

Spatial Language in Jest

The installation consists of a video, sound composition and print.

The starting point for the working process came in the form of three videos in which jokes involving driving were relayed in American Sign Language (ASL). Each time the hand gestures in one storyline showed visual similarities to those of another, an edit was made to that one. In so doing, a continuous movement takes place between one extract of a tale and the next, while the punch lines of the jokes are always avoided.

For every jump in association, another hand sign technique, known as the Kodály Method, was briefly inserted. This system was originally developed as an aid for teaching music, particularly singing, according to syllable names (*do, re, mi, fa, so, la, and ti*) that function as scales. These breaks were edited together producing a video sequence totalling 7 minutes in length, to be utilised much like a plan and basis for later work. The project was undertaken without any understanding of ASL, in order that chance outcomes could occur, both in it's apparent content and in the way that it generated the arrangement of sounds afterwards.

The gestures used in this video were then learnt and performed in front of a video camera in one session and without any subsequent editing carried out. While the face generally plays an important role in sign languages for those who cannot hear, *Spatial Language in Jest* only focuses on the hands.

It therefore does not present actual sign language, but rather a modified kind so as to view hand gesture from a more universal perspective.

On view is also a poster-sized digital print in which the movements have been manually documented through graphic markings on two black spheres. This diagram is further intended to function as a score for future performances, for which textual instructions would accompany it.

Sounds were composed according to the short time frames needed for each gesture and where they were to be found within the spheres. The frequency range of the electronic sounds depended on how high or low the hands were in relation to the body, or according to other audiovisual associations.

The audio is played through two speakers, each representing one hand. Due to the placing of the speakers within the gallery space, an acoustic effect emerges that provides depth to the visual material on show.

The loudspeakers and the monitor screen are situated so that the sound can be perceived independently as well as in conjunction with the video. For the latter, the hand and audio signals have been positioned as precisely as possible in respect to one another.

Spatial Language in Jest considers questions relating to gesture, hierarchy and control, as well as language and chance meetings, among other things.