

The idea:

Meaningless Dance 13 (Empty Gestures) is a duet composed of meaningful hand gestures ripped from the internet. Two dancers move through a series of signs and gestures borrowed from multiple 'everyday' sources (such as sign language, codified religious movements, or casual unconscious motion in conversation). Performed to the precise beat of a metronome, the simplicity and synchronicity of the movements amplifies the hesitations and minor differences between the dancers; the deceptively simple premise produces a quietly poetic and complexly intimate encounter. Whilst recognizable and rehearsed the gestures are ambiguous and decontextualized - the only certainty being the intense and material commitment of the performers to learn and reproduce them.

An accumulating series of data held within two bodies, the chain of learned material grows with each performance. Within an contemporary situation in which knowledge and information is circulated more widely and rapidly than ever before, the piece questions how memory is located, the borders of intangible cultural heritage, and how ideas spread across bodies. Hovering within the meaning/lessness of these cited gestures, the work exposes the very real labour of delivery; questioning what a sincere gesture might be from performer to audience. We aim to interrogate the relationship between performer and spectator - what can each offer the other; and what kind of commitment, to communication, interpretation or understanding, is demanded or expected from either side? How might sincerity and meaninglessness meet, and what might this mean to an audience?

About us:

Tempura Batter's research considers meaning and meaninglessness through oblique gestures, drawing from a playful and critical approach to the stage. The collaborative practice of Rohanne Udall and Paul Hughes, it takes place across choreographic, performance and visual arts contexts. Our work is born out of, and speaks to, a culture that is saturated in content and subject to endless streams of reference and possibility; we are attracted to processes of fidgeting, filtering, distraction, emulation and disruption.

Our writing projects host collisions and confusions between participants and unfold out towards the reader through instruction and suggestion. These uncertain encounters take place on the stage through a spectator/performer relationship that moves between the empathizable and the distant. By manipulating the space between internal sensation and a viewing audience, we question the performance of the neutral body, unsettling and engrossing both the fleeting spectator and a more sustained encounter.

Recent work includes *Empty Gestures* (Rich Mix; Attenborough Arts Centre; 2016) and *Partner Dances For One* (Camden People's Theatre; Battersea Arts Centre; I'Klectik Art Lab; 2015-16); an exhibition of performance *Floorplan//Here Or Now* (Rich Mix; 2015); and collaborative writing projects *Imaginary Festivals Project* (Forest Fringe; 2014) and *Digital Writing Group* (International Conference on Artistic Research; 2016). We are currently working with Vlatka Horvat on new work *Minor Planets* for HAU, Berlin, premiering 2017.

Why The Yard?

Our work emerges out of a landscape of performance including choreography, visual arts, experimental theater and performance art. Often too abstract for theatre, too insincere for live art and with not enough dancing for dance, we find our work in an interdisciplinary gulf. The Yard Theatre, and in particular its NOW festival, has produced a climate in which artists and audiences can move across these disciplinary boundaries. As we develop our emergent practice, we see NOW'17 as a rare space in which we can experiment with presenting our work within a more major context yet remain resolutely committed to our values of playfulness and abstraction.

Within the climates of austerity and neoliberalism, the experimental performance scene often explicitly announce its political utility as a space of assembly, exchange, expression and critique. However, within a society that calls for productivity, stringency and accountability, we resolutely defend and insist on what we see as art's potential to remain wasteful and non-instrumentalized - a celebratory waste of energy, time, space and possibility. *Empty Gestures* forms one of our strategies of this waste, a waste of effort that refuses to produce a clear meaning or message. The potential for communication is questioned in the flattened cataloguing and reproduction of these gestures. We hope our place within NOW'17, a festival responsive to developments of the contemporary performance scene, could reflect the continued significance of strategies of insignificance and meaninglessness.

Which mentor, and why?

We would like to be mentored by Deborah Pearson; we believe she would be receptive to and positively challenge the values to which we work, and the formal structures we employ within our pieces. Her work feels close to ours conceptually. *The Future Show* in particular feels in the same universe as *Empty Gestures* - 'a task, which becomes a theatre', as described by Time Etchells, it is also a game of memory and time, an accumulation that grows and mutates with each repetition.

Stage of development:

Empty Gestures has had work-in-progress showings at the Attenborough Arts Centre (US & THEM 6, May 2016) and Rich Mix (Exhi[5]bititions, June 2016) running at 10 - 15 minutes. Over winter, whilst on Residency at Hospitalfield Arts in Arbroath, we will be developing the work into a stand-alone length peice of approximately 20-30 minutes.

Links to previous work:

Meaningless Dance 13 (Empty Gestures) work-in-progress showing at Attenborough Arts Centre, <https://vimeo.com/177359138>

Meaningless Dance 14, <https://vimeo.com/177154968>

Tempura Batter's website: <https://tempurabatter.wordpress.com/>

Preferred dates: Available weeks of 30th January onwards.