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This thesis is written, edited and designed by Wietske Nutma,  
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# [In-deks]

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04. [in-truh-**duhk**-shuh n]

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06. Chapter I

[Ey] [**lang**-gwij] [uhv] [th uh] [**bod**-ee]

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12. Chapter II

12. Part I

[Fruhm] [mee] [too] [yoo]

16. Intermission 1.0

[Th uh] [mahynd] [uhv] [th uh] [**uhth**-er]

18. Part II

[Fruhm] [mahynd] [too] [wurd]

22. Intermission 2.0

[Rep-ri-zen-**tey**-shuh n] [uhv] [sound]

26. Part III

[Fruhm] [sheyp] [too] [kee]

30. Intermission 3.0

[Neet], [kleer] [and] [**awr**-der-lee] [uh-**reynj**-ed]

34. Part IIII

[Fruhm] [**bod**-ee] [too] [rep-ri-zen-**tey**-shuhn]

38. Intermission 4.0

[En-**hanc**-ing] [th uh] [**pou**-er] [uhv] [th uh] [wurd]

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42. Chapter III

[Too] [**kuhn**-klood]

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46. [List] [uhv] [**ref**-er-uhns-es]

[in-truh-  
duhk-shuh n]

Did you ever had that feeling when texting someone, sending an email or some other type of message that you do not know how to put into words what you want to say. You are worried that the reader will interpret it in a different way than you intended, but there are just no other words to put it, to make it feel more right. Suddenly you wish you could be there, with him/her, so that he/she could see your face and listen to how you would say it, how your body would be aiding you in your words. Not only for the receiver to understand you better but also to instantly see the reaction, the emotions playing over the face, the way he/she holds his/her body.

These signals we provide help to mediate our intention when words alone do not suffice. We can always rely on our intonation, facial expression and bodily movements to change the tone of the words that we use. This non-verbal communication plays the most important part in our day-to-day contact.

Yet the written word does not support this language. It is characterised by its restrictions, its soundless, has a fixed form, and it is flat, two-dimensional. It is a system in which we cannot (yet) be bodily present. How could one see four dimensions at once? How do you catch those shifting and subtle changes of expression in the body? The question arises how words can accurately convey their meaning if the body is not present and if they in fact can at all. They are a beautiful attempt but scoring the moving, sounding body in 4 dimensions remains elusive.

This thesis argues, based on an analysis of the unique languages of both the body and the word, that a void arose in communication as the language of our body continued to get more and more lost in translation. The development of technology over the last hundred years only enforces this loss, this disembodiment. In contrast, it examines the manner in which the human body is captured and depicted through different (more artistic) writing methods, that try to break through all the aforementioned limitations of language, in search of a true writing of the body. Fiona Banners's Performance Nudes and Christine sun Kim's drawings among other things will help us to see the body as more of a communicative tool, one that escapes the grasp of words.

Through them we can discover how this void in communication not only has its negative qualities but how it in fact can be used as a (artistic) tool from which new methods can emerge. Methods where meaning can occur across linguistic understanding.

[Ey] [lang-gwij]  
[uhv] [th uh]  
[bod-ee]



"Speechless complainer,  
 I will learn thy thought;  
 In thy dumb action will I be as perfect  
 As begging hermits in their holy prayers:  
 Thou shalt not sigh, nor hold thy stumps to heaven,  
 Nor wink, nor nod, nor kneel, nor make a sign,  
 But I of these will wrest an alphabet  
 And by still practice learn to know thy meaning."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Shakespeare, W. (1623). *Titus Andronicus*. Retrieved from <http://firstfolio.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/download/text-pdfs/F-tit.pdf>

There is a language which we (as humans) barely even notice. One we do not actively 'read' but understand subconsciously, its recognition resonates deep within us. It's more of a feeling than anything else. This great communicator functions outside the realm of the word in an "unspoken dialogue"<sup>2</sup>. It is the language of our body, the non-verbal aspects of communication to which Shakespeare's text alludes. This unspoken dialogue, all those messages that people exchange beyond the words themselves, is crucial and often overshadows the verbal communication that is going on. Humans have been so pre-occupied with the word and our ability to give words to our emotional condition, that we tend to overlook the fact that our body, face, voice, appearance, touch, distancing, timing, and physical surroundings all play a part in creating the total communication. Together all these aspects can tell one story while our words may be telling another. If we analyse what it in fact adds to our communication we can see that we unintentionally very much rely on this nonverbal type of communication. "Nonverbal communication is omnipresent, its facets pervade virtually every communicative act."<sup>3</sup> Our bodies are constantly in motion, when talking to each other we move our hands, eyes, face and body, even when we're just listening. It is also not limited to conversation, we can indicate our state of mind by just touching our face. These signals provide a lot of information, e.g. the way you stand while talking to someone - how you move your feet, hands, eyes and eyebrows - says a lot about your involvement in the conversation and your underlying attitude towards the other. How long you're talking and how often you are interrupted also plays a role. The position of your arms and legs, both while sitting and standing, can show your mood and intention. The way you smile - the facial muscles you use and how fast you use them - shows whether you're really happy or just pretending, if you're lying or telling the truth, or if you're feeling anxious, miserable, superior or insecure.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Burgoon, J. K., Guerrero, L. K., & Floyd, K. (2009), pp.2. *Nonverbal Communication*. Retrieved from [https://books.google.nl/books?id=KaZYCwAAQBAJ&pg=PT67&hl=n1&source=gbs\\_selected\\_pages&cad=2#v=onepage&q&f=false](https://books.google.nl/books?id=KaZYCwAAQBAJ&pg=PT67&hl=n1&source=gbs_selected_pages&cad=2#v=onepage&q&f=false)

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., pp 3.

<sup>4</sup> Collett, P., & Twisk, L. C. (2003). *De verborgen boodschap*. Utrecht, The Netherlands: Bruna



Nixon and JFK shaking hands  
Collett, P., & Twisk, L.  
C. (2003). *De verborgen boodschap*. Utrecht, The Netherlands: Bruna

<sup>4</sup> Collett, P., & Twisk, L. C. (2003). *De verborgen boodschap*. Utrecht, The Netherlands: Bruna

<sup>5</sup> Sapir, E., & Mandelbaum, D. G. (1949). *Selected Writings in Language, Culture and Personality*. Berkeley, United States of America: University of California Press.

In the photograph above you can see an example of the amount of information behind just a simple handshake. A display of dominance often manifests itself literally by using the high handshake when shaking hands. In the televised debate, JFK, who won not only the debate but also the presidential elections of 1960, had the upper hand while defeated Nixon had the lower during their handshake.<sup>4</sup>

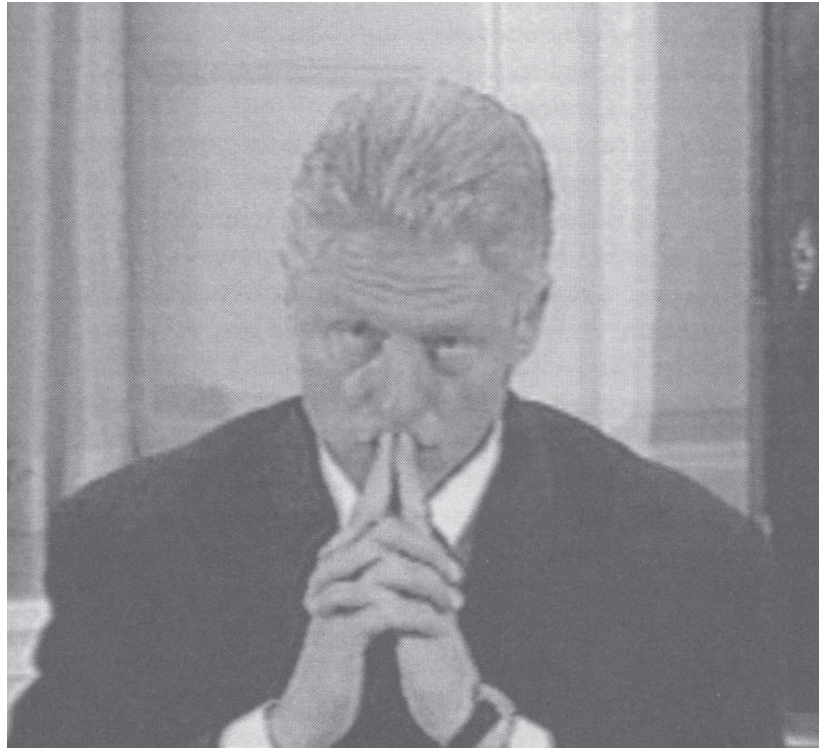
Edward Sapir wrote: "We respond to gestures with an extreme alertness and, one might almost say, in accordance with an elaborate and secret code that is written nowhere, known to none and understood by all."<sup>5</sup>

Body language is something we learn through experience. It is by looking at each other signals and imitating them that we understand what they can accomplish. It is a process that evolves naturally in each and every one of us, often without conscious thought. It is funny to see how some movements are so literal, covering the mouth for instance, is an important sign of lying, perfectly illustrated in the photograph below



by Bill Clinton. When he had to testify before the Grand Jury during his impeachment investigation, he repeatedly touched his mouth. As if he did not want to let the the truth escape between his fingers.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Collett, P., & Twisk, L. C. (2003). *De verborgen boodschap*. Utrecht, The Netherlands: Bruna



Bill Clinton

Collett, P., & Twisk, L. C. (2003). *De verborgen boodschap*. Utrecht, The Netherlands: Bruna

Some of these behaviours, such as the example above, are universal. Wherever you are blushing remains a sign of embarrassment, shrugging the shoulders a sign of indifference, and the sincere smile a sign of joy. **"They allow people to communicate with one another at the most basic level regardless of their familiarity with the prevailing verbal language system. Such nonverbal actions thus transcend cultural differences, forming a kind of universal language."**<sup>7</sup> Meaning that when words fail us we can always fall back on these signals to achieve some degree of mutual understanding.

<sup>7</sup> Burgoon, J. K., Guerrero, L. K., & Floyd, K. (2009), pp. 5. *Nonverbal Communication*. Retrieved from [https://books.google.nl/books?id=KaZYCwAAQBAJ&pg=PT67&hl=n1&source=gbs\\_selected\\_pages&cad=2#v=onepage&q&f=false](https://books.google.nl/books?id=KaZYCwAAQBAJ&pg=PT67&hl=n1&source=gbs_selected_pages&cad=2#v=onepage&q&f=false)

Your body language is thus an outward reflection of your emotional condition. Each gesture or movement (or one of the other aforementioned aspects) can be a valuable key to an emotion a person may be feeling at the time. They help to mediate our intention and add to our words. This way of 'adding' to our communication is extremely important because we understand each other better. Moreover, your body is what shapes you as a person, it makes you who you are. Everyone moves a little differently within it. How you look, how you shape your gestures, how your voice sounds, all plays a significant role in how you make your way of communicating recognisable to someone else.

The written word, on which I will further elaborate in the next chapter, does not support this language. Or at least not in its entirety. Therefore the question arises if this degree of individuality, which is present in our body, can be communicated in words alone. In language, in this mediation, we lose most of these nonverbal features.

Because of this loss a gap appears in between the sender and the receiver, we can 'read' how people feel but no longer 'see' it. It is a gap prone to miscommunication. To explain this concept of miscommunication more clearly I would like to use an analogy of two people building a bridge. Communication is often seen as a bridge between people. Alone and wandering in our minds we frantically try to reach each other. We are moved by our inner urge to share life, to make contact and to not be alone. Language became our sharing tool, the tool with which we can build that bridge. Communicating something to someone else through written words is like building one part of the bridge while not being in sight of the other person. In his understanding the other person is building their part, the second part, towards yours. As you come closer and closer together it might become apparent that you were not heading for the same direction after all, there is a gap, a void deprived of concrete meaning. To reach the other you must take the leap and hope you get it right as you jump across.



[Fruhm] [mee]  
[too] [yoo]

In communication we can make a distinction between what you say and how you are saying it, in the previous text I have tried to argue that we need the body to accomplish the second part. It is through small signs that we carry across tone and the intended underlying meaning. These tells become difficult to preserve in the crossing through a medium from one person to another. If we analyse this process it becomes evident that it is only logical that meaning can get distorted beyond recognition. Walter J. Ong described this transition perfectly: "My mind is a box. I take a unit of 'information' out of it, encode the unit (that is, fit it to the size and shape of the pipe it will go through), and put it into one end of the pipe (the medium, something in the middle between two other things). From the one end of the pipe the 'information' proceeds to the other end, where someone decodes it (restores its proper size and shape) and puts it in his or her own box-like container called a mind."<sup>8</sup> I want to illustrate the consequences of this communication model further with a game I used to play as a kid. In the game the players form a line, the first player comes up with a message and whispers it in the ear of the second person in line. The second player repeats the message to the third player, and so on. When the last player is reached, he or she announces the message they heard to the entire group. The first person then compares the original message with the final version. Although the objective is to pass around the message without it becoming unrecognisable along the way, part of the enjoyment is that, regardless, this usually ends up happening. So as you can see in each retelling something is altered, each (in this case) person leaves its mark on the message, just like any medium would do. In the game this happens because of factors such as anxiousness, impatience, difficulty in understanding or the deliberate alteration of a word. In for example a tweet, the 150-character limit, which renders most punctuation obsolete, forms a restriction that ensures a change.

<sup>8</sup> J Ong, W. (1982), *Orality and Literacy*, pp. 171-172. Retrieved from [http://dss-edit.com/prof-anon/sound/library/Ong\\_orality\\_and\\_literacy.pdf](http://dss-edit.com/prof-anon/sound/library/Ong_orality_and_literacy.pdf)

In a face-to-face conversation a recipient is always present, a conversation also demands anticipated feedback in order to take place at all. When you speak, you address another and somehow you already have to be in connection with the mind of that other person. You have to sense something in the mind of the other to which your own utterance can relate. What you say depends on what you anticipate as a response. Of course this does not mean that you know exactly what the other person will say but you need to have some kind of inclination. Therefore,

<sup>9</sup> J Ong, W. (1982), *Orality and Literacy*. Retrieved from [http://dss-edit.com/prof-anon/sound/library/Ong\\_orality\\_and\\_literacy.pdf](http://dss-edit.com/prof-anon/sound/library/Ong_orality_and_literacy.pdf)

when in conversation, you are both sender and receiver. It is never one-way.<sup>9</sup> Part of the complication of the communication model described above is that the communication is in fact *one-way*. As a writer of the message you get the task to conjure up the recipient as he is not present in the actual moment. It is very hard to write or read if you can only envision the reader, to get into the mind of an absent person. Think back to the metaphor of the bridge I used earlier. In addition every reader measures what he or she reads within his/her own knowledge of language, concepts and images. Everyone's interpretation is therefore different. There is never one possible outcome.





[Th uh]

[mahynd] [uhv]

[th uh] [**uhth**-er]

*"The other eye just bysected, just blinking, flashing white wet eye, smeared shadows shining underneath, fringed dark, skin at the left eyes edge, shattering into a zillion creases to make tiny black lines, restored for an instant her eyes flash closed"*<sup>10</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Banner, F. (2007). *Performance Nude*. Retrieved December 12, 2018, from <http://www.fionabanner.com/works/performancenude/index.htm?i51>

The quote above is from artist Fiona Banner from her project titled "Perfomance Nudes", Toronto, 2007. She moulds language like a sculpture. Imagine the setting of that of a classical life drawing. Banner is standing on a stool in front of an enormous canvas she goes back and forth between the model and the white sheet, checking, readjusting and shaping until she is satisfied. But Banner does not actually draw, she creates a textual portraits of her models. She describes them in her handwriting, starting at the top left and completely filling the surface as time flies by, word after word. She writes in a very straightforward manner, seemingly without any syntax or linguistic coherence. The words seem to express her thoughts just as they appear. Through them we become aware of all her artistic choices, we experience what it is like to be in her head, to see where her focus lies at what time. Through language a very real tangible body emerges, closely related to the artist's mind.

WARM AGAINST THE DEADPAIN WALL. FINGERS  
HANGING DOWN LOOSE, CURLED, ONE HAND TOUCHING  
HER MAUVE HIP. VEINS STRETCHING THROUGH HER HAND,  
SHADOW BREATHING, BLINKING, SHE'S HALF LEANING  
ONE KNEE BENT FORWARD THROWING THE OTHER LEG  
INTO SHADOW. 10 DENAILS PEARLESCENT, OCHRE FEET  
MELTING INTO THE FLOOR. ALL SHADOWS RUNNING DOWN  
FROM HER HEAD, HAIR FALLING ONTO HER FACE, OVER ONE  
EYE, THE OTHER GAZING DOWN, FOCUSING ON NOTHING, OR  
FOCUSING ON THE FLOOR. HER BREASTS ROLL DOWN HER CHEST,  
DARK NIPPLES, ERECT, SUNLESS BREASTS WHITE, DARK RUDDY  
SHADOW BENEATH, ROLLING DOWN INTO HER NAVEL, DARK EXC  
IN THE MIDDLE, ALL SHADOWS POINTING TO HER PUSSY, A G-ZILLIO  
N HAIRS DISAPPEARING INTO THE DARK DARK SPACE INBETWEEN  
HER THIGHS. STOMACH BOWING FORWARDS CATCHING THE HIGHLI  
GHT, ARSE MOON WHITE. SHADOW FROM HER NAVEL SPILLING  
OUT ONTO HER SLOW PULSING STOMACH, SHADOW IN HER HI  
PP BONES AND THE SEAM OF HER THIGHS, MAKING A V SHA



*Performance Nude*  
Banner, F. (2007).  
*Performance Nude*.  
[Photograph] Retrieved  
December 12, 2018, from  
<https://bthumm.de/artists/fiona-banner/selected-works/objects-installations/>



[Fruhm]  
[mahynd] [too]  
[wurd]

*Writing really is a transcoding of thought, a translation from the two-dimensional surface of images into a one-dimensional linear code, out of compact, blurred pictorial codes into clear, distinct written codes; out of the imaginary into the conceptual; out of scenes into processes; out of context into texts. Writing is a method of tearing imaginary things apart and making them clear.*"<sup>11</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Flusser, V. (2011), pp. 15. *Does Writing Have a Future?*. Minneapolis, U.S.A: University of Minnesota Press.

Words, emotions and feelings exist in your mind but in place with no shape, you don't actually know where they are. Although linguistic expressions such as "It is somewhere in the back of my mind" exist and express our desire to give shape to our mind, to see it as a landscape in which we navigate, the mind does not take an actual form. Which only adds to the mystery of what happens inside of it. Thus trying to express that, capture it as a still form on paper may seem a little bit like magic. Before literacy became available to the masses, the ability to read and write was recognised as a form of power, and seemed in the eyes of ordinary people like an occult art. The Latin word grammar (meaning the structure and system of a language) only strengthens this belief, it came from old French gramaire which meant "learning" but also "(magic) incantation, spells".<sup>12</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Etymonline. (n.d.) Grammar | Origin and meaning of grammar by Online Etymology Dictionary. Retrieved November 30, 2018, from <https://www.etymonline.com/word/grammar>

Words and our ability to wield them, and the strength of them strung together is something magical indeed. Language enables us, through speech, to communicate all that we see, hear, feel or think to others. To share. The only thing is that our knowledge of those words determines our ability to express ourselves, we are caught in a framework. Even though language, especially spoken language, is a growing thing and new words are thought of all the time, language to me poses quite the struggle. It can be very alienating if you feel you're unable to give voice to what you feel. In english we also talk significantly about 'finding the right words'. Metaphors of searching, expressing, translating thoughts into words highlight the difficulty of language, the unavoidable inadequacy of language. Giving the impression that what we are and what we feel are hard if not at all impossible to translate into words. Therefore finding the right words requires effort, you need to taste them, chew them, let them pass through your lips until the moment comes when you feel them vibrating throughout your whole body clicking into place. Luckily our living breathing body fills that gap to some extent, we can always rely on our intonation, body language, facial expression and bodily movement to change the

tone of the words that we use. This non-verbal communication probably playing the bigger part in our day-to-day contact. Together they (the body and the word) give you a grip on your environment, on countless phenomena that would otherwise be chaotic and frightening. By talking about it, you gain control over it, you develop understanding, you can distance yourself and you can become thoughtful.

Through writing this process becomes transparent to others, by recording the ephemeral and providing the fleeting word with a shape that can be analysed, you give it flesh and a foundation. It can be looked over and reacted upon by others. The writing also helps to define you and what you are, what you think and what you feel. It brings about a certain justification, by giving form you acknowledge that those feelings are present and true. What you wrote now also exists across space and time, you can put it away, you can send it to someone else, you can put it on the wall, but the letters and the words will stay.

Throughout my life I have always kept notebooks, if I had to work through personal troubles, I kept a diary as evidence. Partly so that I knew that it had happened (it somehow seemed more true) but also for me to look back on the person I was in that time. There was a moment somewhere last year when I found one from when I was eleven years old. And it was a bit like greeting an old friend. Now the things I wrote down seemed silly, nothing to worry over, but through the text I could recall what it had been like to be me at that time. I was perfectly preserved between those pages, and it reminded me a bit of the practice of drying flowers between the pages of a book. That part of me, that text, was just like that dead flower that had once been alive, faded but frozen in time.

This association between death and text is nothing new, Plato over 2365 years ago already hinted at it in his *Phaedrus* (274-7). In this dialogue between Socrates and Phaedrus, Plato has Socrates say the following, **"Your affection for it [writing] has made you describe its effects as the opposite of what they really are. In fact, it will introduce forgetfulness into the soul of those who learn it: they will not practice using their memory because they will put their trust in writing, which is external and depends on signs that belong to others, instead of trying to remember from the inside, completely on their own. You have not discovered a potion for remembering, but for reminding..."**<sup>13</sup> Writing, according to Plato, is in-human, just a thing, it is

<sup>13</sup> Plato. (n.d.). *Phaedrus*, by Plato. Retrieved December 2, 2018, from <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/1636/1636-h/1636-h.htm>

trying to give shape to something that can only exist in the mind. Although the issue of the destruction of memory because of written-down text, may not be a contemporary one, (I would rather say that text has been a great asset as disseminator of knowledge, tradition, history and culture), I can agree to the notion of the lifelessness of text. Writing, as an invention, was quite a drastic one, it may not seem so nowadays since it is so deeply interiorised in our culture, but it does in fact reduce dynamic sound and movement (faculties of the body) to a still space, it separates the word from the living presence.

Not everything you can do is just as good in writing, how would one for example represent a dialect, a deep voice or a soft or loud one. Written language is a far from perfect representation of speech sounds. To be fair, the goal of written text is of course not to reproduce speech the way we pronounce it, but rather to code it so that the reader can quickly retrieve the meaning of the words. The balance between this fast transmission of meaning and a proper representation of sound is hard to find and it is only logical that somewhere along the way concessions had to be made. Written language therefore generally needs more explanation especially when the meaning is hidden in the context which is often the case in speech. We are very good at implying something while we do not use actual words to do so. 'It's not what you said but the way you said it' can be a recognisable example. There is no easy way to translate these instances of hidden meaning. Instead we would add '... she said with a slight rise in voice' or '... the half smile that curved her mouth made her words seem warm and welcoming'.<sup>14</sup> Words can be visual in their own way and help us to paint a picture in our mind. We can describe everything to the letter. But they lack the spirit and energy of life, of the body. The abstraction and distance of written language makes it difficult to give letters the same emotional, raw power. Their existence is a silent one.

<sup>14</sup> Unger, G. (1997).  
*Terwijl je leest.*  
Amsterdam, The Netherlands:  
De Buitenkant.

[Rep-ri-zen-**tey**-  
shuh n] [uhv]  
[sound]



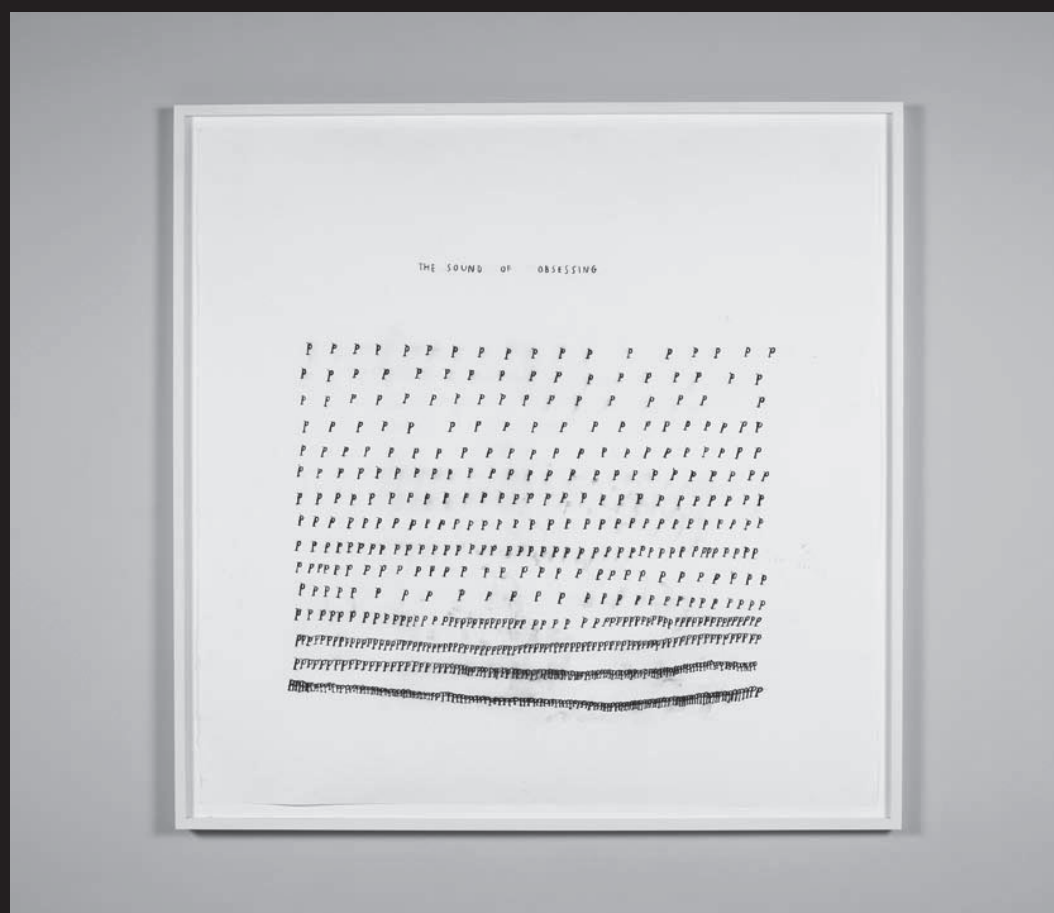
Christine Sun Kim is a sound artist and composer who was born deaf. In her work she combines and transforms the various types of notation that shape her understanding and communication. She explores the materiality of sound through its visualisation in drawing, painting and performance. She believes that you cannot just experience sound through your ears, it can be felt tactually, or experienced as a visual, or even as an idea. In a lot of her drawings she makes use of the dynamic markings from music notation to visualise her experiences with sound. These markings are one of the most expressive elements in music notation, they can communicate a particular emotional state or feeling by determining the loudness between notes or phrases. The two basic dynamic indications are *p* for piano, meaning soft, and *f* for forte, meaning loud. These two go on in multiple variations such as *fff*, *piu ché fortissimo*, meaning very very loud, *ff*, *fortissimo*, meaning louder, *ppp*, *piu ché pianissimo*, meaning very very soft, etc.<sup>15</sup>

In her work "How to measure loudness" she links her experience with the written down event to an equivalent amount of *f*, or the "sound of obsessing" where she gives shape to non-sounds, again with the use of musical notation.

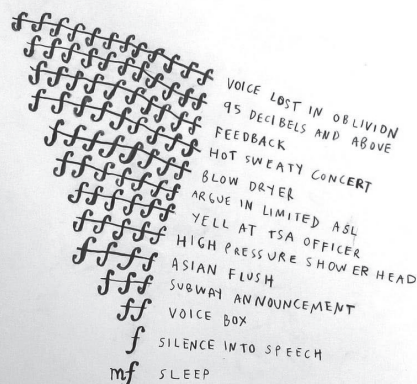
<sup>15</sup> Thiemel, M. (2001). Dynamics. Retrieved from <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000008458>

The Sound of Obsessing  
Kim, C. S. (n.d.).

*The Sound of Obsessing* [Photograph]. Retrieved December 12, 2018, from <http://christinesunkim.com/work/the-sound-of-non-sounds/>



# HOW TO MEASURE LOUDNESS



## How to Measure Loudness

Kim, C. S. (2015, November 25). *How to measure loudness* [Photograph]. Retrieved December 12, 2018, from <https://sortitout24.wordpress.com/professional-practice-in-context-1-laumacup702/>

By combining these musical notations with language, I believe she creates a new notation system. A system which can indicate sound by describing if it is soft or loud or something in between. If we analyse the richness of our voice, we can see that through intonation, it can indicate attitudes and emotions of the speaker. Which involves, among other aspects, a difference in loudness. It helps to focus attention on important elements of the spoken message and to regulate conversational interaction. Yet in written language there is no notation system to indicate this variation. Of course punctuation covers this field to some extent, e.g., with the use of the question mark to indicate doubt or the exclamation mark to denote a strong feeling such as an outcry or an emphatic, or ironic component, but not in its entirety. Through the use of these dynamic markings, as shown in Kim's work, we can capture the fleeting notion of variation in sound. It could serve as an extra linguistic component to carry across the meaning of our words.

Moreover, Kim argues that the lines in her drawings already contain sound through the subtle smudges and smears, they are part of what is left behind from the movement that her body made.<sup>16</sup> Such as in "All. Day.", where she traced the path on paper that her hand would make to communicate the concept "all day" in ASL (American Sign Language). Kim thus uses her body as an active element in her drawings. The echo of the movement

<sup>16</sup> Kim, C. S. (August, 2015). *Christine Sun Kim: The Enchanting Music of Sign Language* [Video file]. Retrieved from [https://www.ted.com/talks/christine\\_sun\\_kim\\_the\\_enchanting\\_music\\_of\\_sign\\_language?language=nl](https://www.ted.com/talks/christine_sun_kim_the_enchanting_music_of_sign_language?language=nl)

that is present within the line brings across information, more information it would seem than the written down equivalent. Now we can see a part of her, of her body. It is a line that only she can make. She took the concept “all day” and then characterised it with her body, traced it over with the marks of her pulses and breathings, her excitement, hesitation, flaws and mistakes. These marks are precious things.



All. Day.  
Kim, C. S. (n.d.).  
*All. Day.* [Photograph].  
Retrieved December 12,  
2018, from <http://christinesunkim.com/work/soundings/>

[Fruhm]  
[sheyp] [too]  
[kee]

This formality that is inherent in written language only gets enforced by the strict black-and-white typography on the page. Writing used to be an act of the body, it retained a vestigial connection to it. A line of ink pressed into the paper was, and still is, evidence of the will, a mark of the presence of the individual. This is why if we want other people to know that we think about them we sent them a handwritten card, or sign a document with our signature. Writing by hand takes effort, people value this effort because it means we spent time on it, time we could have spent in another way. Through our handwriting we get a very strong physical sense of the emergence of language, after all we use our hands to shape something that was not there before. **"This gives you a sense of industry, as if you were actually making writing as tangibly as someone weaving cloth."**<sup>17</sup> It is interesting to see that in the etymology of the word 'text' we can recognise a connection with the Latin word *textus* a **"style or texture of a work"**, literally a **"thing, woven"** which originates from the participle stem of *texere* **"to weave, to join, fit together, braid, interweave, construct fabricate, build"**.<sup>18</sup> Robert Bringhurst in 'The Elements of Typographic Style' also states; **"An ancient metaphor: thought is a thread, and the raconteur is a spinner of yarns – but the true storyteller, the poet, is a weaver. The scribes made this old and audible abstraction into a new and visible fact. After long practice, their work took on such an even, flexible texture that they called the written page a *textus*, which means cloth."**<sup>19</sup> We can conclude that a text is matter, something that is made and shaped just like an object. It is through our bodily gestures that the text takes on appearance. Just like we need our body to form words and to utter speech. This is once again made clear in the verb to write, for words for 'write' in most Indo-European languages originally mean **"to carve, scratch, cut"**.<sup>20</sup> By writing we press our body into the object and leave an impression. We create. In historical forms of writing our effort stood in direct connection with the readability and the durability of the text. We engraved our words into objects in order to transmit information and share knowledge, but objects are treacherous and will always possess a tendency towards entropy and make any mark made upon it or in it eventually disappear. To ensure the longest survival of a written text writers thus faced the choice between writing that remained legible for a long time, in which case the writing took a lot of effort (engraving in e.g. bronze or marble) or the writing is effortless (engraving in e.g. clay).<sup>21</sup> The effort involved

<sup>17</sup> Moran, J. (2017, November 29). *Typewriter, you're fired! How writers learned to love the computer*. Retrieved November 14, 2018, from <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2015/aug/28/how-amstrad-word-processor-encouraged-writers-use-computers>

<sup>18</sup> Etymonline. (n.d.) *Text | Origin and meaning of text by Online Etymology Dictionary*. Retrieved November 14, 2018, from <https://www.etymonline.com/word/text>

<sup>19</sup> Bringhurst, R. (1992). *The elements of typographic style*. Dublin, Ireland: Hartley & Marks.

<sup>20</sup> Etymonline. (n.d.) *Write | Origin and meaning of write by Online Etymology Dictionary*. Retrieved November 14, 2018, from <https://www.etymonline.com/word/write>

<sup>21</sup> Flusser, V. (2011). *Into the Universe of Technical Images*. Minneapolis, U.S.A.: University of Minnesota Press.

in writing has only decreased over the past century. Ever since the invention of movable type which laid the groundwork for machines such as the typewriter and the word processor our bodily involvement in writing has been on the decline. Our phones and laptops with their keyboards nowadays only seem to be in favour of this disembodiment of writing.

This disembodiment occurred because the body no longer stands in direct connection with the tool it wields to create the written text. Mind and body were separated when the first electronic devices, such as the word processor, came to stand in between them. Moreover, the text's physical qualities disappeared as it transgressed from being an object to an image.

The automatising of the writing process started with the typewriter, it was the first machine that could write faster than one could by hand. In a way the making of the letters was similar to the way that printers used moveable type. Typically a typewriter has an array of keys and upon pressing one causes a hammer containing a different single character to be struck against a cloth ribbon with dried ink thereby transferring the impression to the paper. In the earlier versions, dating back to 1868, this array of keys was alphabetically ordered and the keys resembled those of a piano, later on it evolved in the QWERTY keyboard that we still use today. It is an interesting observation to make that regardless of the order, the basic notion of individually separated letters distributed across a grid originated over more than 150 years ago, still taking part in our most cutting edge technology.

The revolutionary part in the birth of this machine that I want to emphasise here was not necessarily the fast transmission of a letter from your fingers to the paper but rather the introduction of the key. All communication must be translated in order for it to reach someone else, with 'translation' I mean the requirements or limits of the medium that the message has to go through. With language this is of course the translation of your feelings into words so that the other might understand you. But with this machine there was an additional form of translation namely the encoding of a shape previously made with the hand, now executed by a finger pressing a key. Which is a significantly smaller movement. The line of thinking that resulted in these keys was the endeavour towards producing the perfect 'original'. Providing the user with a form of editing and correction before everything is finally com-

mitted to paper. The text was now set on a screen, without any existence of its own, no material trace, written through and endless ethereal stream of 0's and 1's. One push on a key and it is gone forever. Or as Joe Moran phrased it **"Writing on a screen can feel like building a sandcastle and then kicking it over yourself."**<sup>22</sup> It is through these keys that we truly lost the connection between our body and the text. Why? You may ask. Because we cannot see anymore that we made use of it (the body) in the rendering of the shape. The form that appears on paper is neat, clear and orderly arranged, not at all representative of the individual. Anybody, literally any different body, could have made those.

In addition, the process of printing the letter also continued to become less and less transparent. With the typewriter one could see the mechanism working, a simple process from a to b, if I press this letter down this bar swings up. The same with the pen albeit in a different way, if I move this pen a line will appear. Now everything gets hidden by glossy casings, plastic or metal boxes that intrude in our line of sight. The electrical circuits in which our letters are stored are hidden from the eye. And even if we open the machine up there is no obvious clue as to how the machine does it. It just reveals a maze of intricate circuits and a collection of silicone chips hardwired to a printed circuit board. Tiny even more complicated mazes are again inside these chips. Villem Flusser said **"With word processor, writing by pressing keys has long since become an opaque process, an event that occurs in a black box to which we have no visual access."**<sup>23</sup>

We know that when we press for example a button with an 'e' on it an 'e' will appear on the screen but the matter of how and why is shrouded in mystery. The keyboard thus taught us how to write, it branded itself in our muscle memory and conditioned in us a trust that each key will do what it is supposed to do. As we use keys more and more to convey meaning to each other (where previously the body was involved) whole actions tend to be wrapped up in one small motion. We have become so familiarised with keys that we use them without thinking. They are everywhere. We can flick a switch and the light will turn on, turn a key and open a door, push a button and whip humanity of the face of the earth. Pushing down, flicking up, turning left or right. All these movements, so similar.

<sup>22</sup> Moran, J. (2017, November 29). *Typewriter, you're fired! How writers learned to love the computer*. Retrieved November 14, 2018, from <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2015/aug/28/how-amstrad-word-processor-encouraged-writers-use-computers>

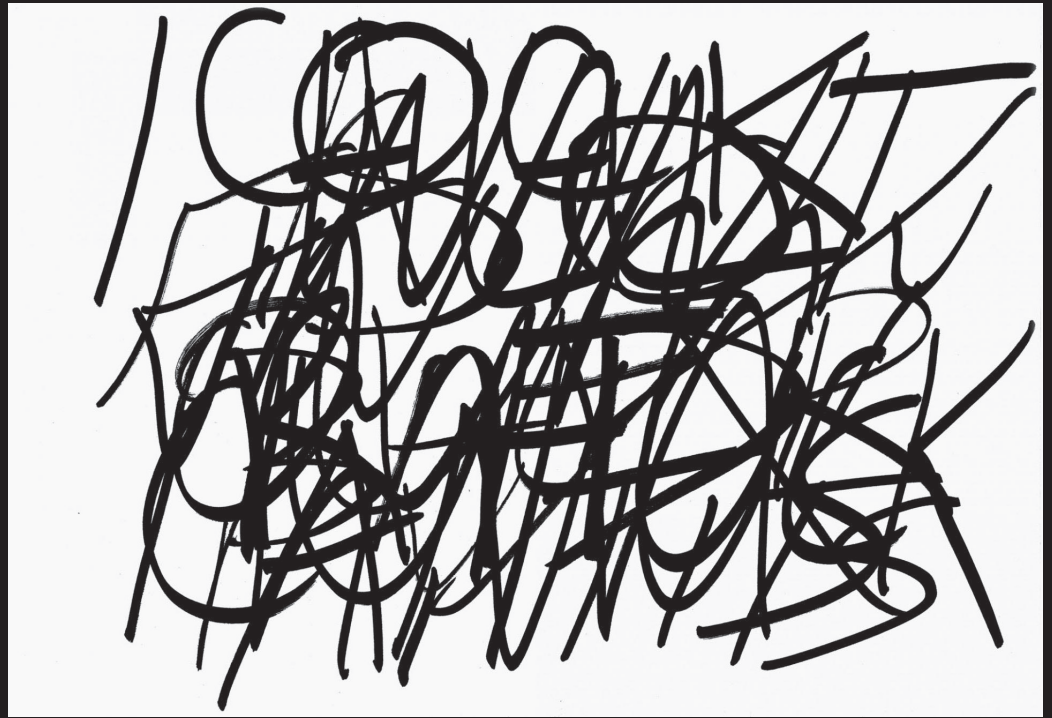
<sup>23</sup> Flusser, V. (2011). *Into the Universe of Technical Images*. Minneapolis, U.S.A.: University of Minnesota Press.

[Neet],  
[kleer] [and]  
[awr-der-lee]  
[uh-reynj-ed]



I Can't Fuck My Way  
Through This.

2015. Ink on paper.  
Jeppesen, T. (2015). *I  
Can't Fuck My Way Through  
This* [Photograph].  
Retrieved December 13,  
2018, from [http://  
exilegallery.org/  
exhibitions/travis-  
jeppesen-new-writing/](http://exilegallery.org/exhibitions/travis-jeppesen-new-writing/)



American artist Travis Jeppesen said; "[...] what I'm interested in is producing a writing of the body rather than of the mind. It's a writing that consists of pure gesture."<sup>24</sup>

<sup>24</sup> Sleek Team. (2016, December 2). Hans Ulrich Obrist in Conversation About Inventing New Languages. Retrieved November 26, 2018, from <https://www.sleek-mag.com/article/hans-ulrich-obrist-zhang-jeppesen-miralda/>

In his so-called object-oriented writings he tries to channel the inner lives of objects. His first big object-oriented writing project was 16 sculptures where he recreated 16 sculptures from different artists from the history of art in the medium of language. The published book contains only the text there are no actual reproductions of the sculptures. Another iteration of 16 sculptures is what you experience upon entering the gallery.

Installation View

Jeppesen, T. (2014). *Travis Jeppesen at Wilkinson London*. [Photograph] Retrieved December 13, 2018, from [https://artmap.com/  
wilkinson/exhibition/  
travis-jeppesen-  
2014?print=do](https://artmap.com/wilkinson/exhibition/travis-jeppesen-2014?print=do)



Jeppesen transformed his writing into sound, the visitor can take place on a chair and put on glasses that black-out their vision, being deprived of our sight Jeppesen's texts stage an encounter with the object through language, one is asked to recreate the sculptures in his mind.

<sup>25</sup> Jeppesen, T. (2014). *Travis Jeppesen at Wilkinson London*. Retrieved December 13, 2018, from <https://artmap.com/wilkinson/exhibition/travis-jeppesen-2014?print=do>

*"What is asserted is the value of perception - a way of seeing through other means, through an intensive encounter with language. Language as a vehicle for re-creation; re-creation as invention."*<sup>25</sup>

Jeppesen's work is in affiliation with the hybrid art form called Asemic Writing, which is a wordless, open semantic form of writing. There is an absence of meaning waiting for the reader to fill in or interpret. Similar to the way in which meaning is deduced from a piece of art. Text and image are fused in unity. It is writing for the sake of writing, no verbal context is needed.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>26</sup> Leftwich, J. (2016). *Asemic Writing: Definitions & Contexts 1998-2016*. Retrieved November 26, 2018, from <https://app.box.com/s/kvq4dp9snvdrmf15kx7ghk1qu7sxjgs4>

It is by looking at these expanded gestures of handwriting in Jeppesen's work that we hover in a state between reading and looking. I believe that these drawings, these marks that he made with his body, allow for meaning to occur across linguistic understanding.



[Fruhm]  
[bod-ee] [too]  
[rep-ri-zen-  
tey-shuhn]

By laying bare the writing process and the steps through which we slowly lost our body, I voiced a lot of critique towards the way in which our writing lacks important communication and individuality. However, I do not mean to say that we have not tried to accomplish the best with the means that we have.

In the digital communication methods in mainstream media that we use to contact one another like WhatsApp, Messenger, Facebook etc. we have been trying our best to bring our body back, that individual, in order to overcome the cold formality of the typographic message and to get an inclination of who it is we are actually talking to. In for example Whatsapp, like in other messaging platforms, the presence of the reader is simulated through the use of a picture in the left corner, we can also see if they are on- or offline, if they are typing a reply, if they have read our message etc. All this to help the writer envision (to get into the mind of) the person he/she is talking to.

If we look at the gesture in isolation from the rest of our non-verbal types of communication we can see that it has resurfaced through the use of the Graphic Interchange Format, also known as the GIF. The GIF. has the ability to save several images in succession, therefore allowing an animation to be displayed. Often they show a short moment from a movie scene sometimes accompanied by a piece of text. If we come across them in our feed, in a digital conversation or in some type of display, we often feel a sense of recognition. They somehow ring true. In a thesis on the GIF by Iris Cuppen she explains that "Most GIF's do not focus on important scenes that define the narrative from which they are extracted but show "in-between" moments: the turning of a head, the wink of an eye, the pointing of a finger or the wave of a hand."<sup>27</sup>

It's essentially these small movements in our communication that tend to escape our conscious mind but play an important role in how we subconsciously position ourselves towards each other when in conversation. Through the GIF these actions are cut out, zoomed in upon and shown in an endless loop. They provide us with a tool that "allows its user to still carry out meaning outside the realm of text through the depiction, sharing and editing of bodily action."<sup>29</sup>

<sup>27</sup> Cuppen, I. (2017). *I have nothing to say only to show*. Retrieved from <http://ihavenothingtosayonlytoshow.com/#essays>

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.,

More alternatives such as the emoji or the voice message occur in online communication in an attempt to establish emotional tone. For all these translations merely accomplish the same thing, they enhance the power of the words or display an inherent meaning that language isn't able to capture.

Note that all these different methods only tackle individual parts of the body, it is either through visual or auditory means. Even a video call, intended to unite all aspects of the body and therefore surpass all the complications surrounding a correct interpretation, tends to focus only on the face since the screen is so small, the rest is hidden outside the frame, invisible to the eye. We can only dissect the body and individually translate all the elements but not reinvoke it through the digital medium as a whole. The irony present in all these methods is that they seem to point to the absence of the individual rather than vouching for his or her presence.



[En-hans-ing]  
[th uh] [pou-er]  
[uhv] [th uh]  
[wurd]



Not only in art, can language express such individuality. There are instances in everyday life where the strong connection between the written word and the body becomes visible as well. Such as when the body is used as (or in combination with) a poster to convey a message. One of the disadvantages of speech is its ephemerality, its understanding is limited to just those present at the moment when you pronounce the words. In an effort to overcome that particular problem and to get more attention for the message people started using the poster as a medium. On it's own the typed text on the poster, as I argued before, possesses a certain distance, the message can be from anyone. In addition, it remains a largely static medium, as it is pasted upon walls or installed in advertising units. However, when the word and the body come together, they both play an active role and the body with its own mimic makes the message personal again. They complement each other, making up for each other flaws. The message now reaches the viewer, coming closer towards them, sometimes even literally.

In fact mobile posters can be traced back to the earliest years of the medium. In London in the nineteenth century 'Boardmen' were roaming the streets. Walking in between carriages and pedestrians the sandwich board wearer earned a meagre existence carrying commercial messages on the chest and back while navigating endless circuits of London, sandwiched between street and pavement."<sup>30</sup>

In forms of protest this connection becomes even more prominent. During the First World War suffragettes became 'Boardwomen' by wearing big letterpress posters demanding votes for woman.

<sup>30</sup> Highmore, B. (2002). *Street Life in London: Towards a rhythmanalysis of London in the late 19th Century*. Retrieved from [https://www.academia.edu/11183181/Street\\_Life\\_in\\_London\\_Towards\\_a\\_rhythmanalysis\\_of\\_London\\_in\\_the\\_late\\_19th\\_Century](https://www.academia.edu/11183181/Street_Life_in_London_Towards_a_rhythmanalysis_of_London_in_the_late_19th_Century)

Women Poster Parade  
[Women Poster Parade  
[Photograph]. (n.d.).  
Retrieved December 12,  
2018, from <https://www.parkschool.org.uk/pupils-talk-feminism-for-womens-vote-centenary/>



As they were facing difficulty in getting publicity displayed in public settings in the United Kingdom, suffragette groups such as the Women's Freedom League regularly organised what they called 'Poster Parades'. They took their message to settings that were the domain of men.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>31</sup> Crowley, D. (2016). *I am a poster*. Retrieved December 13, 2018, from <http://www.eyemagazine.com/feature/article/i-am-a-poster>

Another example would be the Memphis Sanitation Strike in Tennessee in 1968. After two men were crushed in a garbage truck, more than 1,300 Memphis sanitation workers went on strike 50 years ago to protest abysmal wages and working conditions. The Sanitation workers assembled in front of the Clayborn Temple for a solidarity march. The workers all carried posters with the slogan 'I am a Man'. The dozens of silkscreened posters drew the lens of the media to broadcast their messages and when captured by the press photographers became enormously powerful images.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.,



Memphis Sanitation Strike, Tennessee 1968  
*I am man* [Photograph]. (n.d.). Retrieved December 12, 2018, from <https://mltshp.com/p/1D29A>

We can see that the poster becomes an extension of the body, they work together seamlessly in conveying the message. Their intention is felt throughout most of the senses. The posters now become, instead of flat static objects, individual gestures of the body. Even if their affects are amplified by collective action; they operate at a human scale, the body's scale, literally. We can see the person holding the message and we recognise an individual, someone just like us, crying out his or her message to the world. Both through visual and auditory means.



[Too]

[kuh n-**klood**]

My motivation in doing this research originated from a very simple desire to bridge the gap I felt was present in communication. The void (created by the written word) between you and me, deprived of clear meaning, where we can only ever guess after each others true intention. It seemed an unscalable barrier, one where a set of wrongly placed words can make all the difference. I did not know why I felt that the use of words didn't seem adequate enough, only that it did. After all, how could it be so simple? A collection of black-and-white characters on a white background. How is that representative of me? How can I express through them, what I feel, to you? And how would you be able to understand exactly, if what you interpret the words to be is shaped by your own life, which is so different from mine. It seemed a mystical way of communicating.

Men does not possess language, does not have it at his/her disposal to say whatever it wants to say, rather language possesses men.<sup>33</sup> Words dictate my existence, our existence, and I struggled with them as if they were my only means of carrying across meaning, of bringing something to the light. Oblivious to the fact that my body, the one that gives shape, sound and movement to language can reveal so much more.

Trying to understand how this gap came to be, why it is there, and if I was the only one experiencing its persistent presence in my life, led me to discover how important our body is in our communication. This was the missing factor in the written word all along. By analysing in how many ways our body can express meaning beyond the use of language, I found that I had always relied heavily on its presence. I realised that this amazing, living, breathing shell of mine just cannot be captured in any other medium than itself. The body is what gives shape. The term 'embodiment' only emphasises its unique nature. In essence it means 'to shape'. By including the word 'body' in the term it becomes clear that our body is the definitive standard for giving and expression form.

Throughout this text I used the intermission as a model to provide a contrast to the arguments in my writing, to present more shades of meaning. One could see it as an entr'acte in a theatre play, meaning 'in between acts'. While it is true that this void I described arose from a disconnection with the body, does not mean that it doesn't have its own qualities. Maybe the word 'void', which has a negative annotation to it, is not the right one. Instead we should see it as a 'space', one in-between sender and receiver, in-between body and language, in-between meaning and interpretation, a hybrid that is

<sup>33</sup> Munnik, R. (2009). *Tonen wat niet gezegd kan worden – een collage Over Wittgensteins Tractatus Logico-philosophicus*. Retrieved from <https://www.thijmgenootschap.nl/sites/thijmgenootschap.nl/files/artikelen/t97-1-8-rene-munnik-tonen-wat-niet-gezegd-kan-worden.pdf>

concerned with its own kind of meaning, a communicative tool that does not allow itself to be captured through only words. It is a space that allows for new discoveries to be made. A space where the body makes words come to life, where they can touch and shape together. One where we can bend these limitations to our will. This is what happens in the drawings of Christine Sun Kim and Travis Jeppesen, the performances of Fionna Banner and the forms of protest that we analysed. They make us aware of all the different layers in which the body can act and they all have found a way where language is no longer the only medium that carries meaning. They have found a way to communicate their individual voice. This is what we should strive for, a more expressive use of language, a combination in which language and the body are both equally present, where they complement, instead of defy, each other. Watching the body is no mystery, what you 'see' or 'feel' is happening, whether you are consciously aware of it or not. The joy is that we are all silently skilled in 'reading' the body. And if in fact more of it will come to the light, if the body's presence in words increases (as shown in the intermissions) then I believe a more complete understanding will arise from it. One not so prone to miscommunication. One where you cannot only 'see' but also 'feel'.

Do not think that I did not recognise that this thesis however is words, plain black-and-white text. I am fully aware that by conveying my ideas by using only the word, I am guilty of the same as what I argue against. I have to be honest here and say that without this body to support me I am actually still searching for my own type of language, a way to make it personal. To finally feel at home in language, which I think was what philosopher Martin Heidegger meant when he said **"Die Sprache ist das Haus des Seins"**<sup>34</sup>, language is the house of being. This thesis also has been an enormous process of writing and rephrasing in an effort to find not only what, but how I wanted to say it. I often caught myself thinking about how it felt, to write and know that the words which caught and shaped this research, would never be able to accurately convey the bundle of emotion in my mind. Now that I'm here at the end, I want to address you, dear reader. For I never wished for something so strongly as for you being here, now, with me. So that you could see my face, and listen to how I would say all this, how my body would be aiding me in my words. To reach an understanding between the two of us in which meaning can transcend language.

<sup>34</sup> Capuzzi, F. (1998). Letter on "Humanism (1946). In M. Heidegger (Author), W. McNeil (Ed.), & W. McNeil (Trans.), *Pathmarks* (pp. 239-276). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. doi:10.1017/CB09780511812637.012

Still, I can find solace in the notion that "the deadness of this text, its removal from the living human lifeworld, its rigid visual fixity, assures it endurance and its potential for being resurrected into limitless living contexts by a potential infinite number of living readers."<sup>35</sup> After all it is through you, the reader, when your eye makes contact with these markings, that the text has a way to truly come to life.

<sup>35</sup> J Ong, W. (1982). *Orality and Literacy*. Retrieved from [http://dss-edit.com/prof-anon/sound/library/Ong\\_orality\\_and\\_literacy.pdf](http://dss-edit.com/prof-anon/sound/library/Ong_orality_and_literacy.pdf)

[List]  
[uhv] [**ref-er-**  
uhns-es]



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