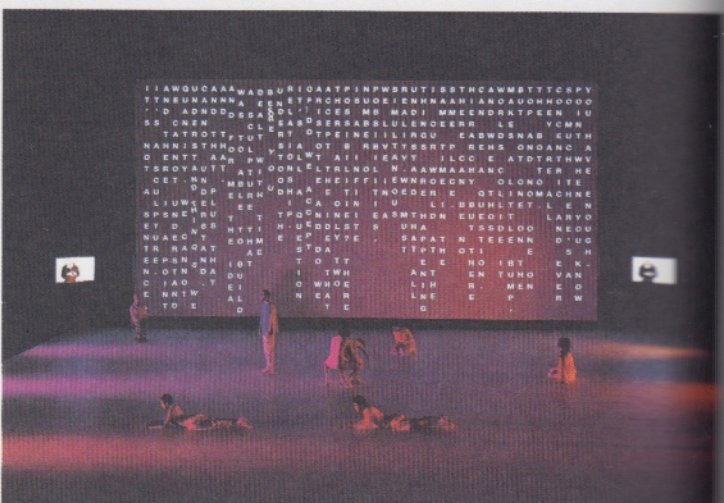
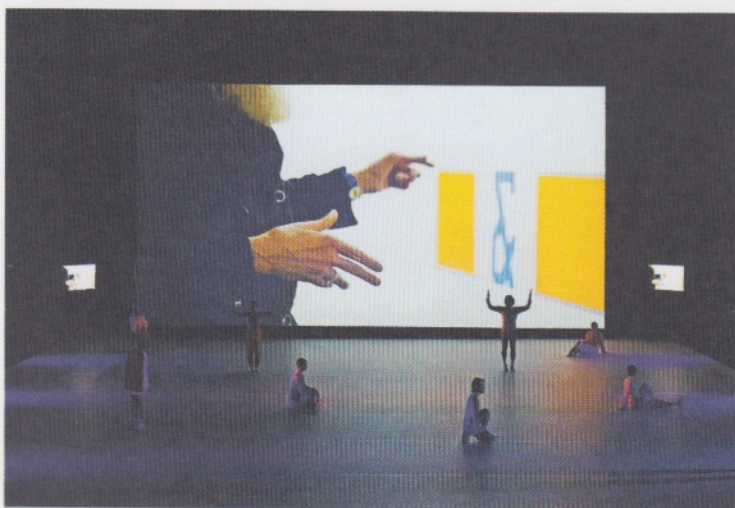
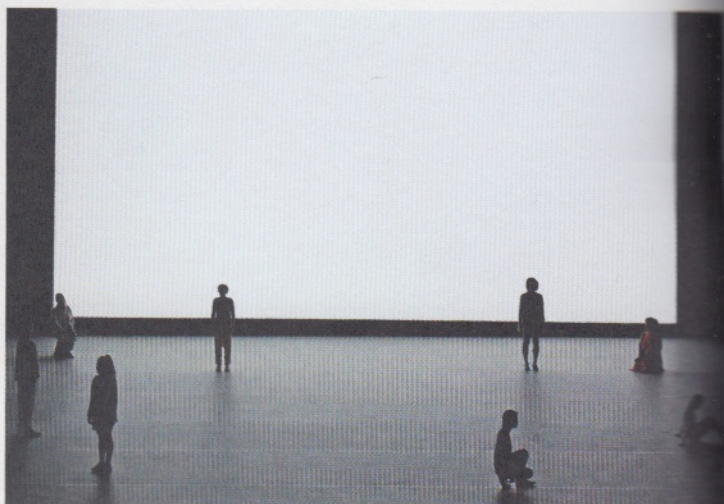
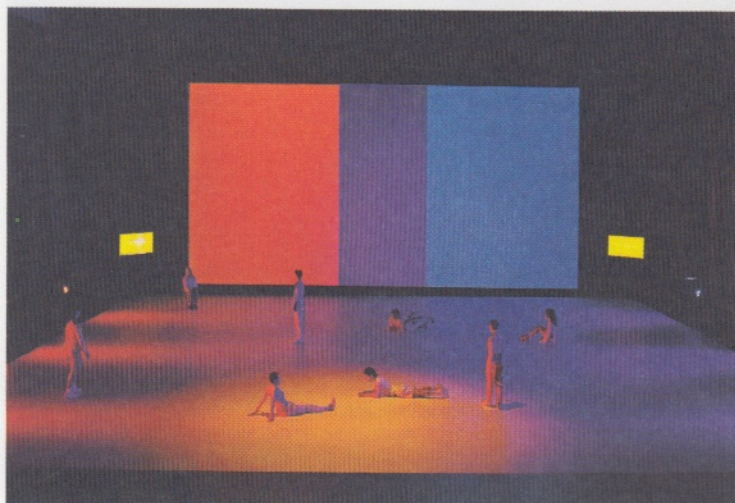


AGATHA GOTHE-SNAPE

born 1980 Gadigal Country / Sydney



In 2011, Agatha Gothe-Snape made her first visit to America. At the time she was immersed in a series of works that focused on the expressive hand gestures of iconic American artist, Lawrence Weiner. Using screen capture software to appropriate the collaging practices of West Coast conceptualists such as John Baldessari, Gothe-Snape cut and pasted images of Weiner's hands onto the heads of other artists. These early works allowed her to consider what has become an enduring question in her practice: how, as a young female Australian artist, she might challenge the weight of the western art canon and the influence of its celebrated male artists on her practice, and contemporary art more broadly.

On arrival at LAX airport, Gothe-Snape found herself standing next to Weiner and shared the works with him. Four years after this serendipitous encounter, a co-commission by Performa in New York, Performance Space in Sydney and the Keir Foundation gave her the chance to revisit the series.¹ Drawing on videos of Weiner speaking, the artist painstakingly created a lexicon of hand-drawn notations based on select hand gestures and a catalogue of the correlating sounds. Noting 'the act of transposing as a performance in itself',² Gothe-Snape elaborated the work with Sydney composer Megan Alice Clune, transforming her notations into a choral score intended to multiply and dissolve Weiner's authorial voice into a live cacophony of interpretations.

At Performa's 2015 festival, *Rhetorical chorus* brought together a choir, a spoken text, and an animated PowerPoint collaging Weiner's hands at the scale of the performers. The score was performed in the ancient tradition of cheironomy whereby its transmission was through the hand gestures of a conductor. Gothe-Snape worked with famed American vocalist and musician Joan La Barbara in this instance, directing singers and dancers to respond through movement and sound.

For Performance Space's LIVEWORKS program in 2017, the interpretive agency of each performer was made more visible through a conventional black box environment. As previously, the work was introduced by Brian Fuata as 'The Prologue' via a spoken performance of Weiner's utterances, recited from A–Z, before transitioning into a structured choral exposition of the multiple levels of interpretations. The work concluded with La Barbara in the role of 'The Epilogue', recounting Weiner's utterances in reverse, from Z–A. More dissonant in nature, the performance was accompanied by an animated backdrop of architectural outlines, colour fields and text that joined Gothe-Snape's ongoing *POWERPOINTS* series.³

Over the last decade, Gothe-Snape's practice has developed its own distinct poetic matrix of outputs, motifs, technologies and collaborators, as encapsulated in *Rhetorical chorus*. Its central interest remains language and its transmission through bodies, time, objects and architectures. In 'singing the song of his hands', *Rhetorical chorus* addresses Weiner's canonised maxims, bringing attention to the relationship between words, gestures and interpretation to ask: what does it mean to be outside of language?

HANNAH MATHEWS

1. *Rhetorical chorus* was originally commissioned by Performa, Performance Space and the Keir Foundation for Performa 15, New York, 1–22 November 2015. The second iteration at LIVEWORKS 2017, Sydney from 19–29 October 2017 was co-presented by Performance Space, Museum of Applied Arts & Sciences and Carriageworks.
2. All quotes from conversations between Hannah Mathews and Agatha Gothe-Snape in 2019, unless otherwise specified.
3. Gothe-Snape's *POWERPOINTS Catalogue 2008 – ongoing* is a series of digital artworks that have been created with Microsoft PowerPoint. See thecommercialgallery.com/artist/agatha-gothe-snape/exhibition/4/powerpoints-catalogue-2008-ongoing, accessed 13 January 2020.