

THE LANGUAGE OF GESTURE

Thursday November 17, 2022 - 8pm. Union Theater - University of Utah

Curated by Assistant Professor in Screendance, Kym McDaniel

We live in bodies that move through the world, creating physical narratives. An extension of the body, a strategy, a phrase, gestures express a language which transcend words. What does it mean to embody an idea? How can gestures hold stories of reclamation and empowerment?

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Close the Lid, Gently, dir. Ariana Gerstein (2013, Video, 4:56)

An examination of an intimate space, its inhabitants, and a particular image making process using equipment once common in a home or office. The process allows for documentation and reflection, pursued slowly and with the physical limitations of using a scanner instead of a camera. Images are captured one frame at a time, each frame taking around 10 seconds depending on resolution. The individual frames are then put together to construct the runtime of the piece. The results of this process are both a reflection and a transformation of the lived experience as well as the palpable presence of process of making the work.

Métis Femme Bodies, dir. Chanelle Lajoie (2019, Video, 5:51)

Utilizing film as a new form of expression for Chanelle, she was able to apply a collective narrative from those whose experiences mirrored her own; that of a Métis Femme. With this, imposed narratives and gazes are substituted by the voices and bodies of which the experience of confusion, shame, and resilience exist.

Notes On Gesture, dir. Martine Syms (2015, Video, 10:30)

Inspired by a riff on a popular joke “Everybody wanna be a black woman but nobody wanna be a black woman,” Notes On Gesture is a video comparing authentic and dramatic gestures. The piece uses the 17th Century text *Chirologia: Or the Natural Language of the Hand* as a guide to create an inventory of gestures for performance. The piece alternates between title cards proposing hypothetical situations and short, looping clips that respond. The actor uses her body to quote famous, infamous, and unknown women. She repeats and interprets each movement several times, switching from a physical vernacular to acting techniques like blocking and cheating.

Friend or Foe #1, dir. Terrance Houle (2010, Video, 11:02)

A series of short vignettes of gestural sign language/signals reinterpreting history from an indigenous lens.

In My Language, dir. A.M. Baggs (2007, Video, 8:36)

“The absence of hidden metaphors or symbolism in Baggs’s images encourages us to engage

with the world on the same terms as they do, opening a space for radical availability.”
--Julián Gatto, Towards A Diffractive Cinema: The Video Works Of Amanda Melissa Baggs

Language Unknown, dir. Janelle VanderKelen (202, 16mm to Video, 6:10)

This film embraces plant sentience as fact and speculates how beings of the vegetal variety might approach interspecies communication with humans (who are far more sensorially limited). Leaves, mycelium, and roots playfully examine how humans experience the world, and the (supposedly) silent watchers consider what language those swift blurs of human might possibly understand.

Becoming, dir. Ariel Teal (2018, Video, 8:03)

Embodying a body after trauma. Blowjobs, Buffy the Vampire Slayer, and memory are interwoven in attempt to find bodily autonomy and to process.

TW: Mention of sexual assault and trauma