UM, ER it's not what you do it's the way that you do it

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Abstract

This research project is about human communication

interpersonal

face to face

encounters

chats of a sort

dialogue of a kind

It's about what we say and what we don't

It's about ways we say it and

ways

we

don't

say

it

gaps

pauses

silences

hesitations

little moments

when - very - little - might - have - been said

gestures

feelings

At the centre of the research is an image of someone about to talk. They shuffle a bit, look down and scratch left wrist and forearm with right hand. Look up to the right, brief smile, look down again. Straighten left arm and pull up sleeve with right hand. Look up to speak. Stall. Look down. Left hand over back of right hand. Left hand squeezes right hand. Pause. Turn body slightly sideways, look up, speak.

This practice-based project considers the relationship between empathy and an awareness of non-verbal aspects of human communication – the tiny gaps, pauses, hesitations and physical gestures. It seeks to explore and address the principal question of how sensitivity to the non-verbal and to the value of hesitation, drawn from my experience as a medical general practitioner, has a role to play in initiating, directing and lending definition to a fine art practice that involves participation, text, video and performance.

The research is distinguished by the way in which it considers the potential of bringing approaches from clinical medical care into the field of fine art making in order to illuminate understanding of how hesitation, gesture and the non-verbal, contribute to empathetic human communication. The manner in which the project was developed and way the thesis has been written, reflects its subject and reappraises the perceived 'failure' of hesitation. This is supported and informed by my reading of Georges Perec's 'meta discursive reflections.'[1]

[1] Michael Sheringham, "Georges Perec: Uncovering the Infra-Ordinary," in *Everyday Life : Theories and Practices from Surrealism to the Present*, ed. Michael Sheringham (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2006)., 262.

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Chapter 1. Introduction

1.1 Background

My fascination with the way that people communicate stems from over thirty years working as a doctor, a lengthy hospital stay as a child and having been run over by a car just before my medical finals.[2] These two formative experiences of vulnerability as a patient have informed my awareness of the pivotal role of interpersonal communication. In hospital, small things such as a touch, smile, tone of voice, someone taking time to pause, eye contact, or the absence of any of these, had a considerable effect on how I felt. It seemed clear that tiny things the staff did or didn't, do or say, had a significant impact on my experience. Whilst some people really understood my situation, others didn't. These first-hand experiences of empathy, and its absence, have influenced the way I work as a doctor. I try to practise with sensitivity and compassion, to help people navigate their way through difficult, traumatic and seemingly more routine circumstances. Part of this involves using empathy as an approach, to try and understand their situation and perspective. Much of this involves listening and observation, which involves paying attention to the way that words are said. As David Haslam has identified:

> Listening means taking note of the content of their speech and the gaps, pauses and hesitations. Listening means observing and noting the way that they speak: their intonation, facial expressions, posture, whether they sit still or move a lot and their gesticulations. Listening means noting areas of incongruence between what has been said and the way it has been said which may indicate something of significance for the patient.[3]

Having listened, empathy also means 'demonstrating' that you have some sort of understanding of someone.[4] This response involves both verbal and 'open' non-verbal communication of gestures and facial expression.[5] It might include waiting to allow them to

[2] Aged 13 I was immobile for 3 months in hospital in a body plaster cast, following back surgery, then wore a back cast for a further 3 months afterwards. When I was run over as an adult I sustained multiple fractures of my pelvis and spine.
[3] David A Haslam, "Who Cares?," *BJGP* (2007)., 991.
[4] Alex Watson and David Gillespie, *Modern Guide to Gp Consulting : Six S for Success* (2014)., 17.
[5] Ibid., 11.

speak more. The significance of hesitations that occur in consultations, and the benefit of allowing them to be and to happen, is evident to me from my experience of general practice.

My interest in inter-personal communication extends beyond health-care. Over the years my impression is that how we communicate is just as important, if not more, than what we communicate. Whether in shops, on a bus or a train, or in a gallery, subtle aspects of non-verbal and verbal communication can have a marked effect on people's experience. How we perceive and respond to people, influences the course of encounters with them. This applies to meeting people in art contexts too and is pertinent to artistic practice, which often involves live components, such as a participatory events or performance.

The core themes explored here are hesitation, gesture and empathy. The research aims to investigate how sensitivity to non-verbal aspects of interpersonal communication and the value of hesitation, can influence and shape a fine art practice that includes participation, text, video and performance. The creative practice is informed firstly by empathy adopted from medical practice - thus, bringing an approach from clinical care into the sphere of fine art making; and secondly, by the work of Georges Perec. As a consequence, the relationship between medical practice and artistic practice has been brought into focus. Whilst major distinctions between these fields exist, there are also connections and common points of contact between them. For example, art and medicine frequently operate from purpose-built buildings; which affect how the objects and activities that take place within them are viewed, as critic Brian O' Doherty has observed.[6] In addition, art and medicine have their own specialist language and unwritten codes of social behaviour. Both institutions tend to be staffed by people 'in the know' who are on home territory and at ease with these rules. However, for any visitors unfamiliar with the conventions or language, these places can be difficult to visit. The language of galleries can be alienating for people, as artist Andrea Fraser has identified.[7] This discomfort happens in many medical contexts too, when use of specialised language and unfamiliar 'practices and procedures' contribute to an unequal relationship between patient and doctor.[8] Another type of connection between art and medicine, is uncertainty; which is discussed in Chapter Four. Uncertainty is a familiar feature of both medical and fine art practice. The act of artistic creativity itself is often beset by

[6] Brian O'Doherty, *Inside The White Cube: The Ideology Of The Gallery Space* (1999).,14.
[7] Andrea Fraser, Alexander Alberro, *Museum Highlights: The Writings of Andrea Fraser* (2007)., xxvii.
[8] Alan Clarke, *The Sociology of Healthcare* (2001)., 225.

doubt: with the final outcome of an art-piece only becoming apparent, very near to its completion, as artist Emma Cocker has identified.[9] This shifting process mirrors uncertainties that may exist within general practice consultations, particularly if people present at a very early stage in their illness.[10] An accurate medical diagnosis often only becomes evident with time, at a later stage in the disease process, and after further consultations and/or investigations.

During the process of this research, two of my teenage children unexpectedly required major surgery, one with a diagnosis of cancer. This brought experience of illness to the fore and resulted in an eight month break in my studies. It also had a marked effect on my work, shifting the focus of research towards questioning the perceived 'failure' of hesitation. As a direct consequence, this thesis is intentionally informed by hesitation, which also mirrors its halting timeline.

[9] Emma Cocker "Tactics for Not Knowing: Preparing for the Unexpected.", 127.
[10] Tate and Tate *The Doctor's Communication Handbook*, 110.

1.2 Key Themes

Most people hesitate. As GP Roger Neighbour states 'sometimes our speech becomes hesitant and awkward.'[11] We don't always know what to do or to say. Within medical consultations, hesitations and pauses are an extremely important aspect of communication. They can indicate that something 'of importance' may be lurking beneath the surface, on the part of the speaker.[12] It may be that the real reason for their attendance is about to become apparent: and when it does, the conversation can completely change direction. Vocal hesitations sometimes suggest that a person is too frightened to speak: what they have to say might be too unbearable for them to hear or too difficult to say. Or they might just feel a bit anxious and be worried about how they will be received. Or, know what to say but can't find the words to express it. Or they were going to say something but have now decided not to. And if there was an elephant in the room, it is staying there for now. Some pauses in consultations are precursors of more fluent speech.[13] At other times, hesitations remain just that: pauses. No more words are spoken. No more information revealed: except that, this person appeared to want to say something – but didn't. But the hesitations aren't noted in isolation: their gestures, posture, facial expressions and tone of voice are all noticed too.[14] Did they seem settled and ok when they paused? Or did that glint in their eye and avoidance of eye contact suggest otherwise? Were they smiling and looking cheerful but the quiver in their voice indicated something else might be underneath? The vocal hesitations, and the physical gestures of the hesitater, convey meaning and information to the viewer.[15] Thus, seemingly inarticulate hesitations do communicate, without saying words: they convey information in subtle ways and can change the direction of conversations.

Gestures are present in every conversation: as whether speaking or listening, people invariably gesture.[16] For linguist David Mc Neil, gestures are inseparable from language and an integral part of it.[17] In medical consultations, gestures, are an important source of information about a patient, alongside their spoken words. Gestures are also a way to

[11] Roger Neighbour, *The Inner Consultation How to Develop and Effective and Intuitive Consulting Style*, Second Edition ed. (Oxford, San Francisco: Radcliffe Publishing, 2005; repr., 2013), 246.
[12] Ibid, 6.
[13] Goran Kjellmer, "Hesitation. In Defence of Er and Erm," *English Studies* 84, no. 2 (2003), 190.
[14] Neighbour, *The Inner Consultation How to Develop and Effective and Intuitive Consulting Style*, 129-30.
[15] Watson and Gillespie, *Modern Guide to Gp Consulting : Six S for Success*, 47.
[16] Michael T Motley, "On Whether One Can(Not) Not Communicate," *Western Journal of Speech Communication* 54 (1990), 2.
[17] David McNeill, *Gesture and Thought* (Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago Press ; 2007), 4.

convey information and care. Gestures alter how people feel; both the person gesticulating, and the one perceiving them. When very ill, communication with gesture becomes more important, as words fade. Although gestures appear emphatic and familiar; when viewed in isolation, abstracted from the context of their conversation, mostly their meaning is uncertain, and not known.

A common understanding of empathy is the 'ability to understand and share the feelings of others.'[18] This involves paying close attention to what someone says, as well as the way they say it: their bodily movements and vocal intonation. For the phenomenologist Edith Stein, bodily movements, actions and gesture were key to understanding other people, using empathy. This involves knowing '…what is expressed in facial expressions and gestures' as well as, '…what is hidden behind them.'[19] Conversing with empathy also involves paying close attention to one's own bodily communication and recognising 'the effect of your own behaviour' on others.[20]

During this creative-practice research I have used empathy, adopted directly from medical consultations, as an approach to all art making. Initially, empathy was directed towards the audience but with time its remit was expanded to include titles, and the text surrounding art-pieces such as emails, flyers, and descriptions for exhibitions. Eventually empathy was extended directly to the art-work and to this thesis. This process of extending its use to the writing, informed my subsequent decision of intentionally incorporating hesitation into the thesis.

In the last thirty years there has been an increasing emphasis on empathy in healthcare and other service industries. Teaching communication skills to medical students is now a much more prominent part of medical education than when I qualified in medicine in 1986. Empathy is taught both as a concept and as a communication skill: something to learn, to do, to perform.[21] Having been on the receiving end of this, it is apparent to me how valuable empathy is when working effectively, and how hollow it can feel when it isn't. Sometimes

[18] "Oxford Dictionaries," https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/empathy.
[19] Edith Stein, *On the Problem of Empathy*, 3rd rev. ed., The Collected Works of Edith Stein (Washington, D.C: ICS Publications, 1989), 5.
[20] Peter Tate and Liz Tate, *The Doctor's Communication Handbook*, 7th ed. (London ; New York: Radcliffe, 2014), 117.
[21] Sundip Patel et al, "Curricula for Empathy and Compassion Training in Medical Eduction: A Systematic Review," *PLoS ONE* 14, no. 8 (2019), https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0221412, 4.

people just seem to be going through the motions of using empathy, as Tate has observed.[22] This means it can often feel inauthentic, as if something is being *done* to me, perhaps for their benefit more than mine.

This pressure to communicate in a specific way, is evident in the emotional labour of phrases and smiles of 'have a nice day' and 'would you like help with your packing?' offered to retail customers. Emotional labour, as described by the sociologist Arlie Hochschild is 'the management of feeling to create a publicly observable facial and bodily display' can often feel inauthentic.[23] As can the seemingly mechanical nature of customer service phone calls that involve algorithms of questions and phrases.[24] The inauthenticity of this type of communication resonates with the pressure to present confidence in other areas of life. In the competitive environment of academia, the onus is to present oneself as successful.[25] This is evident from the tenor of conversations at university and the language of the Newcastle University website.[26] I have felt under pressure to present this thesis in a positive, confident, articulate way. Reading extensive biographical, research details can be intimidating especially when not one's own. Equally it is stultifying and frustrating feeling under pressure to promote oneself likewise. Whilst successes are true, they don't tell the full story as glitches, hazards, difficulties and failures are often hidden, as Carson et al observe.[27] This overwhelming emphasis on the positive, can encourage a version of people and their research akin to an airbrushed photograph: in turn pressurising others to do likewise. Whilst successes are promoted, failures tend to be hidden, with the risk of increased personal anxiety levels.[28] A mismatch exists between what is experienced and what is communicated.

In medical consultations, understanding another person involves attention to, and awareness of, any incongruities between what is said and how it is said. Discrepancies

[22] Tate and Tate, *The Doctor's Communication Handbook*, 98.
[23] Arlie Russell Hochschild, *The Managed Heart : Commercialization of Human Feeling*, Updated ed. (Berkeley, Calif. ; London: University of California Press, 2012), 7.
[24] Anthony Dukes and Yi Zhu, "Why Is Customer Service So Bad? Because It's Profitable," *Harvard Business Review* (2019), https://hbr.org/2019/02/why-is-customer-service-so-bad-because-its-profitable.
[25] Lydia Carson, Christoph Bartneck, and Kevin Voges, "Over-Competitiveness in Academia: A Literature Review," *Disruptive Science and Technology* 1, no. 4 (2013), 184.
[26] "Newcastle University Research Strengths," https://www.ncl.ac.uk/research/strengths/.
[27] Carson, Bartneck, and Voges, "Over-Competitiveness in Academia: A Literature Review", 187.
[28] Ibid, 187.

between a person's spoken words and their non-verbal behaviour is known as 'non-verbal leakage' and often indicates that something of significance, lies beneath.[29]

In this research-project, I eventually approached the thesis with empathy. This involved reflecting on my research process and taking note of my gaps, pauses and hesitations; things I wanted to say but wasn't sure I could. Acknowledgement of the discrepancies between the content of these hesitations and the way I felt pressured to write, alerted me to their significance. This enabled me to include writing that is hesitant in nature, within this thesis. The decision was also informed by my readings of the function of meta-discursive reflections in the writing of Georges Perec. This influence is discussed in Chapter Two.

A hesitation in a conversation, is a space of time, a pause, a gap. It waits, we wait. Thoughts wander, feelings imperceptibly change and move in out of consciousness. Hesitations can be momentary, seconds, barely noticed. They can be repeated, last longer. Take years. Hesitations alter the feel and interpretation of what comes next. Pauses and hesitations of speech, have intentionally been adopted into the content and structure of this thesis. This is a special freedom possible within the field of Fine Art, and as such is to be celebrated.

The hesitations occur in the form of notes which have been written during the research-process. They all stem from a focus on gesture, and empathy. These notes are printed in grey and juxtaposed within the body of this text un-announced. These interruptions are a pivotal part of the research process and of my method of communication with the reader. They pertain to the uncertainty and not knowing of what gestures mean; and the difficulty of ever putting into words the intertwined, intricate processes of interpersonal communication; that often happens in fleeting moments, without recourse to speech.

In addition, links to a series of reports on earlier art-pieces , some of which were influential to the final pieces of this research-project, are listed in Chapter Five. These reports, written in an anecdotal manner, are a summary of reflections I made immediately after the art-pieces were shown to an audience. This informal text has purposefully been included to highlight the nature of my working process, show the evolution of the research-project and development of the creative practice; and to complement the differing academic and hesitant writing styles within this thesis. The full text of each report is in the Appendix.

[29] Neighbour, *The Inner Consultation How to Develop and Effective and Intuitive Consulting Style*, 109.

1.3 Practice

I will now introduce the broad historical context of the practice base of this project, focusing on salient areas of thematic resonance. My interest in the human-ness of interpersonal relationships and the brief, slight, understated events that can influence these experiences, is informed by my work as a GP. My fascination with this process has become a point of reference and departure to my work as a creative practitioner over a period of fifteen years. My artistic practice involves live-events, participation, text, video, performance and object-making. Thematically its focus is on interpersonal communication, the everyday, the relationship between audience and artwork, and the experience of the audience. I am interested in the subtle effects of personal kinaesthetic and embodied knowledge that arise from action and activity. I will draw connections between my practice and the 'living art' of Fluxus[30] and to relational aesthetics[31] which, as the writer Hannah Higgins noted, both involve 'social relationships as a feature of their communicative standard.'[32]

Whilst observing that live activity in culture spans history, including Renaissance spectacles and Mediaeval Passion Plays, art historian Roselee Goldberg traced liveness in art to the disruptive Futurist performances in 1910.[33] Though these events provoked audience participation, it was done in an antagonistic way, which, as art critic Boris Groys noted, made it impossible for spectators to remain neutral.[34] Absurdity, unintelligible sounds and words, gesturing, musical instruments and activity was used in Dada (formed in 1916) performances by artists such as Hugo Ball, Tristan Tzara and Hans Arp. In response to world war one, they parodied themselves, their art, critics and society. Their live works involved audience participation, but in less confrontational ways than the Futurists.[35] These themes resonate with my interest in gesture and language and use of parody, to describe my work, and to

[30] Fluxus began in 1961 and refers to a network of artists from different disciplines and countries with an experimental, democratic approach to creativity which often favoured process over the final outcome. Works were simple, non-commercial, often live and involving audience participation. There was no all- encompassing style to Fluxus. Artists involved include Alison Knowles, Yoko Ono, George Brecht, George Maciunas, Joseph Beuys, Alice Hutchins and Robert Watts.

[31] The term 'relational art' was first used by Bourriaud to identify art that takes 'its theoretical horizon the realm of human interactions and its social context, rather than the assertion of an independent and private symbolic space'

[32] B Hannah Higgins, "Dead Mannequin Walking: Fluxus and the Politics of Reception," in *Perform Repeat Record*, ed. Amelia Jones and Adrian Heathfield (Bristol, Chicago: 2012), 65.

[33] RoseLee Goldberg, *Performance Art : From Futurism to the Present*, 3rd ed., World of Art (London: Thames & Hudson, 2011), 11.

[34] Claire Bishop and Boris Groys, "Bring the Noise: Futurism," *Tate Etc* May, no. 16 (2009).

[35] Ibid.

critique language that accompanies art and institutions. My use of humour is both a means to connect with people and a defence mechanism. I deliberately resist/avoid employing provocation as a means to get audience members to participate in live events, preferring them to have free choice about whether or not to take part.

I would say that my approach also resonates with that of artists of the Gutai group.[36] In *Please Draw Freely* (1956) by Yoshihara and *Please Walk on Here* (1956) by Shimamoto Shōzō, audiences were encouraged to take part in, and to be part of the creation of art. This had the effect of making the relationship between artist and audience more equal and less hierarchical, as curator Ming Tiampo has noted.[37] Art historian Nina Horisaki-Christens has rightly identified that this inclusion of visitors in making artwork, altered the relationship between the audience and the art object. She stated:

> In each of these cases the visitor was co-opted into the artwork itself, making their complicity in the viewer-object relationship both active and ambiguous. This ambiguity made visible the relational aspect of the work of art, drawing it into a social space that positioned it as a dynamic point of contact between artist and viewer.[38]

This 'point of contact between artist and viewer' resonates with participatory work that I have made during this PhD research such as *Synchrocrispicity* 1 (2013) *Outstanding Standing Ovation* (2014)**.** It can also be situated in relation to the audience involvement typical of the work of Fluxus artists in the 1950s/60s, some of which embraced non-verbal communication. Art historian Amelia Jones has identified that 'foregrounding' of the body within 'the making' and the 'encounter' with art was recognised in the gestural actions of Jackson Pollocks painting, by Alan Kaprow.[39] Awareness of gestures, and the relationship of art to its audience was also affected by artists such as John Cage, Allan Kaprow, Alison Knowles, and Yoko Ono. For example, in *4'33"* (1952) by John Cage, part of the implication

[36] The radical Gutai group was formed in Japan in 1954 by Jiro Yoshihara and Shozo Shimamoto. They favoured freedom of individual expression and live performance and rejected traditional artistic practices. Many early works involved using bodily gestures, such as Shiraga *Kazuo's Challenge to the Mud* 1955 when he rolled semi naked in mud. Artists included Atsuko Tanaka, Takesada Matsutani and Kanayma Akira.
[37] Ming Tiampo, *Gutai : Decentering Modernism* (Chicago ; London: The University of Chicago Press, 2011), 29.
[38] Nina Horisaki-Christens, "On the Blurring of Art and Life," *Art21* (2012).
[39] Amelia Jones and Adrian Heathfield, *Perform, Repeat, Record : Live Art in History* (Bristol: Intellect, 2012), 40.

of its extended 'silence' was that the audience experienced, so to speak, themselves.[40] While, *18 Happenings in 6 parts* (1959) by Allan Kaprow had its audience actively engaged in a space, following instructions, read by performers.[41] Using Kaprow's score they performed random words, actions and noises, without any improvisation.[42] Art historian Alexander Klar has described this audience involvement as resulting in the razing of 'the wall between active performer and passive audience'[43] Whilst their relationship had clearly been changed, I am interested to note that those taking part may not necessarily be positive, pro-active participants: they might have felt pressured to become involved. Indeed the critic Claire Bishop has described the relationship between artist and audience in *18 Happenings in 6 parts* (1959) as coercive which gives a very different perspective.[44] Whilst I am unable to accurately assess the experience of the audience in *18 Happenings in 6 parts* (1959) I am aware of coercion in live work and clear of my attempts to avoid this.

Thematically Fluxus centered around experimental music, live events, chance, simplicity, everyday actions and gestures, informality and interaction between audience and performers. Art historian Anna Dezeuze has noted that 'collective production' and 'increased…spectator participation' in Fluxus also undermined 'traditional notions of authorship' in art.[45] In *Shuffle* (1961) by Alison Knowles performers shuffled 'through the audience' to the performance area.[46] In *Apples* (1963) by Ben Vautier, four performers ate four apples.[47] While *Whoop Event* **(**1964) by Ken Friedman involved people running in a circle and whooping together in unison.[48] This focus on the everyday, gestures and activity resonates with broad themes of this creative-practice research which have encompassed, gesture, non-verbal communication, activities and the everyday. For example, *Hand Cleansing Techniques Number One: how to wash your hands with soap and water* (2014) in

[40] Judith Rodenbeck, "Creative Acts of Consumption or, Death in Venice," in *The 'Do-It-Yourself' Artwork*, ed. Anna Dezeuze (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010), 71.
[41] Ibid, 71.
[42] Lea Vergine, *Art on the Cutting Edge : A Guide to Contemporary Movements* (Milan: Skira, 2001), 40.
[43] Alexander Klar et al., *Fluxus at 50* (Bielefeld: Kerber, 2012), 12.
[44] Bishop and Groys, "Bring the Noise: Futurism."
[45] Anna Dezeuze, "Everyday Life, 'Relational Aesthetics' and the 'Transfiguration of the Commonplace'," *Journal of Visual Art Practice* 5, no. 3 (2006), 148.
[46] The Fluxus Peformance Workbook, (Performance Research, 2002), 69.
[47] Ibid, 103.
[48] Ibid, 39.

Appendix H. The involvement of human activity and the senses, within the experience of Fluxus art has been articulated by the artist Alison Knowles who stated that

> Fluxus was thought to be anti-establishment and anti-art. Many objects and events however were not intended to be anti-art at all, emphasizing the heretofore neglected sensibilities of smell, sight, touch and task as a relevant base for art-making and performance[49]

This sensory involvement chimes with embodied experience of gestures, movement and activity with other people and my desire to bring 'life' into a room, exhibition or piece of art-work. Art museums invariably contain objects but at times they can appear to lack life. I equate activity, movement and interaction with people, with life and I am interested to introduce it into artwork; to use its capacity to affect and alter the artwork and our encounter with it.

My concern with experience and incorporating liveness in my own work reflects a change that occurred in this field of practice in the 1950s and 1960s. The critic and curator Guy Brett identified this as a 'perceptual shift' that moved 'away from a static and towards a dynamic interpretation of reality.'[50] Brett pointed to works such as *Bichos* (1963) by Lygia Clark, *Sand Machine* (1963) by David Medalla and *Parangolé Cape 8* (1966) by Hélio Oiticica as pieces that introduced audience participation through their *'haptic, sensorial dialogue with the spectator's body.'*[51] Reflecting on these works, I realise that I may have taken this 'haptic dialogue' that exists in my work, between the audience, art-objects, and movement, somewhat for granted. As Higgins notes, touch as a 'perceptual system' has largely been 'ignored in Western Culture'.[52] In my medical career I am used to touching and aware of its value as a means of communication, and a source of knowledge: whether examining people with a 'mediating object' such as a stethoscope, blood pressure cuff or thermometer or directly with my hands, say taking a pulse. In addition, I am aware of the effect of movement, posture and touch on emotion, particularly from a medical perspective.

[49] Alison Knowles, "Fluxus," http://www.aknowles.com/fluxus.html.
[50] Guy Brett, "Three Pioneers," in *The 'Do-It-Yourself'artwork*, ed. Anna Dezeuze (Manchester; New York: Manchester University Press, 2010), 28.
[51] Ibid, 31.
[52] Higgins, "Dead Mannequin Walking: Fluxus and the Politics of Reception.", 67.

We can also see the work of Lygia Clark expanding the role that activity can play, and the implication this has. Her series of *Propositions* such as *Caminhando* (1963) and *Air and Stone* (1966) created situations for participants to handle paper, scissors, plastic bags and a stone. A person both created the work, became a part of it and experienced this involvement for themselves. Notions of creator/author, audience and participant became rather fluid. The writer and curator Andre Lepecki has noted that Clark's *Camihando* (1963) invited 'everyone to experience his or her own body as an agent of choice, in an open process of discovery immanent to the performance of an act.'[53] That Clark offered the audience an invitation and choice, to experience taking part in something active, resonates with my motivations in developing specific art-works such as *The Great Forced LOLathon* (2013) and *Outstanding Standing Ovation* (2014). I am clear however of the gulf between Clark's intentions and my own. She viewed her work as therapeutic with some of it, as Lucian Arslan observed, having the capacity to 'treat' or benefit those with psychological disorders.[54] By contrast I neither regard my own work as therapeutic nor intend it to be.

This broad view of artistic practice is expanded in later chapters through detailed case studies which help situate and illuminate the practical research and outcomes, in relation to the key themes of this project: empathy, hesitation and gesture. Chapter Three includes discussion of relational aesthetics and a case study of *Forced Empathy*[55] by Tania Bruguera. Chapter Four concludes with two case studies: *Hand Movie* (1966) and *Trio A* (1966) by Yvonne Rainer and *Becoming* (2013) by Candice Breitz, in relation to the themes of gesture and empathy.

This research project has been informed by my reading of Georges Perec which has acted as a complementary means of informing, contextualising and validating my creative practice. Perec's observation of everyday experience intersects with interests of Fluxus and examinations of social activity within relational aesthetics. In addition, the content and form

[53] Cornelia H. Butler et al., *Lygia Clark : The Abandonment of Art, 1948-1988*, 279.

[54] Mourão Luciana Arslan, "Lygia Clark's Practices of Care and Teaching: Somaesthetic Contributions for Art Education," *Journal of Somaesthetics* 3, no. 1&2 (2017), 85.

[55] Tania Bruguera, *Forced Empathy,* 2018. I saw this piece, exhibited at Tate Modern from October 2018 to February 2019, in person. It consists of a white room perfused with excessive eucalyptus so that anyone who enters finds that their eyes water profusely. To enter, visitors have to pass between two museum staff members who stand at the entrance. They stamp the title of the exhibition onto the wrists of the visitors. This is a progressive number, consisting of the number of people migrating in a year plus the number of migrant deaths.

of his book *An Attempt at Exhausting a Place in Paris*[56] and essay *Think/Classify*[57] have resonances with the themes of empathy, hesitation and gesture.

1.4 Thesis Structure

The thesis is structured as follows:

Chapter 1: Introduction to background and key themes.

Chapter 2: *Georges Perec*: influence of meta-discursive reflections.

Chapter 3: *Turning to others*: Empathy. Artist case study one: Tania Bruguera.

Chapter 4: *Encounters with others*: Hesitation; Gesture; Emotion. Artist case study two: Yvonne Rainer. Artist case study three: Candice Breitz.

Chapter 5: *Creative Practice*: Broad Overview; Developmental and Speculative work; Resolved Works.

Conclusion: and next steps.

Appendices: Informal reflective reports of 24 earlier art-pieces that informed the final work.

List of Documented works on Memory Stick Files 1-26: Unless stated otherwise, photographs are by K Stobbart.

Bibilography.

[56] Georges Perec, *An Attempt at Exhausting a Place in Paris*, trans. Marc Lowenthal (Cambridge, Mass.: Wakefield Press, 2010).
[57] "Think/Classify," in *Species of Spaces and Other Pieces*, ed. John Sturrock (London: Penguin, 2008).

Chapter 2. Georges Perec

This chapter considers the connections between the work of Georges Perec (1936-1982), medical practice, empathy and hesitation. Perec's non-fiction writing, particularly *An Attempt at Exhausting a Place in Paris* has directly informed this research project both thematically and methodologically.[58]

Perec's working methods resonate directly with my instinctive way of making art, and his texts have validated my approach to creativity. Two of the main themes of this research project namely hesitation and empathy, resonate directly with the content of *An Attempt at Exhausting a Place in Paris*. Furthermore, the methods of watching, and of writing, that Perec employed to create it, relate directly to the observation, and communication with empathy that takes place within general practice consultations.

Perec's work, and his methodology in *An Attempt at Exhausting a Place in Paris* are discussed. This focuses on four facets of it: his use of observations, his use of reflections, his inclusion of doubt, uncertainty and failure, and his use of lists. These methods have been employed as a strategy in a number of projects, related to the key themes of this research: hesitation, empathy and gesture, and are written in chapters one, two, and three. The methods of Perec's writing that have informed the structure and content of this thesis are discussed in this section.

Georges Perec was a French writer, documentalist, filmmaker, and significant member of the OuLiPo group. As observed by the writer and translator John Sturrock, the OuLiPo, or 'workshop of potential literature', was a group of mathematicians and writers in France, known for their use of self-imposed writing techniques.[59] Many of Perec's fiction and non-fiction works, are written using constrained writing techniques that the OuLiPo devised. For example, his novel *A Void*, which was written without ever using the letter 'e'. Frequently Perec's work contains minute observations of everyday experience, recorded in his text, essays and books. His non-fiction, in particular, uses classifications and lists, to make sense of what he has observed. His writing is restrained and melancholic, but often incorporates lightness through use of humour, wordplay and reflective questioning. Recent international

[58] *An Attempt at Exhausting a Place in Paris*.
[59] John Sturrock, "Introduction to Species of Spaces and Other Pieces," in *Species of Spaces and Other Pieces*, ed. John Sturrock (London: Penguin, 2008), xv.

contemporary art shows such as exhibitions in Warsaw and Romania are indicative of an increased interest in the influence of Perec's writing in relation to artistic practice.[60]

In *An Attempt at Exhausting A Place in Paris* Perec details observations from the Place Saint-Sulpice in Paris, from the vantage point of three cafés and a bench. He sat at each location, observing what was happening around him and writing it down. His observations spanned three days and a total of seventeen hours. At the start of his recordings, Perec stated his aim was to describe '*that which is generally not taken note of, that which is not noticed, that which has no importance: what happens when nothing happens other than the weather, people, cars and clouds'.*[61] In this research project, I have explored aspects of interpersonal communication and gesture, which are often taken for granted or over-looked. In order to demonstrate the significance of Perec on my working methodology, it is essential to explore these connections further.

Observation and Documentation: As has been noted, Perec utilises lists to record his observations. Initially, in *An Attempt at Exhausting a Place in Paris* he largely documented buildings and signposts that were instantly visible, but increasingly came to focus on other elements, such as the people around him and what they were carrying, as well as the movement of vehicles, birds and the wind. In one section, he notes:

> A somewhat empty 87, a half-full 86
>
> The children are playing under the pillars of the church.
>
> A beautiful white dog with black spots.
>
> A light in a building (is it the hôtel Récamier?)
>
> An almost empty 96
>
> Wind.[62]

Perec's method is distinctive. The scholar Michael Sheringham notes that he includes descriptions and classifications of his observations, which are interspersed with questions

[60] The 'Species of Spaces' exhibition at the National Museum of Art, Romania, 19.4.2019-14.7.2019
The 'LIFE.A MANUAL' exhibition at Warsaw National Gallery of Art, Poland, 4.2.2017-23.4.2017.
[61] Perec, *An Attempt at Exhausting a Place in Paris*, 3.
[62] Ibid, 24.

and meandering reflections on his experience.[63] Perec often utilises humour and juxtaposes seemingly unrelated observations. These unexpected associations, as cultural theorist Ben Highmore has suggested, highlight 'the significance of the insignificant'.[64] Professor of Fine Art Stephen Johnstone correctly identifies the 'noticing' and 'attending to' that are a feature of Perec's writing.[65] This resonates with the 'listening to' and 'responding thoughtfully' that are central to GP care.[66] Interestingly, Perec also identifies the failures inherent in this methodology, which can be seen as simultaneously creative and critical.[67] His written observations, which include describing similar objects and movements in many different ways, gives the impression of an authentic account of what he has seen. For example:

> Across the street, at the tabac, the bridge players from
>
> the second floor are getting some air
>
> A motorcycle cop parks his motorcycle and enters the
>
> tabac; he comes back out almost immediately, I don't
>
> know what he bought (cigarettes? a ballpoint pen,
>
> a stamp, cachous, a packet of tissues?)
>
> Cityrama bus
>
> A motorcycle cop. An apple-green Citroën van.[68]

It is interesting to note that his observations change subtly throughout the book, indicating the difficulty of his endeavour. At times, it becomes evident that it is not possible to record everything he sees, and categories are used to aid the documentation process, such as:

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[63] Sheringham, "Georges Perec: Uncovering the Infra-Ordinary.", 264.
[64] Ben Highmore, "Georges Perec and the Significance of the Insignificant," in *The Afterlives of Georges Perec*, ed. Rowan Wilken and Justin Clemens (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2017), 105.
[65] Stephen Johnstone, "Recent Art and the Everyday," in *The Everyday*, ed. Stephen Johnstone, Documents of Contemporary Art (Whitechapel and The MIT Press), 18.
[66] John Gillies and Mark Sheehan, "Perceptual Capacity and the Good Gp: Invisible, yet Indispensable for Quality of Care," *BJGP* (2005).
[67] Joanne Lee, "On Not Staying Put: Georges Perec's 'Inter(in)Disciplinarity' as an Approach to Research," *Literary Geographies* 3, no. 1 (2017), 8.
[68] Perec *An Attempt at Exhausting a Place in Paris*,19.

Night, winter: unreal appearance of the passersby

A man carrying carpets

Lots of people, lots of shadows, an empty 63[69]

Perec's difficulties in recording these observations efficiently, reflect problems I experienced documenting people's hand gestures during this research. This is discussed in chapter two.

Initially, Perec's writing appears objective. Yet, with time, he begins to incorporate his own views, as he notes 'elegant women, aging beaus…potbellies, old skins, old schmucks, young schmucks, idlers, deliverymen, scowlers and windbags' [70] Furthermore, he occasionally shares small indications of how he is feeling, which can be seen when he writes:

Paris-Vision: a double-decker bus, not very full.

It is five after four. Weary eyes. Weary words.

An apple-green 2CV

(I'm cold; I order a brandy)[71]

At other times, Perec draws attention to the shortcomings of his methodology. For example, when describing the mopeds in his line of vision, he acknowledges that his focus on the vehicles meant that he had missed the movement of cars around him. He writes:

> There are only two mopeds still parked on the sidewalk in front of the café now: I didn't see the third one leave (it was a velosolex) (Obvious limits to such an undertaking: even when my goal is just to observe, I don't see what takes place a few meters from me: I don't notice, for example, that cars are parking).[72]

Through this acknowledgment and articulation of the limitations of his method, Perec resists conventions of only presenting perceived achievement and success. By so doing, he adds an air of authenticity to his account, developing empathy from his audience through their

[69] Perec, *An Attempt at Exhausting a Place in Paris*, 25.
[70] Ibid, 18.
[71] Ibid, 19.
[72] Ibid, 15.

recognition of the human-ness of failure: which, as Le Feuvre observes is familiar to 'all individuals and societies.'[73]

The reflections contained within Perec's writing interrupt the flow of the text and function almost as an 'aside' presented directly to the reader, deepening the relationship between the author and audience. This shift in the flow of text evokes the pauses, used by Bertolt Brecht in his plays, which, according to Walter Benjamin, 'rendered people's 'gestures quotable.'[74] This punctuation of his observations, with more personal reflections, has the effect of making them, and his experience, more notable.

This use of sharing personal reflections is evident within many people's conversations. Empathising with another person involves understanding their situation and perspective. When talking, especially with friends, personal disclosure can act as a prompt for the other person to speak, hence more information is shared. In medical practice I frequently use reflection as a method to enhance empathy, but almost invariably avoid personal disclosure, as this is rarely relevant. For example, if someone has suffered a bereavement I might comment 'yes it's so difficult isn't it...' but I would avoid any direct details of my own personal experience of it. Sometimes spoken, overt meta-reflection on the process of a consultation, can help it. For example, if a conversation is stuck in a repetitive circular way, addressing this directly may help. By saying 'it feels as if we are really stuck... what do you think we should we do?' the situation can change. This 'aside' which refers directly to the current state of discourse, can open a negotiated way forward, and shift the dynamic, as Watson and Gillespie have observed.[75] Similarly, if a patient is upset but can't speak, statements such as *'I can see what I've said has upset you...'* followed by a pause, may enable someone to speak more freely about their situation.[76] -

At times Perec's ruminations voice restrained feelings and comments about his physical and mental state, which give the reader a greater insight into him as a person. For example, in one section, Perec notes, 'Buses pass by. I've lost all interest in them'.[77] Sheringham has described these interruptions as 'metadiscursive [sic] reflections', and notes that they are

[73] Lisa Le Feuvre, "Introduction: Strive to Fail," in *Failure*, ed. Lisa Le Feuvre (London: Whitechapel Gallery and MIT Press, 2010), 12.
[74] Walter Benjamin, "What Is Epic Theatre? (2nd Version)," in *Understanding Brecht* (London Verso, 1966), 19.
[75] Watson and Gillespie, *Modern Guide to Gp Consulting : Six S for Success*, 61.
[76] Tate and Tate, *The Doctor's Communication Handbook*, 62.
[77] Perec, *An Attempt at Exhausting a Place in Paris*, 29.

often 'prompted by' and reveal his experience.[78] These musings by Perec, range from voicing his feelings and physical state, to expressing and sharing doubts about his working method. As a result, these punctuations, make the audience more aware of his experience, and empathy between them is enhanced. Sheringham correctly notes that these 'intermittent' bodily and mood revelations, set amongst Perec's observations, reveal the 'vicissitudes' and the experience of his method, to the audience.[79] This sporadic nature of Perec's disclosures is reminiscent of some consultations in medicine, when communication may be indirect. Sometimes snippets of physical or psychological symptoms are hidden away, within lengthy conversations about other things. Or it may take months or years for someone to voice their concerns. Thus, seemingly routine content can be peppered with more directly personal information. For Sheringham, Perec's reference to his body means 'we never lose sight of the flesh-and-blood participant' because his 'physical needs and sensations' are communicated via information of what he 'eats and drinks.'[80] In this way Perec explores the 'lived experience' of his investigation.[81] In another analysis of Perec's work, the artist Joanne Lee has correctly argued that this methodology breaks with the conventions of 'serious' work.[82] Not only that but he critiques as he creates, through 'a self-questioning and self-reflexive voice.'[83] Perec also voices doubt and uncertainty, in other works, such as his text *Think/Classify*, which details his difficulty in writing. Here, referring to notes he has made, he writes '...I chose deliberately to preserve ...these shapeless scraps'[84] Following Perec's example, notes that have been written during this research project have been included into the body of this thesis. This is explained at the end of this chapter.

The communication manifest in people's gesture is one of the key themes of this research project and is a significant component of empathic communication, when face-to-face. Observation forms a large part of general practice work. For example, physical examinations and just taking note of how people are in consultations. There are resonances between medicine and Perec's observational writing. On closer scrutiny *An Attempt at Exhausting a Place in Paris* includes numerous descriptions of people, what they are wearing, carrying, eating or doing. In many ways, his observations increase understanding of them, and so

[78] Sheringham, "Georges Perec: Uncovering the Infra-Ordinary.", 262.
[79] Ibid, 265.
[80] Ibid, 271.
[81] Ibid, 271.
[82] Lee, "On Not Staying Put: Georges Perec's 'Inter(in)Disciplinarity' as an Approach to Research.", 15.
[83] Ibid, 19.
[84] Perec, "Think/Classify.", 189.

enhances empathy, reflecting processes within medicine; where observing, gleans information and aids understanding. Furthermore, Perec's method of minimal note-making resonates with record-keeping in general practice. Following a physical examination, I might document, 'cough 12 days, no vomiting, temp normal, respiratory rate normal, pulse 60, chest clear...see 2 weeks? underlying cause'. As a GP, I take not of and document the concerns voiced by a patient, but also those I have observed myself: such as speed of breathing or manner and tempo of speech or signs of self-care. My instinctive way of making art is to observe and note. This was my methodology in my MFA in 2011. During this PhD research project, I questioned the validity of this subjective method. However, the richness of Perec's observations in *An Attempt at Exhausting a Place in Paris* overruled these concerns. This text has validated my instinct to 'record what I see'. This methodology is discussed further in Chapter Five.

A key component in Perec's work is the way in which he documents his observations using lists, as described earlier. The theorist Caroline Bassett identifies that this very effectively enables Perec to form varied and unexpected connections and groupings, of different components of 'life' he observes.[85] These are interspersed with his reflections.[86] Howard Becker articulates that

> As you read Perec's descriptions you increasingly succumb to the feeling (at least I do, and I think others do as well) that this is important, though you can't say how.[87]

Perec's collation of fragments of information changes the understanding of them. He places emphasis on certain objects and movements by listing them in unexpected ways, or through slight variations in wording, that appear to alter their significance. McCosker and Wilken have rightly state that Perec's lists become a 'transformative' practice, showing 'what is important in the mundane'.[88]

[85] Caroline Bassett, "What Perec Was Looking For:Notes on Automation, the Everyday and Ethical Writing " in *The Afterlives of Georges Perec*, ed. Rowan Wilken and Justin Clemens (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2017), 129.
[86] Ibid, 129.
[87] Howard Becker, "George Perec's Experiments in Social Description," *Ethnography* 2, no. 1 (2001), 71.
[88] Anthony McCosker and Rowan Wilken, "'Things That Should Be Short': Perec, Sei Shonagon, Twitter and the Uses of Banality," in *The Afterlives of Georges Perec*, ed. Rowan Wilken and Justin Clemens (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2017), 147,145.

This comment very much resonates with my experience on some GP home visits of an awareness of 'picking up' on something important and significant that is seemingly not being articulated with words, by anyone present. The combination of sensing and awareness, of somehow knowing-yet not knowing also resonates with my recognition of how little is understood about human gestures. These issues are explored in detail in Chapter Three.

In this research project several art pieces have been made which involve a process of listing within the methodology. These are described in Chapter Five.

There are clear connections between Perec's observations, method of documenting what he has seen and his use of reflective commentary and questioning in *An Attempt at Exhausting a Place in Paris* that resonates with processes in medical consultations. The use of meta-discursive commentary connects with methods of communicating with empathy, when trying to understand the perspective and experience of another person. Ideas of Perec's have been employed as a strategy in the methodology of several creative projects during this research. These include, his use of meta-discursive reflections and lists. This approach is discussed in the final section of Chapter Three; and with reference to specific creative projects, in Chapter Five. In addition, my own meta-discursive reflections have been included within this thesis: they occur unannounced, printed in grey to delineate them. All relate to key themes of this research project: hesitation, gesture and empathy.

My decision to incorporate hesitation into this thesis reflects my awareness of the value of it; which is drawn from experience of communication in medical consultations. It also reflects my familiarity of working with uncertainty, a recognised feature of general practice. Fragments of hesitant notes and meta-discursive reflections have been juxtaposed within the body of this text. Questioning the perceived 'failure' of hesitation, is integral to this project and reflects my understanding of it as a means with which to enhance empathy. Informed by *An Attempt at Exhausting a Place in Paris*, doubts and uncertainty are included; mirroring the not-knowing contained within most of the gestures, of our daily conversations. My affinity for Perec's text has encouraged me to do this, and to allow the language of vagueness, the 'uncertain', the 'hesitant' and the 'perplexed' into this enquiry.[89]

[89] Perec, "Think/Classify.", 189.

Chapter 3. Turning towards others

I've just witnessed someone being hit by a car in a hit and run accident. I heard the thud first, followed by someone shouting out in pain. At the same time a car sped off. I ran over. He's ok but probably got a broken femur. I rolled my coat up as a pillow for him. There was already another doctor with him. The ambulance is there now. Two days ago, I attended to a cyclist who had literally just been knocked off his bike by a car. He was lying in the road we were driving down. He'd hurt his eye and knee. Was probably OK I think. I stayed with him till the ambulance arrived. Both of these incidents make me feel a bit sick. Particularly the one today because of the thud sound and then the crying out. It reminds me of when I was knocked over ages and ages ago. I feel quite tearful about it all. I often feel quite emotional if I see or hear an ambulance speeding by. It's funny what stays with you and gets dredged up at times. 3.1.2016

This chapter discusses empathy: its history, multiple definitions, way of functioning within general practice consultations and its relevance as a means of communication in/for artistic practice. The chapter is divided into three parts.

Part One examines the origins of empathy within aesthetics and phenomenology and its historical links to the terms sympathy and compassion. This is followed by a focus on Edith Stein's development of empathy as a mode of intersubjective understanding, through clear delineation of self and other, and its links to gesture. Different definitions of empathy are discussed. This is followed by consideration of the relationship between empathy and art, with reference to relational aesthetics. The role of empathy in medicine is introduced with focus on considerations of whether empathy encompasses compassion, disagreement and conflict.

Part Two explores the role of empathy as a communication skill within GP consultations in greater depth. This includes how empathy is conveyed from one person to another and its connection to gesture and emotion. Discussion of the experience of empathy in interpersonal communication is included, alongside reflection on potential problems of empathy related to bias.

Part Three highlights the features of 'medical empathy' that have been adopted into the methodology of this creative-practice research. The section concludes with discussion of the themes of this research project in relation to the work *Forced Empathy* (2018) by Tania Bruguera.

My interest in empathy stems from working as a doctor for over thirty years and having spent six months in hospital as a teenager/ young adult**.** These experiences of communication have informed my way of working throughout my medical career. I don't remember ever learning how to 'do' empathy/be empathetic: it has always felt a natural way to communicate. Re-defining empathy is not within the remit of this research project as there are already too many versions of it. My working definition of empathy was, and remains, that it is an approach or turning towards another person, to try to understand their perspective and their feelings. This turning is both literal and metaphorical; it involves giving them time and space to talk; involves listening to both their verbal and gestural communication; and involves constant reflection on/ and responding to this, through one's own words and gestures.

Communication skills training in medicine in the UK has been most prominent in general practice. As a 'product' of this system, my views on empathy are undoubtedly influenced by how it is taught and used within practice, where it is now a standard part of GP training. In medicine, empathy is viewed as a communication skill: something that can be taught, something that can be performed and to be 'done.'[90] Whilst some people are more naturally empathetic it can also be learnt (to a degree) and can be 'performed' (to an extent) in situations where empathising might not come easily. I have been on the receiving end of uncomfortable, unconvincing attempts at empathy and have also been grateful to experience people empathising with me, apparently very genuinely. At the start of this research project I viewed empathy as a natural, positive way of relating to people. I never really considered that there was a down-side to it: the only exception being if it appeared insincere, which I did not consider empathy. At that time my stance was in keeping with academic Carolyn Pedwell's observation that society views empathy 'by definition as positive'.[91] Over the seven years of this research project my opinions have gradually

[90] HR Winefield, Chur-Hanson, A, "Evaluating the Outcome of Communication Skill Teaching for Entry-Level Medical Students: Does Knowledge of Empathy Increase? ," *Med Ed* 34 (2000): 90.
[91] Carolyn Pedwell, *Affective Relations : The Transnational Politics of Empathy* (2014), ix.

changed, as my preconceived views have been exposed to different theoretical perspectives. I am now aware of the vast range of views of empathy and the lack of consensus on a definition. In addition, I am much more aware of inherent bias linked with empathy and the potential problems this poses.

3.1 Empathy

Empathy arose in aesthetics and first entered the English language one hundred and ten years ago, in 1909. With time, the meaning of empathy evolved as it was adopted into the differing disciplines of psychology, phenomenology, science, medicine, business and most recently, product design. A common, present-day understanding of empathy is that it is

> the ability to understand and share the feelings of another[92]

However, within academic discourse there is no consensus of about an absolute definition of empathy and at present its meaning remains multifaceted.[93] Historically, empathy is linked with the earlier terms compassion and sympathy, which originated during the fourteenth and eighteenth centuries respectively. Compassion referred to an emotion felt in response to suffering of another person. Sympathy was first described in 1739 by the Scottish Enlightenment philosopher David Hume in *A Treatise of Human Nature* when he wrote:

> No quality of human nature is more remarkable, both in itself and in its consequences, than that propensity we have to sympathize with others, and to receive by communication their inclinations and sentiments, however different from, or even contrary to our own[i94].

This description of sympathy is comparable to what is now termed empathy. In 1759 in *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* the philosopher Adam Smith developed Hume's view of sympathy by adding an imaginative (now termed high-level) component, as philosophers Amy Coplan and Peter Goldie have observed.[95] Thus Smith's concept of sympathy involved one person considering the feelings of another. The academic Lauren Berlant has noted that

[92] "Oxford Dictionaries".
[93] Susan Lanzoni, *Empathy : A History* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2018), 17.
[94] David Hume and Ernest Campbell Mossner, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, Penguin Classics, 367.
[95] Amy Coplan and Peter Goldie, *Empathy : Philosophical and Psychological Perspectives* (2014), xi.

in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, sympathy could be summarised as 'fellow feeling' and was similar to what is now called empathy.[96] This meaning of sympathy evolved, and it now refers to feeling sorry for or pitying someone else. The roots of empathy are based in aesthetics and later psychology. In 1873, the German philosopher Theodor Lipps used the term 'Einfühlung' or literally 'feeling into' to describe a means of understanding objects and people by projecting oneself into them.[97] This involved instinctive 'bodily mimicry' and physical resonance with the other as cultural critic Robin Curtis has noted.[98] Thus, both cognitive and physiological processes were involved in Lipp's definition. The aesthetic themes of 'feeling into' were subsequently adopted into the field of psychology and British psychologist Edward Titchener first used the term empathy in 1909 when he wrote:

> Not only do I see gravity and modesty and pride and courtesy and stateliness, but I feel or act them in the mind's muscle. This is, I suppose, a simple case of empathy, if we may coin that term as a rendering of Einfühlung.[99]

This first description of empathy entails the observation and assessment of one person by another and a shared emotional response to their observed state, placing empathy in the realm of interpersonal interaction and involving sharing of feelings. The concept of empathy was adopted by the phenomenologists Edmund Husserl (1859-1938) and Edith Stein (1891-1942) as a means of knowing and understanding the experience of others.[100] Stein rejected Lipp's views of 'Einfühlung' and developed her own theory of empathy as a means of understanding 'foreign consciousness.'[101] The academic Anne Whitehead has observed that for Stein empathy involved awareness of the feelings of another and one's own separate feelings: thus the empathiser and subject of empathy are distinct.[102] As Stein stated 'empathy...is the experience of foreign consciousness..' and 'the interpretation of foreign living bodies.'[103] As well as understanding another person, Stein also viewed empathy as a

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[96] Lauren Gail Berlant, *Compassion : The Culture and Politics of an Emotion*, Essays from the English Institute (New York: Routledge, 2004), 23.
[97] Coplan and Goldie, *Empathy : Philosophical and Psychological Perspectives*, xii.
[98] Robin Curtis, "An Introduction to EinfüHlung " *Art in Translation* 6, no. 4 (2014).
[99] Edward Bradford Titchener, *Lectures on the Experimental Psychology of the Thought-Processes* (New York,: Macmillan, 1909).
[100] Coplan and Goldie, *Empathy : Philosophical and Psychological Perspectives*, xiii.
[101] Stein, *On the Problem of Empathy*, 12.
[102] Anne Whitehead, *Medicine and Empathy in Contemporary British Fiction : An Intervention in Medical Humanities*, 40.
[103] Stein, *On the Problem of Empathy*, 59.

source of determining how others perceive us. She stated, 'This is how I get the 'image' the other has of me'[104] and that empathy also acts 'as an aid to comprehending ourselves.'[105] Here, empathy is a continuous active process between people which gives knowledge of 'other' and 'self' to both participants. According to Whitehead, this intersubjective exchange is 'not seeking to access the mind of the other' but to observe their 'meaningful and observable bodily actions'.[106] In this definition empathy is inextricably linked with the observation and interpretation of the gestures and actions (and speech) of the other person. Having discussed the origins of empathy and its significance in phenomenology as a means of understanding intersubjective experience, discussion will now focus on empathy within therapeutic environments.

With the development of psychoanalysis in the mid twentieth century empathy became a means of 'cognitive understanding' of feelings rather than 'a sharing of them' as the choreographer Susan Leigh Foster has described.[107] Empathy as a relational process was central to the therapeutic methodologies developed by the psychologist Carl Rogers, as Coplan has noted.[108] For Rogers, empathy involved kindness and was a means of gaining knowledge of another person's emotional situation, while maintaining a clear distinction between therapist and client. Rogers described empathy as the ability to enter 'the private perceptual world of the other' with sensitivity, objectivity and without judgement.[109] This objectivity required a degree of control and the separation of self from other, as in Stein's earlier descriptions. This resonates with my experience of endeavouring to maintain self-other boundaries when using empathy in general practice. However, I don't attempt nor do I feel it is possible to do this 'through immersion in an empathic process' in the way that Rogers described.[110] For Rogers empathy involved compassion on the part of the empathiser. This debatable point is considered later, after discussion of the processes involved in different definitions of empathy.

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[104] Stein, *On the Problem of Empathy*, 88.
[105] Ibid,89.
[106] Whitehead, *Medicine and Empathy in Contemporary British Fiction : An Intervention in Medical Humanities*, 41.
[107] Susan Leigh Foster, *Choreographing Empathy:Kinesthesia in Performance* (London; NY: Routledge), 163.
[108] Coplan and Goldie, *Empathy : Philosophical and Psychological Perspectives*, xviii.
[109] Carl Rogers, "Empathic: An Unappreciated Way of Being," *The Counseling Psychologist* 5, no. 2 (1975), 3-4.
[110] Carl R. Rogers et al., *Client Centred Therapy : Its Current Practice, Implications and Theory* (London: Constable, 2003), 29.

Currently, within academia, there are many varied understandings of what empathy entails. It is generally viewed as a conscious and subconscious process that occurs between people. Interestingly Lipp's original description of empathy as being directed towards objects *and* people has become more accepted recently and empathy is now a consideration within design technology. The philosopher Gregory Currie has argued that people empathise with 'motor simulation' when engaging with objects at a sensory level, corresponding to the bodily simulation that happens when people watch others move.[111]

The conscious processes of empathising are the use of imagination and cognition to consider the perspective of another person, which, Pedwell has noted, are the main focus of empathy within the disciplines of psychology and philosophy.[112] Coplan and Goldie have described the subconscious processes involved in empathy as 'picking up on' another person's thoughts and feelings.[113] This picking up can happen almost instantly such as sensing when someone is happy or sad, and is evident in very young children. The philosopher Alvin Goldman has used the terms higher-level empathy and lower-level empathy to differentiate between the cognitive/imaginative processes and the subconscious 'picking up on' that is involved in empathy.[114] This differentiation provides a way to consider the different components of empathising which happen simultaneously. Imagination can be used to try to understand someone else's situation from their perspective. However what interests me most are the subconscious messages from other people. Here I am referring to having a sense of someone's emotional situation, without any obvious explanation for having this knowledge. In medical practice I may intuit that a patient is burdened without them having voiced anything. This 'picking up' on details that are seemingly in the background and in our peripheral vision fascinates me. It involves multiple, varied combinations of gestures, vocalisations, speech, hesitation, posture and intonations, that inform and give meaning to conversations and interactions.

When discussing what the process of empathy might entail, the phenomenologist Dan Zahavi has stated:

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[111] Gregory Currie, "Empathy for Objects," in *Empathy: Philosophical and Psychological Perspectives*, ed. Amy Coplan and Peter Goldie (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 94.
[112] Pedwell, *Affective Relations : The Transnational Politics of Empathy*, 4.
[113] Coplan and Goldie, *Empathy : Philosophical and Psychological Perspectives*, xxxiii.
[114] Alvin I. Goldman, *Simulating Minds: The Philosophy, Psychology, and Neuroscience of Mindreading* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

> There is no clear consensus about what precisely it is. Is empathy a question of sharing another's feelings, or caring about another, or being emotionally affected by another's experiences though not necessarily experiencing the same experiences? Is it a question of imagining oneself in another's situation, of imagining being another in that other's situation, or simply of making inferences about another's mental states?[115]

Zahavi clearly articulates the absence of any unifying definition of empathy within current academic discourse.[116] From my medical work I identify with use of imagination, posture, knowledge and intuition in empathy, and consider a combination of all these processes to be involved. I don't recognise 'sharing another's feelings' as empathy. This highlights the difficulties inherent in the academic discussion as one person's version of empathy can vary considerably from another's. Within this research project I have used empathy in art-making in ways that resonate with some of the above descriptions. These approaches of using empathy in art practice are discussed in section three of this chapter.

Thus far, discussion has pointed to empathy as a means of intersubjective understanding through observation and interpretation of other peoples' gestures and words. For Stein, this involved a clear distinction between self and other, and encompassed difference. The multifaceted, contested nature of empathy has been highlighted. The next section will consider the subconscious mechanisms involved in empathy and its relationship to the emotional responses people have towards others.

Recent neurological developments provide insight into the neural pathways involved in empathising, particularly in relation to the unconscious processes that enable us to tell almost instantaneously how someone is feeling. Mirror neurons discovered in 1992, are nerves that are triggered when a person makes an action. The same nerves are also triggered if the person watches someone else make that very same action. The implication of this is that nerve pathways that allow feeling for others are activated by observation of others. The neuroscientist Marco Iacoboni has stated:

> We achieve our very subtle understanding of other people thanks to certain collections of special cells in the brain called mirror neurons… They are at the heart

[115] Dan Zahavi, "Empathy and Other-Directed Intentionality," *Topoi* 33, no. 1 (2014), 129.
[116] Alvin I. Goldman, "Two Routes to Empathy: Insights from Cognitive Neuroscience," in *Empathy: Philosophical and Psychological Perspectives*, ed. Amy Coplan and Peter Goldie, 32.

> of how we navigate through our lives. They bind us with each other, mentally and emotionally.[117]

I have experienced grasping my own finger at the sight of someone's seriously injured finger in Accident and Emergency: this happened instinctively without me even thinking about it. I have also cried once in front of a painting, a long time ago when I saw a Caravaggio. This very much took me by surprise as it had never happened before: I am not someone who cries easily and particularly not in public. I am not sure why I cried. I think it was something in the expression of the face and eyes that I recognised. I can't even remember which painting it was.

This emotional reaction to seeing a painting can be described as an empathic response, according to the previously mentioned definitions of empathy identified by Zahavi.[118] The curator Jennifer Blessings suggests the affective response of empathy is central to our interactions with art.[119] However, this is not my experience of viewing art, as I am rarely moved by what I see. Art historian James Elkins has questioned his own lack of tears ever, in response to paintings and how infrequently audiences appear to be affected by paintings.[120] However, he also recognises that just because an audience does not visibly show emotion, it doesn't mean they haven't been affected.[121] Elkins has suggested that the culture and environment of academic art and museum institutions fosters detached responses from audiences, potentially at the expense of their real, initial experience.[122] Certainly the formal, hushed nature of some art museums has the 'potential to alienate' people who are unfamiliar 'with this language' as artist Andrea Fraser has correctly identified;[123] which could inhibit their responses to art.

Although Elkins does not explicitly advocate using empathy when approaching a painting he does however suggest an audience member uses their imagination and projects their

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[117] Marco Iacoboni, *Mirroring People : The New Science of How We Connect with Others*, 1st ed. (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2008), 4.
[118] Zahavi, "Empathy and Other-Directed Intentionality."
[119] Jennifer Blessing, "What We Still Feel: Rineke Dijkstra's Video," in *Rineke Dijkstra: A Retrospective* (New York: Solomon R Guggenheim Foundation), 29.
[120] James Elkins, *Pictures and Tears : A History of People Who Have Cried in Front of Paintings* (London: Routledge, 2004), ix.
[121] Ibid, 25.
[122] Ibid, 91.
[123] Andrea Fraser and Alexander Alberro, *Museum Highlights : The Writings of Andrea Fraser*, The Mit Press Writing Art Series (Cambridge, Mass. ; London: MIT, 2007), xxvii.

'thoughts onto the painting...to understand' what is 'felt.'[124] These are clearly processes of conscious empathic communication, suggesting that empathy towards objects may be pertinent, as in the earliest descriptions of it, by Lipps.

It is known that performed gestures can evoke 'affective and...mimetic responses' in an observer, as academic Carrie Noland has stated,[125]such as a tapping foot or swaying body. These predominantly unconscious responses resonate with my experience of watching live dance when invariably my body feels differently, as if it wants to move too. This embodied response to a performance and gesture, resonates with subconscious bodily responses to other people: such as a dart forwards if witnessing someone falling or slight movements of the hands when listening to someone speak.

Having explored subconscious mechanisms that occur during responses to people and situations (and a painting) the discussion will now return to the vexed question of whether empathy causes people to behave differently. Does empathy encourage prosocial behaviour? That is: does empathy result in voluntary behaviour intended to benefit another person? As previously stated, for the psychologist Carl Rogers compassion is part of empathy. Pedwell has observed that the prevailing view within society is that empathy does change our behaviour for the better.[126] This was suggested by Hume and Smith in their first descriptions of sympathy-and by Barack Obama during his presidency.[127] Social psychology researchers also associate empathy with prosocial behaviour[128] However due to the multiple different definitions of empathy, interpretation of this research is difficult.[129] Since empathy and care both focus attention onto the needs of others, they have often been associated together, as Coplan has suggested when she described empathy as:

> A valuable - or even essential -tool for developing our understanding of others and enabling us to determine what the best thing to do is in real world situations.[130]

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[124] Elkins, *Pictures and Tears : A History of People Who Have Cried in Front of Paintings*, 212.
[125] Carrie Noland, "Introduction," in *Migrations of Gesture*, ed. Carrie Noland and Sally Ann Ness (Minneapolis ; london: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), xiii.
[126] Pedwell, *Affective Relations : The Transnational Politics of Empathy*, 21.
[127] Mark Honigsbaum, "Barack Obama and the 'Empathy Deficit'," *Guardian*, 04.01.13.
[128] Jamil Zaki and Kevin Ochsner, "Empathy," in *Handbook of Emotions*, ed. Lisa Feldman Barrett, Michael Lewis, and Jeannette M. Haviland-Jones (2018), 876.
[129] Jessie J Prinz, "Is Empathy Necessary for Morality?," in *Empathy: Philosophical and Psychological Perspectives*, ed. Amy Coplan and Peter Goldie (2014), 212.
[130] Coplan and Goldie, *Empathy : Philosophical and Psychological Perspectives*, xxvii.

I agree with Coplan that empathy enhances our ability to understand others. However, it doesn't necessary follow that situations are then dealt with in the 'best' way. Sometimes it is not clear what the best way is. Faced with a patient in tears, do I give them the time they need, whilst making other ill patients wait longer?- as Dr Steven Hatch has stated 'uncertainty is ubiquitous in medicine.'[131] And having a better understanding of someone else, does not necessarily lead to more compassionate behaviour: sometimes people are too tired or can't be bothered to act kindly. People don't always give to everyone who asks for help or who is in need[132]- as reporter Mark Honigsbaum has noted, we can still behave with indifference to them.[133]

For me, empathy is about giving someone attention, and allowing them time and space to think or speak comfortably. This view aligns with that of philosopher Nel Noddings who has described empathetic caring not as projection, but as the ability to 'receive the other.'[134] This means giving someone space, both literally physical space in a room but also space within the conversation and within my head, which allows me to attend to them. It means allowing the other person just to be, and to speak even if it's difficult for them to do so. It means allowing for awkward silences and not filling gaps in the conversation with my own voice. It means allowing them to cry, be indifferent or angry. It means not judging whatever it is they need to speak about. A large part of empathy is about listening to them: not only to what they say, but also what they don't say, how they speak, and how their gestures and body language communicate information without words. Gestures convey people's emotions, which is why the 'picking up' element that was described by Coplan earlier is so important. Thus, a connection between empathy, gesture and emotion is evident.

Empathic communication also involves responding to people and letting them know you have some awareness of their perspective or position - even if yours might be very different, as philosopher Fredrik Svenaeus has rightly argued.[135] Greater understanding of another

[131] Steven Hatch, "Uncertainty in Medicine," *BMJ* 357, no. j2180 (2017).
[132] In my experience empathy and compassion are separate and come from a different place within. It is possible to empathise and not act with kindness or compassion. I don't always give money to people who are homeless. Sometimes I do. The likelihood (or not) of me acting with kindness (talking, buying some food, donating money) depends more on feelings such as guilt, anger, kindness, than my ability to recognise that they are cold and wet and asking for money.
[133] Honigsbaum, "Barack Obama and the 'Empathy Deficit'."
[134] Nel Noddings, *Caring, a Feminine Approach to Ethics & Moral Education* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 31-32.
[135] Fredrik Svenaeus, "The Phenomenology of Empathy in Medicine: An Introduction," *Medicine, Health Care and Philosophy* 17 (2014), 247.

person may reveal profound discord and dislike of them. This view, that empathy encompasses disagreement, is contrary to existing discourse, which sees empathy as a means of smoothing over problems, as Pedwell has clearly articulated when she stated:

> Within liberal discourses, I suggest, empathy is frequently understood in teleological terms: its invoking as affective remedy implicitly supposes a natural telos or end-point, at which tensions have been eased and antagonisms rectified.[136]

This popular notion of empathy as restorative is echoed within artistic discourse, especially in relation to art that creates and mediates social relationships, and that is categorised as relational aesthetics.[137] This genre will be introduced shortly.

So far, the discussion has highlighted the lack of consensus on the meaning of the term empathy. This is particularly evident in debates about whether it promotes prosocial behaviour and whether it encompasses difference. Before exploring the question of empathy and difference in greater detail, the next section considers the relationship between empathic communication and art that falls within the category of relational aesthetics. The discussion is not an all-embracing account of relational aesthetics but a specific exploration of empathic communication in relation to it.

The term relational aesthetics was first introduced in 1997 after the art critic Nicholas Bourriaud identified 'relational art' in response to the artwork of Rirkrit Tiravanija, Philippe Parreno, Vanessa Beecroft, Liam Gillick, Maurizio Cattlelan, Christine Hill, Pierre Huyghe and Carsten Höller.[138] For Bourriaud the work of these key artists focused on 'human interactions' and their 'social context'[139] and involved 'social exchanges [and] interactivity with the viewer.'[140] He deemed this 'shared activity'[141] with relationships formed between artist and audience members as 'political' and convivial[142] and suggested it could rectify 'weaknesses in the social bond.'[143] The influence of this type of art which centres around or

[136] Pedwell, *Affective Relations : The Transnational Politics of Empathy*, 34.
[137] Claire Bishop, "Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics," *October* 110 no. Autumn, 2004 (2004), 79.
[138] Nicolas Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics*, Documents Sur L'art (Dijon: Presses du reel, 2002), 44.
[139] Ibid, 14.
[140] Ibid, 43.
[141] Renate Dohmen, *Encounters Beyond the Gallery : Relational Aesthetics and Cultural Difference*, International Library of Modern and Contemporary Art, 14.
[142] Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics*, 17.
[143] Jacques Rancière, "Problems and Transformations in Critical Art," in *Participation* ed. Claire Bishop (London: Whitechapel and MIT Press, 2004), 90.

produces these relationships has been widespread and evident within contemporary practice and recent major exhibitions.[144] Though closely aligned with these artists, relational aesthetics is a vague term widely used to describe practices that involve relationships of 'exchange, collaboration, and participation' as academic Jennifer Doyle has noted.[145] Doyle has also rightly stated that 'aesthetic practice' of all forms (even object-based) is 'relational'[146] For Bourriaud, an example of relational aesthetics was *Untitled (Free)* 1992[147] when Tiravanija converted a gallery office into a kitchen and cooked and shared (free) Thai curry with the audience. The gallery office staff were moved into the gallery where they worked, thus reversing the 'the relationship between public and private' as art historian Nadja Rottner has noted.[148] Tiravanija's transformation of the gallery into a place of sociability 'relies on the response of the audience' as art historian Renate Dohmen has observed.[149]

Critique of relational aesthetics has centred around claims made by Bourriaud about the work being democratic, political, free from capitalist influence[150]-and improving social contact.[151] There is an inherent power imbalance between 'scenario setting' artists and 'their audience-participants' as Dohmen has noted.[152] In addition, the nature of the interpersonal relationships formed within these works has been questioned.[153] The art historian Hal Foster has, for example, suggested that these encounters are a poor 'substitute' for what is lacking in society.[154] Rottner has observed that 'intersubjectivity and conviviality' were key for Bourriaud, with the 'social effects' of an artwork 'more important

[144]Carsten Höller *Testsite* Tate Modern (10 Oct 2006 – 15 April 2007)*, theanyspacewhatever* exhibition at Guggenheim Museum (24Oct,2008 -7 January) which showed work by Angela Bulloch, Maurizio Cattelan, Liam Gillick, Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster, Douglas Gordon, Carsten Höller, Pierre Huyghe, Jorge Pardo, Philippe Parreno, and Rirkrit Tiravanija. Also, Maurizio Cattelan exhibition at Guggenheim (4 Nov 2011 to 22 Jan 2012)
[145] Jennifer Doyle, *Hold It against Me : Difficulty and Emotion in Contemporary Art* (Durham ; London: Duke University Press, 2013), 89.
[146] Ibid., 89.
[147] Rirkrit Tiravanija, *Untitled (Free),* 1992. This piece (described in *Relational Aesthetics* by Bourriaud) was first presented at 303 Gallery in New York, Tiravanija moved the contents of the gallery office (and staff) and storeroom into the gallery space. He used the office space to cook Thai curry and rice which he served, free, to anyone who attended. The piece was acquired by MOMA in 2011.
[148] Nadja Rottner, "Relational Aesthetics," (2011), https://doi.org/10.1093/gao/9781884446054.article.T2093934.
[149] Dohmen, *Encounters Beyond the Gallery : Relational Aesthetics and Cultural Difference*, 42.
[150] Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics*, 16.
[151] Rancière, "Problems and Transformations in Critical Art.", 90.
[152] Dohmen, *Encounters Beyond the Gallery : Relational Aesthetics and Cultural Difference*, 48.
[153] Ibid, 16.
[154] Hal Foster, "Arty Party," *London Review of Books* 25, no. 23 (2003).

than its appearance'[155] Without reference to specific artworks the artist Joe Scanlan has described relational artwork generally as 'controlling' and subject to 'peer pressure' and potential 'fear' and 'public humiliation.'[156]

For art historian Claire Bishop, many of these encounters and specifically the meals cooked by Tiravinija in *Untitled (Free)* 1992, are not intrinsically democratic, because they lack any 'inherent friction,'[157] are 'convivial' and centred on a 'group who identify with one another as gallery goers.'[158] Dohmen has also observed that critical reflection on the audience experience in this piece 'is fairly nondescript' except for discussion of 'who met whom.'[159] In response to Tiravinija's work Bishop asked 'If relational art produces human relations...what *types* of relations are being produced, for whom, and why?'[160]

In contrast to 'convivial' works such as Tiravanijas *Untitled (Free) 1992,* Bishop has pointed to the effect of antagonism within the artwork by Santiago Sierra such as his piece *Workers Who Cannot Be Paid, Remunerated to Remain Inside Cardboard Boxes (2000)*[161] in which refugees were paid minimum rates to sit in the gallery space hidden within boxes. Bishop has noted that Sierra's work produces 'sensations of unease and discomfort rather than belonging... and *sustains* a tension among viewers, participants and context.'[162] With reference to this emotional unease Doyle has correctly observed that the 'affective orientation' of Sierra's piece is not to the 'exploited performer' but to the 'guilt-ridden liberal art consumer.'[163] Certainly friction of this nature can enhance an art-work (as in this piece) however, not all friction in an artwork is overtly visible, as will be discussed shortly.

Referring to empathy in reference to Sierra's work, Bishop goes on to state that his work 'does not offer an experience of transcendent human empathy' that is able to smooth over 'the awkward situation before us' but instead offers 'a pointed racial and economic non

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[155] Rottner, "Relational Aesthetics".
[156] Joe Scanlan, "Traffic Control. Joe Scanlan on Social Space and Relational Aesthetics," *Artforum* 43, no. 10 (2005), 123.
[157] Bishop, "Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics.", 66.
[158] Ibid, 69.
[159] Dohmen, *Encounters Beyond the Gallery : Relational Aesthetics and Cultural Difference*, 44.
[160] Bishop, "Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics.", 65.
[161] Santiago Sierra, *Workers Who Cannot Be Paid, Remunerated to Remain inside Cardboard Boxes,* 2000. Six Chechnyan refugees seeking asylum in Germany were paid to sit in makeshift cardboard boxes for four hours a day for six week. Due to their political status they were not legally allowed to work in Germany. They were paid in secret and their status was not made public at the time. This piece was first shown at Kunst-Werke in Berlin. I have viewed documentation of this piece at www.Santiago-Sierra.com.
[162] Bishop, "Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics.", 70.
[163] Doyle, *Hold It against Me : Difficulty and Emotion in Contemporary Art*, 90.

identification: "this is not me."[164] Bishop argues that it is this persistence of friction and 'its awkwardness and discomfort' that alerts us 'to the relational antagonism of Sierra's work.'[165]

This statement is interesting for several reasons. Firstly, it clearly equates empathy with the idea of 'smoothing' suggesting that it may lead to an ameliorative action. Though this is a prevalent view in our society today, it is in marked contrast to original descriptions of empathy as a means of understanding and sharing feelings - and Stein's view of empathy as a means of understanding self and other.[166] The second part of Bishop's statement equates empathy with recognising similarities with other people. This again contrasts with Stein's description of empathy as a means to also understand 'foreign consciousness.'[167] For Whitehead too, empathy encompasses difference and the distinction between self and other,[168]- a view closely aligned to my understanding of it. In this way the 'pointed...nonidentification' that takes place between the audience and people employed to participate in Sierra's work[169]-is a manifestation of their awareness and understanding of difference, and evidence of an empathetic response from the audience. Art historian Professor Susan Best has alluded to this, when she stated that Sierra 'shows no apparent pity or sympathy for his employees or the executors of his work' yet 'there is nonetheless a clear recognition of their plight' and he 'highlights their dilemma with extraordinary clarity.'[170] Best's insights point to Sierra's understanding of, and (I suggest) empathy for, his employees. There is no display of compassion or pity in Sierra's relationship with the people he employs. Interestingly, the last part of Bishop's statement suggests that personal feelings of 'awkwardness and discomfort' demonstrate that there is friction within the artwork. Scanlan's feelings of 'peer pressure' are also indicative of a degree of friction, even when he described relational artworks as boring.[171]

[164] Bishop, "Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics.", 79.
[165] Ibid, 79.
[166] Stein, *On the Problem of Empathy*, 12.
[167] Ibid, 12.
[168] Whitehead, *Medicine and Empathy in Contemporary British Fiction: An Intervention in Medical Humanities*, 40.
[169] Bishop, "Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics.", 79.
[170] Susan Best, "Relational Art, Identification and the Social Bond," in *The Institutionalization of Contemporary Art*, ed. Lisbeth Rebollo (Sao Paulo: University Sao Paulo, 2007).
[171] Scanlan, "Traffic Control. Joe Scanlan on Social Space and Relational Aesthetics.", 123.

Working within general practice, it is very evident that levels of discomfort vary enormously between patients. Situations that outwardly appear straightforward and non-threatening for one person, can be completely stressful and difficult for another. As such, whilst I agree with the tenor of Bishop's statement, namely, that friction and antagonism often benefit a piece, I don't think it is possible to accurately know how people feel about any given art-work. A work that is 'convivial' for one person can be filled with awkwardness and difficulty for another. Even situations that 'feel like remedial work in socialization: come and play, talk, learn with me' as Foster has suggested[172]-can be taxing or intimidating for other people as writer Hamja Ahsan has explained.[173] It is interesting to reconsider Bishop's question 'for whom, and why?' in this light, especially when there are people in the audience who may be vulnerable and ill at ease in an art venue.[174] Dohmen has noted that the 'nature and effect of these encounters' has not resulted in 'much interest in the arts.'[175] Bishop invites people to 'analyse how contemporary art addresses the viewer' and to 'assess the quality of the audience relations it produces.'[176] The difficulty, however, is coming to any meaningful conclusion about the quality of a given relationship, particularly if an audience is made up of many different people, some of who may be comfortable and others not. Dohmen has observed the power imbalance within relational artworks where 'participants remain silent' or 'have a marginal voice' yet remain 'central to the completion' of work.[177]

This power imbalance is evident in general practice too, where it is also extremely difficult to assess the quality of consultations. Of evaluative processes, those which use a 'tick box' list of questions and answers, readily identify communication skills that can be trotted out in a rote fashion; rather than accurately evaluating patient experience of a consultation.[178] This potential gap between patient experience of a consultation and its evaluation by medical educators, mirrors the disconnect that can occur between written descriptions of an artwork and audience experience of it. As James Elkins has observed at times it can be difficult 'to see anything beyond the labels.'[179]

[172] Foster, "Arty Party."
[173] Hamja author Ahsan, *Shy Radicals : The Antisystemic Politics of the Militant Introvert*.
[174] Bishop, "Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics.", 65.
[175] Dohmen, *Encounters Beyond the Gallery : Relational Aesthetics and Cultural Difference*, 56.
[176] Bishop, "Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics.", 78.
[177] Dohmen, *Encounters Beyond the Gallery : Relational Aesthetics and Cultural Difference*, 58.
[178] SS Saraswati Aryasomayajula, "What Do We Mean by Clinical Communication?," *BMJ* 354, no. 3729 (2018).
[179] Elkins, *Pictures and Tears : A History of People Who Have Cried in Front of Paintings*, 91.

This section has considered empathy in relational aesthetics, in relation to both conviviality and antagonism. The widely view within art criticism that empathy only equates with amelioration and smoothing has been shown to be erroneous, through re-evaluation of Steins original definition of empathy within the context of work by Santiago Sierra. I have demonstrated that Sierra's work, though morally ambiguous[180], incorporates an acute understanding of the plight of those people working for him and is evidence of empathic communication embracing difference. The unease and discomfort of Sierra's audience suggests recognition of their own complicity in the situations Sierra presents, as well as awareness of difference, from those Sierra employs. This reflects Steins original description of empathy as a means of intersubjective understanding whilst maintaining a self-other distinction. The difficulty of ever accurately assessing the quality of encounters within relational artworks has been broached. The next section returns to the use of empathy within medical practice and considers empathic communication there in relation to conflict.

Not all general practice consultations are positive; disagreements occur; it is possible to understand others yet have differing views.[181] The psychologists Judith Flury and William Ickes identify that whilst 'empathic accuracy' is generally helpful, it can also sometimes 'hurt close relationships'.[182] This is because understanding of others can lead to 'painful and distressing' insights.[183] Thus, the presence of awkwardness, disagreement or conflict does not preclude empathy or understanding between people. As Winnicott states:

> Without felt hatred- without the acknowledgement of harm and frustration as integral to human relations- kindness becomes a protection racket, fellow feeling becomes a denial of the feelings actually held in common'[184]

However, within medicine, my use of empathy is in situations where I also aim to draw near, care, help, ease. Thus, a tension exists: whilst I know of, and allow for discord within empathy, in my mind and experience I frequently link it with alleviation. This potential misunderstanding of empathy as only smoothing, as suggested by Bishop, risks limiting its

[180] Doyle, *Hold It against Me : Difficulty and Emotion in Contemporary Art*, 89.
[181] Tate and Tate, *The Doctor's Communication Handbook*, 114.
[182] Judith Flury and William Ickes, "Emotional Intelligence and Empathic Accuracy in Friendships and Dating Relationships," in *Emotional Intelligence in Everyday Life*, ed. Joseph Ciarrochi (New York: Psychology Press, 2006), 162.
[183] Ibid, 156.
[184] Adam Phillips and Barbara Taylor, *On Kindness* (London: Penguin Books, 2010), 95.

value enormously.[185] It also leads to the incorrect assumption that any awkward, uncomfortable or antagonistic relationships, by definition, lack empathy. This view might in turn, lead to the equally erroneous assumption that peaceful relationships are necessarily empathic. For me, the very value of empathy is the understanding of the feelings and perspective of others, which includes both difference and conflict. Svenaeus identified this space for conflict within empathy in medical contexts when he stated:

> To be empathic is not the same thing as being nice or agreeing with everything that the patient says or wants. Nor does it mean never to feel negative feelings towards patients.[186]

Thus, within medical consultations, and I suggest, art encounters, the presence of conflict, discomfort or awkwardness does not preclude empathy, but may be a manifestation of it.

Having discussed how empathy helps people try to understand more clearly the feelings and perspective of others, which may lead to behaviour that is more caring, indifferent or even antagonistic, the next section will focus on experience of empathy within medical contexts in greater depth.

3.2 General Practice

This next section considers the place and role of empathy in General Practice and how it functions in consultations and what its benefits may be. The experience of this type of communication is discussed, trying to consider situations in which empathy feels inauthentic. The relevance of empathy to art practice is discussed. The section ends with a review of potential problems of empathy both in general practice and in a wider context.

> *Most of the people who I've felt were empathic to me have never actually said that much. But they have been good at listening. They haven't rushed to say platitudes such as 'oh don't worry it'll all work out I'm sure'. They haven't rushed to insist that everything is ok…but instead they have just mainly listened. And seemed interested and thoughtful and kind. For me a large part of other people being empathic is that*

[185] Bishop, "Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics", 79.
[186] Svenaeus, "The Phenomenology of Empathy in Medicine: An Introduction", 247.

> *they just listen and care. They don't need to do anything more than that I don't think. Listen, don't patronise me, let me be upset and cry if I want to. Be ok with me being upset. Don't try and make everything better. Just let me be. If I'm upset, let me be upset. If I'm anxious, then let me be anxious and don't try and stop me. And a large part of feeling listened to does equate to the non-verbal gestures of the other person who's doing in the listening. Them being interested not bored. Them being patient and accepting. And not filling in any silences. Being comfortable with silences and pauses. 4.7.2016.*

In general practice, empathy is widely viewed as an essential feature of a good consultation.[187] It is seen as positive[188] and closely linked to caring. For Mercer and Reynolds empathy means to:

> …understand the patient's situation, perspective and feeling; to communicate that understanding and check its accuracy; and to act on that understanding in a helpful therapeutic way.[189]

Here empathy is a cognitive and behavioural activity that requires a doctor to communicate their improved understanding of the patient, to them. This description is somewhat mechanistic and does not mention the use of imagination. For me, imagination is essential when trying to consider another's situation and feelings. Tate advocates this as follows:

> The medical communication skill we call empathy is about trying to understand. We might not succeed but we should make a concerted effort to try to imagine their situation in order to communicate effectively with them.[190]

Thus, in medicine, empathy is not about sharing feelings, but trying to understand them. For Noddings, empathy brings about caring behavior.[191] As stated previously, I do not necessarily equate empathy with caring. People can empathise yet remain indifferent. However, as a doctor I invariably try to care for the people I have empathy for: hence care and empathy are very closely aligned both in my behavior and thinking.

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[187] Haslam, "Who Cares?.", 991.
[188] Bensing Jozien and Lagro-Janssen Antoine Derksen Frans, "Effectiveness of Empathy in General Practice: A Systematic Review," *Br J Gen Pract* 2013, no. January (2013), 76.
[189] Reynolds WJ Mercer SW, "Empathy and Quality of Care," *Br J Gen Pract* 52 (suppl) (2002), 11.
[190] Tate and Tate, *The Doctor's Communication Handbook*, 114.
[191] Noddings, *Caring, a Feminine Approach to Ethics & Moral Education*, 31.

Empathy has an effect on consultations in several ways: it affects the feelings of both the patient and doctor and it also influences the practicalities of what takes place. Benefits for patients attributed to empathy include feeling 'understood' and 'listened to' and 'greater trust and subsequent compliance with any management plan.'[192] Empathy helps a patient feel more understood and improves the doctor's understanding of the patient's situation. It also reduces patient anxiety and is associated with improved patient outcomes.[193] Sensitivity by the doctor to the feelings and needs of the patient can facilitate a patient to navigate through their given situation, for example, undressing and undergoing a physical examination or deciding whether or not to have surgery.

However, empathy can also be used in a in a coercive way to persuade people to agree to treatment plans or leave the consultation more quickly before the next patient arrives. Seen in this way, empathy appears less about patient care and more for the benefit of the doctor, working efficiency and productivity. This tension is evident in my use of empathy within medicine: at one level I use it to try and understand the patient's perspective better and help them to the best of my ability. But empathy also helps me get the work of the consultation done, for example doing a blood test or physical examination when someone is frightened and speeding up consultations if running late. Coercion can be present in art too. My experience of being in the audience in live art is often of feeling manipulated by the artist to join in something that I don't want to or feeling too embarrassed to leave when I have wanted to. This echo's Scanlan's complaint of 'peer pressure' described earlier with reference to relational artwork.[194]

In this research project I have used empathy in my methodology for art-making, especially when I communicate with the audience in live pieces. My intention has been to try to encourage anyone who wants to join in to do so. And to encourage people to not join in and/or leave when they want to. Whilst I have tried not to coerce anyone to take part - I also have wanted and encouraged them to. The same tension exists here (as in medicine) of using empathy to improve the experience for the audience - but also using it get the piece done. This relates to neoliberalism and the widespread introduction of empathy in

[192] Watson and Gillespie, *Modern Guide to Gp Consulting : Six S for Success*, 70.
[193] Derksen Frans, "Effectiveness of Empathy in General Practice: A Systematic Review.", 77.
[194] Scanlan, "Traffic Control. Joe Scanlan on Social Space and Relational Aesthetics.", 123.

communication[195] and management across business and health care.[196] Here empathy become a means of improving productivity and of compliance. Whitehead identifies that training a workforce in empathy is linked to 'profitable affective capital.'[197]

It is important to consider how it feels to be on the receiving end of empathy. As a patient, genuine empathy can feel fantastic: that sense that someone understands and you're not alone, evidenced not only by what they say, but their actions too. For example, they look as if they are interested in me; there is eye contact; they're not looking over my shoulder or at their computer… they don't sound impatient or bored…they drew the curtains across fully so there were no gaps when I had to undress…they gave me a cover to put over myself; they knew that was important to me without having to ask. Conversely, the experience of having someone going-through-the-motions of empathising can be very dispiriting and distancing as Rosamund Snow has explained.[198] It can feel as if something is being done 'to you' by someone else, perhaps mainly for their own benefit - like the rote enquiries from sales assistants and call handlers.

I agree with Whitehead, who has suggested that patients might experience empathy 'as intrusive or invasive.'[199] Unless conveyed with tact and sensitivity this is a risk of empathy, as with almost all forms of interpersonal communication. In addition, the awareness that people might want and need privacy (not just understanding) is essential to prevent empathetic concern tipping into nosiness. For me, empathy works best when I am unaware that someone is trying to empathise with me. If I know that someone is 'trying to' empathise it feels less comfortable, and I am immediately questioning whether they seem authentic or if it is 'emotional labour' that Hochschild identified[200] - and something they 'have' to do.

In medical schools, the way empathy is taught as a communication skill promotes the tendency for students to run through a 'checklist' of questions and behaviours to 'fulfil' being empathetic. Medical students are observed communicating with people and identifiable empathetic questions, statements and behaviours are observed and

[195] Pedwell, *Affective Relations : The Transnational Politics of Empathy*, 79.
[196] Whitehead, *Medicine and Empathy in Contemporary British Fiction : An Intervention in Medical Humanities*, 190.
[197] Ibid, 10.
[198] Rosamund Snow, "I Never Asked to Be Ice'd," *BMJ* 354, no. 3729 (2016).
[199] Whitehead, *Medicine and Empathy in Contemporary British Fiction : An Intervention in Medical Humanities*, 188.
[200] Hochschild, *The Managed Heart : Commercialization of Human Feeling*, 7.

measured.[201] The mnemonic I.C.E has been introduced in medicine as an aid to promote communication with empathy. ICE refers to ideas, concerns and expectations: ideas - what does the patient think is happening? concerns- what are they worried about? expectations - what do they expect to happen next?[202] The purpose of ICE is *'*to achieve as genuine a shared understanding as possible*'*[203]- and it can be useful. However, used in a rote way without imagination, it can have a distancing and awkward/jarring effect on the tenor of communication. For example, a trainee doctor recently triaging a patient by phone, saying:

> "So, you've told me your husband looks very ill at the moment…can I just ask… do you have any particular concerns today?"

This response clearly lacks any use of imagination by the doctor. Professor of Geriatrics Louise Aronson suggests the reason empathy in medicine is increasingly being communicated in such a wooden way, is because it is seen as a cognitive skill and has become 'divorced…from its' imaginative and emotive origins.'[204] She states 'we short-change not only our patients but ourselves by reducing empathy to a set of rote behaviours.'[205] This is confirmed by Snow who when describing her negative patient experience of being asked ICE questions by a doctor, stated 'it's just another checklist. And it feels like it, on the receiving end.'[206]

Thus far, the discussion has explored how empathy affects the experience of a consultation. Though an obvious statement, this process of empathy requires the use of verbal and gestural communication between people. In person, empathy can be conveyed with spoken words, tone of voice, gestures, touch and actions. Next, the difficulties associated with the expression of empathy in consultations is considered.

There are several factors in GP consultations that may affect such expressions of empathy: these include technology, time and personal factors. The prominence of the biomedical

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[201] Winefield, "Evaluating the Outcome of Communication Skill Teaching for Entry-Level Medical Students: Does Knowledge of Empathy Increase?."

[202] I recently asked a friend what she expected when she went to see any live art? 'to be disappointed' was her reply. I asked her what she wanted? 'To be really moved emotionally' she said. I suspect her expectations could be met if she came to one of my performances but I'm not sure that's the effect that I'm after. I know my expectations of art are higher if I've travelled a long way, especially if that's been the main purpose of the trip. If I am passing by an art venue and unexpectedly go in, my expectations are lower.

[203] Tate and Tate, *The Doctor's Communication Handbook*, 151.

[204] Louise Aronson, "Examining Empathy," *The Lancet* 383, no. July 5, 2014 (2014), 17.

[205] Ibid, 17.

[206] Snow, "What Your Patient Is Thinking."

model of medicine in the UK means that attention is often more on test results and scans, rather than the feelings and concerns of a patient.[207] The feeling of being reduced to a body rather than a person can be isolating and de-humanising, as is sitting waiting while doctors and/or nurses spend more time typing on the computer than giving eye contact or talking.[208] I have felt this same sense of isolation in live art events, watching an artist tap into their computer for the duration of their performance, whilst their back is turned to the audience.[209]

Haslam acknowledges the need to document medical information in GP consultations but states 'our concentration must be on the human in front of us, not on our computer.'[210] Whilst I obviously aspire to giving attention to the person in front of me, I know it is not always possible, particularly when so much needs to be done in only ten minutes, the time allotted to a consultation. The introduction of email and online/mobile phone consultations within general practice has brought new forms of communication that, whilst alienating for some people, are, for others, preferable to face-to-face interactions.[211] These changing modes of interaction in general practice resonate with advances in technology in shops where self-checkouts increase efficiency, whilst reducing face to face interpersonal communication with a shop assistant. Some people prefer this way of shopping. I don't. I dislike the lack of human contact. I want to see someone face to face at the checkout: to speak, smile, interact, even if only briefly. Whilst I want human contact, the quality of it is important too: it needs to feel genuine and not by rote. There needs to be some human interaction but not for too long. Similarly, in art events, the emphasis on filming and photographing live events and performances can spoil the audience experience of artwork, particularly if the documentation process appears to be the main priority.

Another factor that limits the communication of empathy in medical consultations is distancing communication. Constantly facing illness, suffering and death can provoke strong emotional responses in health care staff, who may then distance themselves from patients

[207] Christopher Mayes, "Pastoral Power and the Confessing Subject in Patient-Centred Communication," *Bioethical Inquiry*, no. 6 (2009), 483.
[208] Jonathan Silverman and Paul Kinnersley, "Doctors' Non-Verbal Behaviour in Consulations: Look at the Patient before You Look at the Computer," *Br J Gen Pract* 60, no. 571 (2010), 77.
[209] I don't think this was an intended effect of the performance
[210] Haslam, "Who Cares?.", 991.
[211] Martin Marshall, Robina Shah, and Helen Stokes-Lampard, "Online Consulting in General Practice: Making the Move from Disruptive Innovation to Mainstream Service," *BMJ* 360, no. 26 Mar (2018), 3.

as a way of coping with their own emotions.[212] It has been shown that medical students have less empathy when they qualify than when they entered training.[213] I agree with Shapiro's suggestion that an acceptance of shared humanity and vulnerability is required for doctors to fully care with empathy.[214]

Distancing communication happens in other fields too such as business, commerce and-academia as Elkins has observed.[215] When this happens, personal vulnerabilities are glossed over and kept hidden from others. For example, scholars continually hiding academic rejections, at the expense of authenticity and sometimes their mental well-being, as noted by Carson et al.[216] Distancing can feel less real, less relevant adding to a sense of personal isolation.[217] Conversely sometimes by sharing vulnerabilities people are brought closer together. This was my response to reading the spine of Martin Creed's book *Works*[218] in which, against convention, he lists fears quite publicly.[219]

Having discussed ways that empathy can influence medical consultations, and how the attitudes of practitioners may affect this process, the focus will now turn to the question of bias, which is an aspect of empathy that is easy to miss.[220]

When starting this research project, although aware of individual bias in all communication, I didn't associate this with empathising. At that time, my concerns about empathy were related to the ways people could use it insensitively or in a rote way, which I felt wasn't 'proper' empathy. I considered empathy conveyed with authenticity was, by definition, 'a good thing', and failed to see the risk of bias inherent in its use: namely, who gets to receive the empathy? And who gives it? Throughout the process of this research project my views on empathy have gradually changed and become more nuanced.

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[212] Johanna Shapiro, "Walking a Mile in Their Patient's Shoes: Empathy and Othering in Medical Students' Education," *Philosophy, Ethics, and Humanities in Medicine* 3, no. 10 (2008), 1.
[213] M. Neumann et al., "Empathy Decline and Its Reasons: A Systematic Review of Studies with Medical Students and Residents," *Academic Medicine* 86, no. 8 (2011).
[214] Shapiro, "Walking a Mile in Their Patient's Shoes: Empathy and Othering in Medical Students' Education.", 6.
[215] Elkins, *Pictures and Tears : A History of People Who Have Cried in Front of Paintings*, 102.
[216] Carson, Bartneck, and Voges, "Over-Competitiveness in Academia: A Literature Review.", 187.
[217] Ibid, 187.
[218] Martin Creed, *Martin Creed : Works* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2010).
[219] The spine of this book states: I fear this book, I dare not look, As bit by bit, I trawl my shit, I don't think, I want to make, a book of my work I am, scared to look, at what I have, done in case, I don't like it, and I'm scared , to show it to, others in case, they don't like this. The words *I fear this book* are in large font making it stand out even from distance, drawing the attention of the reader to it.
[220] Jesse Prinz, "Against Empathy," *The Southern Journal of Philosophy* 49, no. Spindel Supplement (2011), 214.

The bias in empathy manifests when people empathise to a greater extent with those most similar to themselves, or whom they know well. As Coplan has stated: 'we are naturally subject to egocentric bias.'[221] Conscious and unconscious personal biases[222] shape judgements and decisions about other people, influencing how power is distributed within society, through access to jobs, education, healthcare[223]- and criminal justice, as the Lammy Review has shown.[224] Judges may identify more with people similar to themselves and juries have been shown to have greater empathy for people who 'express emotions' rather than those who don't; as philosopher Jesse Prinz has observed.[225] It is harder for people to empathise with others if they don't identify with them.[226] Pedwell views this inherent egocentric bias of empathising as problematic, particularly within international development where aid is distributed along existing pathways of power, as she has articulated.[227] She also questions the tendency for aid workers to use empathy to access the 'felt truth' of other people, which gives the empathiser authority in their role.[228] In addition she questions the tendency to consider 'emotional knowledge' as 'direct, natural' and thus 'more legitimate' than 'other ways of knowing.'[229]

As a doctor, it is sometimes difficult to attend to people with empathy, but that is part of the job.[230] I try to avoid 'going through the motions' but recognise sometimes that I am having to 'perform' empathy as best I can. The reality of individual bias means the distribution of empathy is unequal. It would be difficult to show empathy to the man who murdered so many people in the mosque in Christchurch.[231]

This far, the evidence is clear that bias is very much a part of using empathy. This knowledge gradually became evident to me over the course of this Phd project; through detailed

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[221] Coplan and Goldie, *Empathy : Philosophical and Psychological Perspectives*, 13.
[222] A person knows their conscious biases but is unaware of their unconscious ones, which may happen very quickly and affect the judgements we form about other people, in relation to gender, race, class and power.
[223] J. Stone and G. B. Moskowitz, "Non-Conscious Bias in Medical Decision Making: What Can Be Done to Reduce It?," *Medical Education* 45, no. 8 (2011), 769.
[224] *The Lammy Review : An Independent Review into the Treatment of, and Outcomes for, Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Individuals in the Criminal Justice System*, 69.
[225] Prinz, "Against Empathy.", 226.
[226] Coplan and Goldie, *Empathy : Philosophical and Psychological Perspectives*, 13.
[227] Pedwell, *Affective Relations : The Transnational Politics of Empathy*, 21.
[228] Ibid, 83.
[229] Ibid, 83.
[230] Tate and Tate, *The Doctor's Communication Handbook*, 114.
[231] Hannah Ellis-Petersen, "Christchurch Massacre: Pm Confirms Children among Shooting Victims-as It Happened," *The Guardian*, Sat 16 Mar 2019.

research into the theories and critique of empathy and as a result of my creative practice outcomes. My use of empathy within this research project is considered next.

3.3 Art-making

The last section of this chapter discusses my broad approach to using empathy in this research project followed by a detailed case review of *Untitled (Forced Empathy)*2018 by Tania Bruguera. The discussion includes references to creative-practice projects, described in detail in Chapter Five and in the Appendices. The evolution of my approach to using empathy as a methodology to make art is considered first. This is followed by discussion of the processes of empathy that I adopted into my working method, and reflection on bias inherent in empathy, as outlined by Pedwell. At this point it is useful to reconsider Zahavi's statement which shows the imprecise nature of the term empathy. He stated:

> There is no clear consensus about what precisely it is. Is empathy a question of sharing another's feelings, or caring about another, or being emotionally affected by another's experiences though not necessarily experiencing the same experiences? Is it a question of imagining oneself in another's situation, of imagining being another in that other's situation, or simply of making inferences about another's mental states?[232]

During this research project I have incorporated empathy as an approach towards all my art-making. This process evolved slowly over time. Initially I could only consider empathy in relation to people and I incorporated it into any direct communications between the audience and myself: including conversations, emails and flyers. With time I approached object-making with empathy. Finally, I extended my use of empathy towards the form and content of this thesis.

Empathy towards people: From the outset 'making art with empathy' remained an elusive concept to me and I was unclear what it meant in practical terms. I consistently fell back onto the familiar territory of considering it as a communication process only in relation to direct contact with people. This explains my decision to predominantly make live art pieces

[232] Zahavi, "Empathy and Other-Directed Intentionality.", 129.

which also seemed the most suitable medium to explore gesture, another key theme of the research project. Although I wanted to extend my use of empathy beyond the audience, I repeatedly found myself unable to shift my thinking to accommodate this.

My use of empathy involved me considering all the components of an art-piece, from the audience's perspective. This included the title, emails, flyers, location, thematic content, how I communicated directly with the audience during a live work, how it started and how it ended. This included the words I said, my tone of voice and my movements and gestures.

When emailing to advertise the *The Great Forced LOLathon* (2013) a participatory event of twenty-six point two minutes of collective false laughter, I wrote *When did you last laugh out loud?* in the email header. At that time, both at work in medicine and as a research student at the university, my sense was of people being very busy and overwhelmed with their jobs. By putting this question into the email header, I hoped it would encourage recipients to consider how long it was since they had last laughed, open the email, and then read the contents of the advertising flyer. This approach resonates with Perec's use of reflective comments that reference embodiment in *An Attempt at Exhausting a Place in Paris.*

At every stage of this process I tried to imagine the feelings of the audience: what they would think? what would they feel? how they would respond? In this way I was using imagination as a process of empathy as outlined by Zahavi above:[233] both imagining myself in their position and imagining myself as another.

To aid this process, before finalising some art-pieces I spoke with and took advice from friends, art colleagues, work colleagues, university staff and family members. We discussed their views of and feelings towards various art-contexts, social situations and art-works. What did they think of it? Would they visit? If not, why not? What hadn't they liked? What sounded ok? What made the piece work for them? Reflecting on their answers I considered not only what they said but also how they expressed themselves; to try to get a nuanced sense of their perspective. I also tried to imagine the feelings and responses of people I know who don't visit art venues; to the hypothetical art-piece under consideration. Inevitably this process has been riven with bias in ways Pedwell articulated, as I have

[233] Ibid, 129.

considered the opinions of those people I know or respect. This relates to Bishops pointed criticism of groups 'who identify with one another' in art contexts, as described earlier.[234]

During this stage the form of many of the art-pieces was live participatory events that involved enactment of gestures. I used the views of other people to inform my decisions about aspects of the nature, form, content and staging of any art-work I developed, such as: *Synchrocrispicity* 1 (2013) Appendix B, *The Great Forced LOLathon* (2013) Appendix C, *Outstanding Standing Ovation* (2014) Appendix N, *I don't know what to call this* (*Tennis Grunts*) 2014 Appendix K and *AAAAAGGGHH (*2017) Appendix S.

The process involved consideration of my use of words, silent placards and gestures to communicate directly with the audience during live works such as *Final Preparations and Forced laughter* 1 (2012)and in the staging of *O Mio Babbeano Caro* (2014) *Forced Laughter* 3 (2014) and *Hand Cleansing Techniques Number One: how to wash your hands with soap and water* (2014). Links to these pieces in Appendices A, F,G and H respectively are given with the titles above. I tried to imagine and predict what the audience responses would be, in advance of any piece being staged. Then I decided on wording for the signs that I would use to communicate with the audience.

In some art-pieces I also used verbal, written and gestural methods to convey to the audience that I had some understanding of them during any given live work. This echoed my understanding of empathy from GP consultations and the need to show people you have some understanding of them, as Svenaeus has outlined.[235] It also resonated with my understanding of Perec's use of meta-discursive reflections in his writing which enhance empathy. Before I presented *O Mio Babbeano Caro* (2014), *Forced Laughter* 3 (2014)and *Hand Cleansing Techniques Number One: how to wash your hands with soap and water* (2014) all in quick succession of each other, I silently held up three cardboard placards in turn, for the audience to read. My intention was to show understanding towards anyone in the audience who might find performances boring. The three signs I held up read as follows:

3 performances 3 minutes each could be worse

[234] Bishop, "Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics.", 69.
[235] Svenaeus, "The Phenomenology of Empathy in Medicine: An Introduction.", 247.

During the staging of live work, I paid close attention to the audience: their gestures and body language, whether people looked interested or bored, were they engaged and following what I was doing or looking away, how much were they shuffling, talking or looking at phones. Initially, I tried to focus on the whole audience, scanning across many people, but this was only possible in a very superficial way. Eventually I settled on observing more closely the responses of several people in the audience, usually in different locations. I subsequently adjusted my behaviour depending on my observations of the audience response, for example, by speeding up or slowing down and allowing more time. This process correlates with Whiteheads descriptions of empathy involving observation and response to 'observable bodily actions.'[236] It involves the higher level or cognitive and imaginative processes of empathy outlined by Goldman[237] - and the subconscious 'picking up' described by Coplan and Goldie.[238]

I found it difficult to know how to convey empathy to a larger audience of thirty to fifty people. Eventually I settled on using my imagination to consider how a person, in the audience for the first time and unfamiliar, uncomfortable and uncertain about live art, might feel. This mirrored my use of empathy in medicine: of knowing that a routine event for me, might be nerve-wracking for a patient. At this stage of the Phd research I found myself continually conflating empathy with forming positive, helpful relationships, as I would when at work as a GP, which was spilling over into the art-work in ways that were not helpful. Despite my understanding that empathy allows for difference and disagreement, I found it hard to move beyond a view of empathy that associated it with caring, as described by Noddings.[239] With time, I was aware that my focus of trying to approach the (live) audience with empathy was obscuring the nature and content of the art-work itself. It became apparent that the relationship between me and the audience was getting in the way. Firstly, it was obscuring my exploration of gesture in the artwork. Secondly, almost by default I persistently pursued a positive relationship with the audience. Despite my best intentions, at this point my work seemed to confirm that empathetic communication is predominantly ameliorative, as Bishop has suggested.[240] This was not and is not my understanding of

[236] Whitehead, *Medicine and Empathy in Contemporary British Fiction : An Intervention in Medical Humanities*, 41.
[237] Alvin I. Goldman, *Simulating Minds : The Philosophy, Psychology, and Neuroscience of Mindreading*, Philosophy of Mind (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2006).
[238] Coplan and Goldie, *Empathy : Philosophical and Psychological Perspectives*, xxxiii.
[239] Noddings, *Caring, a Feminine Approach to Ethics & Moral Education*, 31-32.
[240] Bishop, "Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics.", 79.

empathy. An additional concern was that, thus far, I had been unable to make work that focused on gesture in ways I wanted.

A turning point in my creative practice and use of empathy came through a very difficult experience of unexpected family illness that led to an eight month break in my studies.[241] Returning to university, I found making art almost impossible. The live, upbeat gesture-based participatory work I had made up to this point felt particularly redundant. I was not able, nor did I want to continue this way of working, which had not fully explored gesture in ways I had intended.

As an alternative I determined to re-kindle and develop a project *A Point Meant 100* that I had started shortly before my enforced eight-month break. This was a planned series of one hundred short meetings with other people, though I ended the project after seventy meetings. The first phase of *A Point Meant 100* (meetings 1-27) 2015 is described in Appendix V. The second phase of A Point Meant 100 (meetings 28-70) is discussed in Chapter Five. In this latter half of the project all the one-to-one meetings I arranged with people, involved us having a small piece of clay to fiddle with whilst we chatted. My intention was that these small sculptures would reflect on the hand gestures of our conversations. I was encouraged to exhibit this piece for my research project. The experience of preparing for this exhibition proved to be a second catalyst for change, which affected my understanding of empathy to objects and of empathy in academia.

Empathy towards objects*:* I was unconfident about the pending exhibition, yet I was being encouraged by my supervisors to produce a confident show. The sculptures were slight, modest pieces of clay and I wasn't sure I could exhibit them. They were the polar-opposite of the tenor of descriptions of research on the Newcastle University website.[242] My attitude towards these sculptures only changed when I began to approach them with empathy. It feels ridiculous to say this, but it transformed my view of them. Rather than rejecting them because they appeared modest, underwhelming and seemingly a bit pathetic, I tried to approach them with empathy: observing their bodily features and trying to imagine their perspective. How would they would feel if only some of them were exhibited? or the broken

[241] Two of our teenage children required major surgery, one was diagnosed with cancer.
[242] The 'Our Research' section of Newcastle University Website favours words and phrases such as: rigour, strengths, pushing the boundaries, excellence, of the highest quality, world-leading, pioneering, advancing knowledge, leading academic talent, award-winning.

bits weren't included? Instead of only showing the 'best' I eventually decided to exhibit each one, 'warts and all' plus every tiny fragment or flake of clay that had broken off. In addition, using the success-orientated language of the university website as a starting point, each sculpture was given a title such as 'excellence' that seemingly mis-matched with their appearance. Taking positive words from the university website and using a thesaurus, I developed a list of one hundred successful sounding words. These formed a separate works *List of Works* (2017) which was displayed alongside the sculptures. It is discussed in greater depth in Chapter Five.

This last section has discussed my overall approach to using empathy to make art within this PhD project. It has highlighted the different cognitive, imaginative and subconscious processes of empathy that this has involved. The difficulty of both discussing such a highly contested term, and of recognising features of empathy within artistic practice are becoming apparent. The bias of empathy reflected in my use of it in these creative projects has been noted. In addition, the practical difficulty of separating out empathic communication, from notions of caring behaviour have been identified. The transforming experience of approaching clay sculptures and fragments of clay with empathy, enabled me to consider empathetic communication differently. I unexpectedly found that empathy could after all, be used as an approach towards objects as well as people, in keeping with its very first descriptions in aesthetics.[243] This change in my long-held perception of empathy, as only a means of communication towards people, freed me up to consider it in different ways. It made me question whether empathy could be extended even further, beyond objects and to written words. I had previously used empathy as an approach to the content of any email, flyer or written communications with the audience. But what if the written words themselves were approached with empathy? This is explored later in Chapter Four. The next and final section of this chapter is a case study of work by Tania Bruguera.

[243] Coplan and Goldie, *Empathy : Philosophical and Psychological Perspectives*, xii.

3.4 Tania Bruguera

The piece *Untitled (Forced Empathy)* 2018 by Tania Bruguera, shown in her recent exhibition at Tate Modern[244] presents the topic of empathy within contemporary practice and is thematically relevant to the discussion in this research project. This individual piece, rather than the whole exhibition, is considered in relation to empathy. As an artist and activist, Bruguera makes work in performance, events, installation, film and text. Thematically, her work focuses on politics, migration, institutional critique and a professed interest in 'the role of emotions of politics.'[245] Her exhibition at Tate Modern inspired by 'recent crises in migration' aimed to encourage visitors to 'participate' and consider 'collective action.'[246] The title of the exhibition was a continually varying number: the total number of people migrating that year, plus the number of people who died migrating that year.[247] Art-works within this exhibition included a sound piece, a floor surface of thermochromic ink, the renaming of a building, a gloss black floor surface, as well as the piece *Untitled (Forced Empathy)*. This work consists of a small room, just off the main turbine hall, filled with an organic compound that provokes a physical reaction and causes people's eyes to water. A sign outside explains that it is a 'private space...to think about the loss that migration entails' and the 'tearing agent...provokes a physical reaction that Bruguera describes as 'forced empathy''. Finally, it states that 'crying together in public breaks down our usual social barriers and leads to a shared emotional response'.

To enter the room, visitors pass two museum staff, who stamp the variable number (that is the title of the exhibition) on the back of their wrist. Once inside, visitors' eyes start to water. Visiting this piece, my eyes started to stream after a couple of minutes due to the overwhelming amount of eucalyptus in the room. Two other visitors were present, whose eyes were also streaming. I identified with them as other gallery visitors and understood that our eyes were watering due to the eucalyptus, but I didn't, or wasn't able to consider their situation beyond that, nor did we speak. We were only in the room together for a few minutes. This 'physical, relational experience' set up by Bruguera links with my art-pieces such as *Outstanding Standing Ovation* (2014) Appendix N and *The Great Forced LOLathon*

[244] "Tania Bruguera," Tate, https://www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/tate-modern/exhibition/hyundai-commission-tania-bruguera.
[245] Frances Morris, "Foreword," in *Tania Bruguera*, ed. Catherine Wood (Tate Publishing, 2019).
[246] Euisun Chung, "Sponsor's Foreword," ibid. (London), 7.
[247] Catherine Wood, "Introduction," ibid., ed. Catherine Wood (London), 22.

(2013) Appendix C when audience members participated in physical actions alongside each other. Witnessing other peoples' watering eyes did not help me reflect on the plight of migrants but seemed an obvious physical response to excessive eucalyptus. However, the process of entering a room containing an organic agent, through a door seemingly guarded by museum staff who stamped a number on my wrist, echoed with recollections of having visited Auschwitz five years previously and seeing the gas chambers there. It was these connotations, rather than visible tears in people's eyes, that prompted my thoughts of trauma endured by other people during the war.

Untitled (Forced Empathy) highlights how difficult it is to define empathy, to recognise it and to promote it between people: these are discussed in turn. The assumption in the piece appears to be that the physical tears of visitors in the crying room equates to them being upset and/or concerned about the other visitors crying and/or the plight of migrants. In *Untitled (Forced Empathy)* I inferred that the presence of people's (eucalyptus induced) tears in some way represented their feelings (seemingly sadness or distress) which in turn would hopefully evoke a concerned response from other people present. However, visitors know the tears are 'false' as they have been caused by a physical reaction to eucalyptus. Thus. these are 'irritant tears' Elkins has described, not emotional ones.[248]

[248] Elkins, *Pictures and Tears : A History of People Who Have Cried in Front of Paintings*, 27.

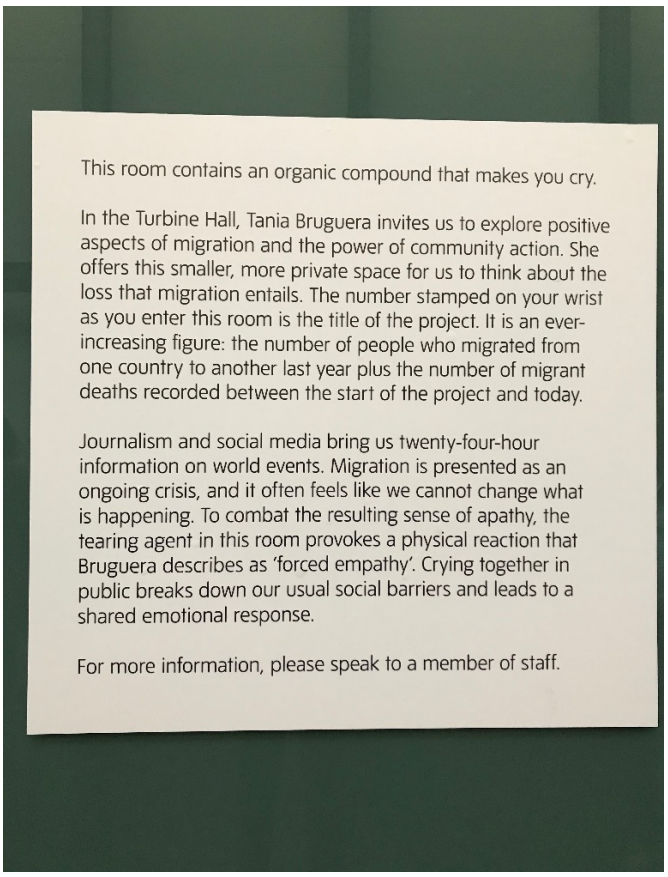

Figure 1. Sign outside the crying room *Untitled (Forced Empathy)* 2018, Tania Bruguera.

During this piece I found myself becomingly increasingly confused about what empathy actually means and what this piece was saying about it. It appeared that this art-piece conflated empathy with feeling the same way as another person- those other people crying in the room. However, the tears were a physical reaction, not an emotional one. The sign outside the room had directed visitors to consider the loss of migration, not other visitors in the room.[249] Bruguera's stated aim that through *Untitled (Forced Empathy)* people would 're- learn to feel for others again' suggests that, for her, empathy equates with compassion and care.[250] However, this is not my understanding of empathy. For me, it is not a matter of feeling the same way as another person, rather a means of understanding their situation and perspective. Also, I view compassion and care as separate and different from empathy. In this piece, I found myself able to empathise to a limited degree with the other gallery visitors

[249] Part of the sign outside this room stated: 'In the Turbine Hall, Tania Bruguera invites us to explore positive aspects of migration and the power of community action. She offers this smaller, more private space for us to think about the loss that migration entails…' I viewed this on 17th October 2018, when I visited the show.
[250] Tate, "Tania Bruguera Hyundai Commission Tate," (2018).

who were also crying in the room (due to the eucalyptus), as we appeared to be in the same situation. However, this did not make me feel caring towards them and we didn't make a social connection with each other. The curator, Catherine Wood, rightly identifies that the induced tears in *Untitled (Forced Empathy)* could lead to a real emotional response,[251] (as presumably can any aspect of an exhibition) though this was not my experience. Nor did I make a conscious connection between crying visitors, real emotions, or the plight of people migrating. This led to considerable personal disconnect between the experience of this piece and the descriptions of it on the text panels within the gallery. Overall, I found Kode9's sound piece in the main turbine hall, that accompanied this work more moving than this crying room. As did art critic Adrian Searle.[252]

In addition to confirming how difficult (if not impossible) it is to define empathy, *Untitled (Forced Empathy)* also highlighted the problem of ever accurately recognising or knowing that empathy exists within any relationship between people. Whilst I didn't feel much connection with the other people in the crying room, perhaps they felt empathy for each other, or for me? But it felt impossible to know, just by observing each other for a few minutes. This made me question whether one can ever accurately claim to feel empathy for another person. In my experience, any sense of this is mainly based on the ability to speak with each other as well as constantly reflecting and intuiting what they say, how they say it, the tone of their voice, their facial and bodily gestures, their eyes and eye contact. As such, any work that increases social interaction between people could enhance empathy between them. Wood identifies that the encounters within this exhibition by Bruguera (of crying, of vibrations from the sound piece, and potentially lying on a heat activated mat) challenge conventions of behaviour and 'potentially prompts social interaction.'[253] This resonates with work made during this PhD research such as *Why don't adults skip? number two* (2014) Appendix L *, Forced Laughter* 3 (2014) Appendix G and *Hand Cleansing Techniques Number One: how to wash your hands with soap and water* (2014) Appendix H, in which I have used gesture as a means to question behavioural norms within galleries: which in turn led to increased interactions between people in the audience.

[251] Wood, "Introduction.", 23.
[252] Adrian Searle, "Tania Bruguera at Turbine Hall Review:'It Didn't Make Me Cry but It Cleared the Tubes'," *The Guardian*, 1 Oct 2018.
[253] Wood, "Introduction.", 23.

A marked difference between my approach to empathy and Bruguera's is that she overtly mentions it in the title, text panels and literature accompanying the exhibition. In contrast I have never stated in text or in person, that I have used empathy in my art-making, nor can I imagine doing so. My approach to using empathy in my work is much more oblique. If an audience is to glean any sense of it within my work, I assume this will happen without me suggesting it to them beforehand.

Bruguera's stated intention for her work is 'to transform the audience into active citizens'[254] and in *Untitled (Forced Empathy)* the audience were directed via a sign to consider 'the loss that migration entails'[255]which is another marked difference in our approach. I find it off-putting and counterproductive to read statements like this, which suggest people should respond in a particular way. As such, I never use them. The critic Mark Hudson described the approach by Bruguera as 'patronising'[256] which I agree with. Elkins has described museum labelling as being counterproductive, suggesting the textual content frequently makes people 'less able' to be 'affected' by what is seen in the art.[257] This was my experience in response to reading the labelling in Bruguera's exhibition. Whilst I try to make my work accessible to people by using empathy, I don't ever explain this overtly, nor do I attempt to direct the audience to become better people, as in this piece.

Untitled (Forced Empathy) highlights not only how contested and varied the term empathy is, but also the difficulty of knowing if empathy exists either between people, or within an art-work. In this art-piece Bruguera associates empathy with shared, and identical displays of emotion, professed feelings, and altruistic behaviour. However, this differs from other definitions. Any clear meaning of the term seems lost. This difficulty of defining empathy resonates with Goldman's observation that 'It is easy to conflate different features of empathy' and as a result people 'can sometimes be mystified as to how, exactly, a given writer uses the term.'[258]

There is a significant difference between recognition (through experience) of qualities in an artwork and being given knowledge (through text) about it. This relates to the difference

[254] Tate, "Tania Bruguera Hyundai Commission Tate."
[255] Sign on wall at Tate Modern. Viewed 17th October 2018.
[256] Mark Hudson, "Tania Bruguera's Turbine Hall Installation, Review: An Unpardonably Thin Travesty of a Political Artwork," *The Telegraph* 2018.
[257] Elkins, *Pictures and Tears : A History of People Who Have Cried in Front of Paintings*, 91.
[258] Goldman, "Two Routes to Empathy: Insights from Cognitive Neuroscience.", 32.

between experiencing someone's empathy (as evident through their gestures, actions, tone of voice and words) and being told that they empathise with you. Sometimes it seems that actions do potentially speak louder than words. This insight has forced me to reflect on my own use of empathy in this creative-practice research, and to ask if it is ever evident to an audience, particularly as I have never overtly mentioned using it.

Chapter 4. Encounters with other people

This chapter explores ways in which people encounter other people face to face. It is divided into three overlapping sections: hesitation, gesture and emotion. The discussion throughout, considers the intersection of spoken language, feelings, bodily movements and gesture, and their relationship to empathy. The chapter has three purposes, of equal importance. First, to consider how movement, gestures and emotion influence experience of interpersonal communication; what is seen, felt, assumed, known or understood, and to consider this in relation to the role gesture might play in shaping interpersonal interactions. Second, to highlight and consider the seemingly unknown qualities of movements and gestures, which make them so difficult to fully understand or accurately interpret. Finally, to consider the role that hesitation plays within our communication.

The historical tendency of using distinct categories of verbal and non-verbal when discussing human communication is not particularly helpful, because invariably face-to-face encounters involve a mixture of both. However, it is difficult to avoid using these very prevalent terms, which simplify descriptions of an extremely complicated process. Non-verbal communication refers to ways people exchange information without speaking. This includes the way spaces in homes and offices are organised, dress sense, and how closely people stand next to others, as psychologist Michael Argyle astutely observed.[259] The focus here, however, is on ways communication occurs via the body: through posture, bodily movements and gait, hand and arm gestures, non-verbal vocalisations and tone of voice. Whist the influence of facial expressions on communication is discussed, the face is predominantly outside the remit of this investigation.

During conversations, people take in the other person's speech but also witness the gestures and actions that accompany it, which affect their own thoughts, feelings and the way they respond, and vice-versa. This 'entanglement' of movement, speech, cognition and emotion occurs simultaneously and is in a constant state of flux, forever shifting and responding in myriad ways as Highmore correctly observed.[260]

[259] Michael Argyle, *Bodily Communication*, 2nd ed. (London ; New York: Methuen, 1988), 3.
[260] Ben Highmore, "Bitter after Taste: Affect, Food and Social Aesthetics," in *The Affect Theory Reader*, ed. Melissa Gregg and Gregory J. Seigworth (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2010), 119.

Historically, gestures tend to have been ignored in text. Unlike spoken words, gestures don't tend to be written down.[261] Written statements exist but generally not a gestured.[262] At the start of this creative-practice research I had assumed the meaning of most hand gestures was known, but this isn't the case: their meaning is dependent on what is said in that particular context and moment in time. The difficulty of accurately pinning down the entwined simultaneous processes of gesture, emotion and cognition is acknowledged from the start, as is the inadequacy of using words to try to describe the constantly moving nature of gestures, which occur in three dimensions.[263]

The discussion includes detailed artistic case studies of works by artists Yvonne Rainer and Candice Breitz which are found in the section on gesture. The artworks considered are *Hand Movie,* (1966) and *Trio A* (1966) by Yvonne Rainer and *Becoming* (2013) by Candice Breitz. These works are discussed in relation to the themes of empathy, hesitation and gesture that are central to this research project.

Finally, this chapter has been informed by an example of communication that occurred at a GP home visit. This was a very vulnerable situation and is presented unannounced. It has been included to draw attention to the significance of gestural communication when nothing or very little is said.

[261] David McNeill, "Speech-Gesture Mimicry in Performance: An Actor-Audience, Author-Actor, Audience-Actor Triangle," *Journal for Cultural Research* 19, no. 1 (2013), 3.
[262] I am making a gestured of this research project.
[263] David F. Armstrong, William C. Stokoe, and Sherman Wilcox, *Gesture and the Nature of Language* (Cambridge ; New York, NY, USA: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 8.

Figure 2. ‘Er’ 2013 poster paint on card 12” x 10”

4.1 Hesitation

Hesitation: the action of pausing before saying or doing something.

https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/hesitation 13.4.19

I am in the middle of hesitation. I'm in the middle of hesitating about writing about hesitation. I am in the middle of hesitating about writing what I want to write about hesitation. Throughout this PhD project I have consistently been told to write it up more confidently, and less hesitatingly. And I wonder why this is. Why is there this pressure within research to be writing up the work in a confident manner? Why can I not write it up in a hesitating manner? Or in a less confident way? And what exactly is the problem with pausing before you say or do something? Why should there be such a pressure to avoid this. Is it really the case that all things less sure or less confident are less good?

Certain: able to be firmly relied on to happen or be the case

Certain: having or showing complete conviction about something.

https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/certain 13.4.19

Certain synonyms: unquestionable, sure, definite, beyond question, not in question, not in doubt, unequivocal, indubitable, undeniable, irrefutable, indisputable, incontrovertible, incontestable, obvious, patent, manifest, evident, plain, clear.

For Certain: Without any doubt.

In no uncertain terms= clearly and forcefully.

https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/certain 13.4.19

The triangle below is a reminder of a situation in GP palliative care home visits, that is very familiar to me. For an outside observer present in the room, this situation might appear hesitant, but invariably it isn't. One side of the triangle is the patient's forearm: they are in bed. Another side of the triangle has busy-ness, noisiness, and distractions attached to it: these must I assume, be away from the bed.

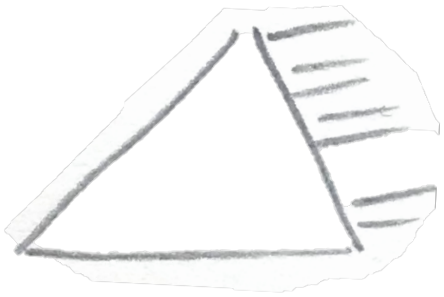

Figure 3. Diagram of a space between people during a GP home visit.

I'm not clear what the third side of the triangle is, perhaps it is the border between me and the bed: with me coming near to them. And somewhere in the middle of that triangle, in a really, really, brief, moment of time, is an intensity of communication where either no words or only very few, are spoken. Sometimes the remains of a word hangs, in the air. And in a moment of relative quiet, something happens. Some sort of feeling or awareness that I can't explain.

I don't know the relationship of this moment to the gestures of the arm, the forearm or the hand. I don't know the relationship of this moment to the movement of my body. Nor to the objects in our peripheral vision, nor the noises, sounds and smells. But I do know that something is happening here, and it is right in the middle of this triangle and it may hardly last any time at all. Words are hardly spoken. There may be some sounds either side, but not in the middle when it is so pertinent and intense and when it seems to mean so much. I hesitate to know what to call this moment. I hesitate to know how to describe it. It feels

powerful and vivid and very real, present and obvious. And on the face of it, not much seems to be happening.

The more I try to focus on what is taking place in these brief intense moments, the less I am able, to see it. Rather, I am aware of 'picking' up on things: in my peripheral vision or peripheral hearing, or peripheral touch or smell that I don't even necessarily recognise. It seems that some combination of context, gesture, words, silence, sounds, noise from outside occurs, but I'm not sure what. These situations always feel very significant. Often a spoken word holds a space open. And whilst some of these words might appear hesitant, in my experience they rarely are.

Consideration of the vital role of peripheral awareness, in these intense moments resonates with the theorist Irit Rogoff's probing of looking 'away from art.'[264] Whilst I don't look away in any sense in these medical home visits, I am acutely aware of things taking place in the periphery of all my senses, almost out of conscious reach: which are affecting the situation. This makes me consider and reflect on the peripheral aspects of communication that occur within art-contexts, as Rogoff questioned:

> What is it that we do when we look away from art? When we avert our gaze in the very spaces and contexts in which we are meant to focus our attention? When we exploit the cultural attention and the spatial focus provided by and insisted on by museums, galleries, exhibitions sites and studios to cajole some other presence, some other dynamic in the space, into being?[265]

Some of this creative-practice research has involved an exploration of more peripheral aspects of communication, as will become evident. For now, the discussion focusses on the issue of hesitation.

Hesitating is often perceived negatively both by observers and the subject hesitating, particularly as it is frequently associated with doubt, uncertainty and failure. The Oxford English Dictionary defines it as 'a pausing or delaying in deciding or acting, due to irresolution; the condition of doubt in relation to action.'[266] The curator Lisa Le Feuvre has

[264] Irit Rogoff, "...And Words in the Middle," in *Writing the Image: An Adventure with Art and Theory*, ed. Yve Lomax (London; New York: I. B. Tauris, 2000), 111.
[265] Ibid, 111-2.
[266] https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/86378?redirectedFrom=hesitation&

noted that uncertainty in society is widespread, as is familiarity with failure.[267] Societal negative perceptions of uncertainty have been correctly identified by artist and writer Emma Cocker, when she stated that it is difficult 'to attach worth to not knowing' because 'culturally… we are conditioned away from such experiences' and 'encouraged to view them as marginal or meaningless, as somehow lacking in true merit.'[268] The columnist Gary Younge observes that within political discourse certainty is privileged.[269] As such, hesitation is frequently experienced negatively. The educationalist Sam Sellar has observed this negative and unsettling effect of hesitation on an individual's 'self-assurance' which can causes people to 'reappraise' and 'make sense anew.'[270] Professor of communication, Jennifer A Theiss concurs that uncertainty within close relationships, although common, tends to be experienced as 'unpleasant and undesirable.'[271] In medical contexts, hesitation is frequently viewed negatively and is linked to uncertainty. For example, in surgical training, strong perceived associations between hesitation and uncertainty have been identified; causing medical staff to incorrectly assume that hesitation equates to incompetence, and by extension, failure. As a result, trainee surgeons may 'avoid seeking help' if they are uncertain, to try and avoid appearing 'incompetent.'[272]

Unlike the culture of hospitals, uncertainty is a much more recognised and accepted feature of general practice work.[273] As Drs Peter and Liz Tate have observed 'dealing with uncertainty is one of the hardest skills to learn in medicine.'[274] People frequently present at varying and early stages of what are often self-limiting illnesses: not all of which need investigation. The earlier the presentation, 'the greater the uncertainty.'[275] In addition, access to blood tests, scans and x-rays is more restricted in primary care and results take longer. Managing this 'uncertainty and unpredictability of illness' is the reality of the general

[267] Le Feuvre, "Introduction: Strive to Fail.", 12.
[268] Emma Cocker, "Tactics for Not Knowing: Preparing for the Unexpected," in *On Not Knowing: How Artists Think*, ed. Elizabeth Fisher and Rebecca Fortnum (London: 2013), 126.
[269] Gary Younge, "The Missing Ingredients in Todays Debates? Generosity," *The Guardian*, 11th May 2019.
[270] Sam Sellar, "'It's All About Relationships': Hesitation, Friendship and Pedagogical Assemblage," *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education* 33, no. 1 (2012), 61-62.
[271] Jennifer Theiss, The Experience and Expression of Uncertainty in Close Relationships, https://doi.org/10.1017/9781316423264, 26.
[272] Michael Ott et al., "Resident Hesitation in the Operating Room: Does Uncertainty Equal Incompetence?," *Medical Education* 52, no. 8 (2018).
[273] Alexander Gillies, "Viewpoint: Embracing Uncertainty," *British Journal of General Practice* 67, no. 658 (2017), 215.
[274]Tate and Tate, *The Doctor's Communication Handbook*, 110.
[275] Ibid, 110.

practice.[276] It requires attention, time, regular reviews and continued reflection and questioning of one's initial assumptions. Knowledge of a diagnosis often only emerges slowly, over time. This period of not fully knowing, which is marked by uncertainty, is difficult and can be stressful for all involved; as anyone who has waited for test results knows.

There's no clock. There's no sound from the room outside.

And it does feel slightly odd to have been placed in here on my own. Not that I've got a problem with the waiting bit. But it's been quite a while now.

[276] Ibid., 162.

And I'm in the middle of a department waiting for them to arrive. And the whole process of it…first in the outside communal area. Then the exciting move through to this new place where the doctor will see me soon.

And the anticipation of being seen.

And it seems quite a long time now to have been kept waiting.

I don't know how long it is as I didn't check the time before I came through and I don't want to check it now, on my phone. And it's odd sitting here alone.

My hands feel a bit sticky and I want to wash them in the sink, but I decide not to as I don't want to look presumptuous when they arrive.

I'm not annoyed, just very conscious of being here. And the oddness of being shoved in a room with two doors, both of which have been closed.

Closed doors waiting.

I can lock the doors from the inside, I think.

Imagine.

And if anything looks at all suspicious, then they'll take a biopsy or remove it later this afternoon.

Melanoma Clinic, RVI, Newcastle upon Tyne 8th December 2016

Though uncertainty is difficult, sometimes it is better than being offered unrealistic or 'dishonest' assurances about a health situation which is not yet fully known, as Drs Tate have suggested.[277] The academic Elspeth Probyn has highlighted the potential emotional costs of not knowing that exist within academic writing and identified the 'shame in being highly interested in something and unable to convey it to others.'[278] Le Feuvre also recognises that embarrassment accompanies failure; which when it happens makes 'you want to disappear.'[279]

Interestingly in artistic practice, not knowing is frequently a preferred state from which to work. Though potentially difficult to experience at a personal level, the artist and writer Emma Cocker correctly observed, that not knowing is beneficial as 'a field of desirable indeterminacy' in which to work.[280] In addition, Cocker has observed that artistic practice often tends 'towards making something *less* rather than *more* known' in an attempt to bring about new understandings.[281] Artist and academic Rebecca Fortnum concurs, stating that artists 'want to encounter…something that does not *feel* known to them' in the work they create.[282] These statements reflect my own approach to, and experience of creative practice: that creativity stems from unknown beginnings and emerges, through a combination of following one's intuition, alongside reflection on critical thinking. It is not always obvious what is going to be or what has been produced. Surprisingly, this apparent recognition and acceptance of not knowing and uncertainty, within the creative process, is less evident in requirements of writing that surrounds artistic practice. As Fortnum has noted, within art education 'the prevailing culture requires one to be able to articulate, at the point of experience, what one 'knows.'[283] This requirement for articulation of knowing extends to artistic statements, written statements about art-work, and project applications.[284] Alongside the pressure on artists to 'quantify and qualify' what they do, observed by Fortnum,[285] this risks privileging certainty over uncertainty: at the potential cost of authenticity. As the artist Joanne Lee suggested, uncertainty seems to go against the

[277] Ibid, 162.
[278] Elspeth Probyn, *Blush: Faces of Shame* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), 130.
[279] Le Feuvre, "Introduction: Strive to Fail.",17.
[280] Cocker, "Tactics for Not Knowing: Preparing for the Unexpected.", 127.
[281] Ibid, 127.
[282] Rebecca Fortnum, "Creative Accounting: Not Knowing in Talking and Making," (Black Dog Publishing), 70.
[283] Ibid, 77.
[284] Ibid, 79.
[285] Elizabeth Fisher, "In a Language You Don't Understand," in *On Not Knowing. How Artists Think.*, ed. Elizabeth Fisher and Rebecca Fortnum (London: Black Dog Publishing, 2013), 10.

grain of academic research, where the 'language of clarity' appears more valued than 'vagueness.'[286]

Confusingly not all situations (or writing) that appear hesitant are, nor are all stated certainties to be relied on as is evident from current political discourse.[287] Nor is all hesitation, negative. In GP home visits, during those occasional experiences of heightened intensity, described earlier: whilst the words and slower pace of conversation are indeed hesitant, my sense is that these moments are the most significant of all. They encompass brief points of interpersonal connection, involving very few words, which takes place in the midst, of everything else.

Silence

Gesture

Feelings

[286] Lee, "On Not Staying Put: Georges Perec's 'Inter(in)Disciplinarity' as an Approach to Research.", 21.
[287] BBc World Service, *Why Does Donald Trump Seem to Have Such a Problem with the Truth?*, podcast audio, accessed 29.9.2019, https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/w3csytgg.

Sometimes

In those

little pauses

and breaks

and

er

hesitations that is

where some sort of

meaning and

and

understanding comes.

silences

And what is the

relation of these

Little movements to the background

gestures

In other situations, people hesitate and pause because they have decided not to speak, act, buy, make, text, or perhaps tweet. They might have changed their mind: this is not necessarily negative. People may choose not to speak, to allow others to have their say or to avoid awkwardness in a conversation. Likewise, a proposed course of action can be halted, after a considered decision.

Even hesitant situations associated with doubt can prove positive. In these situations, academic Sam Sellar points to the individual benefits of hesitation, which can provide 'significant learning opportunities' for the those involved.[288] This happens via the opening-up of 'spaces of questioning', through thinking and consideration of one's response.[289] As Younge has observed 'it's OK not to have a firm opinion about everything. It's OK not to know, to be conflicted or just in the process of working something out.'[290] In general practice it is sometimes incumbent to share doubt about a diagnosis, even though this can be difficult for patients and staff.[291] In other situations, hesitation and uncertainty communicated by one individual, may benefit another who witnesses it. This was my experience from reading the hesitations and questions in Perec's writing, and from reading Probyn's acknowledgement of the potential for embarrassment, through failure in academic writing.[292]

Interestingly hesitation is much more evident when people talk, as opposed to write. The linguist Göran Kjellmer has identified this difference: with speech more likely to show 'hesitation or uncertainty' through 'gestures' 'facial expressions' and 'bodily movements' and by the 'linguistic' means of 'repetitions' and pauses, which can be 'silent' and 'filled'.[293] Pauses in speech which are not silent, frequently involve words such as *ah*, *er*, *erm*, *mm*, *uh* and *um*.[294] The use of these pauses is not always conscious.[295] Whilst these words may indeed be indicative of hesitation, Kjellmer has described many other functions for these 'hesitation phenomena' such as regulation of the flow of conversations between speakers.[296] For example, the word *er* can be used to introduce a person's moment to speak

[288] Sellar, "'It's All About Relationships': Hesitation, Friendship and Pedagogical Assemblage.", 62.
[289] Ibid, 72.
[290] Younge, "The Missing Ingredients in Todays Debates? Generosity."
[291] Tate and Tate, *The Doctor's Communication Handbook*, 110.
[292] Probyn, *Blush: Faces of Shame*, 130.
[293] Kjellmer, "Hesitation. In Defence of Er and Erm.", 170.
[294] Ibid, 171.
[295] Ibid, 191.
[296] Ibid, 171.

'a speech turn', to hold onto that moment of speech: 'turn holding', to allow someone else to speak: 'turn yielding' and to 'attract attention' and 'establish contact.'[297] In addition, Kjellmer has described the 'significant function' of *er* in 'focussing the listeners' onto 'important, semantically heavy element(s) in the delivery' that are about 'to follow' and in alerting listeners 'to implications and innuendos'.[298] Thus, the silent pauses in conversations and tiny words like *um* and *er,* though associated with hesitation, also have a significant role in guiding conversations. For Kjellmer they have a lubricating function that facilitates communication, that is at times 'indispensable' in spoken delivery.[299]

In the context of the palliative care visit described earlier, there are two aspects of hesitation. Firstly, the interrupted, slower conversations spoken, and secondly, my hesitancy in knowing how to describe this in writing.

My experience of *ums*, *ers*, and pauses in medical consultations (both as doctor and a patient) is that these tiny words and silences, have a very significant effect on the nature of communication, as Kjellmer has suggested. Firstly, they mark hesitation, and alert the listener, to something of importance for the speaker. Neighbour has observed that this can manifest in a nervous 'clearing of the throat' accompanied by restlessness or a slight 'backing away movement.[300] Secondly, *ums, ers* and pauses facilitate the ease with which people respond to each other and guide how communication flows from person to person. Finally, they emphasise nuances of spoken words and enable subtleties of meanings to manifest. As such, these hesitations, that involve silences and small words, can enhance communication, and aid understanding and empathy between people. In my experience these effects are not restricted to medical consultations but can occur in any conversations.

[297] Ibid, 183-188.
[298] Ibid, 187-188.
[299] Ibid, 191.
[300] Neighbour, *The Inner Consultation How to Develop and Effective and Intuitive Consulting Style*, 132.

JUST BECAUSE ITS

DIFFICULT TO SPEAK

DOESN’T MEAN YOU

HAVE NOTHING TO SAY

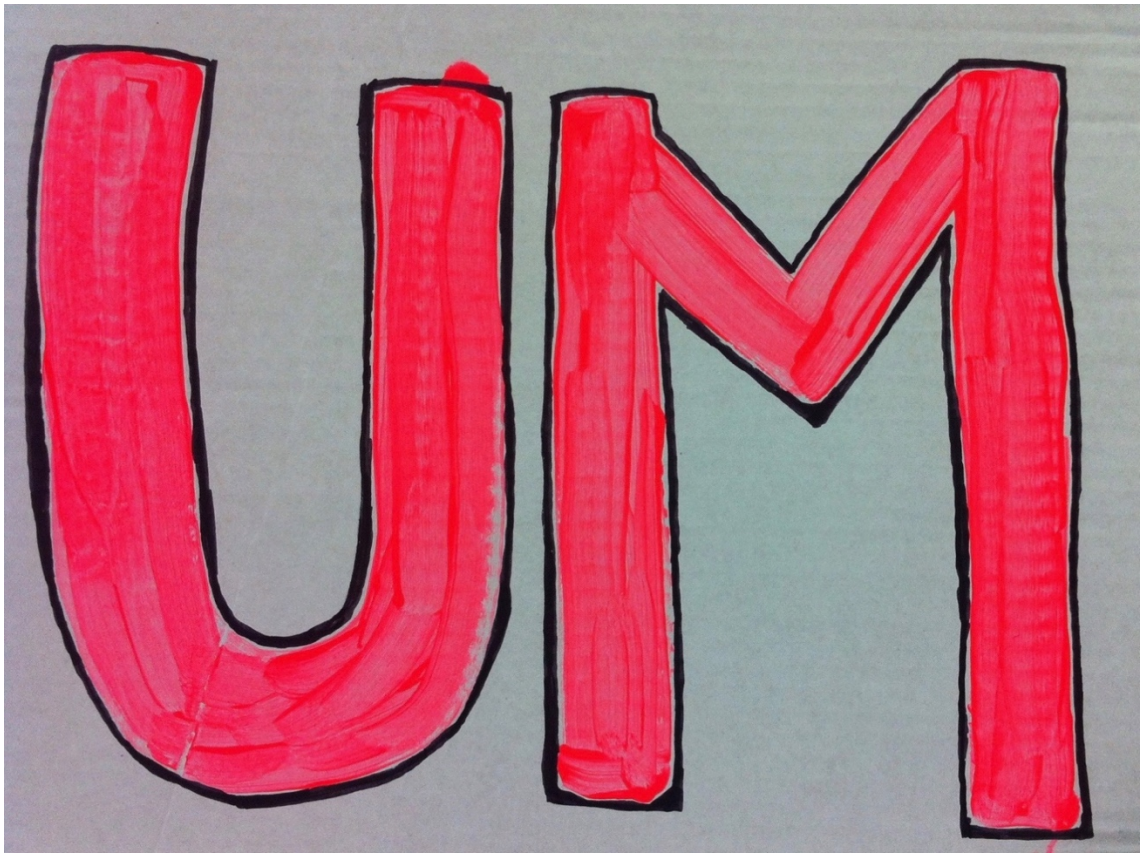

Figure 4. ‘Um’ 2013 poster paint on card 12” x 10”

Both hands across desk, pick up book and then pen take pen lid off with right hand. Right

Just now I'm wondering are there or even is

hand hold pen and start to write across the page. Left hand holding book on lap. Right hand

there any mileage about trying to record the gestures

holding pen between thumb and index finger. Look up straight ahead then down again.

that I make when I write my PhD?

Look up straight ahead then down again. Right hand pushes glasses up. Look up straight

Could these descriptions gestures replace what it is that I've been

ahead then down again. Sit forward on chair and lean forward a bit, look straight ahead,

trying to say (in writing) to the people who will look at it?

scratch nose put left hand across mouth and yawn and look over to the right. Put left hand

What do these gestures say about the whole process

down and continue to right. Look down at book then look up straight ahead. Lean left arm

of it all? And when do I (or do we) forget about

out towards the computer, while right hand holding pen between index finger and middle

them

finger. Left hand clicks on computer.

4.2 Gesture

Gestures are evident in culture throughout history, from the oldest 39,900 year old hand stencil on the island of Sulawesi, Indonesia, and later prints and stencils in South America, Africa, Australia and Europe.[301] The origins of the word gesture are in the Latin verb gerere- to carry, and historically it was linked with deportment and the way people carried their body.[302] Now, however, gesture refers to expression and the Oxford Dictionary defines it as 'a movement of part of the body, especially a hand or the head, to express an idea or feeling.'[303] Though once regarded as a universal form of natural, subjective expression, gesture is now known to be closely associated with social and cultural contexts.[304] The discussion first considers current definitions of gesture, alongside different types of bodily movements.

The biologist Adam Kendon has described gestures as 'actions' done 'for the purpose of expression' not 'in service of some practical aim.'[305] Thus scratching is not a gesture, nor are non-verbal behaviours of 'laughter, smiling and weeping' unless they are done deliberately, with the intention to communicate, such as a sarcastic smile or laugh.[306] The psychologist David Mc Neil also regards gestures as bodily movements intended to convey thoughts or feeling.[307] Common actions such as adjusting clothes, glasses or moving hair aside, are not gestures.[308] These movements, which often occur unconsciously, are not intended to communicate; even though they convey information. Known as adapters, these actions can leak information to an observer unintentionally, as the psychologist Goldin-Meadows identified.[309] This 'non-verbal leakage' might reveal aspects of a person's attitude, for example, a tapping foot indicating impatience. The distinction between actions intended to communicate (gestures)and actions that aren't, does not reflect the practical reality that *all* the bodily movements of a person convey information to others. The psychologist Michael

[301] Catherine Brahic, "Worlds Oldest Hand Stencil Found in Indonesian Cave," *newscientist*, no. 2990 (2014).
[302] Jan N. Bremmer and Herman Roodenburg, *A Cultural History of Gesture : From Antiquity to the Present Day* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991)., 1.
[303] "Definition of Gesture in English," in *Oxford Dictionaries*.
[304] Carrie Noland and Sally Ann Ness, *Migrations of Gesture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008)., xi.
[305] Adam Kendon, Gesture : Visible Action as Utterance, https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511807572., 15.
[306] Ibid., 8.
[307] McNeill, *Gesture and Thought*., 7.
[308] Kendon, *Gesture : Visible Action as Utterance*., 8.
[309] Susan Goldin-Meadow, *Hearing Gesture : How Our Hands Help Us Think* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2003)., 5.

Argyle identified this difficulty of interpreting movement precisely because of this mix of both 'intentional and unintentional signals.'[310] In addition, when people are together, even if they don't speak, they always communicate through their bodies, as the other person interprets these movements as Motley has observed.[311] This was first identified by the sociologist Erving Goffman and is echoed by Kendon.[312] The bodily communication that occurs between people occurs both consciously and unconsciously.[313] Thus it can be difficult to know if a person's actions are intended to communicate or not. MacNeil has observed that people often unconsciously mimic the way others move, particularly if they know or like each other,[314] for example, two people sitting both with their right leg crossed over the left leg. Argyle has identified that forms of gestural communication vary according to culture,[315] whilst the individual variations in gesturing have been highlighted by developmental psychologist Doherty-Sneddon, with extrovert personalities more animated than introverts.[316] Having introduced ways that people communicate through bodily movements, and gestures, the discussion now focuses on the historical development and theories of gesture.

I'm writing now. My left hand has ring, middle

and index finger on the paper, my little

finger and thumb are not on the paper- they

hang down more. What does this mean? Does

it mean anything?

[310] Argyle, *Bodily Communication*, 3-4.
[311] Motley, "On Whether One Can(Not) Not Communicate.", 2.
[312] Kendon, *Gesture : Visible Action as Utterance*, 1.
[313] Gwyneth Doherty-Sneddon, *Children's Unspoken Language* (London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2003), 11.
[314] McNeill, "Speech-Gesture Mimicry in Performance: An Actor-Audience, Author-Actor, Audience-Actor Triangle.", 15.
[315] Argyle, *Bodily Communication*, 1.
[316] Doherty-Sneddon, *Children's Unspoken Language*, 28.

History

There is a longstanding connection between gesture and speech, as observed in the exaggerated hand movements of Roman rhetorical speeches studied by the classicist Fritz Graf.[317] As quoted in Kendon, in first century AD, Quintilian described hand gestures as follows:

> ...it is scarcely possible to describe the variety of their motions since they are almost as expressive as words. For the other portions of the body merely help the speaker, whereas the hands may be almost said to speak. Do we not use them to demand, promise, summon, dismiss, threaten, supplicate, express aversion or fear, question or deny? Do we not employ them to indicate joy, sorrow, hesitation, confession, penitence, measure, quantity, number and time?[318]

Thus, at this time in Rome, hand movements had many functions. This points to a culturally determined, rather than natural and universal, nature of gesture. In the middle ages, when literacy was low, ritual gestures were used to 'transmit political and religious power' at a time when written documents were less prevalent, as noted by medievalist Jean-Claude Schmitt.[319] Gestures, often related to social conventions, are evident in paintings by Giotto. (1266-1337). The art-historian, Moshe Barasch, identifies different depictions of gestures within Giotto's oeuvre. These include the 'announcing' hand, the 'open speaking' hand and 'the blessing gesture' in addition to postures indicative of 'incapacity and awe.'[320] Later, the emergence of depictions of different postures of the male elbow as a sign of masculine 'boldness or control' within Renaissance painting such as Albrecht Durer's *Self-Portrait* (1498) has been highlighted by the curator Joaneath Spicer.[321] The historian Peter Burke identifies evidence of different cultural bodily languages within written texts, such as instructions for courtiers in Baldassare Castiglione's *Il Libro del coretgiano* in 1527.[322] Similarly in seventeenth century England, the physician John Bulwer attempted to illustrate

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[317] Fritz Graf, "Gestures and Conventions: The Gestures of Roman Actors and Orators," in *A Cultural History of Gesture*, ed. Jan N. Bremmer (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991), 36-53.
[318] Kendon, *Gesture : Visible Action as Utterance*, 18.
[319] Jean-Claude Schmitt, "The Rationale of Gestures in the West: Third to Thirteenth Centuries," in *A Cultural History of Gesture*, ed. Jan N. Bremmer (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991), 60.
[320] Moshe Barasch, *Giotto and the Language of Gesture*, Cambridge Studies in the History of Art (Cambridge Cambridgeshire ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 22-33.
[321] Joaneath Spicer, "The Renaissance Elbow," in *A Cultural History of Gesture*, ed. Jan N. Bremmer (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991), 85-9.
[322] Peter Burke, "The Language of Gesture in Early Modern Italy," ibid, 76.

the 'natural speaking motions' of hand gestures in *Chirologia or the Naturall Language of the Hand,* which was published in 1644. By the eighteenth century, gestures within dance were assumed to be expressive of inner emotion, as the linguist Lucia Ruprecht has noted.[323] The emotion psychologist, Paul Eckman, has observed that Charles Darwin proposed that facial expressions displayed emotion universally for all people, whilst hand gestures were 'culture specific'[324] .which was a shift away from the view of gesture as a universal language for all peoples. That gestures differ between different cultures subsequently became a recognised view. In relation to artistic activity, resistance to the longstanding convention that gestures of dance convey emotion began in the 1920s; with the choreographers and dancers Rudolf Laban and Mary Wigman. They developed a technique of gestures representing 'universal laws of flow' and everyday experience, but not inner emotion.[325]

Cultural and social influences on gestures were first observed by the sociologist Marcel Mauss, who noted in *Techniques of the Body* (1934) that gestures and actions vary according to social context and culture.[326] These cultural variations were also identified by the phenomenologist Maurice Merleau-Ponty who stated that 'the gesticulations of anger or love are not the same for a Japanese person and a western person.'[327] Merleau-Ponty's work extended the ideas of the philosopher Edmund Husserl who wrote of 'movement sense' and distinguished between the 'body-as-object' and 'body-as-subject.'[328] For Merleau-Ponty, gestures are the means by which people communicate with other people, with the world as well as a source of individual bodily or somatic knowledge. Describing how gestures inform, he stated:

[323] Lucia Ruprecht, "Gesture, Interruption, Vibration: Rethinking Early Twentieth-Century Gestural Theory and Practice in Walter Benjamin, Rudolf Von Laban, and Mary Wigman," *Dance Research Journal* 47, no. 2 (2015).
[324] Paul Ekman, "Darwin's Contributions to Our Understanding of Emotional Expressions," *Philosophical Transactions* 364, no. 1535 (2009).
[325] Ruprecht, "Gesture, Interruption, Vibration: Rethinking Early Twentieth-Century Gestural Theory and Practice in Walter Benjamin, Rudolf Von Laban, and Mary Wigman.", 23.
[326] Marcel Mauss, "Techniques of the Body," *Economy and Society*, no. 2 (1973), 70.
[327] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, "The Body as Expression and Speech," in *Phenomenology of Perception* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2012), 194.
[328] Shaun Gallagher, "Phenomenology and Embodied Cognition," in *Embodied Cognition*, ed. Lawrence Shapiro (2014), 9.

> The understanding of gestures is achieved through the reciprocity between my intentions and the other person's gestures, and between my gestures and the intentions which can be read in the other person's behaviour.[329]

Thus, visual observation of bodily gestures is a means of understanding others. Merleau-Ponty also stated, 'I understand the other person through my body, just as I perceive 'things' through my body.'[330] **.**This suggests the kinaesthetic, bodily knowledge and understanding that is also afforded to people through their body and gestures. The philosopher, Taylor Carman concludes that, for Merleau-Ponty, this embodied perception involves 'responsiveness and spontaneity in direct engagement with the world.'[331] The theorist Carrie Nolan concurs, stating that for Merleau-Ponty 'gesturing' is the 'inescapable medium' (to) 'navigate environments and enact intentions 'and as such gesturing is 'the link between a naturally given body/world and an existential/cultural situation.'[332] For Merleau-Ponty gestures are also expressive. He stated 'I read the anger in the gesture. The gesture does not *make me think* of anger, *it is the anger itself.*'[333] Thus, for Merleau-Ponty gestures have many roles. They communicate emotions, perceptual understanding between people, and are a means of bodily understanding and knowledge. The theorist Carrie Noland suggests that Merleau-Ponty viewed 'human understanding not with cogitation but with embodied cogitation: he is interested in the body's implication in what the mind thinks it knows."[334] These insights are pertinent to any form of face-to-face communication between people and thus are relevant to empathy, as will be considered shortly. For now, discussion will return to theoretical considerations of gesture and particularly those related to temporal qualities and how gestures may be perceived by others.

[329] Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Donald A. Landes, *Phenomenology of Perception* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2012), 190-1.
[330] Ibid, 190-1.
[331] Taylor Carman, "Foreword " in *Phenomenology of Perception* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2012), x.
[332] Carrie Noland, "Motor Intentionality: Gestural Meaning in Bill Viola and Merleau-Ponty," *Postmodern Culture* 17, no. 3 (2007).
[333] Merleau-Ponty, "The Body as Expression and Speech.", 190-1.
[334] Noland, "Motor Intentionality: Gestural Meaning in Bill Viola and Merleau-Ponty."

Four people waiting, 23.1.12 Evening, Newcastle upon Tyne

1. Sit down with knees slightly apart and head tilted to the left. Move head round to the right and then move it back to the left. Make a quick slight movement of head towards the left and then move it back to the midline. Keep head still and lean back. Turn head slightly to the left and then move back to the midline. Lean head forwards, nodding slightly. Jerk head up quickly.

2. Sit with knees apart holding phone in lap with both hands. Turn head sharply left. Put phone in pocket with left hand. Touch nose with right hand and put left hand on left groin. Gaze down at feet and touch mouth with right hand while left hand touches left groin. Move knees apart a bit and then move them further out, turning soles of feet to face each other. Look straight ahead down over floor and then across to the left. Keeping head still gaze over to the very right and then look down. Turn head a bit to the right. Look straight ahead and then look left and then look to the right. Tilt head up to the right and move left knee in a bit. Flex right knee. Then flex left knee. Lean forwards with left elbow on left knee and put head in left hand. Left hand near left eye and finger over bridge of nose. Lean forwards, pick up bag with right hand, get up and walk off.

3. Sit with knees together and bend forwards, look down to the right and place hands over both knees. Look up straight ahead and then look down keeping hands on knees. Lean back. Bring hands up onto thighs and place right hand on top of the other. Tilt head forwards and look straight ahead and down at the floor. Put left hand on top of right hand and pick at right hand. Lift head up and turn head to the left. Look straight ahead and stand up and walk.

4. Sitting down: sit up, put legs out straight in front of body. Fold arms in front of chest, look to left, then look straight ahead. Keeping right leg straight move it outwards a bit then look down at it. Look up to the left then look down at right leg. Shake and roll right leg briefly. Bring right and left sides of cardigan together with both hands and then fold arms. Scratch head with right index finger three times, then put palm of right hand onto forehead. Fold arms and look to left. Roll right leg outwards. Yawn, placing left hand over mouth. Look down and fold arms. Look up to the left. Scratch neck with right hand then scratch neck with left hand. Roll right foot out a bit. Look up to the left then across to the right.

Interruptions

For the philosopher Walter Benjamin, individual gestures are more easily recognised and remembered if slowed down or repeated. Benjamin considered Bertholt Brecht's Epic Theatre to be gestural.[335] For Benjamin, the interruptions Brecht used in his plays had two effects. Firstly, the 'uncovering' of conditions Brecht wanted to represent, because the pause in action presented the audience with a different perspective.[336] Secondly, the pauses in the gestures of the actors rendered their 'gestures quotable.'[337] Benjamin linked this effect of gestural interruptions to that of quotation marks in writing, which emphasise a given phrase 'by interrupting its context' from the text.[338] Commenting on Benjamin's insight, sociologist Graeme Gilloch observes that by 'suspending action and striking a general pose, a particular moment is distinguished from the train of events.'[339] Thus, through pausing and spacing of gestures, they become even more evident to an observer. As Benjamin stated: 'the more we interrupt someone in the process of action, the more gestures we obtain.'[340] In addition, Benjamin noted the effect of repetition and copying of gestural language within the actors' performances in Brecht's plays *Happy End* and *The Measures Taken* that contributed to making 'gestures quotable.'[341] Benjamin observed the process of an actor 'quoting a gesture of his own' and reproducing those 'made by the other' which rendered these gestures quotable.[342]

These insights resonate with the effect of the pauses and repetitions of action, that occur in television screenings of sporting events, when significant moments such as goals, celebrations and injuries are repeated and re-played, both on mainstream stations and via on-line video replays.

These interruptions in flow also resonate with experience of halting moments during medical consultations. For various reasons, whether on home visits, or in the surgery, pauses occur in consultations. These can be external interruptions such as a phone ringing. Or they can occur when someone becomes unable to speak, is silent and perhaps sits very

[335] Benjamin, "What Is Epic Theatre? (1st Version).", 3.
[336] "What Is Epic Theatre? (2nd Version).", 19.
[337] Ibid, 19.
[338] Ibid, 19.
[339] Graeme Gilloch, *Walter Benjamin, Critical Constellations*, Key Contemporary Thinkers (Cambridge, UK: Polity, 2002), 155.
[340] Benjamin, "What Is Epic Theatre? (2nd Version).", 20.
[341] Ibid, 19.
[342] Ibid, 19.

still. Or they might be overcome with emotion and crying or just look down for longer than normal holding a hand near the face. The minimal action of trying to stifle emotions through suppression of gestures is very demonstrative and often suggests an underlying intensity in feeling. These are often very significant moments in which the normal 'flow' of gestural communication is paused and interrupted. At these times gestures *are* rendered more notable as Benjamin observed and they reveal aspects of emotion too, in ways Merleau-Ponty described. The historian Keith Thomas has noted this when he states that with reference to communication, the body 'can be as significant in repose as in motion.'[343] The significance of very small gestures such as averting ones gaze, sitting unusually still or trying to control facial expressions, is particularly evident in general practice, where they may suggest something of significance is occurring, as Haslam has noted.[344]

The effect of interrupting and repeating gesture observed by Benjamin, relates to work made during this creative-practice project, such as. *Final Preparations* 2012 (Appendix A) which involved re-enactment of the performances made by 100m Olympic sprinters just before their race began, and *Poses for Footballers* (2012) (Appendix T) which involved observing and quoting celebratory gestures of footballers. Interruptions of gesture also resonate with the inclusion of hesitant writing within this thesis**.**

Embodiment

In 1951, in *Minima Moralia*. the philosopher Theodor Adorno recognised the inherent somatic nature of gestures, when he questioned if technological advances in objects might lead to loss of gestures and cause a 'withering of experience' and altered 'innervations.'[345] The 'innervations' described by Adorno point to the embodied knowledge that is made manifest by movements and gestures. The theorist, Carrie Noland, has extended Adorno's observation further by questioning whether appropriation of gestures 'from the past' or 'from another culture' could lead to 'new innervations' or 'new sensations to feel' for the gesturer.[346] My practical experience within medicine suggests that this does happen. For example, learning to tie surgical knots, which required observing and copying dexterous finger actions, in order to be able to secure a knot with the fingers of one hand. This

[343] Bremmer and Roodenburg, *A Cultural History of Gesture : From Antiquity to the Present Day*, 1.
[344] Haslam, "Who Cares?.", 991.
[345] Theodor W. Adorno, *Minima Moralia : Reflections from the Damaged Life* (New York: Prism Key Press, 2011), 35.
[346] Noland, "Introduction.", x.

experience involving sight and manual dexterity resulted in new kinaesthetic sensations gained from moving fingers in order. Within this creative practice I have explored re-enacting gestures appropriated from other people in art-pieces such as *I never knew that I could dance like this* (2015) Appendix Q; a participatory event in which people to tried to copy Shakira's dance moves. If one could dance like Shakira, would it be possible to feel like her too? In my art-pieces Hand Gesture Piece 2017[347] and Hand Gesture Film 2018[348] which are discussed in Chapter Five, I meticulously enacted other people's hand gestures, which at times felt like the 'wrong fit.' Somehow, I could sense in my own limbs that the gestures I was copying differed subtly from my own. This relates to Noland's observation that 'gestures give shape to affects that might not have precise, codified, or translatable meanings.'[349]

The last thirty-five years has seen a greater recognition of the embodied nature of understanding first articulated by Merleau-Ponty. The philosophers George Lakoff and Mark Johnson argue that cognitive science now recognises 'mind and cognitive processes as inherently 'embodied' and that meaning 'emerges...without conscious awareness from the way we- as bodily creatures- engage with our surroundings.'[350] In addition, gestures have been shown to facilitate 'abstract reasoning.'[351] For dance ethnographer Deidre Sklar, the 'vitality profiles' of gesture and movement such as 'rhythm, speed and duration' and 'force;...muscular tension or relaxation' are essential components of bodily knowledge and thinking.[352] These embodied processes of perception and understanding extend into the field of psychology, where for psychologist Darren Langdridge, a person 'is understood as a body-subject' with their 'consciousness embedded in the body' and their 'intentionality that of the body-subject' not just their consciousness.[353] For the psychologist David Rosenbaum, embodied perception means that 'processes of perception, action, and cognition are body-

[347] Documentation: memory stick file 6
[348] Documentation: memory stick File 7
[349] Ibid, xiii.
[350] Mark Johnson, "Meaning and the Body," *New Scientist* 197, no. 2638 (2008), https://institutions.newscientist.com/article/mg19726382-100-perspectives-meaning-and-the-body/.
[351] Francisco J. Varela, Evan Thompson, and Eleanor Rosch, *The Embodied Mind : Cognitive Science and Human Experience* (The MIT Press, 1991), 3.
[352] Deidre Sklar, "Remembering Kinesthesia: An Inquiry into Embodied Cultural Knowledge," in *Migrations of Gesture*, ed. Carrie Noland (2008), 96.
[353] Darren Langdridge, *Phenomenological Psychology : Theory, Research and Method* (Harlow: Prentice Hall, 2007), 37.

centred'. Thus, perception of an object involves people implicitly beginning to 'carry out bodily actions in their presence' for psychologist David Rosenbaum.[354]

These phenomenological insights also extend to ways to communicate with empathy. For example, the psychotherapist Linda Finlay, advocates reflexive awareness of 'somatic empathy' in addition to one's 'felt sense.'[355] In addition she suggests tuning into 'subtle bodily feelings' that may inform.[356] Having discussed practical connections between gesture and communication with empathy that have been informed by phenomenology and theories of embodiment, the discussion now returns to different theories of gesture.

Noland observes that, for the post-structuralist theorist Jacques Derrida, gestures are 'iterable' and belong to 'representation' and 'repetition,' not 'pure self-identity'.[357] This highlights the difference between 'gestures as... subjectivity' and 'gestures as signifiers for meanings generated by the mechanics...of signification itself...'[358] The theorist Vilém Flusser (1920 -1991) linked gestures to expression. For Flusser, a gesture is 'a movement of the body or of a tool connected to the body for which there is no satisfactory causal explanation' that is 'concerned with meaning'[359]and 'expresses a subjectivity.'[360] Thus he connects gestures to activities such as taking a photograph. Ruprecht notes, that in doing so Flusser highlights the overlap between 'expression, communication, and action' in gestures.[361] Practically, it is difficult to distinguish between gestures and actions and Flusser expands readings of gesture. He also identifies the 'freedom' of the 'one who gesticulates' to conceal or reveal themselves.[362] Gestures can thus be a means to both express and to conceal: a way to show emotion, and to try and hide it. In addition, he states 'we cannot distinguish rigorously even between a gesture that is genuine and one that is not.'[363] Thus, for Flusser, it is never possible to fully know if the gestures and communication of another person is 'authentic.'[364] This makes interpretation of gestures very difficult. Is that person as

[354] David A. Rosenbaum, Knowing Hands : The Cognitive Psychology of Manual Control, https://doi.org/10.1017/9781316148525, 197.
[355] Linda Finlay, "Embodying Research," *Person Centered & Experiential Psychotherapies* 13, no. 1 (2014), 4.
[356] Ibid, 10.
[357] Noland and Ness, *Migrations of Gesture*, xxv.
[358] Ibid, xii.
[359] Vilém Flusser, *Gestures* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014), 2-4.
[360] Ibid, 163.
[361] Lucia Ruprecht, "Introduction: Towards an Ethics of Gesture," *Performance Philosophy* 3, no. 1 (2017), 5-6.
[362] Flusser, *Gestures*, 167.
[363] Ibid, 168.
[364] Ibid, 167.

confident as their gestures and stance appears? Or is it all a well-crafted act to hide their true situation?

Against the grain of all other interpretations, for philosopher Giorgio Agamben, gestures do not involve expression. Rather for him a gesture provides evidence only of 'being-in-language itself' and of the ability to communicate with others.[365] In practice, this is a very difficult concept to consider because gestures are a constant presence in face-to-face communications, which is a time when expression occurs. In addition, some gestures do appear to be expressive, for example, clenched fists held threateningly in front of someone's face. Nevertheless, the meaning of many hand gestures does appear unknown and it is unclear what, if anything, they express; particularly when removed from the context of their conversation and surroundings. This difficulty of knowing, and of the uncertainty which surrounds gestural meaning is a constant theme that is echoed throughout this thesis. Whilst gestures are familiar, every-day, and appear to 'say' something, close-up, many appear to confound explanation. There is constant uncertainty as to what gestures might mean.

Returning to the issue of whether gestures are expressive or not, it is pertinent to consider the way that people respond to them. In inter-personal conversations, gestures constantly move back and forth in the space that exists between people, and sometimes are copied or changed. Rebecca Schneider, Professor of Theatre and Performance Art identifies this 'relational and responsive nature' as integral to gesture and describes them as 'body-jumping' performances.[366] That people inherently respond to gestures may seem obvious but can be overlooked because some movements occur unconsciously, such as waving back if someone waves, or getting dressed without thinking. Sociologist Nick Crossley observes that gesture is often taken for granted.[367] Speaking face to face, people are often only partially aware of another's gestures, despite them being constantly visible.[368] Similarly, an individual's own gesticulations remain largely unknown to themselves as Goldin-Meadow

[365] Giorgio Agamben, *Infancy and History : The Destruction of Experience* (London ; New York: Verso, 1993), 155.
[366] Rebecca Schneider, "That the Past May yet Have Another Future: Gesture in the Times of Hands Up," *Theatre Journal* 70, no. 3 (2018), 285-6.
[367] Nick Crossley, "Researching Embodiment by Way of 'Body Techniques'," *The Sociological Review* 55, no. s1 (2007), 80.
[368] Doherty-Sneddon, *Children's Unspoken Language*, 47.

has observed.[369] Yet, despite this mixture of the conscious and unconscious, gestural actions do appear to possess 'an agency' as linguist Lucia Ruprecht notes.[370] People respond to gestures. Schneider observes that responses to gestures cut across time, and different media such as photography, film and newsreels, as well as in person. Whilst emphasising that gestures exist within and are subject to, structures of race and gender, Schneider also points to the copied and iterative nature of gestures, that opens the potential for difference and change, through repetition.[371]

These insights about the responsive nature of gestural movements are extremely relevant to the role gestures can play within embodied interpersonal communication. They highlight the potential that exists within gesture to subtly change the course of personal interactions, through a process of responding, copying and of change. For Finlay, this embodied nature of empathy involves attention to 'the somatic duet lying beneath and between verbal interaction where significant implicit meanings arise.'[372] Thus the subtle interaction between gesture and speech is critical in this process of understanding. It also involves awareness of one's own embodied responses such as changes in tone in muscle tension, flickering and minute movements that may not be regarded as gestural.

Gestures are rarely interpreted in isolation. With reference to conversations between political actors, the geographer Nigel Thrift has observed that some 'of the most potent geopolitical forces are ... lurking in the "little" details...'[373] Thrift quoted the psychologists Shotter and Billig who observed that:

> ... in the continuously responsive unfolding of non-linguistic activities between ourselves and others- in a dance, in a handshake, or even a mere chance collision on the street- we are actively aware of whether the other's motives are, so to speak "in tune" or "at odds" with ours. And in our sense of their attunement or lack of it, we

[369] Goldin-Meadow, *Hearing Gesture : How Our Hands Help Us Think*, 244.
[370] Ruprecht, "Introduction: Towards an Ethics of Gesture."
[371] Rebecca Schneider, "In Our Hands: An Ethics of Gestural Response-Ability Rebecca Schneider in Conversation with Lucia Ruprecht," ibid, 287.
[372] Finlay, "Embodying Research.", 6.
[373] Nigel Thrift, "It's the Little Things," in *Geopolitical Traditions: A Century of Geopolitical Thought*, ed. Klaus Dodds (London: Routledge, 2000), 384.

> can sense their attitude to us as intimate or distant, friendly or hostile, deferential or arrogant, and so on.[374]

This text lucidly highlights the subtle interplay between gesture and speech and indicates the central role that gestures have within interpersonal relationships. Certainly, the significance of perceptions of interpersonal gestures between politicians is evident, as in the seemingly domineering handshakes of Donald Trump.[375] Yet what of the effect of kinaesthetic qualities of muscular tension and knowledge described by Sklar that may occur in these brief moments?[376] Rosenbaum observes that to shake hands 'is just one form of connecting with others' that 'reflects the vast amount we know based on our experience as physical beings and, no less, as social beings.'[377] Schneider also points to the political role that gestures have in the 'hands up, don't shoot' gesture of Black Lives Matter protests.[378] Within artistic practice, gesture has also been employed as a means of resistance to cultural norms and expectations such as the use of everyday movements within the work of Yvonne Rainer and artists involved in Judson dance in the 1960s. The role of gesture within artwork by Rainer and Candice Breitz is discussed shortly.

[374] John Shotter and Michael Billig, "A Bakhtinian Psychology: From out of the Heads of Individuals and into the Dialogues between Them.," in *Bakhtin and the Human Sciences: No Last Words*, ed. Michael E. Gardiner (London: Sage, 1998), 23.
[375] Jonathan Freedland, "The Trump Handshake: How World Leaders Are Fighting Back," *The Guardian*, 28 May 2017.
[376] Sklar, "Remembering Kinesthesia: An Inquiry into Embodied Cultural Knowledge.", 88.
[377] Rosenbaum, *Knowing Hands : The Cognitive Psychology of Manual Control*, 197.
[378] Schneider, "That the Past May yet Have Another Future: Gesture in the Times of Hands Up", 288.

She stretched out her arm towards me with fingers open.

Right arm, semi-conscious.

Her two sons were in the room speaking to me from either side.

And all I could see was this shaking arm spiralling out from the bed towards me.

I moved forward and held her hand.

The sons kept talking at me.

She settled and let go.

I moved back nearer the sons.

Then the arm spiralled out again shaking directly at me.

I held it again.

What do you say when someone is dying?

Home Visit 2016

She stretched out her arm towards me

fingers open.

right arm

semi-conscious

Her two SONS were in the room speaking to me from

either side

And all I could see was this shaking arm

spiralling out from

the bed

towards

me

I moved forward and held her

hand

THE SONS

Kept talking

at me

She settled and let

go

I moved

back

nearer

The sons

Then the arm spiralled

out again shaking

directly at me. I held it again.

What do you

say

when someone is dying?

Holding the hand of a dying woman felt like something hugely significant. I know that it is. But it was rammed home to me at the time: the difference between words and touch and gestures. And on this occasion, she clearly gestured to me that she wanted to hold my hand. She gestured to me and I interpreted her gesture and I held her hand. Twice. And the other words that were spoken in the room didn't really seem as relevant any more. She seemed to be drifting off elsewhere…moving off elsewhere…on another path. And on this occasion words seemed a bit lacking. She wanted and needed and (I think) found comfort in holding someone's hand. I don't think she would have got the comfort she wanted from talking. She couldn't talk…she was semi-conscious…but even if she could have talked, I don't think it would have worked so much. It seemed such a profound thing that she did when she gestured towards me. And it was so simple. And I guess in a way it 'cut through all the crap' and got to the root of things more. I felt such a connection with her.

December 2016.

Hand gestures (or gesticulations) are the hand movements made when people communicate with others. They exist in all languages and are present when visually impaired people speak, as well as sighted.[379] These gestures, which move 'away from' the body have historically been a symbol of 'human agency, as psychoanalyst Darian Leader noted.'[380] Hand gestures of speech are now known to be part of language itself, as Mc Neil has shown.[381] They are spontaneous and are synchronised with any words spoken. Mc Neil's work has clarified that the effect of these gesticulations or gestures is to directly propel and contribute to the thinking and speaking of the gesturer.[382] Thus when speaking, the gestures that people make with their hands, help them form sentences and clarify their thoughts. In addition, hand-gestures have been shown to '...reveal meanings that speech cannot...'as noted by Goldin-Meyer.[383] Hence, they contribute to understanding during conversations. Most gesticulations which accompany speech don't have any linguistic properties.[384] Understanding of gesticulations depends upon the context and the content of what is being said at the time, as Sneddon-Doherty has noted.[385] Interestingly hand-gestures are also prevalent when a person listens to someone else. These listening movements are more closely linked to the body such movements of scratching or stroking and generally listening gestures are 'less attuned to the rhythms of speech.'[386] Hand gestures confer kinaesthetic knowledge to the gesturer, and sensory knowledge related to touch. Leader has observed that with touch the object is felt, and the hand is felt feeling.[387] Hand gestures never occur in isolation, they always occur in conjunction with other bodily movements.[388]

This far discussion has covered historical and theoretic aspects of gesture. Ways that communication between people, takes place using gesture has been considered in relation to the subtle kinaesthetic and embodied qualities of knowledge that this creates. The responsive interactive nature of gestural communication between people and across distances and time has been noted, as has the relationship between gesture, embodied

[379] Darian Leader, *Hands*, 99-100.
[380] Ibid, 4-5,93.
[381] McNeill, *Gesture and Thought*, 21.
[382] Ibid, 15.
[383] Goldin-Meadow, *Hearing Gesture : How Our Hands Help Us Think*, 5.
[384] McNeill, *Gesture and Thought*, 7.
[385] Doherty-Sneddon, *Children's Unspoken Language*, 47.
[386] Leader, *Hands*, 97.
[387] Ibid, 73.
[388] Rosenbaum, *Knowing Hands : The Cognitive Psychology of Manual Control*, 174.

knowledge and communication with empathy. The next section focuses on the role of gesture within artwork of Yvonne Rainer and Candice Breitz, and its relation to the themes of empathy, gesture and hesitation that are central to this research project.

4.2.1 Yvonne Rainer

My art-practice incorporates live-events, text, video and performance: thematically it often explores everyday interpersonal communication. During this Phd research I have created events that involved people enacting gestures together, or I have enacted isolated hand gestures, solo. Hence it is pertinent to discuss the work of dancer, choreographer and film-maker Yvonne Rainer. She incorporated everyday movements into her dance *Trio A* in 1966. Rainer also filmed hand movements, in her film *Hand Movie* (1966) which she made when a patient in hospital. My interest in everyday gesture, and the relationship between the audience and the performer, overlaps with that of Rainer; as does my desire to present gestures naturally.

Rainer introduced and used ordinary movements in dance, in *Trio A* in 1966. In this piece, a solo performer presented 'everyday pedestrian' movements and 'work activity', such as stepping, flicking, bending and swaying; alongside technical dance moves.[389] This inclusion of everyday movements without embellishment or emphasis, was a radical shift that resisted the hierarchical conventions typical of dance, at that time; such as the use of dramatic emphasis, phrasing and timing.[390] Rainer's stated intention was to provide continuous uninflected movement that reflected 'nothing but the presence and action of the physical body' of the performer.[391]

As such, for the art and film critic and writer, Annette Michelson, *Trio A* (1966) presented 'a true temporal order of movements' which were experienced as they were 'seen one after the other.'[392] This resonates with Perec's listing of his observations in *An Attempt at Exhausting a Place in Paris* 1975. For Rainer, the movements in *Trio A* (1966) were 'geared to the actual *time* it takes, [and] the actual *weight* of the body' as it goes through the

[389] Catherine Wood, *Yvonne Rainer : The Mind Is a Muscle*, One Work (London: Afterall, 2007), 18.
[390] Martin Hargreaves, "Yvonne Rainer: Trio A," in *Move - Choreographing You: Art and Dance Since*, ed. Stephanie Rosenthal (London: Hayward Gallery), 53.
[391] Carrie Lambert, "Moving Still: Mediating Yvonne Rainer's *Trio A*," *October* Summer, no. 89 (1999), 98.
[392] Annette Michelson, "Yvonne Rainer, Part One: The Dancer and the Dance," *Artforum* Jan (1974), 58.

prescribed motions.[393] The effect of this was to present movement as the physical manifestation of the body, rather than a direct means of expression.

Rainer's use of everyday movements, presented without embellishment, and filmed in real time, resonates with my use of everyday hand-gestures in *Hand Gesture Piece* (2017) and *Hand Gesture Film* (2018). However, these pieces, involved copied conversational hand gestures which I reproduced as accurately as possible; and included expressive gesticulations and non-expressive adapters, such as someone moving to adjust their glasses. I am fascinated by gesture that imperceptibly shifts between action and expression, as well as seemingly insignificant gestures that may reveal a person's emotions. Thus, unlike Rainer, my work centres on gesture that may express, reveal or hide emotion; and explores the difficulty of distinguishing between a gesture and an action.

Interestingly, in *Trio A* (1966) there was no eye contact between dancers and the audience, which as Lambert-Beatty has observed, marked a fundamental shift in their relationship.[394] Rainers intention was to avoid exhibitionist behaviour by the dancers; and she insisted they did not look at the audience. When viewing footage of *Trio A* (1966) this absence of eye contact, gives the piece a self-contained and closed appearance.[395] Lambert-Beatty has observed that as a consequence, the viewer remains 'unseen'.[396] It is known that eye contact facilitates understanding between people when they are communicating and is evidence that 'someone is listening'.[397] For the psychiatrist Gerald W Grumet, eye contact is a 'crucial' part of clinical care, as it enables the exchange of 'reciprocal influences' between people.[398] Dr Kai MacDonald goes further than this, stating that eye contact presents a means of gathering 'implicit information' about a person's emotional state, forming rapport and conveying 'hope and embodied empathy'.[399] He rightly regards attention to eye contact as one of the skills of 'an effective, empathic clinician', as it presents a means of information

[393] Yvonne Rainer, "A Quasi Survey of Some "Minimalist" Tendencies in the Quantitatively Minimal Dance Activity Midst the Plethora, or an Analysis of Trio A," in *Yvonne Rainer: Work 1961-73*, ed. G Battock (Halifax: The Press of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, 1974), 67.
[394] Carrie Lambert-Beatty, *Being Watched : Yvonne Rainer and the 1960s* (Cambridge, Mass. ; London: MIT Press, 2008), 13.
[395] Robert Alexander, "Trio A (the Mind Is a Muscle, Part 1)," (1978).
[396] Lambert-Beatty, *Being Watched : Yvonne Rainer and the 1960s*, 13.
[397] Romesh Gupta, "Best: A Communication Model," *BMJ*, no. 333 (2006), 35.
[398] W Gerald Grumet, "Eye Contact: The Core of Interpersonal Relatedness," *Psychiatry* 46, no. May (1983), 172.
[399] Kai Mac Donald, "Patient-Clinician Eye Contact: Social Neuroscience and Art of Clinical Engagement," *Postgraduate Medicine* 121, no. 4 (2009), 136.

exchange that is not necessarily evident in a spoken conversation.[400] Rainer's avoidance of eye-contact between performer and audience in *Trio A* (1966) is in marked contrast to some of my own work. Frequently I have used short introductions to my live pieces, to communicate directly (with eye contact) with the audience. I have also used eye contact between myself and the audience, to help promote an open atmosphere, in pieces such as *Hand Cleansing Techniques Number One: how to wash your hands with soap and water* (2014) Appendix H, *Outstanding Standing Ovation* (2014) Appendix N and *AAAAAGGGHH (*2017) Appendix S. In addition, I used eye-contact, as follows: to acknowledge the presence of the audience; to show I am *listening,* through observation; and as a way to maintain audience interest in the proceedings. Thus I use eye-contact as a means of communication and exchange: between myself and the audience.

Interestingly, another of Rainer's pieces, *Hand Movie* (1966) which was filmed when she was ill in hospital, marks a departure from Trio A, 1966. The film *Hand Movie* (1966) which is five-minutes long, silent and black and white, shows her right hand and fingers slowly moving. Throughout the film, the frame is almost filled by her hand which is visible from the wrist to the fingertips. The hand is upright in the vertical axis and on occasion rotates, showing the side, palm and back of the hand in turn.[401] The movements of the hand and fingers are smooth, and the tempo remains slow. The fingers move independently of each other throughout the film, forming a direct connection with adjacent digits and the thumb, and appearing to have individual personalities.[402] Yet none of the movements are recognisable.[403] The hand is set against a neutral background and the location is not made apparent to the viewer. When Rainer spoke of this film, she stated 'I was very ill, but I could move my hand.'[404]

Watching the abstracted hand in this film, one is drawn to try and interpret the gesturing that takes place. Lambert has noted this, stating that 'it causes us to enact – our inability *not* to inventory and decode the cultural and biological data of a hand offered to our view.'[405] Bhukari has suggested that a consequence of this 'lack of...readability' is that the hand

[400] Ibid, 136.
[401] Kyle Bukhari, "Movements of Media in Yvonne Rainer's *Hand Movie* (1966) and Richard Serra's *Hand Catching Lead* (1968)," *The International Journal of Screendance* 8 (2017), 50.
[402] Carrie Lambert, "Other Solutions," *Art Journal* 63, no. 3 (2004), 52.
[403] Ibid, 52.
[404] Ibid, 53.
[405] Ibid, 52.

'represents nothing other than its physical, manual self'.[406] I disagree with this assessment. When observing *Hand Movie* (1966) the gestures appear ambiguous and shift throughout the film. At times they do appear abstracted, as Bhukari suggests. However, on other occasions, they appear to be connected to their owner, who seems to be emphasising the range of movement in their fingers. In these cases, it seems the hand clearly wants to communicate.[407] Further-more, knowing this film was made when Rainer was in hospital encourages us to ask questions. How physically difficult was it for her to make? Was she in pain or was she comfortable? Was she lying flat in bed or able to sit? Is she only using her right hand because her left has a drip in it? Was the curtain pulled around her bed or was the filming on view to others? Was it frustrating for her not being able to dance? Was she excited to be making this when she was ill? Was her gesturing a form of resistance against her situation? It leads us to consider the nature of her relationships with other people in the hospital: staff, visitors and patients. Was she communicating with them? or with people outside?

The medical environment of Rainer's film leads me to interpret the hand gestures differently. It reminds me of being in hospital as a child, when I made a leather purse and a cross-stitch cushion cover for my parents. The purse has been lost but they still have the cushion cover, which is now threadbare. I really enjoyed making these things, especially having real leather to work with. Later, when hospitalised as a young adult following a serious car crash, I made painted two acrylic paintings whilst lying flat on my back again. One is of the view of my feet sticking out from the bed, the other, of two large cartons of fruit juice and some medicine for constipation. These images underplay how difficult that time was. Rainer's *Hand Movie* (1966) reminds me of this innate desire for human contact in vulnerable medical situations, and echoes my own experience in hospital, and of my work as a GP with patients, such as the woman who was dying who wanted to hold my hand.

It reminds me of the embodied and kinaesthetic knowledge that comes through use of hands. The anthropologist Tim Ingold has described how practitioners gain 'personal knowledge' of 'materials' that 'unfolds' through 'sentience' via use of their hands.[408] This resonates with the personal knowledge that is made available through touch in medicine, for

[406] Bukhari, "Movements of Media in Yvonne Rainer's *Hand Movie* (1966) and Richard Serra's *Hand Catching Lead* (1968).", 51.
[407] Yvonne Rainer, "Hand Movie," (1966).
[408] Tim Ingold, *Making : Anthropology, Archaeology, Art and Architecture*, 111.

example taking a patient's pulse, examining their abdomen or holding their hand. Gestures, words and touch are all involved in communication of empathy in these settings.

Thus, *Hand Movie* (1966) which presents only abstracted hand gestures, highlights the impossibility of ever fully separating a performing body from its owner and context. It also reveals our natural tendency to try and read gestures and confirms the difficulties of doing so.

Rainer's work has been valuable to my research, both in legitimising my use of everyday hand gestures and actions in artmaking, and in providing a counterpoint of approach. Unlike Rainer I value use of eye contact to encourage a relationship with the audience. Furthermore, the context in which *Hand Movie* (1966) was created resonates with the experience of communication in medical settings, which informs this research. Finally, the ambiguous nature of some hand gestures in this film, confirms how little they are understood, and encourages me to explore them further.

4.2.2 Candice Breitz

Candice Breitz is an artist who works in multi-channel video installation and photography. Thematically, Breitz's work focuses on gesture and language in relation to media and popular culture[409] and she frequently 're-edits found footage…as a means of social critique.'[410] This next section discusses her use of gesture in her piece *Becoming* (2003) a fourteen-channel video installation. In this piece, Breitz uses Hollywood films as found footage and copies the gesture and speech of seven female leads acting in a romantic film.[411] Thematically this focus on communication and meticulous re-enactment of gesture, is relevant to the discussion within my own creative-practice project, especially in relation to my pieces *Hand Gesture Piece* (2017)[412] *Hand Gesture Film* (2018)[413] and *Brick Wall* (2018).[414]

Becoming (2003) consists of seven sets of paired films shown back to back on monitors. It was first shown at the Moderna Museet, Stockholm. Each pair of films shows the manipulated clip of the female Hollywood lead, in colour on the front screen, while the reverse screen shows Breitz copying the exact same clip of the Hollywood actor, in black and white. The actors include Drew Barrymore, Neve Campbell, Cameron Diaz, Jennifer Lopez, Julia Roberts, Meg Ryan and Reese Witherspoon, all in different films.[415] The clips are less than a minute, looped and all show the female Hollywood lead expressing emotion such as joy, happiness, despair.[416] All other actors have been edited out. The colour, Hollywood films, shown on the front monitors, and the black and white copies by Breitz on the reverse monitors, all share the same audio: that of the voice of the female Hollywood lead.

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[409] Candice Breitz, Yilmaz Dziewior, and Kunsthaus Bregenz., *Candice Breitz : The Scripted Life* (Bregenz: Kunsthaus Bregenz, 2010), 20.
[410] Marya Spont, "Analyzing Mass Media through Video Art Education: Popular Pedagogy and Social Critique in the Work of Candice Breitz," *Studies in Art Education* 51, no. 4 (2010), 300.
[411] Colin Richards, "Recitation," in *Candice Breitz : The Scripted Life*, ed. Yilmaz Dziewior (Bregenz: Kunsthaus Bregenz, 2010), 75.
[412] Documentation: memory stick File6
[413] Documentation: memory stick File7
[414] Documentation: memory stick File9
[415] Sonja Longolius, Performing Authorship : Strategies of »Becoming an Author« in the Works of Paul Auster, Candice Breitz, Sophie Calle, and Jonathan Safran Foer, https://doi.org/10.14361/9783839434604 https://www.degruyter.com/doc/cover/9783839434604.jpg., 30.
[416] Catrin Lundqvist, "The 1st at Moderna: Candice Breitz," Moderna Museet, https://www.modernamuseet.se/stockholm/en/exhibitions/the-1st-at-moderna-candice-breitz/

The women in the films are seated or three-quarter length if standing, with their faces visible throughout. They are seen from an angle and do not look directly at the camera.

In her re-enactments, Brietz wears plain clothes set against a neutral background that is devoid of any distinguishing features: thus, the context is not known. Curator Yilmaz Dziewior rightly states that these differences between the original film and the re-enactment add to 'the moments of disillusionment' in Breitz's attempt to copy the stars.[417] Breitz very accurately lip-syncs each of the Hollywood actors' words, copying their facial gestures and bodily movements: however visitors only ever hear the actors speaking, never Breitz's voice.[418] These sets of paired films are displayed back to back so it is impossible to view Breitz's re-enactment alongside the Hollywood actor at the same time. The viewer must walk from front to back and use memory and concentration to try and compare the two. For Breitz, 'the viewer completes the loop between the original piece of footage...and the copied piece.'[419] The audience is made aware that the actions of the Hollywood actors are being copied, and audience's attention is also drawn to towards the process of copying and mimicry. Breitz's stated intention for this piece was to explore 'the current conventions that describe femininity and desirability' and to consider how do these 'get produced or reproduced in mainstream cinema?'[420]

Artist Marya Spont notes that Breitz's 'flawless' imitations in *Becoming* (2003) point to the observation and mimesis involved in socialisation and learning.[421] This echo's the way people consciously and subconsciously mimic postures and gestures, as identified by Noland previously;[422] and with mimetic empathetic responses, suggested by mirror neurons described by Iacoboni.[423]

With the face and shoulders of the female actors visible in *Becoming* (2003), attention falls on the minute detail of dialogue and gestural communication expected from a female lead; and clearly links with fictional narratives of female roles portrayed by Hollywood. Gesture

[417] Breitz, Dziewior, and Kunsthaus Bregenz., *Candice Breitz : The Scripted Life*, 51.
[418] Spont, "Analyzing Mass Media through Video Art Education: Popular Pedagogy and Social Critique in the Work of Candice Breitz.", 304.
[419] Gregory Burke, "Candice Breitz Speaks to Gregory Burke," *Switch* 1, no. 2 (2009), 12.
[420] Ibid, 12.
[421] Spont, "Analyzing Mass Media through Video Art Education: Popular Pedagogy and Social Critique in the Work of Candice Breitz.", 305.
[422] Noland, "Introduction.", xiii.
[423] Iacoboni, *Mirroring People : The New Science of How We Connect with Others*, 4.

and dialogue are inextricably linked in *Becoming* (2003). The passive content of the actors spoken lines, is evident alongside blinking, nodding, heightened wide eyes, shoulder shrugs, lip curls and hesitant eye contact. As this is shown by seven different actors repeatedly on a loop, the viewer is made aware of the nature and conformity of these roles.[424] For art critic Jennifer Allen this repetitive looped quality makes their performances appear 'like physical symptoms.'[425] This observation brings to mind ways that beauty treatments such as Botox can limit facial movement and gestures, as can illness. Brietz's re-enactments of the Hollywood actors also draw attention to the wish to be like them, to be a star;[426] and to the staged nature of some communication. Spont clearly identified this when she stated: 'On some level *Becoming* is about gesture, but it is also about learned gender, romantic relationships, and social life.'[427]

An important feature of this artwork is that each copy of the seven actors is done by a single performer, namely Breitz. This has the effect of drawing the attention of the audience towards the nature of gestural and verbal communication enacted in each film, and away from the person portrayed. In this way the limited nature of the verbal and gestural expressions of the roles becomes apparent, which, as the writer and artist Edgar Schmitz has noted, is more 'evident for being played out by the same body and face.'[428]

Brietz's meticulous re-enactment of each actor's role is crucial and shows the differences between the original films and her attempted copies. Thus, tiny little gestural details of communication become more evident: the wideness of eyes or number of blinks in relation to what is spoken. Schmitz describes Breitz's attempts as 'painstaking labour' which are 'neither simply flippant nor entirely convincing.'[429]

The inclusion of the head, shoulders and facial gestures in *Becoming* 2003, differs considerably from how I eventually came to use gesture during this creative-practice research. Initially, my projects explored the effect of enacting gestures within groups. In

[424] Jennifer Allen, "Candice Breitz: From a to B and Beyond," in *Candice Breitz: Re-Animations*, ed. Suzanne Cotter and Miria Swain (Oxford: Museum of Modern Art, Oxford, 2003), 32-41.
[425] Ibid, 32-41.
[426] Breitz, Dziewior, and Kunsthaus Bregenz., *Candice Breitz : The Scripted Life*, 51.
[427] Spont, "Analyzing Mass Media through Video Art Education: Popular Pedagogy and Social Critique in the Work of Candice Breitz.", 306.
[428] Edgar Schmitz, "Catalogue: Video Installations 1999-2010," in *Candice Breitz : The Scripted Life*, ed. Yilmaz Dziewior (Bregenz: Kunsthaus Bregenz), 137.
[429] Breitz, Dziewior, and Kunsthaus Bregenz., *Candice Breitz : The Scripted Life*, 137.

participatory projects such as *Outstanding Standing Ovation* (2014) Appendix N, and *Hand Cleansing Techniques Number One: how to wash your hands with soap and water* (2014) Appendix H, gestures were presented within groups of people and always linked with my verbal communication with the audience. However, with time the limitations of this method became apparent, as the focus was never purely on gesture but intertwined with my own personality. As a result, in order to isolate gestures more fully from spoken language and persona, I decided to focus only on hand-gestures. The works *Hand Gesture Piece* (2017) *Hand Gesture Film* (2018) and *Brick Wall* (2018) only show re-enacted hand gestures from filmed conversations; there is no dialogue nor original footage because I did not want the audience to be drawn into comparing the originals with the copied versions. These art-pieces are described in Chapter Five.

In *Becoming* (2003) Breitz copies found footage from Hollywood films as 'social critique.'[430] By contrast the DVD-based work of my PhD project has had a different intention. It has involved me re-editing and closely re-enacting gestures of people with whom I had been in conversation, in order to observe potentially unnoticed or overlooked aspects of our hand - gestural communication. This enabled me to consider these gestures in relation to the effect they may or not have upon us, and their relationship to communication of empathy.

In conclusion, Breitz's piece *Becoming* (2003) reflects my own understanding of one aspect of how gestures work. In addition, it enabled me to identify the different categories of gestures of interest to me; first, those gestures knowingly made when we are being observed, such as in an interview, lecture or even conversation; second, unguarded gestures, made when we don't think anyone is watching such as when waiting and third, gestures made in vulnerable situations when people may have less ability to control how they present themselves.

[430] Spont, "Analyzing Mass Media through Video Art Education: Popular Pedagogy and Social Critique in the Work of Candice Breitz.", 300.

4.3 Emotion

tapping toes Eyes closed Picking fingers

tapping toes Eyes closed Eating nails

touch phone move L ear picking and flick away Foot tab

scratch mouth

touch phone phone pick nail scratch

Scratch forearm drink from bottle hair

Shuffling reading pamphlet still biting and picking

Little finger in ear

pick + look at nails

+ smell wax quiet resignation twiddle hair left hand

pick nails

Leaning forwards take stuff out pocket

Tapping hand Head back more prominent foot tapping

Feet out - quite away

apart + swing back in bum shuffle

still L finger L ear pick

X Arms stretch stand up, sit on

+ cross lying down on bench barrier

forwards Eat chocolate

over body while lean forwards

People sitting in an audience watching a performance that went on too long.

Manchester, February 2019

The discussion so far has highlighted the intertwining of feelings, gestures and words within interpersonal communication. This has been highlighted through a home visit that was marked by vulnerability. The difficulty of accurately describing these complex interactions and the subtle nuances that occur from second to second is evident. This next section explores the connection between gesture and emotion in greater detail. First, a brief recollection of gestural movements that took place in a medical consultation:

> He was leaning in way too close, shouty and distressed and red in the face. He moved away abruptly, then lunged back in too close to me. He kept his arms straight throughout with his hands closed into a fist.
>
> Home Visit: 17.3.2017

In this description, the man's emotions were clearly visible through his gestures and behaviour. However, it is not always as easy, or possible, to accurately read someone's emotions through observing their gestures. As Flusser observed, people have the freedom to choose whether to reveal themselves, or not.[431] People can and do hide their feelings from others by controlling their gestures. For example, holding onto a podium to prevent hands from shaking. Sometimes attempts to mask emotion are seen by an onlooker and they spot a nervously tapping foot. At other times, feelings are hidden successfully, and an observer is unable to discern someone's emotions by observing their gestures. At the extreme end of this, ability to mask emotion (or lack of it) through control of their gestures are psychopaths, who are able to deceive others with purported kindness when it doesn't exist in them. For Merleau-Ponty people's emotions are expressed in their gestures, and thus evident to others. He stated that:

> Anger, shame, hate and love are not psychic facts hidden at the bottom of another's consciousness: they are visible from the outside. They exist on this face or in those gestures, not hidden behind them.[432]

[431] Flusser *gestures*, 167.
[432] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Hubert Lederer Dreyfus, and Patricia Allen Dreyfus, *Sense and Non-Sense. Translated, with a Pref., by Hubert L. Dreyfus & Patricia Allen Dreyfus* ([Evanston, Ill.]: Northwestern University Press, 1964), 52.

This view of gestures as evidence of emotion is reflected within the field of psychology which locates the face as the 'primary source' of information on 'feelings and attitudes.'[433] In a conversation between two people, each person both perceives, and is perceived by, the other. Thus, through observations of facial expressions and gestures alongside intonation and content of speech, knowledge of each other's emotion may become apparent. The feminist scholar, Sara Ahmed, concurs having stated that people's emotions are evident on the 'surfaces of bodies' and shown to others through their actions and behaviours.[434] Schneider has noted the effect that one person's gestures can have on those around them, when she stated:

> Certainly, it is not a stretch to say that if my posture droops, or my head tilts, or my feet drag I may alter the environment of my social surround. These may not be conscious gestures, but they are gestic.[435]

This effect of gesture, and presumed emotion, altering an environment is much more subtle than the first description of anger outlined above. Awareness of a person's emotions is sometimes easier if people speak. When talking, the content of their speech, vocal intonation, pauses or intermittent silences may give an indication of their emotional state. This is in addition to any non-verbal leakage, revealed through gestures such as tapping fingers, or darting eyes. As a GP a lot of what I do is listen and observe. Incongruity between the content of what is said and the way it is spoken is suggestive that something of significance may be underneath, that is not yet evident.

As observed by Schneider previously, there is a responsive quality to gesture that influences relations between people and affects how they respond.[436] Within this creative-practice research I have consciously made use of observations of gesture to influence face-to-face communication with the audiences. During live performances, if I have spotted gestures of the audience suggesting boredom, I have either sped up or altered the content of the performance in response. The psychologist and author on laughter, Robert Provine, has identified that this attention and response to gestural cues in the audience is a method used

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[433] Julia C. Berryman, *Psychology & You : An Informal Introduction*, 3rd ed ed. (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell Pub., 2006), 14.
[434] Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004), 4.
[435] Schneider, "In Our Hands: An Ethics of Gestural Response-Ability Rebecca Schneider in Conversation with Lucia Ruprecht.", 114.
[436] Ibid, 114.

by comedians to pace live shows.[437] In addition, control of facial expression is frequently used as a device by comedians to influence the response of their audience.[438] I have also used my own gestures to suggest my being bored to the audience, as a means of connecting with them, whilst giving brief verbal introductions to the pieces.

By controlling their gestures, people can consciously try to hide their real emotions from others, for example, smiling brightly when feeling sad. This avoidance of showing emotion by using gestural control sometimes works very effectively. At other times, emotions are revealed, even when people don't want to share them, in a process known as non-verbal leakage, as in the description above, of unintentionally showing boredom. With the angry man described at the beginning of this section, I tried to hide my fear and keep my gestures calm to prevent the situation getting worse. I controlled my gestures to influence his response.

Within this creative-practice research, I have been very conscious of trying to control my own gestures as a means of regulating how much and what type of emotion I 'show' to an audience in a live context.[439] By doing this I am directly influenced by the comedian Buster Keaton who mastered the art of a dead-pan expression as comedic device. For example, in my introductions to pieces, I often speak in a dead-pan way because I think this flat presentation works humorously. This means I am consciously not smiling even if I may want to. I used this gestural control in my introduction to *The Great Forced LOLathon* (2013) (Appendix C) a collective twenty-six-minute group laughing event. Here the dead-pan introduction was humorous, given the nature of the piece to come, and this humour helped people relax a bit.

Control of gestures during live performance is a device frequently used by artists. It is present in *Nail Biting Performance* (2001) at the Symphony Hall, Birmingham by Ceal Floyer, who slowly bites the nails of her hands for five minutes, silently, in front of a classical music audience.[440] Floyer's non-verbal action is gestural, because it is done with intent to

[437] Robert R. Provine, *Laughter : A Scientific Investigation* (New York, N.Y.: Penguin Books, 2001), 139.
[438] Liz Fraser, "What Standup Comedy Taught Me About Success at Work," *Guardian*, 19 Oct 2015.
[439] Sometimes this is to create humour. At other times it is because I don't want to share how I am feeling with the audience.
[440] Ceal Floyer, *Nail Biting Performance,* 2001. A five-minute performance in which Floyer bites her nails into the microphone, on stage at the Symphony Hall Birmingham, just prior to performances of Beethoven and Stravinsky by the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra. I viewed documentation of this piece in the Ikon Gallery 'Ceal Floyer' Art Catalogue.

communicate. As curator Jonathan Watkins has noted, Floyer performs a controlled presentation of anxiety in front of a huge audience: her own stage fright.[441] Whilst she does display her anxiety (through the process of silently biting her nails) she is otherwise silent, reserved and undemonstrative.

Though it can be possible to disguise emotions with gestures, it isn't possible to stop them and sometimes it is not possible to hide emotion, as will be shown later. Discussion has explored how communication with gestures is responsive, occurring both consciously and unconsciously. Use of gesture to convey and conceal emotions to influence the response of a live audience has been introduced. Next, attention will turn to how gestures affect the experience of communication both for the gesturer and the person who sees them.

In face to face interactions, seemingly tiny gestures in others can alter how people feel: one person's glance of encouragement that allows the other to ask that question; the slight downward turn of the mouth suggesting impatience that prevents them speaking. Often people do not notice the gestures they make when they speak[442] and are unaware of the impact others' gestures have on them. Mimicry of gestures between people happens subconsciously and can enhance feelings of shared understanding.[443] Most 'bodily action' between people 'just happens' and 'falls below the threshold of perception and reflective knowledge.'[444] Goldin-Meadow draws attention to this when she states:

> An entire exchange can take place without either speaker or listener being consciously aware of the information passed between them.[445]

At other times people are very conscious of the effect of gesture on their experience of communication. It was frightening when the angry man stood too close and clenched his fists. His shouting and pacing might have been cathartic for him, but it was intimidating to witness. As he was standing too close, he crossed a social spatial distance boundary which I perceived as unusual.[446] I perceived his clenched fists as a sign of anger and felt afraid, and

[441] Watkins Jonathan and Jeremy Millar, "Ceal Floyer (Art Catalogue)," ed. Ikon Gallery (Ikon Gallery Ltd, 1999).
[442] I was unaware of the extent of my own hand-gesturing: until I saw video footage of me talking during the course of this research-project.
[443] McNeill, "Speech-Gesture Mimicry in Performance: An Actor-Audience, Author-Actor, Audience-Actor Triangle.", 15.
[444] Crossley, "Researching Embodiment by Way of 'Body Techniques'.", 83.
[445] Goldin-Meadow, *Hearing Gesture : How Our Hands Help Us Think*, 245.
[446] Doherty-Sneddon, *Children's Unspoken Language*, 11.

angry. Interestingly, it is known that 'premeditated displays of anger' during protests can lead to 'genuine feelings of anger' for the person involved. [447] The way that a person moves, and gestures also affects their experience and influences what they do next. As observed by Crossley when he stated:

> How we act in situations affects our conscious experience of them, thus further affecting our subsequent actions.[448]

Thus, the way a person gestures affects their feelings and subsequent actions, which in turn affects the feelings and responses of those they are communicating with. Gestures, as stated previously are extremely responsive. It is known that movement and dance promote positive emotions in people.[449] In addition, synchronised movement has been shown to increase feelings of well-being.[450] In this creative-practice research I have explored the use of gesture as a way of forming connections with an audience, making work which has entailed collective group activity such as *Outstanding Standing Ovation* (2014) in Appendix N, and *AAAAAGGGHH (*2017) in Appendix S.

[447] Crossley, "Researching Embodiment by Way of 'Body Techniques'.", 90.
[448] Ibid, 90.
[449] Sarah Cook, Karen Ledger, and Nadine Scott, "Dancing for Living: Women's Experience of 5 Rhythmns Dance and the Effects on Their Emotional Wellbeing," ed. U.K Advocacy Network (Sheffield2003), 14.
[450] Arran Davis, Jacob Taylor, and Emma Cohen, "Social Bonds and Exercise: Evidence for a Reciprocal Relationship," *PLoS ONE* 10, no. 8 (2015), https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0136705, 1.

Chapter 5. Creative Practice

This chapter is an account of the creative practice that took place in the course of this PhD research project. It begins with a broad overview of all the art-pieces made during the research project. The chapter is then split into two sections. The first section considers work that is developmental and speculative in nature. The second section is a detailed discussion of work that I consider resolved and complete. These art-pieces are discussed in relation to the theoretical and thematic considerations of hesitation, empathy and gesture, and in relation to the meta-discursive reflections of Georges Perec's writing in *An Attempt at Exhausting a Place in Paris.*

5.1 Broad Overview

In total the research has resulted in forty-eight art-pieces which include live events, performances, DVDs, an installation of over a hundred sculptures, several sign paintings, two text pieces and two photographic series. This creative output can roughly be divided into two groups: earlier live pieces, many of which were participatory in nature, and latterly, pieces that focused on isolated abstracted hand gestures enacted by me. This shift from live, collective events towards relatively quieter solitary presentations of isolated hand gestures occurred slowly and in a non-linear fashion. Thus, whilst I made more participatory work earlier on, I continued to do so occasionally, throughout the duration of the research. The earlier art-pieces are listed together on the next page. Many of these focus on a single aspect of non-verbal communication, such as gesture, posture, laughing, clapping and bodily movement; a few are text based. Pieces that focus on non-verbal communication include re-enactments of gestures and actions by me, and larger group events when people enacted movements collectively. Links to reports in the appendices, of each of these pieces are given in the list. These reports, written shortly after each piece was presented to an audience, chart the development of my artistic practice during this period of the practice-based research. This informal, questioning writing, has intentionally been included in the thesis to enhance understanding between the reader and myself. It echo's the effect of meta-discursive reflections used by Georges Perec, as discussed in Chapter Two.

Collectively these earlier live art-pieces provide an insight into the nature of empathic and non-verbal gestural communication. The art-pieces point to the potential of using enactment of gesture, in live participatory works, to engender empathetic communication between people, and as a means to change the dynamic within a room. This is particularly noticeable when movements are made in synchronisation with other people. In addition, these art-pieces highlight the knowledge and understanding that comes through the act of doing; particularly the embodied nature of gestural knowledge, and the way our gestures alter the way we (and others) feel. These pieces also suggest that disclosure of uncertainty can be used an effective means to engender mutual understanding. Finally, though tangibly different from the later hand-gesture works, insights from these earlier works (listed below) informed the development of pieces that are discussed in the last section of this chapter.

5.1.1 Earlier works

- *Final Preparations and Forced laughter* 1 (2012)
- *Poses for Footballers* (2012)
- *Synchrocrispicity* 1 (2013)
- *The Great Forced LOLathon* (2013)
- *The Synchrocrispettes* (2014)
- *An analysis of putting on three separate pieces in quick succession.*
- *O Mio Babbeano Caro* (2014)
- *Forced Laughter* 3 (2014)
- *Hand Cleansing Techniques Number One: how to wash your hands with soap and water* (2014)
- *Why Don't Adults Skip? number one* (2014)
- *Huuh* (2014)
- *I don't know what to call this* (*Tennis Grunts*) 2014
- *Why don't adults skip? number two* (2014)
- *I'm On The Train: A year's worth of over-heard mobile phone calls*.2 (2014)
- *Outstanding Standing Ovation* (2014)
- The Synchrocrispettes film *Synchrocrispicity* (2014)
- *I haven't the foggiest what to do: clapping* (2014)
- *A Point Meant 100* (meetings 1-27) 2015
- *I never knew that I could dance like this* (2015)
- *Trying to pose like Bruce McLean when he posed in Poses for Plinths in 1971* (2015)
- *AAAAAGGGHH (*2017)
- *Naming a thesis* (2012-2019)
- *Poses for Bins (2012-2020)*

5.2 Developmental and Speculative Work

In addition to the earlier works, I have chosen to write in detail about three other art-pieces that are developmental and speculative in nature, and another two that are resolved and complete. These pieces highlight the key shifts in my thinking and making, that occurred during this research project. In addition, the pieces show the breadth and complexity of determining the nature of empathy, and point to seemingly small ways that gesture, empathy and hesitation can affect a variety of different situations. The selected art-pieces also exemplify the range of my artistic practice and provide evidence of my working processes.

5.2.1 I Was Meant To (2015)

Location Atrium Space, Newcastle University, August 2015.

Medium Performance.

Aims This is an odd piece and I am still not able to fully understand it nor my intentions behind it. The piece explored sharing personal feelings of doubt and fear, in unplanned encounters, with anyone attending a group art show opening. I hoped to salvage something from my apparent inability to be creative at that time. I wanted to test sharing personal information within this location.

Description At the opening of the MFA group show at The Hatton Gallery and Newcastle University Fine Art department. I had a small card in my back pocket, on which I had written the following:

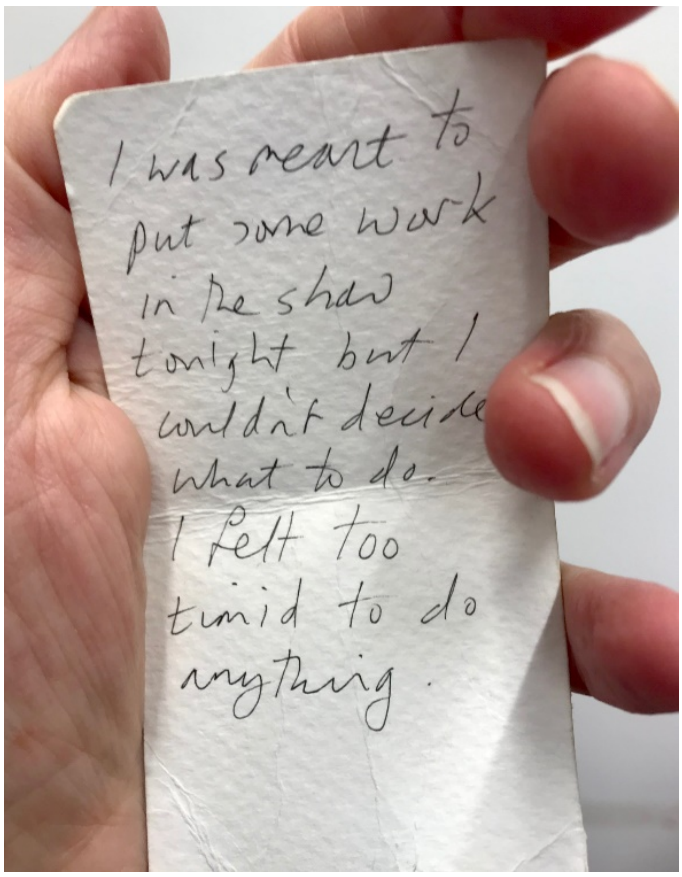

Figure 5. Card shown to people if they asked why the performance had been cancelled.

If anyone asked me why my performance (that had been due that night) had been cancelled, I took the card out of my pocket and showed it to them.[451]

Project Development This project started from a marked sense of failure, hesitancy and uncertainty. I had originally intended to present a performance alongside the MFA group show but as the date approached, I was consistently unable to make anything. It was shortly before one of my daughters had surgery and we had heard it could be complicated, potentially entailing much more surgical intervention than had been anticipated. I was very nervous and unsettled and had found trying to make art-work a complete irrelevance. Having agreed to show, I was also reluctant to pull out completely as I felt I should have let people know earlier. I couldn't decide whether to try and make work or pull out and ended up doing this.

[451] The location of these conversations was varied and in the setting of the busy show; around other people's work in the gallery spaces and in the corridors of the department, which were full of people.

I decided to write down how I was feeling (timid and nervous) without stating why. I considered keeping to my original performance time slot and voicing this statement to the assembled audience but felt uncomfortable with this approach; it seemed too attention-seeking to me to suggest that people gather to hear me say that. I also considered leaving the card stuck in the space but felt that was slightly impersonal and that I would not necessarily find out how people responded. Eventually I opted to share my information in person but only if someone asked me why my performance had been cancelled. I decided to write this on a card rather than just explain in person to try and create a situation that distinguished it from a normal conversation or usual social behaviour. I kept this art-piece unannounced so that I would gain a clearer indication of peoples unplanned responses. In addition, less attention meant I could stop doing the art-piece if it was too painful to do.

Methodology I didn't try this out in advance. During some very brief conversations, seven people asked me what time I was performing or why I wasn't. On each occasion I said something like..'Oh .. wait a second, I've got something about that...' and I took the card from my pocket and then showed it to them. I didn't do this confidently because I felt uncomfortable with the whole process: I am sure this will have shown. Invariably once people read the card there was quite an awkward response. Most people appeared uncertain about how to react. A few smiled a bit uncomfortably or said 'Oh' and moved the conversation on. One or two people apologised for having asked me. This hadn't been my intention and I felt uncomfortable that I appeared to be making them feel uncomfortable. Invariably, on each occasion I tried to lessen this; by smiling and reassuring them and moving the conversation on or with some people, just explaining verbally that things were a bit difficult.

Documentation single photograph of the card.

Critical reflection This piece worked by bringing in a very brief component of performance to the conversation of an encounter with acquaintances and friends, in the public setting of an art show opening. My public sharing of timidity via a hand-written note invariably provoked an awkward response, both in myself and in the other person. This was instantly evident from people's behaviour, speech and facial expressions; with changes in tone of voice, content of words, degree of eye contact and speed with which the conversation ended. It was evident that the intimate setting of a face to face encounter amplified this

awkwardness. This may have come about due to the content of my message, but also by the nature of the delivery (me producing the card for them to read) which is not in keeping with conversation in such a setting. The intensity of the people's responses was linked to the relative intimacy of these face to face encounters; as their words and gestures any change in tone of voice or conversation were immediately evident and on display; were mine. Producing the hand-written card did alter the dynamic of our conversation shifting it away from a typical conversational encounter. Had I just answered their question with spoken words identical to those written on the card, the encounters would not have been so awkward. Writing my feelings down on the card drew attention to them; as if they were words that were unspeakable. Taking the card out of my pocket also caused delay in our conversation; a fraction of a pause that emphasised what was taking place, again drawing attention to the words I had written: suggesting they were of significance. Equally my studied placing of my hand into my pocket and bringing out the card for them to read, also silently speaks of agency, as Leader observations suggest.[452] Storing the card in my back pocket also hinted at a compartmental approach to the content of what was written. I could put the card away and not show it to anyone, in the same way that emotions are generally not expressed in art viewing contexts as Doyle has noted.[453]

Altering the temporal dynamic of a conversation through a switch from one medium to another (in this case from speech to written text) draws attention to, and potentially amplifies the content of that moment. In effect this is similar, to a hesitation that may naturally occur in a conversation; and resonates with the use of delays in plays by Brecht, as observed by Walter Benjamin.[454] A face to face encounter is also considerably more threatening for the audience than say them reading the same words in the text of a book or on a poster. The content of what I had written on the card was not that different from the tenor of Perec's writing when he stated during a project 'it rapidly became clear that I would never manage to…'[455] and then 'my feebleness at..'[456] and 'in the end I chose deliberately to preserve the hesitant and perplexed character of these shapeless scraps…'[457] However the

[452] Darian Leader, *Hands*, 93.
[453] Jennifer Doyle, *Hold It against Me : Difficulty and Emotion in Contemporary Art* (Durham ; London: Duke University Press, 2013), 4.
[454] Walter Benjamin, "What Is Epic Theatre? (2nd Version)," in *Understanding Brecht* (London Verso, 1966), 19.
[455] Georges Perec, "Think/Classify," in *Species of Spaces and Other Pieces*, ed. John Sturrock (London: Penguin, 2008), 188.
[456] Ibid, 189.
[457] Ibid, 189.

difference between reading these words in a book and reading these words on a small hand-written card, held in someone's hand seemed considerable.

Conclusion This small art-piece has been very significant to me during this Phd project and has been one that I have kept coming back to. My suspicion is that it is more significant for my work than I realise. I have always felt very uncomfortable about it because it appears too flimsy to be called art and for me it is a bit too intense in the way it reveals personal discomfort. Yet I keep coming back to it and considering it. And I kept the card. Not long after, we found out that our daughter had cancer which was an immense shock. Then we really were all over the place, and I took time off from the Phd.

Reflecting on this piece now with family illness safely behind us and at the end of my Phd, is revealing. It so clearly relates to the themes of my research. It involves a hand gesturing out with a card held in it, which causes a tiny pause in a conversation. It shows awkwardness and social discomfort within empathic communication. It involves hesitation and uncertainty. The uncertainty written on the card and on our faces. It involves the difficulty of 'failing' in a public context. And awkward responses. It also reminds me of the woman whose hand I held at the home visit.

5.2.2 A Point Meant 100: meetings 28-70 (2015)

A major piece of work in this PhD research was my project *A Point Meant 100* which aimed to be a series of one hundred face to face meetings with other people. My original intention was to explore interpersonal dynamics of one-to-one meetings in relation to empathy and gesture, and to test these meetings as a potential medium for my art. The project was interrupted by family illness half way through, when I took several months break from university. As a result, *A Point Meant 100* was effectively split into two separate and distinct phases. The first phase, *A Point Meant 100* (meetings 1-27) 2015 is discussed in Appendix V. The discussion that follows here covers the second phase of this project, from meetings twenty-eight to seventy, in 2017. I stopped the project after seventy meetings.

Description Forty-two meetings/encounters with people, when we talked and fiddled with a small piece of clay or sculpey.

Location various cafes, homes, parks, corridors, studios

Documentation Digital photographs: memory stick File: 1. *A Point Meant 100*

Aims In this second half of *A Point Meant 100* I intended to continue my exploration of non-verbal communication in one-to-one meetings and make two new pieces that responded directly to this. I aimed to undertake seventy-three more meetings in this phase. I made three changes to the process. 1.Instead of a focus on non-verbal communication of the body, face, and limbs I decided to restrict my attention to hand gestures only. This was to concentrate attention onto one aspect of communication and was practically much easier to do. 2. I widened my remit of one-to-one meetings to include un-planned encounters with people I met through the course of a day, as well as pre-arranged meetings. 3. Finally, I decided to use clay or sculpey within these meetings, as a tool to collect an imprint of non-verbal gestures when people were talking.

Project Development When meeting up with someone, I asked if they would be happy to play with a bit of clay, whilst we talked. I explained they could do whatever they wanted with the clay and keep it at the end of our meeting or give it to me, if they didn't want it. Thus, the clay we fiddled with or sculpted as we talked not only bore an imprint of our fingers and of conversational gestures but was also an artefact of a meeting. I took part in forty-two meetings or encounters, in this way. Everyone agreed to play with the clay or sculpey, as we talked. Initially, I gave people instructions such as 'can you make something very small?' but these suggestions always felt too directive and I rapidly settled on saying 'Just do whatever you want with it' I started using clay but switched to sculpey, because it came in smaller, wrapped packets which didn't dry out.

In the meetings, the other person chose which colour of sculpey to use, then we divided it up so we both had a piece the same size. On occasion, it became the focus of conversation, with people speaking about past events, triggered by the small object that they made. More frequently, it was just something we fiddled with, as we talked. Many people said how much they enjoyed this. I tried to make these meetings and encounters as neutral as possible and apart from a few meetings at the start I avoided directing what people could do with the sculpey. I experimented with using my own piece of sculpey to mimic what other people made, to see if it influenced the course of our conversation or the degree to which rapport was formed. I was aware at times of feeling inhibited, when asking people if they wanted to play with a piece of sculpey. This happened in a small medical educational meeting and

occasionally when asking friends. Having widened my remit to include 'encounters with people I came across in-the-course-of-my-day' I also asked the audience of a comedy set I did at The Stand Club, if they wanted to play with a bit of sculpey, as I talked.

Figure 6. Image of clay models from *A Point Meant 100* meeting in café.

Critical Reflection The process of us meeting up one-to-one and of making something, did not really feel like art to me. Unsurprisingly some of the locations we met in and our reasons for meeting (having a cup of coffee with a friend) seemed just too similar, to everyday life for this process to be labelled as art. This highlighted again, as in the first phase of *A Point Meant 100* (meetings 1-27) 2015, the effect of context, on the notion of something being viewed as art. Another frustration was that whilst I tried to keep the one-to-one meetings as neutral as possible, I again found that my own investment and bias in the process made this impossible to fully achieve.

Figure 7. Clay sculptures from *A Point Meant 100* meeting in house.

During this second phase of *A Point Meant 100* I was aware that the clay and sculpey was often a comforting distraction for people when they talked. In addition, the action of us 'doing something together' potentially contributed towards us forming a rapport and communicating with empathy. The sculptures acted as a remnant of non-verbal gesturing that had taken place during the conversations. However, I also intuitively sensed the sculptures were not yet helping me access or articulate non-verbal gesturing in the way that I had originally intended. I did not know what this method of articulation was, I only knew I had not yet found it and I felt uneasy about the role of the sculptures. In response to these concerns I decided to exhibit the sculptures to see if they could 'work' in the ways that I was hoping. I also planned to make two new pieces in response to them.

Conclusion My conclusions for the *A Point Meant 100* project, both the first phase (meetings 1-27 described in Appendix V) and this second phase (meetings 28 -70) which involved making small sculptures, follow next.

It was very evident that location has a considerable effect on the way that people behave and how they communicate with gesture and language. Secondly, people's mannerisms, gestures and actions vary according to the roles they are performing- and our expectations of the way other people communicate, also depends on their role. The effect of context on

Figure 8. *A Point Meant 100* meeting using Sculpey.

how an activity or object is viewed as art was also apparent, with limits on presenting everyday situations as art. The subtle influence of a shared activity (enhanced by having identical coloured clay) on encouraging rapport and empathy was apparent. People sometimes shared quite personal reflections whilst they were kneading the clay. In addition, it was clear that there was considerable comfort or relaxation gained from this activity, which eased conversations and sharing of information between us.

Whilst there is clearly potential for using one-to-one meetings as a medium for my artwork it is not something that I want to purse. At this stage it was clear that I had not yet fully explored non-verbal communication, particularly that of gesture, from one-to-one meetings in the way I wanted. The pieces that developed directly from this second phase of *A Point Meant 100* were *Outstanding Life Changing Sculptures Made by Other People And Me When We Were Talking about Something Else* (2017) as well as *List of Works* (2017) and *A talk About My Work* (2017) which are discussed next.

5.2.3 Outstanding Life Changing Sculptures Made by Other People (and me) When We Were Talking about Something Else (2017)

Location alongside the MFA show, Fine Art Department, Newcastle University, August 2017.

Theme small sculptures that had been made during one-to-one conversations.

Documentation Memory Stick File:2 *Outstanding Life Changing Sculptures.*

Description The exhibition room was bare except for the installation of sculptures. There were no plinths or shelves used to display the work on. The installation was a site-specific display of the sculptures which responded to the architecture of the space. The sculptures were placed around the peripheries of the room: on the window sills, skirting boards, mantel pieces and fire places, radiators, piping, electric plugs, light fittings and picture rails. There were no sculptures in the middle of the room. Some small broken pieces of sculpture were stuck onto several of the walls. During the opening night event, more sculptures made by the audience, were added to this initial exhibition. The new sculptures were displayed in a haphazard way in the centre of the room, alongside remaining un-opened packets of sculpey for a few days. Later they were arranged into two groups on the wooden floor, using demarcations of two trap doors, as a device to frame them. A few of these new sculptures were placed onto the window sills and fireplaces adding them to some of the groups already displayed. Throughout the exhibition, unopened packets of sculpey were on display. Some visitors used this to make more sculptures, which they placed in the space. There was no written message or instruction for the audience to do this, however it was intended that the audience would respond in this way. I enjoyed identifying new additional sculptures, on several days during the exhibition.

Intention and Development This piece was intended as a second stage in the development of my project *A Point meant 100* which asked: 1. Do face-to-face meetings with other people have any potential as a means of making art-work? 2. Can the content of the non-verbal communication from these meetings form a starting point for new work related to my interest in communication?

In this work, my aim was to find out if sculptures made incidentally, during the one-to-one conversations, can reflect upon the hand gestures of the conversations, that took place

when they were made. I intended to respond to the sculptures that had arisen from the *A Point Meant 100* meetings and exhibit them, to help answer this question. In addition, I wanted to combine gestural elements from the one-to-one conversations with the sculptures. A smaller proportion of the sculptures had been made during a live comedy set that I gave (about my PhD) at the Stand Comedy Club, Newcastle upon Tyne in February 2017[458]. The sculptures from these two groups were air dried (clay) or baked in the oven (sculpey) before being exhibited. The third group of sculptures exhibited were made by members of the public on the opening night of the show and over the course of the two-week exhibition. These sculptures were not baked/dried.

From the outset, I very deliberately decided to include *all* the sculptures that had been made during *A Point Meant 100*. My intention was to respond to them, exhibit them and assess how they worked in answering my research questions. I included *every* single fragment of the sculptures in the exhibition. When making this decision I had consciously responded to the sculptures as if they had been patients in a consultation. Namely, that in a consultation I attempt to accept, listen to and enable patients to say whatever they want to (be that words or gestures). I pay attention to their verbal and non-verbal communication and don't readily discount anything they say. I decided to exhibit (make visible) all the sculptural forms made during the *A Point Meant 100* meetings as they represented a facet of the non-verbal communication that had taken place.

As I considered how to show the sculptures to an audience, I reflected on my lack of confidence in them as 'research findings' and art objects and my reluctance to exhibit them in public. This led me to reflection on the ways that confidence and 'positivity' is valued in society, whilst a lack of confidence is not. In addition, I reflected on the different ways we use language to influence the viewer. The *way* things are described influences the way an audience may perceive it: whether a wine label, a description of art, or a politicians soundbite. Words, labels and descriptions influence peoples' expectations and alter their perceptions. This happens in medical situations too: to facilitate people through some situations: for example, the tendency to use 'you'll just feel a tiny scratch' rather than 'this will hurt'. This subtle re-framing with language, can in turn affect the experience that people have of a situation. This led me to consider the effect of the titles and written descriptions

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of art upon the perceptions of the viewer. I decided at this stage that I would not give much information to the audience about the origin of the sculptures, so that any response would be to the sculptures themselves, rather than a text panel.

During this time, I also reflected on my reasons for using sculptures in the first place. I had just returned to my PhD after my daughter had been ill and found it very hard to make any work and re-engage with my investigation of one-to-one conversations. Part of my motivation for making sculptures, was to have something tangible from the meetings. This echo's the tendency in medicine to monitor identifiable parameters, whilst ignoring (or perhaps being unable to accurately quantify) those qualities that are most important to us.

Methodology For the display, my original intention was to keep the sculptures in paired groups, linked to the one-to-one conversations that had taken place when they were made. I experimented with plinths and a museum cabinet to display them. Instinctively, these methods appeared flat and unsuitable. Interestingly, once removed from any conversational grouping or plinth, the sculptures interacted with the space.

Figure 9. Sculptures displayed in periphery of exhibition space.

Sculptures and fragments were placed systematically on the surfaces in the room: window sills, picture rails, skirting boards, radiators, pipework, light fittings, fireplaces, mantel pieces and electricity sockets. Different looking sculptures were placed in lines along horizontal surfaces, and some were occasionally grouped according to size, shape and colour. Others were hidden behind radiators or on picture rails. Tiny coloured fragments were used to draw attention to less obvious spaces, and hidden sculptures. Same-coloured sculptures were occasionally placed in vertical lines from floor, radiator up to picture rails. Some rules were used to place the fragments and sculptures, for example, a small red sculpture was placed on every electricity plug in the room that was switched on. None were placed if the plug was switched off. I experimented with using small written and typed titles and labels placed next to the individual sculptures. The addition of titles for *all* the sculptures didn't appear to add much extra meaning to them. Eventually I opted for only one sculpture having a title next to it which was *Assured*. This title was intended as a play on words. The sculpture itself was very small and did not appear assured. During the development of this installation I wanted to combine gestural aspects of the *A Point Meant 100* meetings alongside the sculptures. However, I was unable to find a way to combine these two elements that I felt convinced by. As a result, I only ended up exhibiting the sculptures.

Figure *10*. Installation image of sculptures on electrical fittings.

Figure 11. Tiny sculpture on mantelpiece.

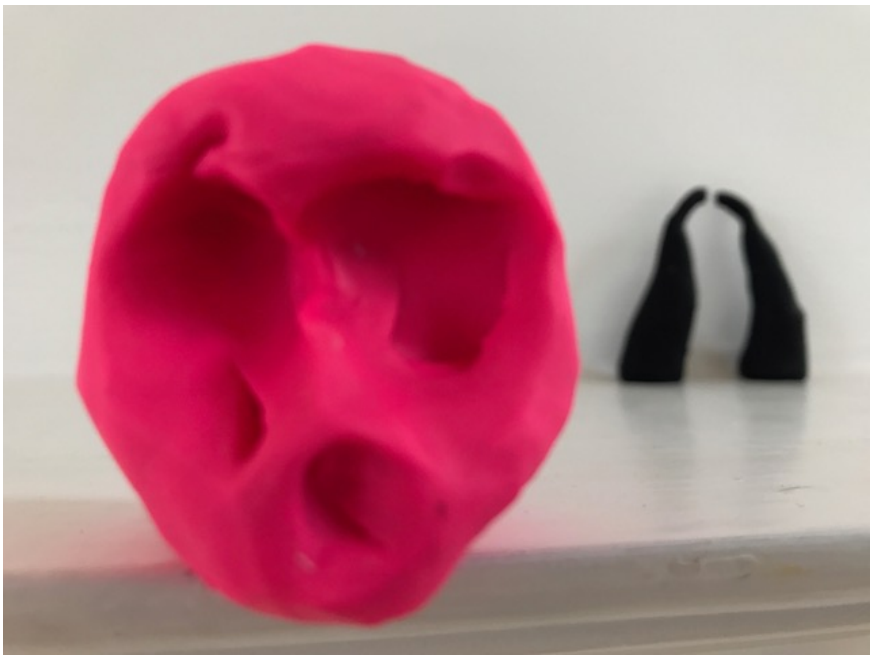

Figure 12. Sculptures on mantelpiece.

Critical Refection This sculptural installation worked in the space, with the simple forms interacting well with the piping, skirting boards and various surfaces of the formal room. In addition, the use of *all* the tiny remnants and broken flakes of clay gave a sense of inclusivity and the informal display of the sculptures lent an open, inviting air to the room. I felt that a small text panel would have been of benefit, to inform the audience that the sculptures had arisen when people had been chatting together briefly. Feedback from viewers corroborated my impression that the exhibition needed more written information. The dissonance between the title *Assured* and the small, seemingly tentative sculpture drew attention to how that sculpture might have felt. However, as only one sculpture had a title, this was an easily over-looked aspect of the installation. On reflection, I felt that more titles for the sculptures titles would have added emphasis to this. This made me appreciate that I am very interested in trying to reflect on the less tangible aspects of human communication, such as feelings, within my work.

Disappointingly, the installation of sculptures did *not* reflect upon gestural non-verbal communication in any noteworthy way. The sculptures were clearly, hand-made and marked with the fingerprints of people who made them, and their simple form suggested clay doodles. However, the sculptures were not suggestive of gestures that had accompanied the conversations, when they had been made. This absence of any link to non-verbal gesturing echoes my own response to the sculptures during the installation process: an awareness of their visual properties but *not* non-verbal gesturing.

Conclusion The installation evoked humour, simplicity, open-ness and the sculptures simple forms suggested physical doodles, bearing the finger prints of the people who made them. However, the sculptures did not suggest non-verbal conversational gesturing in any way. Potentially, if exhibited with different work, these sculptures could contribute to reflections on non-verbal gesturing. However, in their current form, they do not.

In making this piece, I responded to the sculptures as if I was responding to a patient, which appears to be an emerging theme in this PhD research; as is attempting to convey something about human communication that is intangible – perhaps related to feeling or experience.

Just because I know about the origins of a piece, does not mean that the audience will. Giving text information during exhibitions can be of benefit to the audience. When making

this piece I wanted to reflect the gestural non-verbal communication but was unable to find a way to do so.

Work leading on from here Two pieces of work led directly on from this installation. The first was called *List of Works*, which is described next.

5.2.4 List of Works (2017)

Location alongside the MFA show, Fine Art Department, Newcastle University, August 2017.

Theme A list of two hundred words and phrases that denoted confidence and success.

Description A hand-written list of over 200 titles of work: written on ink on two sheets of Basildon Bond watermarked, personal writing paper. White sheets229 mm x 178 mm.

Documentation Memory Stick File: 3. *List of Works*

Intention and Development My intention was to add a personal dimension to the installation *Outstanding Life Changing Sculptures Made by Other People And Me When We Were Talking about Something Else*. I hoped people would identify with the tension between the unassuming appearance of the sculptures and their confident sounding titles. I wanted to direct focus on to pressures to be confident and the prevalence of words espousing confidence, in many areas of life. I intended to take an oblique approach (via a list of titles) rather than use an information text panel to achieve this. The developmental work for this piece took place before the sculptures were installed. However, the piece was only fully realised in response to the sculptural installation and was included in the exhibition, three days after it opened. *List of Works* developed directly from my anxieties about taking part in the exhibition and feeling under pressure to produce a 'confident piece of work'. The Newcastle University website made me worse: the tenor of language being of 'success' 'confidence' 'world class leaders' and 'cutting edge' research. Apparently, my research is of greater value if confident and successful. Yet inside, I was the opposite. This made me question what a confident piece of work means, what does it look like? How do we know that it's confident? It also made me question what confidence is and why it seems so valued? Why do fears, lack of confidence and personal anxieties all appear to be of less worth than being sure of oneself? Why hadn't I been asked to make a timid, hesitant, under-confident piece of work? Numerous websites for increasing personal confidence were discovered, having googled, 'how to become more confident'. One site advised

repeating 'I can be successful if I work at it' to change one's thinking. I kept a note of this pinned to the wall, and repeated the phrase, during the development process. Most websites recommended thinking and speaking confidently, to ultimately *be* confident. I decided to approach the installation *Outstanding Life Changing Sculptures Made by Other People (and me) When We Were Talking about Something Else* as sculptures, that both lacked confidence and required help to change. Perhaps confident titles would make the sculptures confident? I required numerous titles: for each sculpture and every fragment and flake of clay included in the installation. Titles were chosen by entering 'confidence' into an online thesaurus and dictionary and each word that came up, was used as a title. Next, each of these words were re-entered into the thesaurus and dictionary for another search. This technique was repeated by entering key 'positive' words and phrases from the Newcastle University website. In this way, an exhaustive list of words related to confidence was created, which were then used as titles.

Methodology Instinctively, I felt this list needed to be hand-written with black ink. Initially I tried using A4 paper, but the appearance was too office-like. My final choice was letter writing paper. I wrote down a numbered list, of all the positive words and phrases that had been gleaned from the thesaurus search. Occasionally I added a description of one of the sculptures that were on display in the installation (for example white swan). I did this to focus attention onto the link between the titles and sculptures. In addition, having identified the white swan, I presumed the viewer might systematically designate the remaining titles, to the other sculptures in the room. However, there was no direct correlation between them: I had no idea how many sculptures, fragments and flakes of clay, were installed. I used the normal conventions of size of writing paper as the parameters for the size of the piece (229 mm x 178 mm) rather than choosing a larger piece of art paper that would have accommodated the whole list. The list straddled two sheets of paper. It was important that the list was made using the writing paper to hand, rather than sourcing a larger sheet more typical of art show displays. *List of Works* was added to the exhibition three days after I installed the sculptural works. It was fixed with white tac (rather than framed) behind the edge of one of the internal walls, to bear some formal similarities to the sculptures.

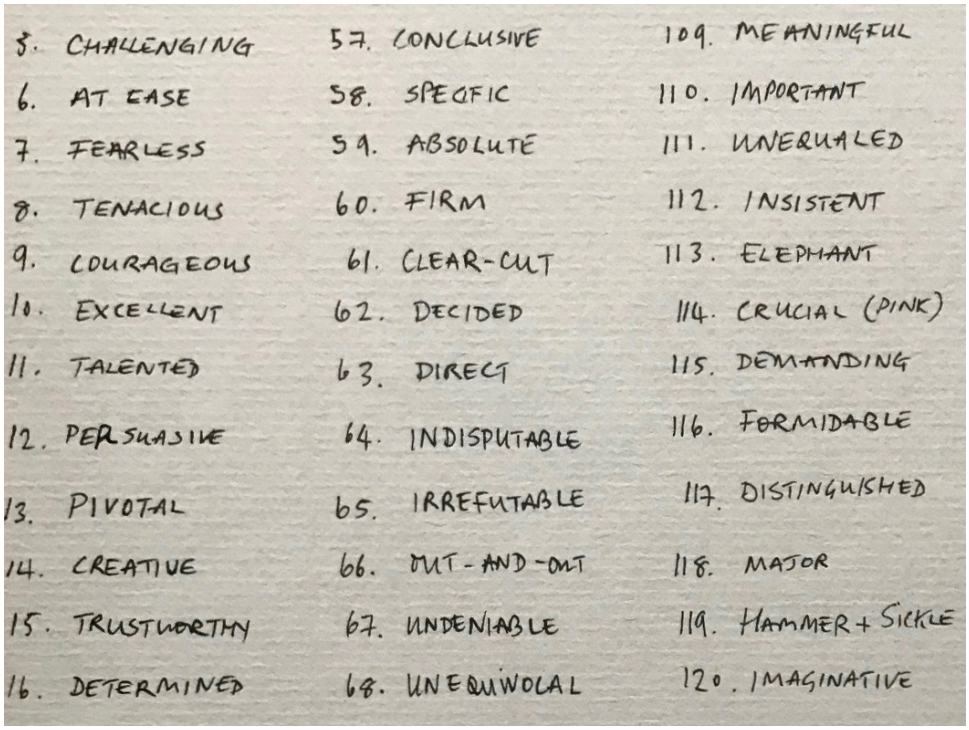

Figure 13. *List of Works* detail: showing examples of positive titles.

Critical Reflection *List of Works* added a dimension to the exhibition and many audience members, did use it as a map, to allocate titles to various of the sculptures. The hand-written list echoed the hand-made qualities of the sculptures and contributed to a sense of the more personal. The tension between the overtly positive titles and the unassuming form of the sculptures was apparent.

It is interesting to reflect on how this piece developed. It started with me feeling under-confident about the sculptural installation. I then responded to the sculptures and projected my lack of confidence about them, onto them. From that point, I approached the sculptures as if they were people, in need of a confidence boost: and went on to make *List of Works*, which reflected issues to do with feelings.

Curiously, when I responded to the sculptures, I gave no consideration whatsoever to non-verbal gestures. This is added confirmation that the sculptures in *Outstanding Life Changing Sculptures Made by Other People (and me) When We Were Talking about Something Else* failed to reflect on the non-verbal gestures in the way that I had intended.

Conclusion In making this piece, I approached objects as if they were people and projected my own feelings onto them. This approach or attitude appears to be a significant part of my working method in some (but not all) of my work.

This piece used written words. Whilst my research has predominantly concentrated on non-verbal communication, language is often in my work. During the delivery of this piece, my focus was on feelings. This suggests that the focus of my interests lies at the intersection of gesture, language and feeling. The hand-written list and use of writing paper added to the sense of the personal.

The sculptures that I responded to during the making of this piece, did not evoke any consideration of gestural non-verbal communication within me. My original intention was that the sculptures would reference non–verbal gestures that occurred during conversations when they were made. In this sense, the sculptures were unsuccessful. The dissonance between the positive titles and the appearance of the sculptures created tension, which in turn hinted at the discrepancy between our inner lives and our outward appearance.

Work leading on from here In this next section, I will discuss the second piece of work *A talk about my work* that came about in response to the *Outstanding Life Changing Sculptures Made by Other People (and me) When We Were Talking about Something Else* installation.

5.2.5 A Talk About My Work (2017)

Location The seminar room, Fine Art Department, Newcastle University, August 2017.

Theme Confidence, insecurities, fears. Crossing social conventions of gallery space.

Description A performance/talk, twenty-minutes duration

Intention and Development With this piece, my first aim was to bring some life into the room: add some form of enjoyable human interaction into the exhibition space. Secondly, I wanted to discuss under-confidence, both personal and general to form a connection with the audience. Thirdly, I wanted to inform the audience of the connection between the non-verbal conversational, gesturing and the sculptures, as well as my ambivalence to the

sculptures. Finally, I intended to see if as a group, we could do something together (gesturing and making sculptures) to 'break the ice' before the audience was offered the opportunity to dance within the exhibition space. My intention was to gradually form a rapport with the audience, before offering them the opportunity to cross the social conventions of the gallery space at the end. I wanted to test if it was possible for the audience and myself to overcome social constraints of a gallery space, with our gestures. Additionally, would this be possible when the environment of the gallery had not been changed to accommodate it?

I decided to use discussion of personal under-confidence, to then bring in issues to do with confidence, in the world. At the time, Trump was threatening North Korea in his tweets and I felt discussion of this as well as personal confidence, would resonate with the audience. I intended several instances of us all 'doing something together' during the talk, with the aim of making it easier for people to take part should they choose too. In order these were: clapping, screaming, warm up gesture exercises, making a sculpture, dancing. Before the opening night, I tried to learn my talk off by heart so that I could present in succinctly. Curiously, it felt instinctively wrong, each time I tried this and after several failed attempts at rehearsal, I decided to follow my instinct and present it an "off the cuff' manner.

Methodology I was very nervous about this performance. I talked using prompts written on small cards, rather than speaking without them, as I didn't feel confident of remembering what to say. I accidentally dropped all these at one point, and they were out of order when I retrieved them which added to my nervousness. In several places my talk fell a bit flat with people silent, still and looking a bit dis-interested. When I introduced the sculptures (as if they were people) to the audience, they were most animated. The audience joined in with the warm up exercises, and more enthusiastically with making sculptures. Only one person danced along with me at the end, mostly the audience looked awkward at this stage. However, a lot of people stayed in the space and continued to make sculptures out of sculpey, whilst I danced in the space, to Abba.

Documentation Audio of talk Memory Stick File:4. *A Talk About My Work*

Critical Refection My overall impression with *A Talk About My Work* is that it was confusing for myself and for the audience. Predominantly the piece brought about an open, atmosphere in the room during which people readily took part in small sculpture making.

However, this was not my main aim. One of my intentions, was that the audience would make a connection between gestures used during conversations when the sculptures were made, and the sculptures on display. In this regard, *A Talk About My Work* was unsuccessful. Whilst making this piece I decided to include talk about confidence, because this was an issue for me, when making the sculptures with other people. During delivery of *A Talk About My Work* my under-confident start felt like a problem however several people have since commented that my visible nervousness was very much in keeping with the topic under discussion, that is, lack of confidence. I am also aware of a tendency in me to make something out of an impromptu situation or encounter: something quick and not very rehearsed. Is this opportunity for an unplanned encounter with whoever happens to be in the audience that day part of my motivation for often doing something live in exhibitions that I've had? As a method of working, it certainly reflects some of day to day general practice, when encounters with patients can be completely different from the next and are often unexpected and impromptu. This led me to consider if my live work is limited precisely because I don't always plan or rehearse? However, I have quite a strong unease for 'slick' productions and have always wanted to avoid that. After the performance, I kept the small hand written prompt cards that I had written for the talk. I place a high value on the lists, detritus, papers, false starts and mistakes from development of a piece of work. And at this stage I was unclear if these were part of my work or not. In previous projects, I sensed the 'detritus' was part of my work, though it has never been exhibited. On occasion, I have felt that the false starts are better than a final piece: particularly with video clips and mistakes filming. Occasionally I have felt these small mistakes or slips of paper are better than a final piece. Reflection on this confirmed to me my appreciation of the small things that reveal how something was made, that reveal what's taken place during the making and the false starts and errors that occur on the way. In this piece, I use gestures to quickly do something together with other people 'to break the ice' and I tried to use it to overcome social restraints.

Conclusion This piece was unsuccessful in linking non-verbal communication with the sculptures that were displayed in the room. I attempted too many different topics, which made the work confusing. Discussing the sculptures as if they were people has potential for a future piece of work. The open atmosphere in the room, meant a lot of people took part in the sculpture making, however this had not been my main aim for the piece.

Frustratingly, neither *A Talk About My Work* nor *Outstanding Life Changing Sculptures Made by Other People (and me) When We Were Talking about Something Else* were successful in focusing attention on to non-verbal gesturing.

Figure 14. Remnants of sculptures made at the end of *Talk about my work.*

Work leading on from here I was determined that my next piece would only have non-verbal communication in it: there would be no words and no attempts to form a rapport with the audience. This happened several months later when I made *Hand Gesture Piece* (2017) which is discussed in the next section.

5.3 Resolved Work

The 'Gestural Works' form the culmination of my PhD research and consists of a body of work focused on abstracted hand and arm gestures. This includes *Hand Gesture Piece* (2017), *Hand Gesture Film* (2018), *The Great Cragside Cover-Up: House*.(2018), *and Brick Wall* (2018). The development and delivery of each project is described followed by analysis and critical reflection. The development of these pieces took place slowly and did not occur in a linear fashion.

The influences from works made early in the PhD research (which are detailed in informal reports in the Appendices) are visible in these final pieces: with different ways of working and technical processes from all stages of the research, combining in these later pieces. My decision to concentrate only on abstracted hand and arm gestures at this stage in the research stemmed from the realisation that my work had failed to adequately focus attention on the physical gestures of inter-personal conversations. During the earlier stages of the PhD research process I experienced a nagging and persistent awareness that whilst my work included gestural elements, these were frequently obscured by other features such as: forming a rapport with the audience, the presence of my body, my personality and the use of humour.

The exploration of gestures enacted in one-to-one conversations had been an initial aim of my PhD. I was therefore keen to refocus on this in order to address what was clearly set out in my initial project proposal. I was made acutely aware of the need to do this, in 2017 when my exhibition *Outstanding Life Changing Sculptures Made by Other People and Me When We Were Talking about Something Else* (2017) and my performance *A Talk About My Work* (2017) both failed to focus the attention of the audience onto the gestural elements within the pieces. As a direct result of my frustration at this, I decided that subsequent work would *only* involve abstracted hand and arms re-enacting gestures from conversations. This was the starting point for *Hand Gesture Piece* and the beginning of the body of work called 'The Gestural Works'. An account and critical reflection of this collection of works follows.

5.3.1 Hand Gesture Piece (2017)

Location Gränsland Teckning exhibition, NoA, Norrtälje, Sweden, 13th -22nd Oct 2017.

Theme Re-enacting hand gestures from other people's conversations

Description A performance piece of 2 hours duration, that presents the live re-enactment of hand gestures sourced from observation of one-to-one conversations.

Introduction I was invited to take part in this group show funded by the Swedish Arts Council. I used a set, made of three large white boards to form a screen eight-foot high and twelve-foot wide. Two arm holes were cut in the middle board at a height of six-feet, just off centre. The whole front side of the set was painted white and was spot-lit. In contrast the back of the set was left unpainted and there was no extra lighting of it. Just before the performance began, I stood on a chair behind the board, poked my arms through the armholes, then held my hands together and waited until the exhibition opened. The performance was un-announced and started when I began to re-enact a continuous sequence of observed hand gestures. I listened to an audio score through headphones to re-enact the gestures.

All the gestures re-enacted in this performance came from one-to-one conversations with other people during meetings in the project *A Point Meant 100*. Some conversations had been filmed. This footage was then reviewed: and through a process of me observing and describing the gestures of others, I created an audio file of gestural descriptions which acted as my score to re-enact the gestures. The set was located near the centre of the barn-like building and faced a settee. The audience could sit or stand to view the performance from the front or walk around the back of the set, and watch me standing on a chair, with my arms poking through the arm-holes in the boards. My original plan had been for the audio score to be audible to the audience, but I changed this decision in response to the audio spill from other pieces in the show that were quite loud.

Development My intention, was to present the re-enacted hand and arm gestures of other people, taken from the footage of the one to one meetings in *A Point Meant 100*, as a performance. The aim was to focus on the hand gestures, not on me. I didn't want the audience to see my body, just my hands and arms gesturing. This was to distance the gestures as much as possible, from their original context (other people's conversations) and

from myself who would re-enact them. I also wanted to avoid speaking with the audience in person, before the performance started and to resist performative behaviours, such as the use of humour during it. In earlier performances I had spoken directly to the audience to 'introduce' the piece to them, just before it started. In reality. the 'introduction' was part of the piece which I used to try and form a connection with them, to facilitate their reception of the piece: and to a degree obscured the content of what I presented. On this occasion I would not do it. In this way I aimed to abstract the gestures I was re-enacting and focus attention onto these gestures, rather than my speaking with the audience. Thus, if people responded to the piece, it would mean they had responded to the abstracted hand gestures, rather than a conversation with me as well.

The project was a direct development from the investigations of A *Point Meant 100* and the public exhibition which arose from It which included *Outstanding Life Changing Sculptures Made by Other People and Me When We Were Talking about Something Else* and the performance *A Talk About My Work* that took place in 2017. These works that are discussed in the first section of this chapter, were also informed by work made prior to the PhD, during my MFA (*Five Speeches* 2011) in which I observed and re-enacted to camera, movements made by prominent public people, giving speeches.

Thematically this project was a continuation of exploration of ways gesture can influence experience of communication. So far, this had been investigated in mainly participatory works involving groups of people enacting a gesture together such as *Synchrocrispicity* 1 (2013), *The Great Forced LOLathon* (2013), *Outstanding Standing Ovation* (2014)and *Hand Cleansing Techniques Number One: how to wash your hands with soap and water* (2014). In these participatory pieces, it was difficult to differentiate the experience of everyone doing something together, from the effect that the gesture (being enacted) had on this experience. This difficulty highlights the embodied nature of gestures: there is always a person behind them. As discussed previously, in the exhibition *Outstanding Life Changing Sculptures Made by Other People (and me) When We Were Talking about Something Else* (2017) I presented over a hundred small hand-made sculptures: made when people chatted one to one. These sculptures were clearly hand-made and bore markings of gestures and finger prints however they didn't really draw attention to the gestures of communication (that had taken place when people met one to one) as I had intended. I was determined that my next art-work would only show hand gestures (from one to one conversations). Only hands and arms

would be visible and there would be no prior discussion with the audience. In this way I hoped attention would be directly on the gestures themselves. This methodology in this project was a continuation of my approach of observing, listing and abstracting aspects of human behaviour (inspired by George Perec's *An Attempt at Exhausting a Place in Paris*) that I had done in my MFA, and in *I'm On The Train: A year's worth of over-heard mobile phone calls*.2 (2014).

Methodology

Audio Script The method that I used to deliver the performative element of this piece was identical to that used in *Final Preparations* 2012 (Appendix A). In this method, I observed and described movements to make an audio file commentary, that I listened to on my mobile phone. The audio file acted as a set of instructions for me to re-enact the movements described. In *Hand Gesture Piece*, the audio file was made by observing video clips from the one- to-one meetings in *A Point Meant 100* and making a commentary of the gestures. I watched the clips in slow motion at times, to aid accuracy. It was difficult to fully describe complex gestures that involved movement of both upper and lower arms in relation to movements of fingers and thumbs, that occurred at the same time. Inevitably some gestural elements were 'lost in translation' during this process of transcribing visual information. I chose the first few minutes of each video clip of the one-to-one meetings because these included footage of us talking unguardedly before our "meeting" started in addition to footage of us talking with each other when we were fully aware of being filmed.

The Set I used the wooden boards as a screen to stand behind to keep my body and face out of view: to remove the gestures from their original context (other peoples' conversations) and from myself (when I re-enacted them). The boards were painted white, to mimic a white cube space, and because it was much easier to see my arms against a white background.[459] The arm holes in the boards were higher than normal at approximately six feet high: to keep the focus on the gestures, rather than the idea of a person standing behind the board. Keeping the sides of the boards open and allowing the audience to walk around the set and watch me standing with my arms through the arm-holes, was a deliberate decision: to keep the process simple and visible, with no embellishment or disguise. This was an important element in this piece. Part of my working process is to put

[459] I was aware that white boards referenced medical contexts, though this was not the main intention.

aspects of human communication into different contexts: but making this process obvious. Changing the context is the first step and if it works aesthetically, I don't make further changes. If I feel that the piece is requires more then I may experiment further with different aspects of the setting: but where possible I keep the set as simple and as straightforward as possible.

Figure 15. Rear view of set of *Hand Gesture Piece* which was open to view.

Performance This piece was un-announced with no information given to the audience about its duration. It was to function in an incidental way with people catching sight of my gesturing out of the corner of their eye, rather than being encouraged to arrive at a set time and sit in front of me in rows of chairs. For me this connects with the use of our peripheral vision, which forms an important part of our perceptions of gesture. I wanted to resist a temporal structure of a piece with a beginning middle and an end: and to remove any theatre-like anticipation. In addition, I instinctively felt that a quieter understated approach

was in keeping with the nature of the gestures that I was re-enacting, ones that by and large occur without much notice. If the audience was interested, this would indicate a response to the gestures, not a response to written information about the piece. In addition, I wanted the audience to feel free to leave when they wanted and choose for themselves how long to stay. The duration of the piece was an hour, but on the night, I performed for two hours. I began by standing on a stool behind the set, I placed my arms through the arm-holes in the board and stood and waited for the exhibition to open. The audio file (with the script of gestures) was on my mobile phone in my back pocket. When the show opened, an assistant placed head phones in my ears, attached the headphones to my mobile phone and switched on the audio. I then began re-enacting the hand and arm movements described on the audio file. I couldn't see through the set: there was no peep hole see the audience.

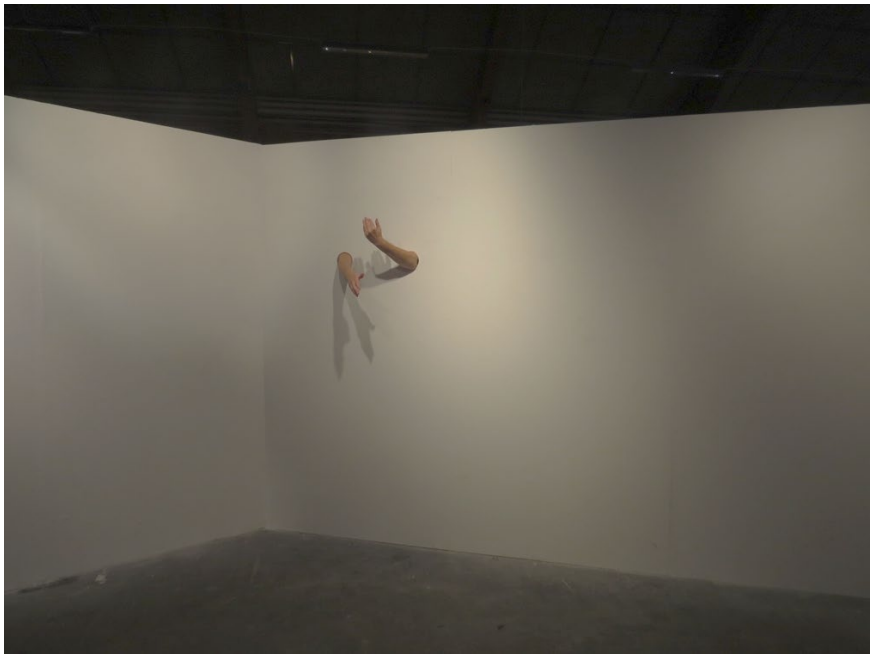

Figure 16. *Hand Gesture Piece* viewed from the front. Photo H Edling.

Projection Following the live event on the opening night, I repeated this piece the next day as a performance to camera initially for the purpose of documentation. This footage was then edited into a film that was projected in the space for the remainder of the exhibition. This decision was made in conjunction with the curator Helen Edling. I sensed she wanted evidence of the event, after the opening night. For myself I was unclear whether *Hand*

Gesture Piece worked more effectively as a live event or as a film. I decided that showing a film might help me answer this and decided to project the film on to the boards used for the performance, adjacent to the armholes I had poked my arms through. This projection was installed after I left Sweden. Reviewing documentary footage of the performance I was aware that film would enable me to abstract hand gestures even more than a live performance.

Documentation Digital images and film in memory stick File 6 *Hand Gesture Piece*

Critical Reflection With regard to the core themes of this research, gesture and empathy, this project was extremely informative. Overwhelming *Hand Gesture Piece* confirmed the responsive, intersubjective ephemeral nature of gestures; how people respond and react to them; how gestures affect people's behaviour and actions;[460] and affect the feel of a space. It is evident, that gestures pass between people in a continuous forward and back, and out to the side way and are constantly being recycled or reformed as noted by Schneider.[461] In addition, gestures without dialogue, simultaneously appear familiar yet unknown, and their interpretation usually relies hugely on knowledge of the content and context of the conversation, from where they are formed. This project also showed that abstracted hand gestures initiated a very responsive connection with the audience: despite having avoided any verbal encouragement of this. In addition, the project refocussed attention onto the importance of gesture in communicating empathy, particularly the significance of touch. This has opened new ways of thinking about empathy: how it may be possible to convey empathy and compassion within one action: perhaps, explaining how overlap between these two forms of communication may occur. Next, I will reflect on each component of this project in detail.

<u>The Set</u> The board worked well as a device to focus attention onto the arm gestures. I liked the simplicity of this method. When viewed from the front, the audience could only see my hands and arms as my head, body and legs were hidden from view. The white surface meant that the shadows of my arms had a strong visual presence, however this was not one that I had intended, and was a result of spot-lighting being readily available. On reflection,

[460] McNeill, "Speech-Gesture Mimicry in Performance: An Actor-Audience, Author-Actor, Audience-Actor Triangle."
[461] Schneider, "In Our Hands: An Ethics of Gestural Response-Ability Rebecca Schneider in Conversation with Lucia Ruprecht.", 114.

keeping the back of the screen open to the audience (who could walk round and see me standing with my arms through the board gesturing) removed some attention away from the gestures and onto the physicality of the set and myself. The photos of me, taken from the side and the back, during the performance are slightly reminiscent of seaside pier boards used for photo poses. These connotations were not ones that I had intended.

Not trying to form rapport When presenting live art-pieces earlier, during this creative-practice research, I had always intentionally spent a few minutes nominally 'introducing' the piece to the audience, first. In fact, this was already a part of the performance and I used this time trying to engage the audience and start to form a connection with them. My expectation was, that this would enhance their engagement with, and experience of, the piece: I usually thanked people for coming, explained how long the piece would take, what might happen, and shared some of my thinking behind the work. Invariably I kept this light hearted. However, one consequence of facilitating the interface between the art, the audience and myself in this way, has been to increase attention on me and my personality.

As a result, I decided I would not introduce *Hand Gesture Piece* to the audience, before it began. Nor would I 'play to the crowd' with any friendly or 'amusing' gestures such as high fives, thumbs up or 'V's signs, once the performance started. During the delivery, I had quite a strong impulse to wave at the audience when I first put my arms through the holes, however I stuck rigidly to the audio script, and only re-enacted the gestures it described: all observed from one to one, conversations. The consequence of resisting this temptation to embellish the script with an overtly 'witty' gesture was firstly, that I stayed true to those gestures that I had observed in the conversations. And secondly that I wasn't 'playing for a laugh' and intentionally trying to embroider the piece in any way. In addition, by not speaking directly to the audience before the piece began, I removed any intention on my part to influence their reception of the work, before it started. As a result, the piece was predominantly about the gestures enacted and the response of the audience to them, and less about my relationship with the audience. This was exactly the result I had hoped for. This experience gave me have a greater awareness that whilst speaking with an audience (in real time) *can* be of benefit to a piece, it might not always be helpful as it can deflect attention from other aspects of the work. It also made me more aware of the distinction between forming a rapport (a harmonious relationship) and empathy (one of understanding).

Information for the audience I didn't give the audience any information about the duration of *Hand Gesture Piece* beforehand because I was unsure how long I would be able to perform. In retrospect, I felt this was a mistake as there were three other live events taking place and more information would have helped the audience choose where to be at a given time.

The delivery This section details the experience of delivering *Hand Gesture Piece*. Reflections on the key themes of this Phd research, making art using empathy and ways that gesture affects experience of communication, are discussed throughout.

On several occasions during the performance people touched my hands whilst I was re-enacting the gestures from behind the screen. I was very surprised this happened, particularly as I had made no attempt (before the piece started) to encourage it. When first touched, I quickly had to decide to stick with my original decision not to shake hands or 'play to the crowd' at all. I acknowledged the person's presence by very lightly touching their hand in return, but I rigidly persisted with re-enacting the audio score of gestures as planned. and purposely didn't try to shake hands, 'high five' or directly interact. I thought of hands unexpectedly touching in public when it warrants a small apology and of being 'allowed' to touch if shaking hands.

With some touches, I couldn't tell if it was an adult or child. I wondered if one person was a child being held up by an adult and so decided it was 'nicer' to acknowledge them with a tiny touch from me, rather than ignore them. Apart from this very minimal acknowledgement, I stuck with my original decision not to interact. One person let their head touch my hands, so my fingers stroked their hair as I re-enacted the gestures on the audio. Their hair was extremely fine, and I again assumed it was a child being held up by an adult. It reminded me of the intensity of feeling, of stroking my own children's hair. After the performance, I discovered it had been an adult woman standing next to my hands, which surprised me because I would not choose to do this if I had been in the audience watching.

One person held onto my hand briefly: their hand felt warm, soft and dry. I sensed they wanted to hold so I let it happen and kept gesturing with my other hand. It made me think of that desire for contact. To not be alone. Of a child holding an adult's hand. And situations of care: the woman who was dying, did she ask to hold my hand, or did she offer hers to me? If someone proffers their hand to shake, a response needs to be made. A

decision is taken. One person's gestures affect the response of someone else: gestures move between people and alter how they are in a space as Schneider so clearly articulated.[462] I wondered if the person holding my hand would have done so if we had been visible face to face? I suspect It would have been more awkward, as socially we don't hold hands with strangers. Shaking someone's hand one learns something of each other: strength of grasp, temperature of hands, roughness of skin, dry or sweaty palms.

Figure 17. Unexpected interaction during *Hand Gesture Piece*. Photo H Edling.

This experience of people touching my hands during the delivery of this piece made me reflect on the social norms that affect our interactions: particularly the responsive nature of gesture and speech. For example, responding to the question 'Hi How are you?' verbally and gesturally. I also considered the responsive nature of our gestures if someone offers a hand to shake; which, if accepted leads to touching another person within a social context. I also

[462] Ibid.

considered gestural responses such as the instinct to touch to comfort or communicate presence to another, physically. That intensity of touch of a new-born baby and the increasing significance of touch in situations of care when people are ill. Even something as small as taking someone's pulse or touching their shoulder lightly if undergoing a procedure. Tiny points of contact. The potential intensity of these and the sometimes, immense absence and lack, if missing.

The process of standing on a chair behind the board, with my hands stuck through arm-holes and gesturing for an hour was quite tiring. I had to keep still to hold my place on the chair. Whilst I couldn't hear the detail of people's conversations (due to the audio in my earphones) I was aware of in the space but isolated others and from social interactions. My shoulders and arms ached a bit and reminded me of standing still in operating theatres doing surgery: the white boards and spot lights adding to medical references.[463]

As mentioned earlier, I decided from the start in *Hand Gesture Piece*, to avoid direct verbal (and by implication, gestural) interaction with the audience during it. The staging of this work also made this a practical reality for me, because I couldn't see or hear the audience though the wooden boards and couldn't tell if anyone was watching. Being unable to see or hear the audience meant I could only respond directly *to* them if they touched my hand first. The piece would have changed enormously if there had been a tiny 'peek-hole' in the wooden board, because it would have allowed me to respond directly to the audience with my gesturing. This restriction helped to prevent me 'playing to the crowd' and trying to directly influence my interaction with them. It also meant that the initiative to communicate directly with me, through touch was with them, not with me. Watching me gesturing, some people responded by touching my hands or by gesturing next to me. This brings into consideration the responsive nature of gestures and the subconscious tendency for mimicry of gestures, particularly if people have an affinity for each other.

The fact that people touched my hands and gestured adjacent to me, suggests that the overall set-up enabled direct connection to occur between the audience and myself. Perhaps it was the wooden set that prevented direct face to face contact, which made it possible for people to touch my hand; akin to a sharing within a confessional space next to a priest or undressing behind a drawn curtain, in a GP surgery, where anonymity is

[463] And arms sticking out from a solid plaster cast.

guaranteed. In addition, the onus was on the audience to touch if they chose to, not the other way around and me imposing on them. Consideration must also be given to the universal nature of gestures being enacted as well, and the tone of these: they were from observed conversations, not from a fight.

The visual restriction, plus my intention from the outset *not* to try and 'form a connection' with the audience in real-time during the piece, meant that when a connection did occur, it had developed naturally, from the audience's volition, not mine. As a result, *Hand Gesture Piece* was less about me facilitating a 'connection' with the audience: and predominantly a study of silent re-enacted hand gestures and their effect on an audience; and the relationships that occurred between my hands and different members of the audience.

This experience made me reflect on the way we communicate face to face: visually, verbally and with touch. My own capacity to interact depends predominantly on sight and hearing. In the absence of any dialogue we pay more attention to a person's gestures. In the absence of sight, we pay more attention to touch. When people are very ill, touch becomes a much more significant aspect of communication.

During the performance, I wondered how my gestures appeared to the audience, and whether anyone understood or recognised them. Conversely I didn't know what the gestures that I was enacting were expressing; as they were all abstracted, out of context and separated from their owners and original conversations. Whilst I knew I was communicating with the audience I wasn't clear what was being communicated. I was reminded of Agamben's description of gestures representing the condition of 'being-in-language itself.'[464]

The audio instructions, of gestures lasted an hour. It was clear to me how little we know hand-gestures in that many of the gestures, all of which were observed from other people, were unfamiliar to me. When that audio ended, I decided to continue to re-enact movements for longer and use the opportunity to experiment with making gestures without a script. The ones I did included: re-enacting the movements that I had already made in the previous hour, fiddling with my fingers and thumbs as if waiting and making gestures I might use when greeting a patient, taking someone's pulse, temperature or blood pressure during a GP consultation. I varied the speed of these more experimental gestures, e.g. making

[464] Agamben 2007. Notes on Gesture. In *Infancy and history: On the destruction of experience* (trans: Hero, Liz). London: Verso, 155

some of the medical movements in slow motion. I did this for another hour which was a long time keeping relatively still and made me aware how much movement (or its lack) alters how we feel. I was surprised to reflect on medical situations to the extent that I did. After the performance, I learnt that an elderly man with dementia, had stood in front of my hands for a considerable length of time conversing with me. I hadn't been aware of his presence at all during the performance. In addition, several teenagers had 'performed' spontaneously in front of the white board adjacent to my gesturing hands without me having been aware of them. The person who had held my hand for longer was a young woman, who I spoke to afterwards.

The gestures that I re-enacted in *Hand Gesture Piece* had all been observed and copied from filmed one to one, conversations I'd had with other people. I had taken an empathetic approach in my communication during these conversations: trying to understand their feelings and perspectives. I didn't re-enact any of my own gestures from these original conversations: only those of the other people involved. It is possible that aspects of empathic communication may have been manifest in the observed gestures that I copied: as in several of these filmed conversations our gestures mimicked each other.

When planning this *Hand Gesture Piece,* I tried to imagine the perspective and feelings of an imagined audience, and of people I know. I also sought the opinions of other people in the group show during the installation. I opted to make it open, without a definite start or end time, for people to come and go as they wished. I also made sure extra seating was available near it. During the delivery of this piece, my empathy or understanding of the audience predominantly came through touch and sight. When people approached me from the front and touched my hands, they appeared inquisitive and wanting to communicate with me. I very much sensed that the person who held my hand for longer than the other people, both wanted to and felt comfortable to; her hand felt relaxed. Looking at the video footage of this incident afterwards, she is smiling holding my hand with one hand, and her phone in the other. Lots of people came around the back of the set to look at me with my hands stuck through the boards, gesturing. Whilst I could see them, I didn't interact much as I was focussed on listening to the audio and enacting the gestures: however, they mainly appeared interested.

I had anticipated *Hand Gesture Piece* as being purely visual, but It ended up having a dimension to it, that I had not expected: with some people responding with touch and gesturing. Reviewing footage of the performance afterwards, I saw gestures in a different light. Removed from the context of their conversations, gestures take on a different significance with people looking more closely at their shapes, trying to recognise or read them. This resonates with my experience in medicine when in situations with fewer words spoken: observing posture and gesture becomes a vital means of trying to understand someone. Without accompanying words, the seemingly-familiar, ephemeral and half-knowable nature of gestures becomes apparent; reinforcing Argle's comment that it is difficult to discern which movements are intended to communicate.[465] Seeing the hand gestures without any accompanying dialogue it was evident how easy it may be to over-look gestures in the normal course of conversations, when speaking and listening to others. Some-how when speaking, hand-gestures don't take centre stage, but are nevertheless present, evident within the periphery of our vision and affecting our interpretation of the words spoken.

The role of touch in empathy was very evident to me during this piece. This includes the very subtle role of touch in understanding another person: for example, in social situations like a hand-shake where touch is allowed, we learn something of that person, through the temperature, feel, tone and movements of their hand. It also includes the role of touch when trying to communicate one's understanding of another person, back to them. For example, a slight squeeze of a child's hand if they are frightened walking past someone. This squeeze comforts and reassures, but it also lets them know that you realise they are frightened at that moment. This touch, which conveys both comfort and empathy at the same time reminds me of holding the hand of a woman who was so terribly burned. I was trying to comfort. And I was showing her I could tell she was terrified. At least that is what I thought I was doing.

Evidence of empathy through actions (and/or speech) is present (and absent) in hospitals where, in my experience little things can make a big difference. By drawing a curtain fully shut when a patient on a ward is undressing, it shows you understand they may value privacy from patients and staff. It also shows that you care. It appears that to convey

[465] Argyle *Bodily Communication*, 3-4.

empathy may sometimes also convey caring at the same time. This is a subtle shift from my earlier view of empathy at the start of this research project. My understanding of empathy had always been that it helps our understanding of another person: which might lead to compassionate behaviour but may not. I have always believed that compassion comes from a different place within. Now however it seems that communicating one's understanding of another person's situation to them and caring for them, might sometimes occur simultaneously within the same action. However, as with any type of communication this depends on how one's actions are perceived and interpreted. Apparently compassionate care can be completely misguided (and not actually caring) if situations are misjudged. Or actions may be misconstrued. For example, having the hospital curtain drawn shut could be interpreted as 'don't let anyone see you, you'll scare them' rather than concern for privacy. This difficulty of interpreting actions relates closely to the difficulty of knowing what gestures mean and of the meaning of any interpersonal communication for example spoken and written words. Often the meaning lies between words and relies on noting what has not been said.

Dispensing with a verbal introduction to *Hand Gesture Piece* didn't diminish the piece but enhanced it. People responded to the hand-gestures displayed and a connection formed between us. These reflections have helped me clarify some of the subtle nuances that point to differences in my work, some of which is fundamentally about a responsive relationship with the audience, and other work that is not seeking this.

Site specific nature of *Hand Gesture Piece* Some decisions about the final form of *Hand Gesture Piece* were made in direct response to the location and the other art-work in the exhibition. *Hand Gesture Piece* was much quieter than some other art-works being exhibited. Instinctively I felt *Hand Gesture Piece* would work as an effective counterpoint to the audio loudness of these pieces: by being in the background during the evening and announced. In addition, I opted to listen to my audio script through headphones, rather than having it audible to the audience. Practically the other louder, pieces would have obscured my audio script had I tried to play it in public. This decision relates to one of the themes that emerged as the Phd project progressed namely, how the undemonstrative may reveal something of significance. It also links to my observations of how people respond to each other face to face. In conversations there are phases when one person talks and gestures, whilst the other person is quieter and listens and does not gesture much. This

process then alternates when the second person speaks. In the context of this show, I felt that *Hand Gesture Piece* was the quieter side of any 'conversation' with the other works. Had I presented *Hand Gesture Piece* as a solo show my staging of it would have differed, because it would have been the only voice on display, and there would be no requirement for it to respond to other works. One interesting question is would I ever consider making one of my pieces louder in relation to someone else's work?

Conclusions The key learning points from *Hand Gesture Piece* related to the themes of gesture and empathy in this Phd research, are described next.

The responsive, and relational, nature of gestures was made very evident in *Hand Gesture Piece*. The audience responded to the hand gestures in unexpected ways, using touch, mimicry and performances of their own gesturing adjacent to me. This response was to the visual and tactile nature of the gestures presented, as well as my presence behind the set, which was only visible, walking around the back. The performance *Hand Gesture Piece* showed the very familiar, seemingly unknowable, ephemeral nature of gestures and the significance of tiny understated, often un-noticed gestures. It also confirmed, how understanding of gesture is so closely linked to spoken language and knowledge of the content and context of conversations. In addition, *Hand Gesture Piece* made evident the significant place of touch in communication of empathy in situations where fewer words are spoken.

The form of Hand Gesture Piece created a way of showing abstracted hand gestures that resulted in much greater distance between the gestures and myself. This distance was achieved by my avoidance of speaking directly to the audience before the piece began; and by sticking my hands through holes in a board, so my body was obscured from view. Distance was also achieved by not being able to see the audience during the performance and refraining from 'playing to the crowd' during it. As a direct result of these decisions, the abstracted re-enacted hand gestures became central to the art-piece. As a result of these findings I decided that my body would be completely hidden from view in my next art-work. The audience would not be allowed any access behind the set: to enable even greater distance between the gestures and myself. By doing so I hoped that gestures would become even more central to the investigation.

Work following on from here I experimented with the set in the gallery space when the exhibition was closed. A variety of people came to gesture or make something from clay, within the set. Their response was enthusiastic. I have clips of people making 'two- minute' sculptures whilst their arms are stuck through the arm holes, and they can't see what they are doing. This was a very easy way of getting an audience to join in and gesture and/ or a make a clay sculpture: it was entertaining to watch particularly when each person's time slot was so brief. However, it seemed that this process quickly became more about the relationship between the maker and the audience (trying to make the audience laugh) and the slightly competitive nature of people 'having a go' in turn. Focus on hand gestures was reduced by the opportunity to make something. The link between the gestures of the person who made the sculpture, and the clay sculpture itself, appeared to be very tentative. Reflecting on this, referred directly back to the sculptures made during the *A Point Meant 100* meetings when we had chatted face to face, whilst making. It confirmed to me that the sculptures from the *A Point Meant 100* meetings did not particularly show or highlight the gestural nature of those conversations. Rather, those sculptures functioned as a device to enhance rapport and at times to relax and divert attention from the topic of conversation. This process of reflection after *Hand Gesture Piece* helped me clarify why the earlier *A Point Meant 100* had failed in its attempts to make gestures central to it.

This in turn fuelled my decision to continue working with only hand gestures (not my face, body or voice) and to find a way of abstracting hand gestures even more. I decided to do this using film instead of performance: so that no one could see my body at all and to remove my live presence altogether. This process is discussed in the next project. When I returned to the UK I decided to develop *Hand Gesture Piece* and abstract the hand gestures portrayed, to an even greater extent, and pursue this with film, instead of performance, to remove the live-ness. This process is described next.

5.3.2 Hand Gesture Film (2018)

Theme Re-enacting hand gestures from other people's conversations.

Description Film of re-enacted hand gestures abstracted from one to one, conversations.

Documentation Digital footage in memory stick File 7 *Hand Gesture Film.*

Figure 18. Screenshot of *Hand Gesture Film* 2018.

Intention and Development *Hand Gesture Film* (2018) developed directly from the live performance *Hand Gesture Piece* (2017). In this new film, my intention was to abstract hand gestures even further, so that they appeared removed from a body and thus became the central focus of attention. I decided to film my hands in a studio setting, re-enacting a portion of the same gestural script that I had used in *Hand Gesture Piece* (2017).

A set was constructed in my studio, consisting of a vertical 8"x 6" piece of plywood with two armholes cut through. The arm holes were cut at a height of 6". The set was painted white to mimic both a white cube and a clinical setting and to mimic the set used in *Hand Gesture Piece* (2017). Standing on a stool behind the board, I put my arms through the arm-holes. When viewed from the front only my arms and hands were visible, as the rest of my body was hidden. Listening through headphones, to the audio recording of descriptions of people's gestures, which acted as my script, I then re-enacted the gestures, which were filmed. My intention was that the film would be silent: to present the gestures in an

unembellished way, forcing the viewer to respond to the visual nature of the gestures, rather than any auditory dimension as well.

I decided to film the gestures without any use of a spot-light (as had been done in the earlier *Hand Gesture Piece* 2017) to assess whether shadows were integral to this piece or not. My gesturing hands were filmed from the front with a static camera and a hand-held camera. In addition, to try to get a more abstracted view of the gestures, they were filmed again from below using a static camera placed on the floor. The length of the re-enactment of gestures filmed was 20 minutes. All footage from the different camera angles was reviewed in detail. The most unfamiliar imagery was that shot from below using the static camera placed on the floor. This produced images of arms and hands which appeared abstracted from the human body. The footage shot from the front produced a more familiar view of arms and hands, in keeping with what we see of other people's arms, when talking face to face.

Several attempts were made to edit the footage of the gestures: using a split screen view to combine footage from the front, with footage from below, and by selecting gestures according to appearance. However, all these edits appeared to over complicate the imagery obtained. Eventually, a prolonged continuous sequence of hand and arm gestures from the static floor camera was selected for the film. This sequence of film presented the gestures in the most abstracted way. Shorter sections of this sequence were then selected to make a four- minute film and as well as a twenty- minute film of these gestures.

Critical Reflection *Hand Gesture Film* (2018) resulted in much greater distancing of the gestures (from a person) than the live performance of *Hand Gesture Piece* (2017). This enhanced abstraction of gestures in *Hand Gesture Film* (2018) had been my intention from the outset. It came about through the combination of shooting the gestures from an unusual inferior view, using an impersonal set, and by using film, not live performance. The white set which included a fluorescent ceiling light that was partially in view, provided an ambiguous setting for the hand gestures which hinted at the clinical. And use of film meant that all presence of a live person was completely removed. As a direct result of these decisions the gestures in *Hand Gesture Film* (2018) came to the fore in this piece, and features of gestures that may not normally be seen or recognised, came into view.

Seen from an unfamiliar inferior angle, the hand gestures at times took on an unexpected almost mechanical appearance, with syncopated movements suggesting automated factory

machinery or angle poise lamps: they appeared more remote, less personal, no touch. At other times the hand movements were fluid and almost familiar. Knowing that all the gestures in *Hand Gesture Film* (2018) were meticulously observed and copied from real conversations, without any embellishment made me consider how unusual their shapes were, viewed in this way: and what unknown effect they may have on our subconscious understanding of each other. It made me wonder how the hand gestures of adults in conversation, appear to young children looking up at them?

The 'seen-from-below' views of gesturing hands, in *Hand Gesture Film* (2018) had echoes of the elbows and hands and queasy moving ceiling lights, being wheeled on a hospital trolley. The vulnerability of a child's-eye view of arms above, somehow resonating with the unusual views afforded by vulnerability within medical settings, dependent on others. The triangle formed by a flexed arm gently cradling a baby and the relief of the triangle of arm pushing a trolley to A+E. The arm trembling, shaking its way out from the bed towards me and my hand reaching forward, holding.

Soon after making *Hand Gesture Film* (2018) I consulted several people to compare the film with a live performance of me re-enacting identical gestures with the same set and location. Everyone involved, commented that the film showed hand gestures in a more abstracted way than the live performance. The film drew people to the actual gestures, whilst the performance directed them to the person (me) behind the screen enacting gestures. Some people preferred the performance precisely because a person was there. 'Why on earth would I want to see gestures in a film? I want to respond to the person making them' was a remark from one observer who preferred the performance. This comment endorsed my own view that *Hand Gesture Film* (2018) enabled a fuller abstraction of hand-gestures than the performance. Even if a person isn't fully visible in a performance, their presence always brings an inescapable liveness to the room.

This resonates with my preference when shopping of wanting to see a real person, face to face. I avoid self-service 'check-ins' as I prefer contact with real people at the check-out. When on the other side of the world, I appreciate the chance to communicate via skype, but I don't want to see my doctor this way at all. Whilst screens can and do connect people, they are also another layer, an interface: subtleties of tone and nuance in gestural and verbal communication are lost. Touch is absent. Norms of interpersonal communication are

changing rapidly and increasingly interactions are mediated via phones, online platforms and screens. Medical care via mobile phone apps such as *GP at Hand* are promoted by private health care providers.[466] These shifts in interpersonal interaction will mean developing new ways of interpreting gestural and verbal communication and communicating with empathy, through the reduced field of a screen, rather than in person.

The only sound I have considered adding to *Hand Gesture Film* (2018) is that of conversational utterances such as ums and ers. So far, I have continued to hesitate over this, and I still have not added any sound, mainly because I want to keep as open a reading of the gestures as possible (and avoid any obviously male or female voice).

Conclusion *Hand Gesture Film* (2018) successfully abstracted hand gestures from the person gesturing and gives a unique perspective of conversational gestural forms and movements. By filming from below it allows a view of communicative gestures that is rarely seen: when mostly for adults, hand gestures in conversations, are viewed on a horizontal plane. But what of the view of small children? Is it possible we *have* seen gestures this way before and they evoke something of distant conversations? Do they echo with gestures from ages and ages ago? In *Hand Gesture Film* once removed from their original context, the gestures fluidly shift and morph, between different registers of unusual, seemingly emphatic forms, to those that are somehow familiar, then less recognisable and almost imperceptible. They remind us how difficult it is to know the meaning or intent behind them. They suggest the un-knowable or unknown aspects of gestures. The difficulty of ever really knowing what they mean, or how they affect us. The successful abstraction of gestures from a person in *Hand Gesture Film* (2018) happened because of the decisions to film instead of using live performance, have a set which completely hid the body, and by shooting the film from below to use an unusual view of the hands.

Work leading on from here *Hand Gesture Film* (2018) influenced the development of several different pieces of work, all of which involved placing abstracted hand gestures into the architecture of different contexts. They stemmed from a desire to acknowledge and bring in the human to these varied settings. Rather than just a focus on the form of gestures, these pieces reflect on the influence and meaning of gesture according to context.

[466] Zoe Kleinman, "Gp at Hand's Smartphone Doctor Ads Ruled Misleading," in *BBC News* (BBC website 2018).

The four pieces are *The Great Cragside Cover-Up:Gestures* (2018), *Brick Wall* (2018), *Bannister* (2018) and *Sculptural Silence* (2019) which are discussed next.

5.3.3 The Great Cragside Cover-Up: Gestures (2018)

Location Cragside House, Northumberland**,** 6th June - 7th November 2018.

Theme Boredom, frustration, trying to get someone to listen.

Description The five-minute looped film shows three adjacent pairs of hands gesturing from the servant tower of Cragside. The audio is of ambient birdsong and sounds recorded during filming of the gestures. This piece was a site-specific response to Cragside House in Northumberland and formed part of the group *Women of Power* exhibition by the National Trust and Newcastle University.

Documentation Digital film in Memory Stick File 8 *The Great Cragside Cover Up: Gestures*

Intention and development This film was made for the *Women of Power* exhibition held at Cragside, Northumberland. The brief asked for a response to the centenary of votes for women, in relation to Cragside. My intention from the start was to make a site-specific piece. I visited the site on numerous occasions. From these visits, it was clear there was a vast amount of accessible history through photographs, paintings and sculptures: of the men at Cragside, yet very little about the many women who had lived and worked there. The further down the social scale, the less likely it was that any women were acknowledged, either in written documents, photographs or paintings. My intention was to hint at fragments of conversations and gestures of individual female servants who had worked there and to reference the silent voice of the house for women. I wanted to do this in an understated way, using abstracted hand gestures. I did not want to make a specially created set to abstract the hand gestures but wanted to use the architecture of Cragside to achieve this.

With no films available and only photographs of formal shots of higher status women I had no source of their gestures to copy. Instead I tried to imagine and understand how they may have felt, talked and gestured.

I searched Cragside for a suitable location and eventually decided on the servant's tower for filming. This location was specific for the women I was trying to reference, and it included

the view across the grounds, that servants had, morning and night. I imagined how some of them felt when they finally went to their quarters late at night: what said out of earshot of their employers. The wall surrounding the top of the tower had three parapets that I decided to use as a 'set' from which I would enact hand and arm gestures: with only my hands and arms being visible. Looking out from the tower, I imagined three scenarios for the servants: first, just chatting with each other, second, being bored stuck at Cragside and finally being absolutely frustrated that as a woman they had no voice, and no one ever responded.

Three different sets of my different hand gestures were filmed: one at each of the three adjacent parapet locations. It was difficult to do this because I had to kneel and bend forwards as low as possible with my hands raised above my head, to successfully film only my gesticulating hands (and avoid my head or body being in shot). It took a lot of re-takes to achieve three sets of abstracted gestures in this way.

The first set of gestures were re-enacted ones taken from observed present day conversations that I had used earlier in *Hand Gesture Film* (2018). In the second set I imagined a servant stuck there, very bored and a long way from home. In the final set of gestures, I imagined being a woman stuck there, with no voice, desperately trying to attract the attention of an imagined person somewhere in the grounds of Cragside. In this final set I tried to gesticulate as much as possible from the servants' tower to attract someone's attention, imagining myself voiceless. I felt extremely angry and frustrated ~~inside~~ as I vigorously flapped and waved my arms around trying to do this. How do you get heard if people are a long way off and you don't have a voice? The gestures I used were completely ineffective and there was such a limited range of what my arms could do trying to communicate to people far away, in vain. My arms hit against the walls of the parapet when I was doing this and were very sore the next day. This experience of feeling angry as a direct result of making angry gestures confirmed to me ways that gesture affects our emotions and confers embodied knowledge on us.

The final film consisted of these three, different sets of hand gestures screened side by side within the adjacent parapet locations. The audio of birdsong in this film, recorded during filming also referenced the location of Cragside as the gardens are a habitat for many birds. The peaceful sound of the location helped create dissonance with some of the more frantic

imagery of gestures in the film. This relates to the dissonance that is sometimes obvious when communicating with people: when there may be a miss-match or non-verbal leakage, between the words spoken and gestures seen.

Figure 19. Screenshot of three pairs of hands re-enacting different types of gestures.

Methodology This film was exhibited in the billiard room at Cragside House. This male dominated room was allocated, no others were possible. My overwhelming inclination was to project this film onto paper rather than using a tv style flat, hard screen. The nature of a thin paper screen that moves easily in drafts of air was in keeping with the tenuous nature of the collective female voice in the house. In addition, the tangibly fragile screen resonates with personal vulnerabilities often associated with life as a female servant. I chose the fireplace to screen the film because the servants brought coal to the fires each day, and the chimney itself led directly up to the servant quarters. I wanted to back-project the film with the projector in the unlit fire-basket and the fire-guard used as the screen for the film. Doing this, meant visitors could walk freely past the fireplace with no risk of anyone walking through the path of a front-projected film. Also, by containing the film within the fireplace, people could sit in the nearby armchairs to view it. With the projector in the fire basket, tissue paper was then secured to the fire-guard, to form a screen. The tissue paper was thin enough to ensure a clear image of the projected film. In addition, the criss-crossed metal fire guard projected hatched shadows across the image of the film, on the screen. These

shadows added an additional imprisoned or trapped dimension, to the gesturing hands of the film.

Critical Reflection The developments in *The Great Cragside Cover-Up: Gestures* (2018) related to the PhD themes of gesture and empathy are discussed next. The meaning and interpretation of the hand gestures of conversations is inextricably linked to content of the words spoken, when those gestures arise. The meaning of movements and actions also changes according to context. For example, a tapping foot at the counter of a shop café might mean something different from a tapping foot at the counter of a police station. The context of this project, in a historical architectural setting also affects the interpretation of the gestures within the film: associations with people who may have lived or worked at Cragside in different eras are made. Thus, the fluid nature of gestures which are not fixed but influenced by cultural and social circumstances was apparent during this project, when reflecting on ways servants used to move. These movements, postures and gestures are generally no longer evident in the UK.[467] Many bodily movements and some gestures occur in direct relation to objects and these all alter as technology advances. Being in this historical environment made me consider how even within the last ten years so much of our social gestural behaviour has altered, with the prevalence of smart phones. Our postures and movements and gesturing are affected by these appliances: which reflect the times. This resonates Adorno's concern that gestural knowledge would be lost due to technical innovations and alterations in actions. Schneider has spoken of the universal nature of a hail or greeting in relation to the current generation and of this speaking back to history and forward into the future. This makes me question what connections there are between the gestures that we converse with now and those of the past.

The image the viewer sees in film *The Great Cragside Cover-Up: Gestures* (2018) of three abstracted pairs of hands gesturing from the parapet of the servant's tower, provides some visual humour reminiscent of surrealist imagery. This was enhanced by having three sets of hands gesticulating adjacent to each other. With the house visible, as well as three pairs of gesturing hands, the viewer is forced to consider the relationship between the gesturing hands and the location. Are they people who live at Cragside now? or sometime before? What is their connection? What are they saying or doing? The contrasting gestural 'score' of

[467] Except perhaps for royalty.

each pair of hands was evident and they appeared to be 'saying' something different. The three different sets of gestures simultaneously, also added to a sense of unfamiliarity of the gesturing on view. Some people who saw this film accurately said to me that one set of hands 'looked bored' another 'pretty normal' and the third 'a bit frantic'. The location of the gestures, filmed in the servant' tower, was an important consideration in understanding the meaning of gestures shown. I had wrongly assumed that the National Trust volunteers, ever present in the billiard room, would explain this to visitors, so I had omitted this information from the leaflet provided. In retrospect I realise this was an error and I should have included the location of the gestures, in the visitor leaflet as knowing their context added meaning to the piece.[468]

Making this film I acted out three different sets of abstracted gesturing hands. Two of these used imagined gestures that I made up, and in one, I re-enacted gesture from the audio score that I used in *Hand Gesture Piece* (2017). There was a big difference between enacting imagined gestures and re-enacting observed ones. There was a freedom imagining what another person's gestures may have been and making them up. Not only did this affect my feelings but it also opened new ways of thinking about people's responses and relationships, from past and also into the future; how gestures may yield information. From my experience in this project, imagining gestures risked them merging into a uniform mass of vigorous ones: an explosion of energy perhaps, but not necessarily how anyone else ever gestures. I found myself frantically trying to think of different gestures for the 'voiceless' woman, and yet ended up mainly banging my arms against the walls of the parapet in frustration. But there was a clear message. I was gesturing to try and attract someone's attention and get them to listen.

For me there is also a real fascination in the re-enactment, of observed gestures and providing an approximation of how someone else has moved. Whilst it does feel constraining to meticulously re-enact someone else's gestures, this is also precisely why it so interesting: because they clearly feel different from one's own gestural repertoire: and any tiny little variations become obvious. By moving in the same way as someone else does

[468] The volume of visitors was frequently too much for volunteers to explain this detail and as well, not every visitor wants to speak with guides or volunteers.

someone come to think or feel as they do. This process of trying to accurately copy even a simple gesture makes one aware of the infinite number of variations of gestural interactions there are in any one social setting.

When making *The Great Cragside Cover-Up: Gestures* (2018) I tried to empathise with the female servants in my attempt to try to reference them through use of gestures. That is, I tried to understand their perspective and point of view and how they felt. I did this through a process of research in books, the archives at the Tyne and Wear Museums and through discussions with the historians at Cragside, plus exploration within the house. I used my imagination and tried to consider how they might have felt, and I considered how I might have felt had I been in their situation. Yet overwhelmingly it feels a real conceit for me to say in any way that I can empathise with their situation, so vastly different from my own and when they are not even present to speak themselves. It feels as if I am making assumptions about them predominantly based on my own views. This links with Pedwell's concerns of the bias of empathy discussed in Chapter Three.

Conclusion The architectural setting using in *The Great Cragside Cover-Up: Gestures* (2018) functioned to abstract the gesturing arms, without the need for a purpose made set. This site-specific relationship embeds the work in that context, which in turn influences the different interpretations of gestures. As well as again questioning potential limitations of empathy, *The Great Cragside Cover-Up: Gestures* (2018) made me reflect on the possibilities for connections between our current gestures and those of different generations. Would it be possible for conversational gestures from different eras to converse with each other in different locations and contexts, through architecture and objects or artefacts? Or through imagined gestures of the future? This project also led me to reflect on the ways that gestures evolve with time and to consider which aspects of gestures persist and remain.

Work leading on from here Following on from this project I wanted to continue to explore conversational hand gestures in relation to different contexts and different architecture. The over-riding impulse in these works was to bring an element of human life or presence into a direct relationship with a given space. The next project to be discussed is *Brick Wall* (2018) which differs considerably because it involved drilling through the fabric of architecture.

5.3.4 Brick Wall (2018)

Brick Wall (2018) is an over-arching title which encompasses three iterations of the same piece. These different versions are *Red Brick Wall, External Brick Wall* and *Internal Plaster Wall.* These are referred to individually on occasion, but mostly the collective title *Brick Wall* (2018) is used.

Theme Desperately trying to connect.

Description In these videos, two hands poke through arm-sized holes in a wall and then re-enact gestures from one to one, conversations. Three different walls are used: an internal red-brick wall, an outside red-brick wall and an internal plaster wall. Filming took place at the derelict site of the old Star & Shadow Cinema.

Documentation Digital photography, video in Memory Stick File 9 *Brick Wall* (2018).

Intention The impulse for this film stems from a long-standing desire of mine to put my arms through holes in a brick wall and gesticulate to anyone who might be on the other side of the wall. It is difficult to clarify what this desire entails. It is less an interaction with the architecture and more a pushing through, desperately trying to communicate with someone outside. It doesn't involve speech but gesturing.[469] Gesturing from a building to the outside. This piece also involves transforming a mundane place and situation in a humorous but bleak way. If realised, the piece is humorous and sad. My ideal plan for this piece is as follows.

1. Find a large blank wall (no windows) on the side of a functioning building, make sure the wall is visible to the public.
2. Get a large drill.
3. Drill two circular arm-holes in the wall.
4. Put arms through the arm-holes

I haven't yet found a functioning building with a large blank wall that I can drill holes through, to realise this project as described above. What follows is a description of the first iterations of *Brick Wall* that were completed in 2018. This involved me pushing my arms through holes in three different walls: an internal red-brick wall, an external brick wall and

[469] When I think of this piece I am reminded of very long, slow nights, immobile flat on my back in hospital, watching yet another sun slowly come up. And I also think of hands sticking out of massive plaster cast round my back thirty years earlier.

an internal plaster wall at a derelict site. For ease the project will be described as *Brick Wall* (2018). On occasion I will refer to the different iterations separately, as *Red Brick Wall, External Brick Wall* and *Internal plaster Wall*. The building was extremely dirty and unpleasant, and it wasn't possible to invite anyone to view. As a result, these pieces are performance to camera and photographs with Arto Polus the cameraman.

Brick Wall (2018) is another exploration of gesture and the ways it can affect experience of communication. The most significant development in this piece, for this creative-practice research is the relationship between gestures and architecture. In *Brick Wall* (2018) gestures literally push through the wall of the building from inside to out. The gestures are trying to communicate. It's not clear what they are saying or what they want to say. There is a trapped feeling to them. They have a massive desire to connect. With someone. The gestures are not dissimilar from descriptions by Agamben in Chapter Four, of showing only that communication is possible.

Development This piece involved me putting my arms through three different walls at the derelict former Star & Shadow Cinema in Newcastle. This involved drilling two arm holes 7.5cm diameter (at a height of 6 foot) through each wall. Then at each wall I stood on a chair, pushed my arms through the arm-holes, listened to an audio script of gestural movements through headphones on my mobile phone, and re-enacted the hand gestures described, to camera. The audio script was the one used previously in *Hand Gesture Piece* and contained descriptions of observed gestures from face to face conversations. This script was used for each wall. When gesturing, viewed from the front, only my arms and hands were visible to camera. Making these pieces in this location is described next, for each wall.

Red Brick Wall Arm-holes in this floor to ceiling brick wall, enabled me to stand in one room of the building, with my arms poking through to a different area. This brick wall had originally been an external wall, but after a wrap-around extension was built around, it became an internal wall. It divided a bright room from a darker area. As such, when I stood inside the lighter room with my arms through the holes in the wall, they projected through to a darker, damp area where the camera was located. Thus, my hands in this location had to be lit with spot lights. It explains why there is a crescent of white light showing in through the gap between my arms and the sides of the arm-holes in the video/photographs.

Figure 20. Hands protruding through the holes in red brick wall. Photo A Polus.

Standing alone in the lighter room I felt very isolated. To get here involved going through several locked doors, outside the building complex and in through two different locked doors. Arto was on the opposite side of the wall with the camera. Once my arms were through the arm-holes in the wall, it wasn't possible to hear each other. If he needed to speak to me, he had to touch my hand to let me know, then I withdrew my arm and we could speak via an arm-hole.

To perform to camera, I stood on a chair next to the wall in this bright, very damp room, which was full of rubbish and pushed my arms through the pre-drilled holes in the wall. I then re-enacted hand gestures, by listening to the audio script, as described earlier. The room felt isolated, dank and oppressive. My arms were poked through a wall gesturing into a similarly oppressive, darker room on the other side. It didn't feel as if my arms were 'out there' anywhere nice. More just a shift from one dark space to another. No one could see me. Only the camera set up to film on the other side. This detracted from the whole point of the piece, which was to form a live visual connection from within a building to the outside: using arm-holes in the wall, using gestures. Whilst re-enacting the gestures, they felt incongruous to the location. I think this was partly because there was no-one there to see them and it felt as if I was talking to myself. It also felt very passive. I was re-enacting gestures taken from one to one, conversations. Nothing dramatic had happened in these conversations, there was nothing unusual about the gestures. Yet here I was stuck in an

unpleasant place with my arms through a brick wall and 'talking' as if everything was normal and OK. After I finished re-enacting the gestures on the audio-script we spent time taking a lot of different photographs of my hands. First with shots being taken every second as my hands moved slowly. Then with me holding different hand poses, whilst the photographs were taken. This latter part of the process, with quick explosive bursts of different gestures felt much more in keeping with the ambience of the space.

External Brick Wall This external 12-foot-high red brick wall was the outer wall of the compound of the derelict Star & Shadow Cinema building. It was topped with barbed wire. As such, the wall formed a barrier between the surrounding streets and outside yard of the cinema site. Standing behind this wall, my arms poked through arm-holes towards very quiet surrounding streets, whilst I was stood in the open yard of the site. Sun was shining on my back. It was very quiet with no voices. I felt as if I was imprisoned, particularly because of the associations of the barbed-wire on top of the wall, which reminded me of images of internment in the second world war. I kept thinking about this while I was gesturing.

The sun was warm on my back and the yard was still. Outside my bare-arms were cooler and the breeze felt over every aspect of the surface of my fingers and arms, through and around and between my fingers. Outside felt free. The gestures I was re-enacting didn't seem to relate at all to how I was feeling.

Internal Plaster Wall The internal plaster-board wall was in an upstairs location near to a bannister. The room wasn't as damp as the previous ones. The wall that my arms went through was much thinner. The edges of the walls were cutting into my arms a bit during the re-enactment of gestures to camera, so I did a much shorter duration of gesturing. When filming here Arto was in the same space so it didn't feel isolated like it had earlier.

Critical Reflection It is clear there was considerable incongruity between the gestures I was re-enacting and how I felt while enacting them in the location. The derelict site was pretty grim: barbed wire, smelly, bottles, rubbish, faeces outside. I wasn't particularly aware of my emotions at the time, but I was aware that I felt at odds with gestures I was re-enacting, they didn't seem to relate or *feel* right. I felt constrained by them. It was only when the gestural script finished, and I moved my hands as I wanted, that my movements became more aligned with how I felt. This shows how closely but imperceptibly gestures are

Figure 21. *External Brick Wall* 2018. Photo A Polus.

connected to emotions and resonates with the view emotions that they are carried on gestures[470] and with the embodied knowledge that gestures impart, as discussed in Chapter Four. In medicine, I am familiar with observing someone's gestures to help gauge how they might be feeling. However, I have been less aware that my own gestures may subtly reveal

something of my own feelings to myself. This insight, that I gained from *Brick Wall* (2018) resonates with Schneider's statement that a gesture 'may...always carry more with it than the intentions of an isolated gesturing body or thing.'[471] No doubt the location and physical constraint on my arms affected my feelings but it was clear to me that the gestures were

[470] Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, 4.
[471] Schneider, "In Our Hands: An Ethics of Gestural Response-Ability Rebecca Schneider in Conversation with Lucia Ruprecht.", 114.

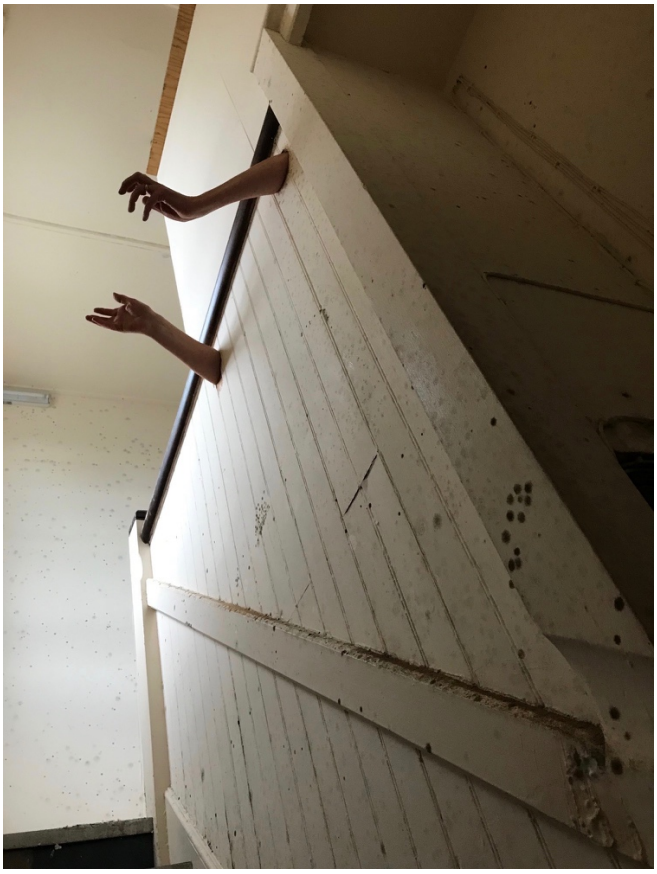

Figure 22. *Internal Plaster Wall* 2018. Photo A Polus.

also affecting how I felt. I hadn't anticipated gestures affecting me in this way. It confirms how 'entwined' movements, cognition and emotions are;[472] and how difficult it is to separate these out. In addition, my sense of mis-match with the hand gestures I was copying, that all came from other people, shows how gestures vary according to personality.[473]

This project also shows how meaning of gestures is affected by their context. Hands gesturing through a brick wall suggest they may be linked to that location, perhaps wanting to escape; even more so after the tragedy of Grenfell Tower in London. Barbed wire on top of the external wall did hint at a prison or war environment and those gestures appeared to echo something of that. Even so, reviewing the footage of *Brick Wall* (2018) it was difficult

[472] Highmore, "Bitter after Taste: Affect, Food and Social Aesthetics.", 119.
[473] Doherty-Sneddon, *Children's Unspoken Language*, 28.

to make sense of the gestures. The re-enacted gestures all came from conversations and included gesticulations accompanying speech and unrelated movements before and after speaking. Argyle highlights the difficulty of distinguishing between movements intended to communicate and those that are not;[474] which makes it difficult to ascribe meaning. In *Brick Wall* (2018) the meaning of the gestures would have been clearer if the content of conversations was also shown. This finding from the piece reaffirms that most gestures don't have linguistic properties;[475]and that their meaning is affected mainly by the context of the conversations.[476]

I was surprised by how destructive and violent it was drilling through the brick wall. It took a long time and created lots of noise and dust. This feeling of destructive actions led to an awareness that *Brick Wall* (2018) consists of hands pushing through a seemingly unassailable barrier, then trying to make contact with who-ever may be on the other side. As such this piece is less a conversation *with* the architecture and more a breaking *through* it. A silent signalling and gesturing outwards hoping someone might notice. I only became fully aware of this dimension of violence to *Brick Wall* (2018) after making these iterations.[477] In pushing my hands through a wall, I was trying to say something. Something that I hadn't yet been able to fully articulate. Even after pushing my hands through the wall and gesturing to the outside I know I want to say something, but I don't quite know what it is I want to say yet. These insights from *Brick Wall* (2018) confirm how gestures do propel our thinking[478] as shown by Mc Neil and that they '...reveal meanings.. to us' as Goldin-Meadow stated.[479] Writing and reflecting almost a year after I made *Brick Wall* (2018) I am aware that I now understand the meaning behind this piece and that it is evident: hands pushing through a barrier and trying to connect. It seems so obvious now. The desire to put my hands through the wall was mine. That was my gesture and perhaps that is why I can finally understand what it meant. I combined this gesture of pushing through the wall, with the re-enactment of other people's hand gestures. And this is the bit that I still don't understand. When I look at the re-enacted hand gestures, some of them look familiar and I can hazard a guess as to

[474] Argyle, *Bodily Communication*, 3.
[475] McNeill, *Gesture and Thought*, 7.
[476] Doherty-Sneddon, *Children's Unspoken Language*, 47.
[477] It seems odd to me now, that I didn't realise at the time, that there was violence in drilling holes through the walls. Had I punched my hands through the walls I would have been aware of this straight away. At the time I wasn't aware.
[478] McNeill, *Gesture and Thought*, 36.
[479] Goldin-Meadow, *Hearing Gesture : How Our Hands Help Us Think*, 5.

what they might mean; but overall, I don't understand what these re-enacted hand gestures are saying. Perhaps it doesn't matter that I don't know. Perhaps they are just saying that they are there. The length of time it has taken me to understand the difference between *Brick Wall* (2018) and *Hand Gesture Film* (2018) confirms to me that value of delay within hesitation.

Work leading on from here I found the making of these *Brick Wall* (2018) pieces felt very destructive due to the noise, dust and mess that resulted from drilling arm-holes *through* the walls. I became aware that these pieces projecting *through* the walls, were a distinct category in themselves, which in this first iteration I had not yet fully realised as intended. I decided to halt work on *Brick Wall* (2018) and instead return to exploring the non-destructive use of architecture or objects to frame gesturing hands and potentially bring gestures into some type of conversation with a site. This is a new project *Sculptural Silence* (2019) which is under development now. Footage is in memory stick File.10 *Sculptural Silence* and images of this new work are shown next.

Figure 23. Screenshot *Silent Sculptures* 2019. Camera A Polus.

Figure 24. Screenshot *Sculptural Silence* 2019. Camera A Polus.

Chapter 6. Conclusion

This PhD was inspired by those brief, elusive moments of intensity that sometimes occur between people, during medical consultations. The unique feature of it has been to approach all aspects of artistic creative practice with empathy, adopted from one-to-one consultations in General Practice. Empathy was directed first to art pieces and then extended to the 'wider elements' involved in their display, such as email flyers, social media messages, leaflets and text panels in exhibitions. Eventually an empathetic approach was also used on this thesis. By combining expertise from both fine art and medicine, the research has highlighted areas of connection and difference between these fields.

Throughout the project, I have continually tried to focus on the role of gesture, speech and empathy during fleeting moments of intense communication in medical consultations and relate this to artistic creative practice. Yet the harder I looked, the more apparent it became that it is almost impossible to either describe or know what a gesture means, let alone reach any agreement on what empathy might be. In the words of Georges Perec:

> What came to the surface was the nature of the **fuzzy**, **the uncertain**, the fugitive and the **unfinished,** and in the end I **chose deliberately to preserve the hesitant** and perplexed character of these shapeless **scraps**, and to abandon the pretence of organizing them into something that would by rights have had the appearance (and seductiveness) of an article, with a beginning, a middle and an end.[480]

Collectively, the live events, performances, films, sculptures and paintings created during this research point more towards loose-ends and threads for further probing, rather than a decisive conclusion or an end. Nevertheless, these pieces offer up new understandings into:

1. The importance of touch, somatic awareness and sensitivity to people's hesitations, during interpersonal communication with empathy; awareness of the risk of bias within empathetic communication; and of empathy potentially being experienced (by a recipient) as intrusive, particularly if used in an explicit, rote manner which lacks use of the imagination. It is apparent that empathy works so much better if you don't mention it at all,

[480] Perec, "Think/Classify.", 189.

and just let it emerge. This is pertinent within many different contexts ranging from marketing, retail, art and medicine.

2. The hugely responsive, yet largely unknown nature of hand gestures and the vital role that they play in empathic communication. Gestures interact with speech in subtle ways that add nuance and meaning to interpersonal communications. Yet gestures give rise to meanings that we are still not fully able to articulate. This is a huge area of potential for further research that is relevant to both art and medicine.

3. Recognition of the value of hesitation; that to hesitate is to be human. This faltering often indicates that something of significance may be lurking near the surface. It can provide a pause in time that allows nuance and meanings within discourse to become apparent. And hesitations can present us with opportunities to respond to others in ways that are different from usual. This potential within hesitation extends well beyond artistic practice into spoken and written communication within many other fields, including politics, medicine and academia. In addition, the perceived (and/or real) vulnerabilities within hesitation resist the current orthodoxy, that confident fluency is better. Paradoxically, attentiveness to hesitation can improve people's experience of communication, making it more personal, meaningful, and tangibly different from what usually happens.

In the future, I want to explore hand gestures as seen from below. This is of particular relevance to situations of vulnerability during illness and hospitalisation when people lie flat and view interpersonal communication from a different angle. Inevitably this next step, alongside a continued focus on the value of hesitant communication, will open the work to different audiences- particularly those working in or needing to visit, medical settings. It seems

a plurality of positions

sounds so much better

than saying you're not sure

I know that

my thesis is sick and needs

medical attention[481]

[481] As does the whole world right now. Today is the 20th March 2020 and global deaths from Covid-19 are more than 10, 000. It feels terrifying. I am returning to medicine as soon as I can.
7th April... just finished my corrections - and worldwide deaths are 76,419.
April 25th ..corrections have been corrected - worldwide deaths are now over 200,000.

Appendices

Appendix A: Final Preparations and Forced laughter 1 (2012)

Location Connecting Principles event, Newcastle University, Nov 2012.

Medium Performance

Documentation Images on memory stick File: 11. *Final Preparations*

Duration 5 minutes and 1 minute

Summary Two performances done in quick succession. In the first, I re-enacted the movements that the 8 male 100 metre Olympic finalists made when they were warming up just before the 2012 100m Olympic final race began. In the second, I laughed out loud for a minute.

Intentions To make a piece of work that wasn't too boring for the audience to watch, which allowed me to experiment with the connection between gestural communication in any form, and empathy. I wanted the audience to enjoy the combination of pieces and to consider what I was trying to do in the first piece. I made it quite quick in the hope it would be more palatable for anyone watching. I combined the two pieces thinking that the sum of them might work better, than each piece in isolation.

I aimed to experiment with: 1.making live work out of re-enacted observed body movements and laughter. 2.clearly delineating myself from the audience, by not speaking but using written statements to communicate with them. 3.How I introduce a piece to the audience: in this case by giving people information about the duration, and permission to leave if they wanted to. This nominal sharing of information was an opportunity to form a connection with the audience. 4. How much information I give to the audience about the movements that I was re-enacting. In *Final Preparations* (2012) I didn't give them any information at all. 5. Strictly using a timer to limit the duration of a live piece. (as opposed to continuing with a piece for as long as it felt appropriate to do so)

Method *Final Preparations* (2012): I didn't speak to the audience but used cardboard signs with written statements on to communicate with them. I used 3 separate signs to introduce

the pieces: ‘This piece is called Final Preparations’ then ‘It lasts 5 minutes’ and finally ‘Feel free to leave whenever you want to’

Figure 25. *Final Preparations* 2012. Newcastle University. Photo J Hargreaves.

Next, I switched on an audio tape recording of descriptions of the movements that the 100m athletes had made. (The audience could hear this description of the movements, but they weren’t told that the movements belonged to the athletes.) I then re-enacted the movements in slow motion at half normal speed, using the audio descriptions as a script of instructions to follow. At the end I held up a card-board sign that said ‘Thank-you.’

Method *Forced Laughter 1* (2012): Next, I held up three separate signs in quick succession to inform the audience of the next piece. The signs said: **‘**The next piece is Forced laughter 1’

‘It lasts 1 minute’ and finally ‘Please feel free to join in, especially if you don’t feel like laughing.” I then set the timer on my phone to one minute and began laughing out loud. I was standing when I was laughing and slapping my thigh a bit (as this is how I laugh if I really find something funny). I suddenly stopped laughing when the timer went off after a minute. I finished by holding up a cardboard sign that said ‘Thank-you.’

Critical Reflection The combination of these pieces worked. The *Forced Laughter* 1 seemed to act as a foil to the re-enacted movements piece. The audience really laughed during *Forced Laughter* 1 and it felt as if the combination of pieces ended on a high note. The delineation of myself from the audience (by not speaking but using pre written statements on signs to communicate) worked effectively. It felt like a useful tool (to engage with the audience) that I could develop further. The quick shift from one (quiet) piece to another (loud) piece worked. As did the use of the timer in *Forced Laughter* 1.[482] I am not convinced that re-enacting the movements of the athletes worked as a live event. I feel that the source/subject matter is a good one (those nervous moments before something important) but I am not convinced that a live performance in this way is the best medium for it. In retrospect it seems the re-enactment of the athlete's movements might have been better received, if I had informed the audience beforehand, about what the movements were, that I was trying to copy.

What changes have I made since? I have experimented more with how I introduce pieces to the audience, and how I try to engage an audience during performances. I have almost always tried to inform an audience about how long any live piece of work will take, and 'given them permission' to leave anytime they want to.[483] I have experimented further with the use of strictly timing performances (gradually making pieces a bit longer in duration). I have experimented further with using a combination of seemingly unrelated performances one after another in quick succession: a medley of pieces.

What works did this lead on to? This performance led directly on to me making more work that involved laughter namely: *Forced Laughter 2*. (2013), *Forced Laughter 3*. (2014) and *The Great Forced LOLathon* (2013). In addition, as a result of *Final Preparations* (2013) I made work involving celebratory movements of athletes *Synchrotennisity* (2014). And I have gone

[482] Perhaps this is something to do with the slightly arbitrary decision to do something live but only for 1 minute…I suppose usual expectations of performance works are that they have a much longer duration. I was also considering the time limitations on GP consultations to 10 minutes. If we stopped a consultation at 10 minutes exactly it would have a very odd effect on the ending of medical consultations. Yet the reality is that we are constantly trying to fit in the consultation to a small space of time, which usually isn't enough and are then running late. So, in this piece I thought that I would restrict it to 1 minute EXACTLY and stop then, even if it would have been better to continue for longer.

[483] This has been borne out of my frustrations of feeling trapped when watching performances, which I have wanted to leave, but have felt unable to for fear of offending the artist.

on to re-enact the non-verbal movements of Sally Fields Oscar acceptance speech in my performance *Huuh* (2014).

Key words observations, movement, out of context, re-enactment, introduction, laughter, nervous, uncertain.

Appendix B: Synchrocrispicity 1 (2013)

Location Northern Gallery Project Space, Northumbria University, 28th Nov 2013

Medium Performance 10 minutes

Documentation Images and audio of responses memory stick File:12 *Synchrocrispicity*

Summary I ate at bag of crisps in synchronisation with twenty-five members of the audience who volunteered on the night to eat a bag of crisps too.

Intentions To engage the audience in a collective synchronised event, on the night, that involved a group of people attempting the same movements. To make the piece engaging and accessible. I wanted it to be light hearted, presented in a serious manner and I wanted people to join in. I was more interested in collective movements rather than crisp eating. I didn't want to be centre stage but wanted our positioning to be egalitarian, in a circle.

Figure 26. *Synchrocrispicity 1* 2013 Northumbria University. Photo Z Worth.

Method I gave a brief verbal introduction, about the piece; explaining that it was an attempt at collective, synchronised crisp eating; and that it would be much harder to do than it sounded. I presented it as an endurance sporting event and advised that if it was "too much" for anyone, they should stop for a couple of minutes before starting to eat their

crisps again. I asked people to switch off their mobiles before it started. I explained that the starter of the event would count down from 5 and then we would open our bag of crisps and start to eat them. I asked the audience to try and copy my movements and manner of crisp eating throughout. I explained that an audio recording of the event would be taken. Twenty-five people took part, each given a bag of Walkers ready salted crisps. We stood in the gallery space. I was in a central position and turned around a bit, as I was talking to everyone at the beginning, to try and make people feel included. The starter then counted us down from 5 and we started by opening our bag of crisps. I began by eating my crisps in a normal way and at a normal speed. I then ate some crisps very slowly and others quite fast and "chomped" to get as much crunchy sounds as possible. I used a mixture of normal movements and more theatrical ones. I finished the bag of crisps by tipping all the crumbs into my mouth straight from the bag and then screwing up the bag and chucking it on the floor.

Critical Reflection A lot of people joined in with this event so from a numbers view it was successful: it was easy, non-threatening and of course the crisps were free. The contrast between what we were doing (eating crisps) and the straightforward delivery of my introduction, plus my adoption of sporting jargon (used in training talks) worked well to introduce humour into the piece. It was impossible to avoid being centre stage in this piece. The moment I spoke the audience moved to the edges of the room, in a circle around me. Despite me trying to encourage a more equal circle, this never happened. In this piece I was unclear how we would eat the crisps. In the end it was a combination of theatrical movements and real actions (all instigated by me). On reflection I think it would have been better if I had stuck with normal crisp eating movements.

What changes have I made since? I have realised that it is very difficult to facilitate a live event like this and not end up being in a position of "power" or "in charge". If I don't want to end up in that dominant position, then I need to delegate in any given project, for someone else to facilitate it.

What works did this lead on to? This led on to the formation of a synchronised crisp eating band "*The Synchrocrispettes*", *Synchrocrispicity* 2 and a film of the *Synchrocrispettes*.

Key words synchronised, collective, eating, crisps

Appendix C: The Great Forced LOLathon (2013)

Location Mining Institute, Newcastle upon Tyne, Nov 26th, 2013.

Medium A collective endurance event, 30-minutes duration, made in collaboration with Wunderbar.

Documentation Images and phone footage memory stick File: 13. *Great Forced LOLathon*

Summary A live endurance "sporting" event in which people came and laughed out loud together, for 26.2 minutes.

Intentions To be straightforward and simple "it does what it says on the tin" so the audience understood what it was about, before they came along. I wanted to create it so that people would want to attend and that once there, felt able to participate. My intention was for it to be easily accessible, non-threatening and hopefully enjoyable at times. I aimed to present a nominally light event in a serious manner. I chose the Mining Institute as the venue because of the contrast between the formal location for an informal top. Also, because the curved seating in the auditorium meant people could easily observe each other – which I hoped would encourage people to continue to laugh. I wanted to reduce any distinction between audience and artist and avoid being centre stage. I arranged for someone else to count down and start the piece off, whilst I was already sitting alongside everyone else in the audience (the participants).

Method This event was made in collaboration with Ilana Mitchell of Wunderbar. It was advertised on Radio Newcastle and Metro radio. People were invited by a series of emails to take part in the first ever *Great Forced LOLathon*. The first invitation email header was the question "When did you last laugh out loud?." I hoped that people might identify that it was some time since they had last laughed out loud. The following week a training schedule was emailed out detailing exercises, dietary requirements and what to wear on the day of the event. The language used in the training schedule was appropriated from marathon training manuals.

Figure 27. *The Great Forced LOLathon* 2013. Newcastle Upon Tyne. Photo I Mitchell.

1. The event was ticketed using Eventbrite and tickets were checked at the door.
2. On arrival people were offered a free drink in the hall: alcoholic and non-alcoholic.
3. After 15 minutes people chose where to sit in the main lecture theatre and given the choice of sitting in a place to be filmed, or not filmed.
4. I gave a brief introduction prior to the start of *The Great Forced LOLathon*. I showed the countdown clock on the table (that was visible to all) and explained we would all laugh continuously for 26.2 minutes and then stop when the clock got to zero. An audio recording would be taken. I discussed what people might feel whilst they took part, what to do if they wanted to go to loo, or to stop (take a rest and gather their breath). Also that it was important they laughed how they wanted to and that there was no "proper" way of doing it. I then took questions before we started. Several people had queries that they wanted addressed.
5. We then ran through a few LOLathon stretching and breathing exercises. I explained how the event would be started (by silent count down by an official "starter" who held up cards counting down 5, 4, 3, 2,1and then commenced the clock countdown)
6. We laughed constantly for 26.2 minutes, stopping abruptly as the clock reached zero.
7. After the event participants were given a commemorative pin badge, made especially for the event.

Figure 28. Pin badge given to everyone who took part in the *Great Forced LOLathon.*

Critical Reflection The email flyers were effective, with lots of positive feedback from people about them. I marketed the event in a similar way to a sporting one, appropriating language from marathon training manuals. I feel that there is potential for future overlap between participatory live art and participatory mass sporting events (the latter which seem to be so prevalent today). Having time, and a free drink before the start, helped participants relax. The verbal introduction (and warm up exercises) before the beginning, worked well. I gave a deadpan introduction which people found funny and many people commented on this afterwards. People really took part in the prolonged laughter and virtually everyone laughed continuously for 26.2 minutes. The laughter went from loud at the start to even louder and then extremely raucous by the end. Lots of interactions developed between people: trying to make others laugh and to continue laughing. The badge at the end was well received and effective in referencing the sporting "goody bags" awarded at the end of sporting events. I hadn't planned to film this, but Sky Arts TV turned up. I wasn't sure what to do and opted for a compromise: one half of the room would be filmed/ the other half not. In retrospect I wish that I had not filmed it. (I never saw the footage that sky arts took as they closed their Newcastle office the following week)

What works did this lead on to? *Outstanding standing ovation* (2014)

Key words Deadpan, collective, laughter, sporting, audience making the event, egalitarian?.

Appendix D: The Synchrocrispettes (2014)

Location Star & Shadow Cinema, Newcastle upon Tyne, 10.1.14.

Medium Live gig by the Synchrocrispettes five-minutes duration.

Documentation Photos, films, audio recording on memory stick File:14. *Synchrocrispettes*

Summary The first live performance of synchronised crisp eaters.

Figure 29. Synchrocrispettes performing *Synchrocrispicity* 2013. Star & Shadow Cinema, Newcastle upon Tyne. From left to right: L Mulroy, I Mitchell, K Humphreys, J Carman, C De Giorgi, L Duncanson, T Tofield, K Penrice and K Stobbart. Photo J Hargreaves.

Intentions We wanted to enjoy ourselves and wanted the audience to enjoy the performance and for people to join in if they felt like it.

Background The band formed in late 2013 after emailing out to my friends and colleagues asking, 'Have you ever wanted to be in a girl band?.' Anyone who replied was accepted. Collectively we made up a routine to each eat a bag of crisps in an identical fashion. We included authentic crisp eating methods from various members of the group and amalgamated these different eating styles into a performance for all of us to follow simultaneously. I took a 'conductor' role, with the other band members following my lead on the night. There is no musical accompaniment to the performance.

Method The band all dressed informally in black. We stood on the stage with our painted band sign on display. We kept a straight face throughout. I did a brief introduction about the performance to the audience and we handed out free bags of crisps to anyone who wanted to join in with us. I then asked people to switch off phones to follow our movements keenly, before beginning the performance of synchronized crisp eating, (following the score that had previously been devised) as follows:

-hold crisp packet in left hand, brief shake of packet

-open bag of crisps

-eat five whole crisps one at a time (using right hand)

-brief shake of bag

-eat next 2 crisps half a crisp at a time.

-pick out a crisp and look at it for a second…then nibble it quickly making as much noise as possible. Repeat this with 5 crisps in a row.

-then go back to start of sequence and repeat till crisps eaten.

-at end: look in bag, hold bag up to mouth and shake any crumbs left into mouth

-discard the bag in any way, then walk off stage.

Critical Reflection This piece went down very well with the audience. A lot of people joined in with us and there was a lot of laughter from them. We did our crisp eating to the best of our ability and our delivery of this was done in a serious manner. We could have improved our synchronization with more rehearsals.

What changes have we made since? We have rehearsed more and made this into a film.

What works did this lead on to? We have made two films of Synchrocrispicity.

Key words: Collective, crisps, eating, synchronised, band, fun.

Appendix E: An analysis of putting on three separate pieces in quick succession.

Title *O mio babbeano caro* (2014), *Forced Laughter 3*.(2014) and *Hand Cleansing Techniques number one: how to wash your hands with soap and water* (2014).

Location Globe Gallery, 24th Jan 2014

Medium Performance each three minutes duration

Summary Three separate performances done straight after each other: *O mio babbeano* caro (2014) consisted of me re-enacting a scene from the film 'Mr Bean goes on holiday'. In *Forced Laughter 3.* (2014) I laughed out loud for 3 minutes. In *Hand Cleansing Techniques number one: how to wash your hands with soap and water* (2014) I taught the audience the latest NHS guidance on how to wash your hands with soap and water. People received a department of health leaflet about hand washing, when they arrived at the gallery.

Intentions To try three separate unrelated performances and to experiment with a 'medley' approach of putting seemingly unrelated live pieces, on together straight after each other.[484] In the final piece I was trying to see if I could get the audience to move collectively. I felt that this was more likely to be achieved if there was a bit of a warm up period to that piece. Hence, I was using the earlier two pieces as an 'icebreaker' to try and soften the audience, for the last piece. I wanted to include a vaguely medical topic piece alongside unrelated ones. I will review putting on these pieces collectively (now) in addition to a review of each individual piece (in the subsequent pages)

Critical Reflection The main benefit of me putting on 3 pieces together was to allow me to quickly move through material that I wanted to try out. I had a venue and an audience, and it enabled me to trial different aspects of work at one event. The transition from *Forced Laughter* 3 to the hand washing performance worked well when I abruptly stopped my

[484] In part I felt that no single one of these pieces was particularly good on its own and I wondered if putting several short pieces in quick succession would enhance any of them. In short: would they be more than the sum of the parts?

laughter, then moved immediately into the next piece. On the night, this abrupt transition from one event to another struck me as being powerful. I was surprised that virtually everyone joined in the handwashing piece This degree of involvement I think, came about because of the two preceding performances. Had I only done the handwashing performance piece I think it is unlikely that as many people would have taken part. I used different techniques in this piece to communicate with the audience: pre written statements on signs as well as speaking directly to the audience: moving between these improved the overall performance. I suspect that the overall package of 3 performances like this will have been confusing. Inevitably the pieces will have been read together and I'm not convinced that links between the pieces were strong enough to use them in this way.[485]

What changes have I made since? I have reduced the numbers of pieces of live work that I perform straight after each other. I am now clearer that NOT speaking directly to the audience (but using written signs) can be of benefit. Conversely I have found it better to speak directly to the audience if I am being slightly tongue in cheek and presenting a topic in a more deadpan way. It is difficult to convey the nuance of a deadpan presentation in writing.

What works did this lead on to? I presented *Why don't adults skip? number1* (2014) and *Huuh?* (2014) in quick succession of each other.

Key words for putting 3 pieces on in quick succession: medley, unrelated, transition, rapid, changing, collection, icebreaker, collective.

[485] I don't have a very high tolerance for watching live art: I suspect that the 9 or 10 minutes that it took to do these three pieces will have dragged a bit for the audience.

Appendix F: O Mio Babbeano Caro (2014)

Location Globe Gallery, Newcastle upon Tyne, 24th Jan 2014.

Medium Performance three-minutes duration.

Documentation Images in memory stick File: 15 *O Mio Babbeano Caro.*

Figure 30. *O Mio Babbeano Caro* 2014, Globe Gallery, Newcastle. Photo C Davison.

Summary As stated previously, this was the first of three separate performances done straight after each other: *O Mio Babbeano* caro (2014) consisted of me re-enacting a scene from the film *Mr Bean goes on holiday*. In the scene Mr Bean is lip-syncing and miming the sound track of an operatic performance of Puccini's O Mio Babbino Caro. My title is a pun on the Puccini title.

Intentions To be ad hoc, amateurish, lo-fi and vaguely amusing. To reflect on gestures. I wanted the technology to be portable, so used a laptop and a set of small speakers.

Method I held up 3 separate hand painted cardboard signs in quick succession which said:

'3 performances'

'3 minutes each'

'it could be worse.'

Next I held a sign saying, *'O Mio Babbeano Caro'* then I started the performance. My laptop was on a table, with the screen visible to the audience. I pressed play, to start a YouTube clip from the film 'Mr Bean goes on holiday' playing on the laptop.[486] The song (sung by the opera singer) was audible to the audience and the film of Mr Bean lip syncing to the song was visible too. I copied all the movements made by Mr Bean as he performed this scene in the film.[487] The piece ended as the song finished and Mr Bean (and I) took a bow.

Critical Reflection The main achievement of this piece was that I completed it. I'm not convinced it worked as much of a performance, but it did function as an icebreaker for the pieces that followed. It worked well in this way as virtually everyone joined in with the final piece. If the film of Mr Bean (that I was copying) had been projected behind me in large scale, this piece would have been better. As it was, the film running on my computer was difficult for all of the audience to see clearly.

What works did this lead on to? I have made several pieces of work that have involved me collaborating with other people one to one, attempting to copy the movements that the singer Shakira makes in one of her music videos. This piece also indirectly led to *I never knew that I could dance like this* (2015).

Key words: Re-enactment, movement, lip syncing, light-hearted, lo-fi, amateurish

[486] I did consider projecting the film on the wall behind me but decided against this, in favour of portable technology. I'm not entirely sure why I wanted this, but I tend to want to keep things simple. Even better than a lap top would be something that I could keep in my back pocket (? mobile phone). There is something about being able to 'take it with you' that I aspire to.

[487] In essence the performance was of me lip syncing to a film of Mr Bean lip syncing to a song by an opera singer

Appendix G: Forced Laughter 3 (2014)

Location Globe Gallery 24th Jan 2014.

Medium Performance three-minutes duration.

Documentation Images in memory stick File: 16 *Forced Laughter* 3

Summary This was the second of three separate performances done straight after each other and it followed straight on from *O Mio Babbeano Caro* (2014) described above. In *Forced Laughter 3* I forced myself to laugh out loud for three minutes.

Intentions To engage the audience. I wanted to try out a laughter- based performance within a gallery setting, to see what effect the location had. (I had previously done a similar performance in a non-gallery setting). I expected responses to range between funny and irritating. I hoped that by inserting this piece into the schedule of performances, that more people would take part in the last piece that I was putting on.

Method I performed *O Mio Babbeano Caro* (2014) first and then moved straight into *Forced Laughter*. I held up 3 cardboard signs to introduce it to the audience. The signs said

'Forced Laughter 3'

'3 minutes'

'please join in esp if you don't feel like laughing'

I set my phone timer to three minutes then stood in the middle of the room and laughed out loud. I stopped suddenly when the timer sounded. I then swiftly embarked on the last performance.

Critical Reflection The bit of this piece that worked most, was right at the very end when the phone timer went off and I stopped laughing very abruptly. This rapid transition from loud laughter to none, was unexpected and provoked tension in the room and made some people laugh. In addition, this piece functioned well as an icebreaker: and I think increased the

Figure 31. *Forced Laughter 3* 2014, Globe Gallery, Newcastle. Photo Colin Davison.

audience engagement in my final piece about handwashing, which followed on immediately. My main feeling, however, was that this piece felt too long and was mostly annoying or boring for the audience. I had previously done shorter versions of it at different locations: of 1-minute duration and for 2-minutes when people laughed a lot and really joined in. However, I was surprised on this longer 3-minute occasion, at how much it did not seem to work within the gallery context. The audience was very silent, no one laughed, and I sensed that people were either awkward or just plain bored. It felt like a lead balloon.

What changes have I made since? I have not repeated this piece as a solo performance. When I first started the piece, I imagined a series increasing in duration by 1 minute at a time. I 'm not convinced that this is worth pursuing. As an icebreaker this piece would be better if it was shorter.

What works did this lead on to? *Come Cry with me* (2015)

Key words: Laughter, timed, abrupt change, icebreaker

Appendix H: Hand Cleansing Techniques Number One: how to wash your hands with soap and water.

Medium A three-minute performance at Globe Gallery, 24th Jan 2014.

Documentation Images on memory stick File:17 *Hand Cleansing techniques*

Summary The last of three performances done straight after each other. I taught the audience the latest NHS guidance on how to wash your hands with soap and water.

Intentions To get a large group of people in a gallery setting, synchronising their movements together. I wanted the piece to be non-threatening and easily accessible. I chose hand movements, as they are some of the least threatening movements for people to make. I presented it as vaguely "scientific" piece that taught people the latest government guidelines for health care workers on hand washing. However, the main aim was to try and get people to move their hands in the same way, at the same time.

Method First, I had performed *O Mio Babbeano Caro* and then *Forced Laughter 3* (see preceding descriptions). When *Forced laughter* 3 stopped abruptly, I swiftly moved into this piece and began by speaking directly to the audience, explaining that it was called *'Hand cleansing techniques number one: how to wash your hands with soap and water*' and was based on the latest Department of Health (DOH) guidelines to health care professionals.[488] I gave a brief talk on the risks of spread of illness via unclean hands and evidence of the extent of the problem in the UK.[489] I then taught the audience how to wash their hands with soap and water according to the latest advice from the DOH. I demonstrated the movements required and then encouraged the audience to mime these hand-washing techniques together. Finally, we repeated 'two cycles' of hand washing whilst listening to the Macarena, played through the lap-top.

[488] A copy of the latest Department of Health Guidelines on washing hands with soap and water was given to the audience when they entered the gallery.
[489] Twenty five percent of hands in the UK have faecal bacteria on them and fourteen percent of mobile phones.

Critical Reflection I was surprised so many people took part in the 'handwashing.' Almost everyone present was involved. I didn't expect many would dance to the Macarena at the end, but a lot of people did.

Figure 32. *Hand Cleansing Techniques Number One: how to wash your hands with soap and water* 2014, Globe Gallery, Newcastle. Photo C Davison.

I think the extent of audience participation benefitted from the 'ice breakers' of the preceding two pieces that had taken place immediately beforehand. Many people have since told me they think of this piece (and the Macarena) whenever they wash their hands; and they remember the correct technique. I am less sure how successful the content of this piece was. I purposely did it with a slightly naff aesthetic (choosing the Macarena as a sound track). However, I can't help wondering if it was all a bit inconsequential. What does it mean if a group of people enact some movements together in a gallery setting? However, in the light of the current coronavirus pandemic, with the main emphasis on handwashing, as the means to prevent spread of disease, I find I am now reappraising this piece.[490]

What changes have I made? I want to continue to mix vaguely medical with other topics.

[490] As of 9th March 2020, over 110,000 cases of Covid-19 have been reported worldwide and global deaths are almost 4000.

What works did this lead on to? *I never knew that I could dance like this* (2015).

Key words: Medical, movement, collective, participation, naff

Appendix I: Why Don't Adults Skip? number one (2014)

Location Culture Lab, Newcastle University 17th Mar 2014.

Medium Performance. This was immediately followed by the piece *Huuh*.

Summary I skipped around the edge of the room for two minutes.

Intentions Simple, silly and informal. And, to be something that someone watching (perhaps) might want to join in with.[491]

Figure 33. Screenshot of *Why don't adults skip?,* 2014.

Method I stood and briefly spoke to the audience. I explained that I would do both performances one after the other, and that the total duration would be about six-minutes. I then said, "this performance is called *Why don't adults skip?*" and set my phone timer to two-minutes. Then I started skipping around the edge of the room. Whilst skipping I

[491] I'm interested in the fact that we skip when we're young but as an adult we don't. I've known it for a long time. But I've never been told that. Can skipping be radical? Why are we (why am I) so inhibited about skipping? When I see a child skipping they look so free and joyous. It's such a simple thing but why is it so difficult for an adult to skip? It's not that different from running.

explained that people were very welcome to join in if they wished. One person joined me a few seconds before the timer went off. When the timer sounded, I stopped skipping and went and sat on a seat before starting the next performance. I was a bit out of breath, so I sat and caught my breath for a minute or two before I started the next piece *Huuh.*

Critical Reflection The introduction to the audience worked well. It felt better to be speaking directly, rather than silently holding up signs with pre written statements on (a method I have used in several performances described previously).[492] This piece itself, was simple and a bit silly. At the outset I had been trying not to bore the audience, so I restricted it to two minutes. When the timer went off, it felt as if it stopped too quickly. In retrospect I think I should have continued to skip for a bit longer (perhaps following my gut instinct on the night and doing what felt right at the time). I feel that I am aware of how an audience is responding and on this occasion I could have skipped for longer.[493] Whilst this was a nice

[492] But why did it feel right to be speaking directly to the audience on this occasion? Is it to do with the content of the piece? Is speaking directly just a better method? Or are some pieces suited to using written signs and others suited to using speech? I can't identify why it is that I would choose one method for a different piece: yet I am clear inside myself that one situation requires speech whilst another situation requires silent signs. Was it to do with me trying to persuade the audience to DO something for me: in this case in the Skipping piece I wanted them to skip with me (if they wanted…I didn't feel v strongly about whether they did or not) In the HUUH piece I wanted the audience to clap me before I started it: I DID VERY MUCH want them to clap for me: perhaps powers of persuasion to achieve this are greater if I am speaking rather than holding up silent signs?? Also there seems something a bit annoyingly demanding about a hand-written sign held up silently. Maybe it's not demanding, maybe it's a bit controlling of the situation in that it does have an effect of making an audience go quiet.

[493] I'm also often a bit (? overly) worried about it being boring for the viewer and too demanding of their time. Perhaps in some situations I need follow what I want to do more (rather than what I think the audience may be wanting: there's obviously no way of pleasing everyone out there). There is a connection here with how a consultation may take place in medicine: there's often no set agenda and I will look out for and respond to clues/communications from a patient and modify my responses accordingly; taking longer and giving time here/cutting things short and stopping a line of questioning there. I am concerned that in art if I am responding overly to an audience (or overly concerned about them) that I can end up just making something totally bland that no one is interested in.

experiment for me to try it was perhaps less interesting for the audience. However, it acted well as a quick ice-breaker for the performance *Huuh* that followed.

What changes have I made since? I have repeated this piece in a formal gallery setting.

What works did this lead on to? *Why don't adults skip? 2* (2014)

Key words Skipping, movement, time restricted, silly, simple, lo-fi, desire to do something that someone else might also want to do, element of disrupting norms of behaviour in a given space.

This piece was immediately followed by *Huuh* (2014) which was performed straight after and is described next.

Appendix J: Huuh (2014)

This piece followed on straight after *Why Don't Adults Skip? number one* (2014) described previously.

Location Culture Lab, Newcastle University 17th Mar 2014.

Medium Performance four-minutes duration.

Documentation Memory stick file 25 *Huuh*

Summary I re-enacted the non-verbal communication from Sally Fields Oscar acceptance speech, which she gave when she was awarded an Oscar in 1985 for her role in *Places in the Heart.* The audience was not informed of the source of the movements/sounds that I made.

Intentions To isolate the non-verbal communication from a real-life speech and re-enact it. I wanted the audience to give me a massive round of applause at the beginning of the piece.

Method I sat in a chair in the middle of the room and caught my breath from the previous skipping performance. I began by explaining that I needed a massive round of applause before starting the piece. I said, 'this would really work best if you give me a massive round of applause first…not just gentle clapping but really loud clapping.' We did a trial run of audience applause first. Then I explained that I would begin the performance 'proper' when the audience applauded me again. When the clapping began I stood up and re-enacted all the movements made by Sally Fields when she got up from her seat, waved cheerfully, walked on stage, and shook hands as she accepted her Oscar. She also adjusted the microphone as she started her speech. I didn't speak any of the words of her speech, only the non-verbal utterances she made: most of which consisted of the sound 'huuh' as she breathily gasped. She repeated this breathy sound 12 times during her speech, which I copied. At the end, I lifted my hands up in the air (as she had) and then left the stage, walking back to my chair.

Critical Reflection Asking the audience to give me massive applause (before I'd even started) broke the ice in the room and completely changed the atmosphere. It also felt very funny for me to be receiving applause for something I hadn't yet done. I'm less convinced about my re-enactment of Sally Fields movements and breathy Huuh sounds. I suspect it was

awkward to watch and a relief that it didn't last very long. But perhaps the combination of the two (the funny introductory clapping and the piece itself) worked.

What changes have I made since? I have repeated *Huuh* (2014) in a conference setting, which was funny. It certainly very effectively altered the dynamic in the conference room.

What works did this lead on to? After *Huuh* (2014) I very clearly wanted to make more work based on clapping, which is such an amazing tool for changing the atmosphere within a room. I created a live event purely based on receiving a standing ovation called *Outstanding Standing Ovation* in 2014.

Key words verbal introduction of piece, re-enactment, movement, audience not informed of movements, false distinction between introduction and piece, non-verbal gasps and grunts, collective activity of the audience, manipulation of audience.

Appendix K: I don't know what to call this (Tennis Grunts) 2014

Location Foyer of the Hatton Gallery, Newcastle upon Tyne, 22nd Aug 2014.

Medium A talk/demonstration of eight-minutes duration.

Documentation Images and footage memory stick File: 18. *I don't know what to call this.*

Summary I gave a brief introduction to the types of non-verbal communication that take place within professional tennis matches. This was followed by a demonstration of the grunting by players (and the clapping of the tennis audience) in three minutes of play in the last game of the match between Serena Williams and Maria Sharapova in the Wimbledon 4th round ladies' singles competition in 2010.

Intentions Quick, funny, enjoyable and a bit absurd.

Figure 34. Giving the introductory talk to *Tennis Grunts*. Photo J Hargreaves.

Method I stood in the centre of the room with the audience standing around me and on the stairs. I then gave a brief introductory talk before starting the demonstration. Whilst talking, I turned around frequently to enable eye contact between me and members of the audience. The text of my introduction is here:

'Good evening and thank-you very much for coming along tonight. In a few minutes time I'd like to present a piece to you that is titled 'I don't know what to call this/tennis grunts'.1. 2014.. but before I do, I 'd like to give a brief bit of background to it. The piece is about the non-verbal communication that takes place within tennis matches. Rather than looking at the movements of tennis players I have concentrated on the sounds that take place within matches: and that basically means the sounds made but the audience and the sounds that the players may or not make. As you'll be aware, the sounds of the audience are mainly the clapping and cheering which takes place when the players come onto the court and in between points during the match. Occasionally audience members do shout out during matches, but generally the noises that they make are restricted to clapping and cheering. Now tonight, (it's a great coup for Newcastle University) we are really, really, delighted to have both Serena Williams AND Maria Sharapova playing with us. So, can we just now welcome them both onto the court. (Big cheers and whistles by the audience). Well what about the non-verbal noises that the tennis players make during matches. Well basically we're looking at grunting. Do the players grunt or not?

So, a brief history of grunting in tennis matches: Grunting really first came to light in the 1970's with Jimmy Connors who won Wimbledon and many other big tournaments in his time. The first woman to really adopt grunting was Monica Seles, who was very successful and famous during the 1990's. Current top player who grunt are the Williams sisters, Serena and Venus, Maria Sharapova, Novak Djokovic and Rafa Nadal. So why do players grunt? And what do we know about it? Apparently men are more natural grunters than women. Men's grunts tend to be quieter and at a lower pitch than women's. Most of the experts in this field believe that grunting is a subconscious activity. It's not something the players are actively thinking about doing…they just link hitting the ball with grunting. And this is borne out by a quote from Serena Williams who was asked about grunting during an interview. She said I just play my game and sometimes I grunt and sometimes I don't. I'm not conscious when I'm doing it I'm just zoned out. It doesn't really affect my game if my opponent is grunting. Experts are aware that if you breath out and grunt at the same time as you tense

your abdominal muscles it increases the force that you can deliver. This is what happens in weight lifting…when people lift a big weight, they virtually always breath out and grunt at the same time as tensing their abdomen muscles: and in tennis grunting like this increases the force of a shot. Many of the experts believe that grunting helps player relax and release tension, and some go even further than this: Matthew Wilcox (who is a director of one of the elite high-performance tennis venues in this country) when talking about women tennis players said (and I quote) 'Encouraging female players to breath out with the shot and to grunt brings them out of their shell and increases their preparedness, competition and confidence.' And Dr Thompson (a sports physician in elite tennis) said (when talking about grunting tennis players) 'it is courageous for someone to draw attention to themselves and to do something a lot of people dislike.'

Now obviously people grunt in different ways. Some are low-pitched, some more high pitched and some grunt in a more prolonged way than others. So, what I've got for you tonight is 3 minutes of condensed play taken from the last game in a match between Serena Williams and Maria Sharapova in 2010 in the Wimbledon 4th round ladies' singles competition. Serena Williams is about to win the match… (and in fact she goes on from this match to win Wimbledon.) So, I've got a recording of the noises made during the last 3 minutes of the match and I'll just show you what I'm going to do. I'll just give a brief demonstration of their grunts. Sharapova's is quite high pitched (squawking grunt) a bit like a seagull. And her grunts are v loud. They can reach up to 101 decibels (which is just below the roar of a lion). Serena William's grunts are lower (and quieter) (demonstration). So that's what the two sound like (another grunt/grunt/grunt out loud). Now I've got a recording of play from their game. And I'm going to demonstrate the grunts of the players and also the clapping of the tennis audience. So, if the tennis audience claps, I will clap too….and if you want to join in with any of it then please do…but don't be feeble. If you want to clap/cheer, then do it really loudly as we're right at the end of the match and its very tense situation. So, I'm just going to put my headphones on now and listen to the sounds of the match and demonstrate them to you"

I then put my headphones on and plugged them into my iPhone, to listen to my recording of the grunting and clapping that took place during the last 3 minutes of the match. Every

time a player grunted (with each point) I copied this and grunted out very loudly to the audience. Every time the tennis audience clapped, (in the recording of the tennis match) I clapped vigorously and tried to encourage the art audience to clap too. This fast sequence of loud grunting and clapping continued for a couple of minutes until the last shot when Serena Williams won the match and the referee announced *'Game set and match to Miss Williams: 2 sets to love, 7-6, 6-4*' I announced this to the audience and stopped clapping.

Critical Reflection The introduction was well received by the audience. During the piece people really enthusiastically took part in the cheering and clapping.

What changes have I made since? I repeated this piece using two people (instead of just me) in *We don't know what to call this (Tennis Grunts 2)* 2014 however having two people was much less successful than the silliness of presenting it by one person.

Key words: introduction much longer than the piece, clapping, grunting, participation, persuasion/encouragement, sport, tennis, re-enactment, non-verbal communication, out of context

Appendix L: Why don't adults skip? number two (2014)

Location Hatton Gallery, Newcastle upon Tyne**,** 22nd Aug 2014.

Medium Performance two-minutes duration.

Duration Images in memory stick File:19 *Why don't adults skip?*

Summary I skipped unannounced during the opening of the MFA show.

Intentions. To introduce some type of movement which wouldn't normally be seen in a formal gallery setting. I thought that some people watching, would wish they too were skipping in the gallery: and that even if they didn't join in, then maybe they would be aware of wanting to.

Figure 35. *Why Don't Adults Skip? number two* 2014. Hatton Gallery, Newcastle. Photo C Davison.

Method I asked all the artists who were exhibiting in the Hatton, if they were ok for me to do this. They all agreed. On the night I asked someone to film me on my mobile phone as I skipped around all the rooms in the Hatton. This was unannounced. I was aware during this piece, of quite a strong desire to try and persuade others to join in with me during the skipping. I almost succeeded on one occasion: but not quite.[494] I repeated the skipping once more later in the week, again unannounced. I didn't do this every day as I had planned as I felt uncomfortable about it.

Critical Reflection I don't think this piece worked. It felt as if I was just being irritating (and attention seeking?) skipping around the gallery and it felt inconsequential.[495] However I don't know because I never completed it. I had decided to do the skipping unannounced (there was no mention of it in the flyers for the show) and in retrospect I suspect this decision reflected my lack of confidence and reservations about it. Had I announced it before hand, and done it each day, then it would have been different: at least I would have completed it. Whereas what I did (not) do felt more like a failure.

What works did this lead on to? I have thought about skipping in other public places (or asking staff who work in public places to try skipping for a fraction of their day, such as a few steps along a hospital corridor). However, I have not taken this further.

Key words skipping, movement, un announced, unconvincing, persuasion?

[494] I do wonder if what I am more interested in some of these live pieces is me trying to persuade other people to do something with me.

[495] However, there is still quite a strong part of me that thinks there is potential for it as a piece in some way. And I regret not having gone through with my plans.

Appendix M: I'm On The Train: A year's worth of over-heard mobile phone calls.2 (2014)

Location Nottingham Contemporary, 3rd Oct 2014, In Dialogue conference.

Medium Performance twenty minutes.

Documentation two photos in this report.

Summary I read a verbatim selection of overheard mobile phone conversations.

Figure 36. Flyer for *I'm On The Train: A year's worth of over-heard mobile phone calls* 2, 2014, Nottingham Contemporary.

Intentions To be engaging and presented in a professional/confident way.[496] For the audience to identify with the content and oddness of everyday conversational behaviour.

Method I stood on the floor in front of a standing microphone. The lights were dimmed. I was lit from above. The phone calls were written down in a very small notebook, with one phone call per page. I said, *'This is a selection from a years' worth of overheard mobile phone conversations'* and began reading out the phone calls. I used different voices and intonation according to whether the call was by a man or a woman. I tried to maintain eye contact with the audience as much as possible. I paused between each call and used the turning of the page in the notebook as a way of emphasising each separate phone call.

Figure 37. Stage setting for *I'm On The Train: A year's worth of over-heard mobile phone calls*.2, 2014, Nottingham Contemporary. Photo unknown.

Critical Reflection This performance was well received. I knew at the time, as the audience was very responsive. I think in part this was a combination of several factors: I stood on the floor at the same level as the audience (rather than up at the podium) which along with the

[496] Often in my work I aim for an amateurish aesthetic yet in this case I really knew that wasn't what I wanted. Why is this? What was it about this piece of work that I felt lent itself more to a 'professional' look??? Was it the gallery context?

dimmed lighting gave a more intimate feel. Having the phone calls written down in the tiny notebook also added intimacy - partly because it appeared to be the book, I'd jotted down calls in. In addition, by turning a page for each separate call it emphasised the distinction between different voices. Several people commented afterwards how well this use of the notebook worked. The piece worked well as a live event (rather than an audio recording). The nature and manner of the calls contained something that many of us (both me as artist and the audience) could recognise and identify with.[497] I wonder if it could be improved by presenting the calls from behind the audience (or sat amongst them) rather than me being at the front and a focus of attention.

What changes have I made since? This piece made me realise that very small changes in the method of presentation can have a big impact on how a work is received by an audience. The use of a small notebook is potentially a very useful device for me to present further work that focuses on observations of human behaviour. A change that I am considering is to repeat this performance with me sat behind the audience (or out of view from them) so the focus becomes the overheard mobile phone conversations and not me presenting them.

Key words: Overheard, copied, observed behaviour, confident/professional presentation.

[497] If I had presented an audio of the calls it makes me (the artist) more distant and remote from the phone calls.

Appendix N: Outstanding Standing Ovation (2014)

Location Gateshead Old Town Hall, 17TH October 2014.

Medium Live event, forty-minutes duration.

Documentation Images and footage memory stick File 20. *Outstanding Standing Ovation*

Summary A standing ovation, on stage, for anyone who wanted one.

Intentions To provide people with the opportunity to receive a massive ovation.[498] Part of my intention was to have as little distinction as possible between performer and audience. I wanted it to be almost a self-contained unit, where everyone participated on an equal footing. For it to be fun and enjoyable. And simple: people will clap for you if you want.

Method Email flyers were sent out asking if anyone would like a standing ovation. On the night of the event people who came to the festival were asked if they would like a standing ovation: the names of those who wanted one were listed on a piece of paper. People who didn't want an ovation were asked if they'd be happy to join in the clapping to give an ovation to the others. I also went around asking any of the Sage staff members (who were working for the festival that night) if they wanted an ovation. Their boss gave them permission to come up if they wanted. Three staff members came up (one from the front welcome desk and two who were working in the bar). One of them asked me what the purpose of the event was, and I explained it was so that 'normal people could get an ovation.' The event was in a large hall with a stage at one end. There was cabaret seating at tables within the hall. The lights were dimmed, and a spot light was shone onto the stage. There was a standing microphone to the side of the stage. On the floor on each table was a notice informing people that if they wanted an ovation, they just needed to write their name on a piece of paper and pass it to one of the helpers (who were circulating between the tables). Each table had a supply of chocolates for people to eat.

To start the event, I got up on the stage and welcomed everyone and then gave a brief explanation of what would happen. I explained that a standing ovation means that the

[498] I had inadvertently experienced this myself in one of my earlier pieces *Huuh* (2014) and was surprised at how funny and enjoyable the whole experience was.

audience stands up and that as an audience we'd need to persevere with the clapping to make each ovation special for each person. 'When your name is announced come on up to the stage and receive your ovation' 'if you're not able to come up onto the stage then stand on the floor at the front and receive your ovation in the spotlight there.'

Figure 38. Stage setting *Outstanding Standing Ovation* 2014. Old Townhall, Gateshead. Photo J. Hargreaves.

I then stood to one side of the stage (out of the spotlight) and used the microphone to announce the name of the first participant 'ladies and gentlemen please give a big round of applause to …' I then began to clap vigorously along with the audience who all stood up giving an ovation. When the first participant left the stage I then announced the name of the next participant to receive their ovation. This continued until everyone who wanted to, had come up onto the stage and received their ovation. In total we gave an ovation to twenty-two people. The only thing that was announced about the people coming up was their name, there was no mention of their achievements in any way.

Critical Reflection As a participatory event this worked really well. The people in the audience who took part were incredibly enthusiastic, right from the start. Anyone who went up onto the stage got a massive standing ovation. The piece was part of an evening of different events: with a bar for drinks available nearby and other art works to see. All of this contributed to improving the atmosphere of the evening. The location worked extremely

well for the piece: there was a stage with curtains behind it and spot lighting of the stage, all in keeping with the concept of an ovation. The audience sat in cabaret style seating which added to the atmosphere. I liked asking the members of staff who were working at Gateshead Old Town Hall that night if they wanted to join in. I feel that this added to the event because it extended the remit of the piece beyond the usual visiting audience, to include people working there that night. Also, I felt the conversations with staff members just added a different dimension to the piece. I feel that this piece would have been improved if there had been some element of awkwardness to it. Perhaps awkwardness was there in it? I don't know really know how people felt, coming up for their ovation, perhaps others didn't come up because they felt uncomfortable.

What changes have I made since? I have modified this piece and performed it in a gallery setting, without any formal lighting or a stage setting.

What works did this lead on to? This piece led to *I haven't the foggiest what to do* (2014) which was in a gallery setting and which did not include a stage or spot lighting, nor all the email flyers in advance of the event.

Key words: clapping, collective, participation, accessible, simple.

Appendix O: The Synchrocrispettes film Synchrocrispicity (2014)

Figure 39. Screenshot of film *Synchrocrispicity* 2013. Camera A Polus.

Location Filmed at Nuns moor, Newcastle upon Tyne.

Medium Film five-minutes duration.

Summary A film of the Synchrocrispettes performing *Synchrocrispicity* in collaboration with film-maker Arto Polus.

Intentions To make a film based on the live piece *Synchrocrispicity* (2013). I couldn't decide if I was making a film of a performance or a film. As a result we opted to make two versions: a film of the performance in an outside location – and an edited film, with a music soundtrack. I wanted both to be short and straightforward. Part of my reasoning for making a film was that this is frequently what bands do. So as a synchronised crisp eating band it would be good for us (The Synchrocrispettes) to make a film. I wanted the films to 'work' in a gallery setting; perhaps in the background rather than the main focus of attention.

Documentation Links to films on vimeo:

Silent version https://vimeo.com/127623945 password: synchrowide

Music version https://vimeo.com/110371357 password: synchromusic

Critical Reflection It was great fun filming this outside on the town moor. The setting, alongside the warmer outdoor clothes we wore, altered the visual dynamic of the original performance of *Synchrocrispicity*: giving it an air of a sports event or exercise class. Two

Figure 40. Screenshot of S*ynchrocrispicity*. From l to r, K Stobbart, L Mulroy, J Carman, I Mitchell and K Penrice. Nuns moor, Newcastle upon Tyne, 2014.

films were made. The first film was a continuous shoot of the original performance Synchrocrispicity filmed here, outside: the sound on this film is of us eating crisps in an outdoor setting. This film is understated and quiet. The second film version which was shot and edited in the style of a Western, has a soundtrack by the industrial rock band Nine Inch Nails. This version is louder and more overtly attempting to be humorous. On balance I prefer the first, quieter version. Both films were screened at The Blue Moon Festival at the Star & Shadow cinema in Nov 2014. I was disappointed at how underwhelming they felt. They just didn't work on a big screen in a cinema setting. My feeling is that they need a gallery setting where they are peripheral to something else: and that they would benefit from being screened onto a wall so that the figures in them are nearer life size: combining this with something else in a gallery say performance/sculpture. The musical version was screened at the Running Sushi Film Festival at the Kuntsraum Garage, Vienna in March 2016, but I did not see this screening.

What changes have I made since? None yet, though I still want to release an I tunes soundtrack of the Synchrocrispettes or preferably make an LP.

What works did this lead on to? The idea behind forming the Synchrocrispettes band links with my ideas underpinning the piece *I never knew that I could dance like this* (2015).

Key words: DVD, crisps, movement, synchronisation, collective, collaboration.

Appendix P: I haven't the foggiest what to do: clapping (2014)

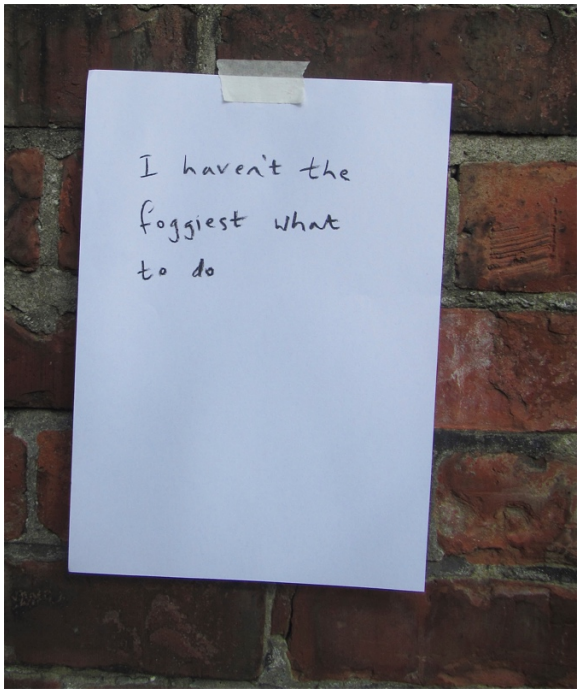

Figure 41. Flyer image for *I haven't the foggiest what to do.*

Location Royal Standard Liverpool, 28th Nov 2014.

Medium Live event five minutes duration.

Documentation Images on memory stick File:21 *I haven't the foggiest what to do*

Summary An opportunity to receive a standing ovation in a gallery setting.

Intentions This was an art gallery iteration of my *Outstanding standing ovation* piece, which had previously happened in a town hall. I wanted anyone who wanted to, to participate. I didn't mind if nobody did. I wanted to see how the piece functioned in a gallery, with an audience who didn't know me.

Method For a long time I had no idea what to do for this exhibition. I felt nervous about not knowing. Eventually I settled on using this not knowing, in the title of the piece and in the email flyer. The day before the show I decided that I would repeat my ovation piece within an art gallery setting. On the night I stood in the room and welcomed people in. The room

was dark except for a spotlight hanging overhead. I stood in the pool of light. I didn't announce the title of the piece. I said that people were free to leave whenever they wanted. I explained that the piece worked best if they could give me a massive round of applause and I asked everyone to do that. When they'd finished, I asked them to give me another louder round of applause. I suggested that people could shout and whistle too. When the cheering for me subsided I then explained that if anyone else wanted to receive an ovation they just needed to step forward and I would introduce them and then we'd all cheer. In all I think four people came forward to receive an ovation. I stepped back into the shadows, announced their name and then we all gave them a massive round of applause. The piece finished when no one else wanted to come forwards.

Figure 42. *I haven't the foggiest what to do* 2014 Royal Standard, Liverpool. Photo unknown.

Critical Reflection The audience were wary of taking part. There was a real awkwardness to it which had not been present during the earlier iteration *Outstanding standing ovation* (2014) which had taken place at Gateshead Old Town Hall. On this occasion in the smaller setting (at Royal Standard) it felt strained in that people seemed quite reluctant to come forward. Every time there was a 'pregnant' pause I just stood there quietly and waited for a

few minutes.[499] I feel that although far fewer people took part, the awkwardness that formed around this piece, improved it: because it gave time to consider what was behind the reluctance and hesitation to participate. The title of this piece worked well in that people identified with it. Far fewer people came forward for an ovation on this occasion. Partly I feel this reflects me not having a big email campaign beforehand and also being in a new environment when I didn't know the audience. Also, the small, enclosed gallery setting was quite a claustrophobic environment, perhaps with the potential to make people feel exposed and on edge and as a result less likely to take part. Likewise, there was no sound system or lighting to use to help set the scene.

What changes have I made since? This experiment has given me an insight into the difference that a location makes upon a piece of work.

Key words: location, clapping, ovation, participation, awkwardness.

[499] This awkward silence reminds me of moments in GP consultations when people sometimes find it difficult to say what they want to.

Appendix Q: I never knew that I could dance like this (2015)

Figure 43. *I never knew that I could dance like this* 2015, Gallery Space, NewBridge Project, Newcastle upon Tyne. View from outside, showing blocked out windows of gallery.

Location The Newbridge Project Space, Newcastle upon Tyne 21st June 2015.

Medium A participatory group event, five hours duration.

Documentation Phone footage and images on memory stick File 22. *I never knew that I*

Summary A five-hour dance session led by choreographer Martin Hylton.

Intentions This piece was intended as a participatory event, for people to learn to dance like Shakira. I wanted it to be enjoyable and self-enclosed, so that there would be no audience for it, only those of us taking part. I wanted to test the effect of re-presenting dance moves in a group context, within an art location.

Development The piece evolved directly from the earlier *A Point Meant 100* meetings some of which had involved trying to copy Shakira's dance moves from a lap-top. The choreographer Martin Hylton agreed to teach the dance that Shakira used on her video of 'Hips don't lie.' One of the lyrics from this is 'I never knew that I could dance like this' which

I chose for the title of this piece. Thinking people would be more comfortable taking part if they did *not* have to perform in front of a separate audience, I made it a closed event. The only people able to see it were those taking part. This reflected the process of the meetings in *A Point Meant 100* which were never viewed by a separate audience. I chose NewBridge Project Space because it was an 'art' location that had frosted windows, and no-one could see in. In addition, the room was large and had a dance mat. Tickets were free, on Eventbrite, with the option to pay-as-much-as-you- want. Any donations went towards costs, with all profits going to charity.

Methodology I brought a tray of fruit snacks for everyone to share. To avoid people feeling they were performing to camera, we collectively agreed to take as little documentation as possible, though there were one or two photos. Martin led the session in a very relaxed, enjoyable way. Twenty people attended and everyone took part. By the end of the day we managed to learn a version of Shakira's dance routine.

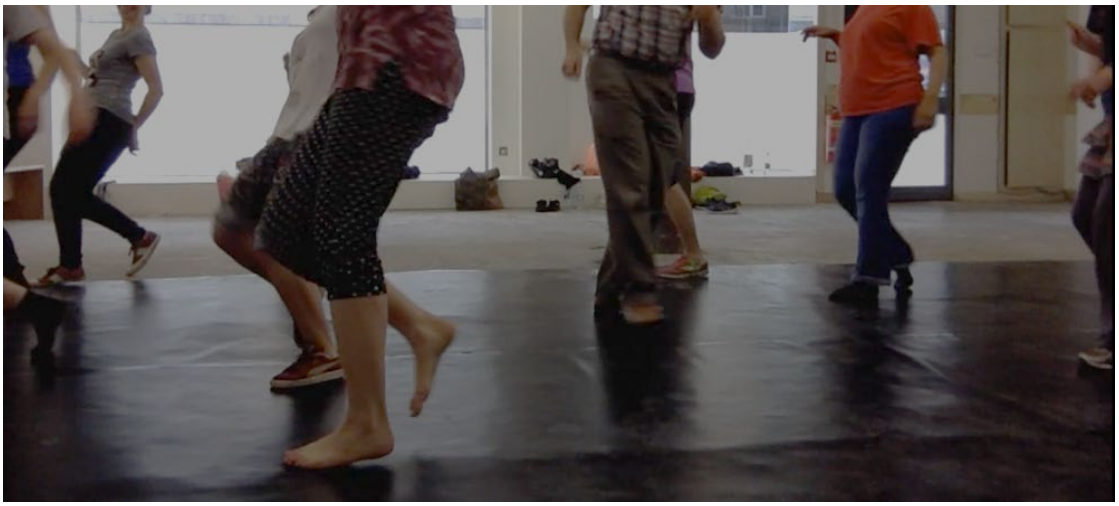

Figure 44. Feet of participants.

Critical Reflection This event went off very positively, with people joining in, dancing and seemingly enjoying themselves. By the end of it we did a reasonable version of the 'Hips Don't Lie' dance. However, my over-riding sense with this piece, was that whilst it had been nominally successful, the piece had been a dance lesson at an art venue and nothing more than that. It didn't feel like art to me. During its' delivery I questioned and regretted my

decision not to make this piece open to the public for viewing. I felt that the presence of an audience may have conferred some sort of artistic value or different meaning onto the piece. In addition, I sensed that the art venue itself (a slightly shabby disused office block) was too informal and similar to the environment of some dance studios. The context was wrong. Had this piece been delivered in a very formal gallery it might have worked differently: due to dissonance between the setting, the dance moves and the norms of social behaviour, within a gallery context. This piece increased my awareness of the influence context has on a piece. Whilst I cannot prove it would have worked any better in a formal gallery setting, I am confident that it would have worked *differently*. The presence of a separate viewing audience appears to increase the likelihood that an event will be viewed as art. There are limitations to re-presenting everyday situations that involve gestures as art. Giving too much priority to the feelings of participants can potentially limit a work. It is evident that, gestural activity especially movements that are synchronised with others changes the way that people feel (more energetic, more positive) and can be a means to enhance empathy in group situations.

Audio recording

Key words Dancing, amateur, low key, choreographer, delegation, collective, movement, gallery space, disappointing

Appendix R: Trying to pose like Bruce McLean when he posed in Poses for Plinths in 1971 (2015)

Figure 45. *Trying to pose like Bruce McLean when he posed in Poses for Plinths in 1971* (2015) ArtHouses, Whitley Bay Film Festival, 2015. Photo C Dearnley.

Location Whitley Bay Film Festival, Arthouses, Victoria Avenue 29.8.15

Medium. Live event eight minutes.

Documentation Images on memory stick File:23. *Trying to pose like Bruce McLean*

Summary I re-enacted the poses made by Bruce McLean in *'Poses for plinths'* (1971)

Intentions To be quick, light and a bit ad-hoc/amateurish, engaging.

Method I briefly introduced the piece: saying that I was going to try pose like Bruce Maclean when he posed in his piece *Poses for plinths* in 1971. I showed the audience the crib sheet of the poses that I was going to try and copy: which was a laminated copy of MacLean's *Poses for plinth* (1971). I then lay across the 3 upturned plastic bins and attempted to recreate each of the poses Maclean made for his piece. When I thought I'd achieved the pose I tried to hold that position for a minute. When I had completed all twelve poses, I said 'thankyou' to show that the piece was over.

Critical Reflection I used three upturned domestic plastic waste bins instead of formal plinths. The bins were a similar height to plinths that Maclean had used and two of the bins were equal in height (as two of his plinths had been). I also chose the bins to 'just grab whatever's to hand and using that'; which is often how I make work. I was going to someone else's house to do this piece and I didn't feel I could just grab the bins from their house. So, I went with something 'prepared' and opted for these bins because

1. They were there.
2. They were the right height.
3. They have a little bit of give in them, and more importantly, they could support my weight.

The piece was quick (but probably not quick enough) and ad-hoc. I am not convinced that it was engaging. In retrospect it feels like a sketch of a piece. Me holding and looking at the crib sheet to try and copy the poses worked in providing a somewhat low-key/amateurish aesthetic to this piece. Using the bins also functioned in this way (and they did also hold my weight which was good). My introduction to this piece was poor. I felt quite nervous and hadn't been clear in my head before I started, what I was actually going to say. This was apparent and I just waffled on a bit before I started the poses. It would have been better if I'd just introduced the title of the piece and then started. In this piece I wanted a clear delineation to the start of the performance, but I didn't achieve it. I wanted to quickly say 'this is what I'm going to do' and then to start the poses…. but I ended up waffling on a bit because I was nervous and hadn't planned it out well enough in advance. In other performances I have played a bit with my introductions (effectively pretending that I haven't yet started performing when I'm sometimes introducing the work, at length. This isn't true because the introduction I give is always a part of the performance and often a large part.[500] I don't think this piece was particularly engaging for the audience. People were interested to start with, but I feel that it went on too long. The shift between the twelve different poses I made was not that clear to the audience.[501]

[500] There is a similarity here with medical consultations such as explaining what will happen during a physical examination. I wonder if this is where my play on introductions comes from?

[501] There would have been more tension in the piece if I had been performing it on a concrete surface rather than grass. However, I'm not keen on hurting myself and it wasn't my intention to try and create tension in this

What changes have I made since? I am more aware of the importance of a clear starting point for some live pieces; and the need to be clear about how I introduce work, and to plan this properly beforehand.

What works did this lead on to? If I take this piece further, I would prefer to try and get other people to copy the posing on the plinths/bins. My initial thoughts of this as a live event would be the opportunity for the audience to try and reenact the poses (a bit like taking part in the coconut shy at a fair) However perhaps health and safety constraints would rule this out of ever being performed in a gallery setting.

Key words Re-enactment, live, movement, posture, ad-hoc, amateurish

way. In retrospect this may improve the piece. Perhaps it would be better as an on-going durational piece in the background. In fact, I quite often feel that some of the work I make would be better off in the background of a show rather than 'centre-stage.'

Appendix S: AAAAAGGGHH (2017)

Location NewbridgeProject group show opening.

Date 3rd Feb 2017

Medium Live event, three-minutes duration.

Documentation phone footage on memory stick File: 24 *AAAAAGGGHH*

Summary A collective single scream by people at the opening night of a show.

Figure 46. 'AAAAAGGGHH' NewBridge Project, Newcastle upon Tyne. A collective single scream to mark the inauguration of Donald Trump, 2017. Photo unknown.

Method I spoke to the audience briefly, explaining that I felt really depressed with the election of Trump and the vote for Brexit. I pointed out that Trumps inauguration had taken place almost 125 years to the day that Edvard Munch wrote about the inspiration for his painting *The scream* (1893).[502] I suggested people could in trying to quickly re-enact a scream together: if they wanted. People were keen. We did some limbering up exercises

[502] Reading the words by Munch very much made me relate to the nauseous feelings I had with Brexit and Trump. Some sense of foreboding and that the whole world has somehow shifted and gone a bit wrong. A sense of unease.

together first such as jumping on the spot. I explained we would do one massive scream together…as long as our breath would hold it and that would be the piece. I asked everyone to take a very deep breath, then scream out as far as it would go. Next we breathed in deeply and screamed together for one loud, prolonged exhalation of breath.[503]

Critical Reflection Speaking to the audience explaining what I wanted to do and asking if they are ok to be involved, very much links with trying to put patients at ease within the context of a GP consultation, and checking that they are ok with me for example examining them, or referring them to a specialist, or taking some blood. I also said how stressed and depressed I'd felt because it was true reflection of how I was feeling at the time. Within a consultation I would not normally be revealing my own feelings in such a direct way. However, I *would* respond to a patient if they told me about their own stressful situation... by agreeing that their situation say, was very difficult. By directly telling the audience that I felt depressed about Brexit/Trump I really felt that I was only acknowledging what many people in the audience were likely to be feeling at that time; as there were several discussions about this very topic before I started the piece. It felt quite cathartic, as if we were all in it together a bit. Which is often all that we do as a GP: be with/alongside people. A lot of people took part. A lot of people seemed to like it. One comment was 'that was brilliant, fucking brilliant. It's exactly what a performance should be. Quick, understandable and to the point.'

[503] I felt really nervous about doing this piece but was encouraged on the night, when two people (not knowing my plans) came up, and independently of each other, mentioned *The Scream* by Munch and how they were feeling 'all over the place' with what was happening in the world. The fact that other people seemed to be feeling the same way as me emboldened me to do the piece.

Appendix T: Poses for Footballers (2012)

Location Studio

Description In this series of work I attempted to re-enact the postures of footballers shown in photographs of sports pages of newspapers.

Documentation Images on memory stick File:25. *Poses for Footballers*

Themes This project covers gesture, social conventions of different contexts, and failure. It combines the humour and/or pathos of a person, alone, trying to copy gestures of professional athletes.

Intention and Development This piece began as an exploration in my studio. I was intrigued by the physical nature of photographs of footballers, their freedom of being able to move in such a physical and almost balletic way, and to seemingly be able to express themselves (at work) in such a charged, passionate, emotional way. I tried to copy the poses of these professional footballers in these photographs: to see what images of me would look like if caught in the same poses. Unfamiliar movements, not quite the same degree of success possible.

Background I could never imagine my own body being able to form those postures or being able to act against gravity to try and achieve the heights that the footballers achieve. There seemed to be such a freedom in the way they moved -that is caught in these static poses. The other aspect of these photos that intrigues me is the way footballers celebrate their success; and that it is socially acceptable for them to display such vigorous and sometimes aggressive celebrations like falling to the floor, arms wide out, mouth wide open. It must be so liberating to be free enough to move like that. Yet in my job in medicine, if I celebrated in that way after writing a prescription, making a diagnosis or helping someone – my behaviour would be deemed unacceptable; there would likely be a full complaint about me. It isn't socially acceptable to celebrate like a footballer in many other contexts either, such as in the street and artistic settings. In art contexts it would be possible to exhibit this behaviour as part of an art-piece, but not otherwise. If I'm honest I feel quite jealous of the freedom that footballers seem to have to do this.

Figure 47. *England captain Steven Gerrard celebrates his goal in the World Cup qualifier against Poland at Wembley*. Photo – Stefan Wermuth-Reuters.

Figure 48. *Daniel Sturridge makes light of a Damien Delaney challenge to create more danger for Liverpool*. Photo Paul Ellis-AFP-Getty-J.

Methodology I collected images of footballers from the sports page of any newspaper I read. I didn't bulk buy newspapers to collect images; I avoided buying papers with political content that I disagreed with.[504] My selection of photographs related to the postures of the footballers: mostly I chose vigorous 'action' shots depicting movement. There are very few pictures of footballers standing with their arms by their sides (say as if they were shopping). And if there were any images like this then generally I didn't select them to use. In keeping with 'using what was to hand' I wanted to replicate these images myself, rather than asking someone else to photograph me. I aimed to make all images using my mobile phone and downloaded an App that allowed me to take automatically timed photographs at a given series of intervals. I chose a plain background to remove the images from their context. I hung my mobile phone from a clip, set the automatic timer on the app then, looking at the newspaper image on my desk, I re-enacted each pose of the footballers, to camera. There were two aspects of this that I had to achieve, one was to form the pose as accurately as possible, the second was to do it at the same time as the phone took the automatic photograph. The end result was a large series of images which attempted to capture each photograph of the footballers.

Critical reflection The automatic timer on the mobile phone camera app worked well as a way of taking photographs independently; but the disadvantage is the lower quality of the photographs. However, the quickness and 'lightness' of this project is a large part of what it is about. Perhaps some brief sort of silliness that actually changes how you feel a lot (for the better) and which can easily be done, and which is at one level a very slight, light intervention. It of course links very well with Lefebvre's description of the everyday being. This work has great potential for a very quick interventions with other people, to re-create photographs together; crossing all sorts of social boundaries with it with regard to normal spatial distances. The disadvantage of doing a large series of these photos is that it would involve a lot of images of me in it.

[504] Using what is to hand, is often a part of my working process. If I buy that specific newspaper every other day, then those are the images that I will use.

Appendix U: A Point Meant 100 (meetings 1-27) 2015

Description Seventy timed meetings with friends and acquaintances.

Location café's, homes, offices, studios, GP consultation room, corridors and parks.

Aims To explore the effect of location on interpersonal dynamics of one-to-one meetings, particularly in relation to gesture and empathy. To make three art-pieces in response to non-verbal communication. And to test the potential of one-to-one meetings as a medium for art; by providing a 'service' for people; facilitating a 'shared experience'; and by imposing an artificial time-frame onto our conversations. I planned one hundred meetings.

Project Development It began as an exploration of influences on non-verbal communication in one-to-one meetings. Up until this point in my research, the appropriated non-verbal communication used in my projects, came from people communicating with larger audiences. Instead I decided to focus on more intimate every-day one to one settings; because these situations are routine, understated and perhaps less performative than those involving communication with larger numbers of people. And everyday interactions are overlooked, even though they are integral to our conversations. Through a series of informal meetings, I hoped to document non-verbal communication to form a starting point for work. I also wanted to reflect on the dynamics of the meetings and consider the role of empathy and gesture within them, in relation to the processes of consultations in general practice. Finally, I wanted to explore one-to-one meetings, not just as a source of material, but as a medium for my art.[505] The title *A Point Meant 100*, was a play on the word appointment. I asked friends if they would meet with me and explained my interest in non-verbal communication and the dynamics of meeting together. I got permission to film conversations so I could re-enact any of the non-verbal communication, as a starting point for future work. To reduce the power imbalance between us, I suggested they could decide what we did, or I could, or we could split the time available, equally between us. Some people decided the agenda, others asked me to and several requested that we took turns. I had completed twenty-seven *A Point Meant 100* meetings when my daughter Frances was

[505] Whilst I have never been drawn to using one-to-one meetings within art-work, they have however, formed the mainstay of my career as a doctor (and still do). Communicating with people in medicine is the part of the job that I love. I wondered if I could use aspects of this within my art.

diagnosed with cancer and I interrupted my Phd. On return, I completed another forty-three meetings and then stopped the project at a total of seventy. These two halves of *A Point Meant 100* are distinct. The second half was discussed in Chapter Five. The account here is of the first 27 meetings of *A Point Meant 100* .

Methodology Meetings were in homes, my studio, work offices, GP consultation rooms, and cafes: and usually lasted 10-minutes. The longest was 55-minutes. In half we chatted and in half we did something that the other person had chosen, in advance such as sitting in silence, walking, chopping vegetables, staring at each other. If I was asked to decide the agenda I suggested we try to dance like Shakira or re-enact the gestures of footballers in the latest newspapers. These activities related to my interest in gestural communication and I felt they would be enjoyable, simple and brief. One person opted to re-enact footballing gestures, and three re-enacted Shakira's dance moves. The dancing involved us trying to copy Shakira's moves from a You Tube clip on my lap top, and only lasted a few minutes. These meetings were very funny, and people were very positive about them. I chose medical contexts for some meetings, to assess the impact of that context, on the non-verbal communication. I met (for ten minutes each) with three medical friends at their

Figure 49. Screen shot of text reminder sent a day in advance, to anyone who agreed to a meeting.

place of work in GP surgeries and a hospital office. Before these visits I texted a reminder of their *A Point Meant 100* meeting to them. The wording of the text was appropriated from appointment reminders that I had received for my own NHS appointments. These meetings were timed for ten minutes using my phone. In these medically located meetings, one friend wanted to talk about work, the other two asked me to suggest something. I had come with a flask of coffee, fruit, CD's, poetry books and my lap-top with me. I offered a coffee and chat, reading poetry, listening to music and trying to dance like Shakira. No-one opted to dance like Shakira. In both GP meetings the doctors chose coffee and reading poetry out loud, which we did alternately. It was very emotional reading poetry in a GP consultation room, with medical objects such as the sharps bin, visible. During two of these meetings, I was struck by my friends behaving seemingly still in their role as doctors, rather than friends. This was evident partly due to their 'work' clothing but also by the more restrained way they sat, gestured and spoke: which was more controlled than if we spoke in non-medical contexts. And they had larger chairs, with greater access to the desk, than me.

They were extremely busy (and perhaps unable to switch off) but it seemed the medical context affected the nature of interpersonal communication that took place between us. This made me consider how my communication alters when I work as a doctor: I listen more, gesticulate less and pay more attention to my own non-verbal communication in relation to the other person. In addition, these *A Point Meant 100* meetings in medical locations seemed to act as distraction for the doctors from their usual routine: almost like art therapy for medical staff. Other meetings were held at places of work in the arts sector**.** Activities decided upon included chatting, me grinding beans to make people coffee, and physical exercises. No one opted to try to dance like Shakira. In these contexts, there appeared to be less pressure of time and the chosen duration of meetings was considerably longer than in the medical settings. I was less aware that people were performing a role when they talked: gestures and manner of speaking appeared the same as when we have met outside their work-space. On occasion, people sat with arms folded, looking at their computer and gave me little eye contact. When this occurred, I was aware that I was more tolerant of the lack of eye contact (in the art setting) than I would have been in a medical setting. This indicated to my differing expectations of other peoples' communication, according to location. As with the *A Point Meant 100* meetings in medical locations, I also felt that I provided a disruption to the daily working routine, during these *A Point Meant 100* meetings

in art contexts: surprisingly however, I had less sense that the meeting provided any form of therapeutic intervention for the people involved. This perhaps reflected differences in time pressures between the art and medical contexts, or my expectations of what might take place. During these initial twenty-seven *A Point Meant 100* meetings, I also reflected meetings that occur with personal trainers, hairdressers, mentors and life coaches, who sometimes visit people in their homes or work, for a series of sessions.

Documentation Diary entries, mobile phone photographs, some video footage.

Critical Reflection At this stage in *A Point Meant 100*, I felt that more questions had been raised, than answered. I had met people on a one-to-one basis and experienced a strange overlap between meeting as friends and meeting because of my research. We had talked in various locations: with differing duration and content of meetings. People were more relaxed to interact in their homes or my studio. In other places, whether cafes, parks, arts or medical work settings they were more inhibited about what they would do. None of this was unexpected, it only confirmed my previous assumptions about the effect that location has upon our social behaviour. However, the reasons for meeting up felt obscure. As *A Point Meant 100* unfolded I realised that it was impossible to make the meetings neutral: as they were part of my art research and ultimately had been initiated by me. Timing the meetings using my phone was interesting: it made them feel more formal and contained and made me consider the potential of what *could* be achieved in the ten minutes. The short durations echoed the reductive nature of 'sound-bites' on television. Once the timer went off the conversation was interrupted, and our focus was drawn to the time limitation. However frequently we continued to talk on. Usually this was a discussion about what had just taken place in the meeting. This continuation of the conversation (although of a different nature) made the purpose of timing the meetings confused. My over-riding sense at this stage was that a clearer direction and purpose for *A Point Meant 100* was needed. This project was interrupted by unexpected family illness. When I returned to university after a break in study, I made several changes to what became the second phase of *A Point Meant 100* which is described in Chapter Five.

Appendix V: Poses for Bins (2012-2020)

Location Project Space Newcastle University.

Medium Film three-minutes duration.

Documentation digital photographs in this account

Summary A short film in which I attempt to re-enact the poses that Bruce McLean made during his piece *Poses for Plinths* (1971). Instead of plinths I have used upturned bins.

Figure 50. Screenshot of *Poses for Bins* 2020.

Method In 2012 I tried to re-enact Bruce McLeans poses, in my studio, using a photograph of his piece as a crib sheet, and upturned bins to position myself on, instead of plinths. I wanted to make this film independently so used my computer to film my movements. I never felt that this piece was a resolved piece and had just kept it unchanged for ages. Occasionally I looked at it again but didn't know what to do with it. In 2020 I edited the film: speeding up certain sections so that the overall duration was brief. In addition, I made pauses in the film to highlight the twelve poses that were made during the process of gestural re-enactment. I also added a small amount of tickertape text to it, which revealed how I had been thinking during the process of filming.

Critical Reflection This is the final piece that I made during the Phd research and I was extremely pleased with it. It makes me laugh to think how long I had kept it, before actually knowing what to do with it. I like the final outcome, which has humour and pathos in it. The addition of the text works well adding different meanings to it. It felt very natural to me to be adding this text and it is funny to see how clearly this relates to the reflections that Georges Perec made during his writing. I also like the fact that it has taken an eight-year delay before I have known what to do with it. I had never really considered that some hesitations could take this long but I guess this piece is proof that they can.

Appendix W: Naming a thesis (2012-2019)

A list of all of the different titles I have had for this thesis.

1. It's not what you do it's the way that you do it
2. It's not what you do it's the way you make others feel
3. It's not what you do it's the way that you do it that makes others feel
4. It's not what you feel it's the way that you feel it.
5. It's not what you say it's the way that you feel it.
6. It's not what you say it's the way that you hear it.
7. It's not what you say it's the way that you fear it.
8. It's not what you do it's the way that you fear it.
9. It's not what you do it's the way that you feel it.
10. It's not what you say or do it's the way that I feel it.
11. It's not what you do or say or say or think you say it's the way that other people experience it.
12. It's not what you do it's the way that other people experience it.
13. It's not what you say or do or do or say it's the way that we hear and see and feel it.
14. It's not what you do it' s the way you tread on other people's toes.
15. It's not what you do it's the way you bullshit and pretend that you don't
16. It's not what you do it's the crap that you say about it.
17. It's not what you do it's the way that you talk about it.
18. It's not what you-do-or-say-or-say-you-do-its-the-way-you-make-us-feel
19. Um, er…hesitation and empathy in making.
20. Um…Hesitation and Empathy in The Making
21. Um, er …Hesitation and Empathy in The Making
22. Hesitation and empathy in making.
23. Hesitation and Empathy in the Making
24. Hesitation In The Making
25. Empathy-In-The-Making
26. Hesitation-In-The-Making
27. Empathy-In-The-Making
28. Empathy in making, hesitation in the writing
29. Mempathy and Wresitation.
30. It's not what you do it's the way that you hoo Hoo
31. It's not what you do it's the way that you H H
32. It's not what you do it's the way that you i i
33. It's not what you do it's the way that you dot dot dot squiggle squiggle dash.
34. It's not what you do it's the way that you forward slash, forward slash, forward slash
35. It's not what you do it's the way that you J J J J

36. It’s not what you do it’s the way that you fe- eel.
37. It’s not what you do it’s the way that you hair-air
38. It’s not what you do it’s the way that you tear-up
39. It’s not what you do it’s the way that you Ig Ig
40. It’s not what you do it’s the way that you Ug Ug
41. It’s not what you do it’s the way that you Back-ack.
42. It’s not what you do it’s the way that you ju-ump.
43. UM – ER: Beyond words
44. UM – ER: when words won’t do.
45. UM-ER using empathy to make connections.
46. Um, Er it’s difficult to say what it is
47. Um, er I don’t really know.
48. Well er I can’t really tell.
49. Um I’m kind of not sure
50. Well you know what I mean
51. Sort of thing
52. You know what I mean
53. You see what I mean?
54. I mean I’m trying to say.
55. I guess I thought that it might be
56. If you kind of imagine er
57. I guess well I was thinking that
58. So it’s Kind of this
59. So, what it is about is
60. It’s about well the way that
61. It’s about the way that it’s obviously not so obvious as we all thought.
62. It’s purporting to be obvious, but it obviously isn’t
63. It’s about as you will see
64. It’s obviously not as clear as originally intended
65. Um er well this is difficult to say.
66. Um it’s hard to speak out.
67. Um er it’s what I want to say
68. Um er what I want to say is
69. Um Er what I’m going to say is
70. Um Er what it is is
71. Um, Er, it’s
72. Um Er this thesis is
73. Um Er this thesis is
74. Um Er this research is
75. Um, Er this is it!

76. This time our lovin is the real thing!
77. Um Er that's not what I meant
78. What I meant is that this is it.
79. This is it
80. This is er it.
81. This is um it
82. Um This is er it
83. WTF was I thinking?
84. It seemed a good idea at the time.
85. God only knows.
86. What the hell?
87. I've no idea what it is
88. I've no idea what to call it
89. Not even sure what it's about.
90. It'll look nice on the shelf.
91. Can't imagine it finished
92. An exploration into
93. Who knows what?
94. If you don't know, neither do I.
95. It took you how long?
96. What's it about
97. Don't even ask.
98. I said don't even ask.
99. Not now.
100. I don't know
101. I'm not sure
102. I struggle to say
103. Well it's um
104. Well, it's about er
105. Well what I was
106. I was thinking it might
107. So, you see, if we
108. How can we connect?
109. How can we get a grip?
110. Making a connection.
111. Connecting with gesture
112. Trying to connect
113. Trying to connect with gesture
114. Why fluent?
115. Well why should I?

116. Why do you insist on that?
117. It's not rocket science
118. It certainly isn't
119. Um, er I thought it
120. Um er I thought if we
121. Trying to connect in a
122. What's not to love about a hesitation
123. What did you think you were doing?
124. How many years?
125. It took you how long?
126. And hasn't changed anything?
127. They said it would be a journey
128. It's about
129. Well, er, if you
130. If you see what I mean
131. Certainly uncertain
132. I'm not sure
133. Definitely maybe
134. Slow and clunky
135. A bit crap can be better
136. Who would have thought?
137. Who would have guessed?
138. I never knew that I could write like this
139. It's not what you think
140. It's not what you write it's the way that you er um write it
141. It's not what you do it's the way that you do it
142. It's not what you say it's the way that you say it
143. It's not what you say it's the way that you express it
144. It's not what you say it's the way that you gesture it
145. Gestures speak louder than er words
146. Gestures speak louder than words
147. Do our gestures say anything?
148. What on earth?
149. What did you mean?
150. A theme for a dream
151. Words don't always work
152. Why does always
153. Why do words take priority?
154. Who says what?
155. Who says?

156. Who says words?
157. I say you say we say
158. I saw Esau sitting on a see saw
159. You say me say
160. Wot say you say why say
161. Why say what
162. Who say why?
163. What say how
164. How say what
165. We say you say um er
166. Er, Er, it's
167. Er it's um it's like
168. Well it's kind of like
169. Under-confidence is the new positive.
170. Confidently underconfident
171. God, I don't think I can do a confident title.
172. Keep going keep going it might just work.
173. Fake it til you make it
174. Fake it til you make it
175. Fake it til you bake it.
176. Bake it and then fake it.
177. Make it fake it make it.
178. My special work just knows it.
179. It's unreal how congealed it all feels.
180. UM ER it's not what you do it's the way that you do it

Appendix X: List of Documented works on Memory Stick

The memory stick that accompanies this thesis contains documentation of all of the creative practice, as follows:

File 1. *A Point Meant 100* meetings 28-70 (2015)

File 2. *Outstanding Life Changing Sculptures Made by Other People (and me) When We Were Talking about Something Else* (2017)

File 3. *List of Works* (2017)

File 4. *A Talk about my work* (2017)

File 5. *I'm On The Train: A year's worth of over-heard mobile phone calls* (2014)

File 6 *Hand Gesture Piece* (2017)

File 7 *Hand Gesture Film* (2018)

File 8 *The Great Cragside Cover Up: Gestures* (2018)

File 9. *Brick Wall* (2018)

File 10 *Sculptural Silence* (2019)

File 11 *Final Preparations and Forced Laughter* 1 (2012)

File 12 *Synchrocrispicity* (2013)

File 13 *The Great Forced LOLathon* (2013)

File 14 *The Synchrocrispettes* film and performance (2014)

File 15 *O Mio Babbeano Caro* (2014)

File 16 *Forced Laughter* 3 (2014)

File 17 *Hand Cleansing Techniques Number One: how to wash your hands with soap and water* (2014)

File 18 *I don't know what to call this (Tennis Grunts*) 2014

File 19 *Why don't adults skip?* number two (2014)

File 20 *Outstanding Standing Ovation* (2014)

File 21 *I haven't the foggiest what to do* (2014)

File 22 *I never knew that I could dance like this* (2015)

File 23 *Trying to pose like Bruce McLean* (2015)

File 24 *AAAAAGGGHH* (2017)

File 25 *Poses for Footballers* (2012)

File 26 *A Point Meant 100* (meetings 1-27) 2015

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