

*The Mist of Gesture*

(Performed at Empty Gesture, Alaska Projects, Sydney, 2012)

Five of the six exchanges that took part with the collaborating artist for project Empty Gesture are represented through various manifestations in the gallery. I would like to present the sixth exchange that took place with Joshua Sofaer now under the title: *The Mist of Gesture*.

On Monday April 20, I got out of bed at 6:15am.

I showered, dressed, turned on the kettle, made a pot of tea and sat down at my computer. I thought about the day and what might become of it. I thought about the weather and about Joshua. I like Joshua, everything that I know of him, I like. Outside it was overcast, inside the air was thick and I felt heavy. I looked up the forecast for Sydney, it said 14 degrees, I looked up the forecast for London, and it said 24 degrees. It was my 6pm, his 9am.

I Skyped Joshua, we spoke for one hour

It was Wednesday in London and Joshua had just completed his training to be a Relational Dynamics Coach.

“What does that mean?” I asked

He said it doesn’t really mean anything, “it’s like passing a driving test, it doesn’t really mean you’re a very good driver.”

Relational Dynamics focuses on emotional intelligence, the development of emotional skills and ‘useful failure’.

I asked Joshua if he’d like to coach my relational dynamics.

He said yes. We could do it for the first fifty minutes of our time together and that as the coachie, I needed to come up with a question.

“What would I like to achieve in the next 50 minutes of coaching?” he asked

I said that I would like to achieve a clearer understanding of what I needed to get together for the opening date of Empty Gesture. What in fact would an opening be for such a project be? I explained the project...

I said

“I’ve asked some artist to join me in considering the gesture of participation in their art practice. What does it mean to open up their process, allowing the outcome to be influenced by other people? This invitation to participate is everywhere, to stand up, take part, be accountable, and belong is prolific, not just in art works, not just in social networking sites but in everything: from local government to cocoa cola advertising campaigns, supermarket surveys and grass roots political movements. The thing is, this project is like a workshop, it’s a long conversation, a series of questions, a time for investigation, and now I’ve hung this short research period on an outcome by having an exhibition. I’m not sure why I’ve done that. So my question is: how do I accumulate and share this knowledge of participation as gesture with both artists and the public?”

Then Joshua asked

“If you were to imagine the ideal situation. Let’s say that the question: how do I accumulate and share this knowledge of participation as gesture with both artists and the public was fully realized and it was fantastically successful, what would that be?”

I said

“In order for this to be fully realized and fantastically successful I would imagine three things. There would be the faces of the exhibition. A room of mist: that is the mist of gesture and one massive loud, abrupt, gesture, a performance.

“Is there anything else?” He asked.

“No” I said.

“What kind of faces are those faces of the exhibition?”

“The faces of the exhibition are of support and of judgment. They are faces of peers; of friends and people I don’t know. They are standing around drinking. They’re friendly and intimidating but I feel OK.”

“Is there anything else about faces of the exhibition?” He asked.

“No” I said.

“What kind of mist is that mist of gesture?”

“It’s a light, dense, romantic, pleasurable mist, the mist that comes before the fog or just after it.”

“Is there anything else about the mist?” He asked

“No” I said, “I think I’m happy with that.”

“One massive gesture, loud and abrupt, a performance. What kind of performance is that performance?” He asked

“The performance is like a fanfare, a series of performances, or it could be a performance lecture. Its something that happens once, with no other traces, and then its’ gone.”

“Is there anything else about the performance?” He asked

“No” I said

“And now if I’m to ask you again what would the ideal outcome be of: ‘how do I accumulate and share this knowledge of participation as gesture with both artists and the public’, and you think of the faces of the exhibition that show support and judgment, of peers and people that you don’t know; the room of mist, the light, dense, romantic mist of gesture, or the one loud and abrupt massive gesture, the series of performances, like a fan fare, a performance lecture with no other traces, gone...Do you think there is anything else or do you think that the ideal situation lies in there?” He asked

“Um, I think the ideal lies in there. I think I could unpack it further but I think I would be coming back to the same combination.”

“Is it a combination of all of those or one of those?” He asked.

“Yes except, perhaps without the fan fare.” I said

“So out of all of that, what would you like to concentrate on now?” He asked.

“My goodness” I said, “the mist”.

“The mist, OK, lets stay on the mist” He said. “So what kind of mist is that mist?”

“It’s a beautiful mist, its romantic; it’s a cold climate mist.”

“Is there anything else about the mist?”

“ Yes I said, it’s like a Sherlock Holmes mist”

“And what’s that like?”

“Funnily enough, the mist is full of mystery and intrigue, it’s inviting.

“And where is this mist?” He asked.

“The mist is in the car park.”

And what happens just before mist?

“Just before the mist is the rest of the world.” I said.

“And where could mist have come from?”

“From the process, from the messiness. Confusion is inherent in communication and that is the process of the project. It has come from all the people I have worked with. It is man made.”

“Can mist happen?”

“Yes, I think it can.”

“And what needs to happen in order for mist to happen?”

“Air - flow and a change in temperature. It s a climate thing I guess and its cold in Alaska...I am taking mist away from it. I’m a little confused about the outcome but I’ am taking mist away.

“What is 14 x 36?”

“Can I use a calculator?”

“No.”

“Can I write it down?”

“No.”

“I don’t know” I said.