



## Vishal Judgeo

### *Square Configuration (Decorum) Study*

The Helen Pitt Gallery Artist Run Centre is honoured to host the exhibition of a new work by Los Angeles based artist Vishal Judgeo.

*Square Configuration (Decorum) Study* is a provocative installation that puts forward complex representations of social interaction that are at once denaturalized, distanced, absurd and evocative of different types of codified speech.

Amateur actors are situated in a lush film-set that subtly shifts from one sequence to the next as it approximates various kinds of interior space. In each of these brief vignettes, the performers in *Square Configuration (Decorum) Study* likewise shift in their mode of address, sometimes speaking out directly to the viewer - as in a public speech or press conference - elsewhere engaging in tense, personal confrontations. Consistent across these multiple characterizations is an apparent discrepancy

or gap between that which the actor is speaking and how it is that the artist has chosen to represent the context of this action.

Most of Vishal Judgeo's recent work engages with the codes and conventions of film and television production. Whereas popular TV and narrative cinema generally aim to seduce the viewer into forgetting the artifice of the medium, the constructed nature of what is presented here is rendered explicit.

The film-set is invoked through sculptural interventions made in the gallery and it is from within this constructed space that we view the work. While certain material aspects of the installation do mirror the set that is seen in the video, it is by no means an exact recreation. These levels of infidelity - the original set as featured in the video being already excised from reality

- finds corollary in the decorum and detachment enacted by the performers. They are, in their unreality, all the more palpably real, which works against the way we are used to watching video-recorded drama.

The peculiar quality of the actors' performance in *Square Configuration (Decorum) Study* distances the viewer but also engenders the necessary fluidity in the numerous iterations of their relationship with one another. They are flattened just enough to receive the projection we cast onto the nature of their being together. As their relationship seems to change from one scene to the next, so does each of the performer's persona.

The destabilized subjectivity of the performers denies us a cohesive narrative and withholds the kind of empathy that is the essence of conventional theatre, TV or film. The loaded, irrational dialogue and nonsensical actions so rich in symbolic meaning recall earlier alienating resistances to administered society. (The Brechtian strategy of emotionally distancing the audience from performers quickly comes to mind.) It is clear, however, that this work behaves very differently when compared with its modernist predecessors.

We find ourselves now in a depoliticized and highly charged quagmire where ideology functions almost imperceptibly in everyday life. The nuances



and complexity of today's conflicts demand an engagement and sensitivity that is scarcely visible in mediated representations of politics. Extracting bits and pieces of the often empty language and rhetoric of popular TV news and entertainment programming, Judgeo bolsters this dialogue with intimate and inflammatory texts that speak around social inequities brought about by racism, neo-liberalism and our failure to communicate. The urgency implicit in the video is not plainly political, but more broadly encompasses the near-impossibility of adequately approaching and understanding an other through the symbolic power of language.

In this refreshing new work, Vishal Judgeo affords us new opportunities for investigating the absurdity and struggle of our attempts at being with one another and offers us a thoughtful reprieve from the ceaseless babble of official culture by revealing the very irrationality that it attempts to conceal.

Paul Kajander  
Director/Curator

Vishal Judgeo is a Canadian artist currently based in Los Angeles. He has exhibited in Canada and the United States, including solo exhibitions at the Western Front in Vancouver, and at LAXART in Los Angeles. Group exhibitions include the Armory Center for the Arts, Pasadena, Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions, Los Angeles and Leslie Tonkonow Artworks + Projects, New York. Judgeo received a BFA from Simon Fraser University, Vancouver, an MFA from the University of California, Los Angeles, and attended the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture, Skowhegan, Maine.

Julian Geoghegan & Simon de Brée are students of the Emily Carr University of Art and Design.