientists, or new creative fields for artists.

The overriding outcome for participants, however, was the challenge to their identity (as artists or researchers). The destabilization led some to new confidence in individual professional depth, while others mentioned a gain in orientational knowledge regarding

52 Andreas Broeckmann and Daniela Silvestrin, "The Interfaces of Artistic Research and the Case of Anonymity," in *Book of Anonymity*, ed. Anon Collective (Goleta CA: punctum books, 2020).
53 [201901], line 851.
54 [201903], line 680.

the factors that allow a collaboration to succeed, and yet others learned that "withdrawing"[53] can sometimes be an important competence: "Choose your collaborators wisely!"[54]

Transcending epistemic cultures can create self-reflexivity regarding one's own practice of knowledge production, which, in the best case, questions hegemonic modes of knowledge. Complicities between art and science, with their social-experimental character, confront participants with existential questions and require an exercise in appreciating the diversity of mindsets and interests. Accomplices cannot evade such confrontations as complicities are so intensely entangled. To not only *think* beyond the disciplinary horizons but also *act* collaboratively and experimentally, puts traditional hierarchies to the test. Further development of knowledge production in the direction of more forward-looking, participatory-democratic forms can only be a benefit.

p. 346

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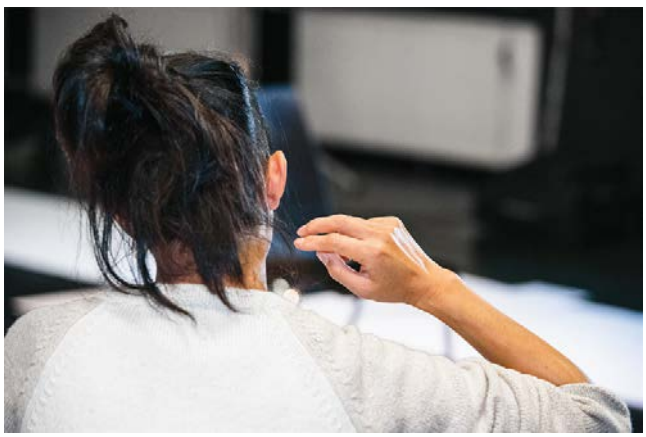
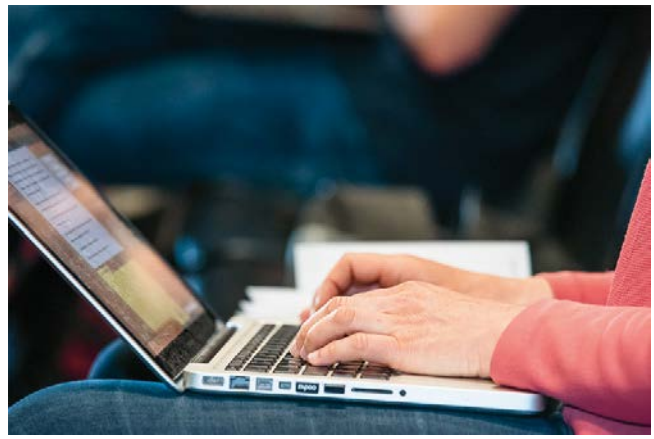
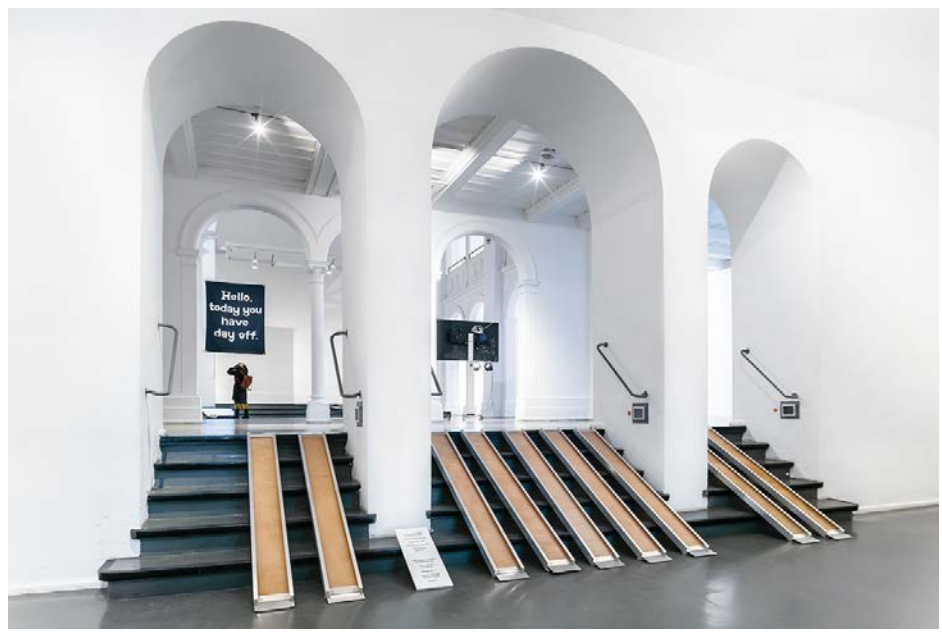




space?
"theatre" to disrupt
do we want the viewer to become

in dealing with gesture?


Hello,
today you
have
day off.

Photographs on pp. 340–46 by Torsten Schmitt Fotografie | Berlin

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Recent publications include the special issue "Artificial Intelligences" in *Zeitschrift für Medienwissenschaft* 21, Bielefeld 2019 (with Christoph Ernst, Jens Schröter, and Andreas Sudmann); "Preferable Futures—Trans-Formation Design in Digital Cultures," Lüneburg 2021 (with Saskia Hebert, Wolfgang Jonas, and Rolf F. Nohr), and "Autonomous Dwelling. Smart-Homes and Care-IT" in *Affective Transformations—Politics, Algorithms, Media*, edited by Bernd Bösel and Serjoscha Wiemer, Lüneburg 2020.

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Alexander Koch is co-founder of the KOW Gallery, which opened in Berlin in 2009 and represents internationally acclaimed artists. After being chairman since 2007, he became the director of "New Patrons" in 2017, a program which initiates art projects in non-art related contexts, commissioned by citizens or communities all over the world—without regard to the commissioners' resources or social position. His work includes exhibitions and publications about his idea of art as anti-representational and socially oriented. As a theorist, Koch has addressed topics such as the withdrawal from art and structural and economic distinctions within the field of art.

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Laurie Young is a Berlin-based choreographer and dancer interested in the embodiment of unauthorized histories and their representation. Her work brings into focus how relationships are choreographed between human and other than human beings in the theater, museum and city.

She was a founding member of Sasha Waltz and Guests and a former ensemble member of Schaubühne am Lehniner Platz. Her own works have been presented at Sophiensäle, Martin-Gropius-Bau, Canada National Arts Centre, and Museum für Naturkunde Berlin, among others. Laurie is working in collaboration with choreographer/dancer Justine A. Chambers, thinking through the body as an archival force of gestures of political resistance. Together they have been named Visiting Dance Artists at the Canada National Arts Centre on the unceded territories of the Algonquin Nation. Laurie was a fellow of the Volkswagen Foundation's "Arts and Science in Motion" program including her participation in *The Entanglement between Gesture, Media, and Politics* research project.

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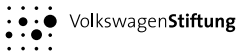

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Throwing Gestures. Protest, Economy, and the Imperceptible

edited by
Florian Bettel
Irina Kaldrack
Konrad Strutz

Gesture in focus—Gestural body movements play an increasingly vital role in disciplines across the board, including politics, art, the media, and technology. In *Throwing Gestures*, contributors examine the recent intensification of interest in gesture and the entanglement between gesture, media, and politics. The gestures discussed pass from body to body and between states of medial representation. Protest movements, the respective aesthetics specific to those movements, the perpetuation of socio-economic crises over many decades, the plight of gig workers in precarious employment and mechanisms for the quantification of work and leisure are some of the issues addressed. What do gestures communicate about society and politics in the context of transformation driven by ubiquitous technology and media?

Fourteen contributors, including curators and art critics, from diverse fields ranging from visual and performing arts, cultural studies, and cultural history, to media theory and political science, shed light on the many aspects that comprise mediatized gestures today. Developed from independent approaches brought together through interdisciplinary collaborations, *Throwing Gestures* combines conversational, artistic, and essayistic contributions with scientific articles. Image and text are juxtaposed. Readers are invited to leaf through the collection or approach the volume as a flipbook. The associative, artistic, performative, and scientific examinations in the preceding research project have found a continuation in both the contents of the book, and in the book itself as a tangible artefact.

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