



**The Center for Gesture, Sign, and Language presents:**



## **Susan Giles & Sally Morfill**

**The School of the Art Institute of Chicago &  
Manchester School of Art**

### ***Synchronizing Hand and Thought: Gesture, Language, and Drawing***

**Monday, May 9 @ 3:30pm CT**

**Keller Center Sky Suite (or via [Zoom](#))**

Drawing is an act that connects the hand to thought, and so too are the spontaneous hand gestures that are produced with speech. Art critic Jean Fisher describes the immediacy of mark making as a means to “protect the intensity of thought” and to elaborate thought “at the very moment it translates itself into image” (2003:221-222). The synchronicity of movement and mind that insists on the present tense in drawing is not only evident, but also essential to everyday conversation. According to developmental psychologist Susan Goldin-Meadow, co-speech gestures, “convey substantive information” and “may offer unique insights into a speaker’s unspoken thoughts... Speakers reveal information about their cognitive status through their gestures” (2006:34). This shared relationship to gesture as an expression of thought invites investigation into the connections between drawing and speech. Through a series of art-based projects, Susan Giles and Sally Morfill consider, where one performative action – co-speech gesture – ends and another – drawing – begins, thus looking for intersections between drawing and research that stems from the field of gesture studies.

Highlighting the link between hands and thought, *Found Gestures* is an artistic collaboration between Giles and Morfill that captures and visualizes sequences of ephemeral gestures. Using audio and motion-capture technology we record the speech and hand gestures of a community of participants. Digital movement data is translated into wall drawings, prints or objects as fragmentary traces of the conversations that took place; and each two- or three-dimensional drawing is accompanied by a transcription of the corresponding speech.

This presentation touches on a series of paradoxes pertinent to drawing research highlighted by our work e.g., spontaneous (present tense) gestures are only made physical and visible through time-consuming processes that defer their temporal immediacy. Furthermore, the co-speech gestures of others – which in themselves may be construed as drawing – combined with our own analogue, digital, and mechanical drawing acts, demonstrates how each work is a meeting ground for a range of different gestures. Moving beyond debates that relate to contemporary art practice, we now seek to understand the value of these visualizations within the field of gesture studies.

#### References:

Fisher, J. (2003) ‘On drawing.’ In de Zegher, C. (ed.) *The Stage of Drawing: Gesture and Act*. London, New York: Tate, The Drawing Center, pp. 217-226.

Goldin-Meadow, S. (2006) ‘Talking and Thinking with Our Hands.’ *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, Vol. 15, No. 1 pp. 34-39.

*Free and open to the public. ASL-English interpreting will be provided. Persons with disabilities who need an accommodation in order to participate in this event should contact Zena Levan at [zena@uchicago.edu](mailto:zena@uchicago.edu).*

*Organized by [The Center for Gesture, Sign, and Language](#).*